

Chiara Russo Krauss (ed.), *The Neo-Kantian Reception of Schiller*, Federico II University Press, Napoli 2026, pp. 315, ISBN 9788868873936

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The volume collects the papers presented at the international conference held at the University of Naples Federico II in September 2025. Its aim is to reconstruct systematically the role played by Neo-Kantianism in the rediscovery of Schiller as a philosopher from the second half of the nineteenth century onward. In that context, the renewed interest in Kant and the heated debate on materialism led several authors to interpret Schiller's work as a possible middle path between naturalism and metaphysics, capable of combining anthropological attention with an orientation toward the ideal. The book therefore seeks to fill an important gap in scholarship by offering a broad and articulated reconstruction of the various Neo-Kantian interpretations of Schiller. The essays examine figures belonging both to the two major schools of the movement – Marburg and Baden – and to the wider Neo-Kantian milieu, showing how Schiller's work was mobilized in different philosophical domains, including aesthetics, ethics, epistemology, and the philosophy of culture. What emerges from this multifaceted inquiry is a complex and sometimes divergent picture reflecting both the heterogeneous character of Neo-Kantianism and the theoretical richness of Schiller's thought.

The volume opens with Frederick C. Beiser's essay, which challenges a widespread postmodern interpretation of Schiller. According to this view, Schiller's aesthetic writings – from the *Kallias Letters* to the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* – should not be regarded as genuine philosophical works, but rather as rhetorical exercises by a poet who occasionally ventured into philosophical territory. Beiser firmly contests this reduction. The fact that Schiller conceived himself primarily as a poet, he argues, does not diminish the philosophical significance of his writings. On the contrary, a careful philosophical reading of these texts reveals that Schiller's

aesthetics represents a coherent attempt to reinterpret and critically develop Kant's legacy, rather than a merely literary reflection on art.

The second contribution to the volume, by contrast, shifts the focus to the first phase of Neo-Kantianism. In his essay on Kuno Fischer, Sabato Danzilli reconstructs the decisive role played by *Schiller als Philosoph* (1858) in the initial revival of Kantian philosophy. Fischer interprets Schiller as a pivotal figure in the history of German thought: not simply a follower of Kant, but the thinker who makes possible the transition from Kantian criticism to Romantic and Idealist philosophy. From this perspective, Schiller's aesthetics becomes the site where the fracture between sensibility and reason, ethics and aesthetics – left open by Kant's philosophy – is recomposed. Danzilli shows how this interpretation, shaped by a historicist and partly Hegelian outlook, attributes to Schiller a mediating role within the broader development of German Idealism.

The reinterpretation of Kantianism through Schiller is further explored in Paolo Pecere's contribution, which revisits Friedrich Albert Lange's reading of Schiller. Pecere argues that Lange's position cannot be adequately captured by the traditional historiographical label of "physiological Neo-Kantianism". Rather than reducing Kantian idealism to physiological concepts, Lange finds in Schiller a model for reformulating Kantian philosophy in a way that combines naturalistic insight with an enduring commitment to ideals. In this framework, Schiller's philosophical poetry becomes the paradigm of a transformation of idealism into symbolic construction: ideals function not as metaphysical truths but as imaginative and poetic images capable of orienting moral and political action. Pecere also reconstructs the broader historical and political background of Lange's interpretation and traces its later influence within philosophical and cultural debates.

This focus on Lange continues in Chiara Russo Krauss's contribution, which examines the project of a "Schillerian Kantianism" conceived as a philosophical framework suited to the conditions of industrial modernity. Lange appears here as a thinker seeking to reconcile the scientific and naturalistic understanding of human beings with the preservation of their ideal and cultural dimension. In this perspective, Schiller's aesthetics offers a conceptual space in which Kantian idealism can be reformulated in anthropological and historical terms,

acquiring a new significance for the ethical and cultural orientation of modern societies.

The following group of essays turns to representatives of the Southwestern Neo-Kantian tradition. Gerald Hartung analyses the theoretical significance of Wilhelm Windelband's article *Schillers transzendentaler Idealismus* within the broader architecture of Windelband's philosophical project. Hartung shows that Windelband interprets Schiller not merely as a commentator on Kant but as a thinker capable of extending critical philosophy toward a philosophy of culture. In this reading, Schiller's transcendental idealism becomes a reflection on the unity of spiritual life and cultural formation.

From a broader perspective on the Baden school, Roberto Redaelli investigates the presence of Schillerian motifs in the works of Windelband, Rickert, and Emil Lask. Although Schiller does not occupy an explicit systematic position within Southwestern Neo-Kantianism, Redaelli demonstrates that he nevertheless functions as an important reference for a philosophy attentive to the totality of human experience. In particular, the Schillerian motif of the *ganze Mensch* – the idea of the human being in its wholeness – emerges as a guiding thread that helps illuminate Schiller's theoretical role within the Neo-Kantian context.

A more critical assessment of this reception is offered by Giovanni Morrone, who highlights both the strategies and the limits of the Baden school's appropriation of Schiller. Windelband and his followers, Morrone argues, tended to legitimize Schiller as a philosopher primarily insofar as he could be presented as a "disciple of Kant". While this strategy helped secure Schiller's philosophical status, it also risked obscuring important aspects of his thought, including the pre-Kantian phase of his development and the more independent elements of his philosophical reflection.

The cultural mediation between philosophy and literature becomes the focus of Domenico Spinosa's contribution, devoted to Jonas Cohn. Within Southwestern Neo-Kantianism, Cohn interprets Schiller primarily as a Kantian mediator between philosophy and literature, emphasizing the role played by the poet in introducing Goethe to critical philosophy. Schiller's aesthetics thus appears as an important moment in the transmission and transformation of Kantian ideas within German intellectual culture.

Schiller's role within value theory is examined in Christian Krijnen's study of Bruno Bauch. Here Schiller's aesthetics serves as a corrective to the formalism of Kantian morality, enabling Bauch to articulate a more concrete understanding of freedom. In this perspective, Schiller becomes a reference point for thinking the historical actualization of values and for transforming the categorical imperative into a more culturally grounded "imperative of culture".

The relationship between Schiller and Kant is addressed from yet another angle in the essay by Stefan Klingner and Rudolf Meer, which focuses on the notion of the "beautiful soul". Their analysis shows how Neo-Kantian interpreters debated whether this concept should be understood as a continuation of Kantian moral philosophy or rather as a departure from it. In doing so, the essay highlights the role played by Schiller in shaping Neo-Kantian discussions about the relationship between aesthetics and ethics.

The volume then turns to the Marburg school. Gian Paolo Cammarota examines the role attributed to Schiller in Hermann Cohen's philosophy. For Cohen, Schiller represents the poet who exemplifies the principle that true idealism coincides with realism. In this interpretation, Schiller stands alongside Plato and Kant as a figure capable of expressing the ideal dimension that structures reality and historical culture.

Cohen's engagement with Schiller is further explored in Scott Edgar's essay, which analyses the significance of the concept of the *Spieltrieb*. Edgar shows how Cohen adopts this idea in order to conceive the aesthetic sphere as a mediating domain capable of linking theoretical and practical dimensions of consciousness, thereby assigning aesthetic experience a unifying role within his philosophical system.

Ezio Gamba offers a broader reconstruction of Schiller's presence throughout Cohen's intellectual development. While Cohen initially approached Schiller's aesthetics with some reserve, he later came to recognize Schiller as the thinker who most effectively developed Kantian aesthetics. Gamba shows how this gradual reassessment eventually led Cohen to engage critically with the Romantic elements of Schiller's thought and their influence on the growing prominence of art within modern culture.

Schiller's role within Marburg Neo-Kantianism also emerges in Mattia Papa's essay on Paul Natorp. Papa shows that Natorp

placed Schiller alongside Kant and Plato within the history of transcendental philosophy. In Natorp's interpretation, Schiller's aesthetics provides a principle capable of mediating between theoretical knowledge and ethics, thereby contributing to the systematic unity of transcendental philosophy.

The influence of Schiller extends further in Luigi Laino's study of Ernst Cassirer. Laino shows that Schiller appears in Cassirer's philosophy in connection with two key issues: the rejection of the copy theory of knowledge and the development of a holistic conception of reason as a constructive symbolic activity.

A different intellectual context is explored in Giuseppe Guastamacchia's contribution on Wilhelm Dilthey. Here Schiller's conception of the human being as a unified and creative organism provides Dilthey with a theoretical resource for criticizing the reductionist assumptions of mathematical psychology and for grounding a descriptive psychology attentive to lived experience.

The theme of idealization forms the centre of Francesco Pisano's essay on Hans Vaihinger. Within the philosophy of the "as if", Schiller's work offers a model for understanding ideal constructions not as theoretical errors but as necessary products of human activity that orient moral and practical life.

The collection concludes with Edoardo Massimilla's study of the possible presence of Schillerian motifs in Max Weber's thought. By examining the frequently noted parallel between Weber's *Entzauberung der Welt* and Schiller's *Entgötterung der Natur*, Massimilla argues that the connection must be treated with caution and interpreted within the broader intellectual context of Southwestern Neo-Kantianism.

Overall, the volume makes a significant contribution to studies on the philosophical reception of Schiller by addressing systematically a topic that has so far been treated only in fragmentary ways. The diversity of the essays highlights the plurality of Neo-Kantian appropriations of Schiller's work and shows how it functioned as a theoretical resource in several philosophical domains, from aesthetics and ethics to the philosophy of culture. Despite the variety of approaches, the contributions converge in demonstrating that engagement with Schiller offered many Neo-Kantian thinkers an opportunity to reinterpret and critically develop Kant's legacy. The volume thus stands out not only for the richness of its historical

analyses but also for its ability to illuminate an important nexus in the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophy.

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