

“A Star of the First Magnitude within the Philosophical World”: Introduction to Life and Work of Gustav Teichmüller

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In 1871, the German philosopher Gustav Teichmüller (1832–1888) moved from his Basel chair to the much better paid chair in Tartu, and taught there until his untimely death. Besides philosophy, he had studied various disciplines, including the natural sciences. In the preparation of his own philosophy, he explored the history of philosophy for more than twenty years and made pioneering contributions to the history of concepts. Only by the early-1880s did he begin to elaborate his “new philosophy,” an original version of personalism, both anti-idealist and anti-materialist. He did this in three major works (*Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt* 1882, *Religionsphilosophie* 1886, *Neue Grundlegung der Psychologie und Logik*, posthumous 1889) which built upon each other. Unwritten remained the keystone of his philosophy, the *Philosophie des Christentums*, in which Teichmüller wanted to show that the philosophical contents of Christianity were encapsulated by his own personalism. One major objective of his philosophy, as I see it, was regaining reality—in particular the reality of the person—after it had been lost in the wake of the failure of modern representationalism. Notwithstanding its coherentist elements, I see Teichmüller’s philosophy as a precursor of direct realism. Although he fell into oblivion soon after, his thoughts were received throughout Europe, notably by Friedrich Nietzsche, Aleksey Kozlov and Nicholas Lossky. His extensive literary remains, which are kept in Basel, remain to be explored.

Keywords: philosophy in Tartu, philosophy of religion, metaphysics, personalism

1. Financial constraints

On November 28, 1870, Gustav Teichmüller decided to leave his Basel chair of philosophy for Tartu. It was not an easy decision. In fact, his wife Caroline (Lina) Cramer was from Narva and her family was still living there, but

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she did not want to change sunny Basel for chilly Tartu.¹ Teichmüller felt extraordinarily comfortable in Basel, too. It was money that tipped the scales for Tartu. Unlike today, at that time a professor was able to earn almost three times as much money in Tartu as in Basel. Teichmüller could not support his family in Switzerland. The annual subsidy he had to request from his father-in-law exceeded his own Basel salary (see Schwenke 2006, 46–53).

2. “The most learned young man I ever saw”

Tartu was lucky with its new acquisition. The new professor was one of the most learned philosophers of his generation. Besides philosophy, he had studied numerous other disciplines with many luminaries of his time: archaeology and the Classics including Egyptian hieroglyphs, theology, historical science, political science, physics, chemistry, physiology, anatomy, pathology, geology, geography, and meteorology.² His education already attracted attention in his student years.³ In the summer of 1853, the twenty year-old Teichmüller went on a journey through Switzerland. Just before the ascent into the High Alps, he by chance met the then well-known and influential Presbyterian author Samuel Irenaeus Prime from New York. They were drawn to each other immediately and hiked while discoursing for several weeks across the High Alps from Altdorf to Geneva. Prime was deeply impressed by the erudition of his young companion. In his book *Letters from Switzerland*, he devoted several enthusiastic pages to the vast knowledge and inquiring mind of his interlocutor, and concluded: “He was the most learned young man I ever saw. And few old men knew half as much” (Prime 1860, 107–109).⁴

3. An excellent academic teacher

But Tartu’s new professor of philosophy did not only possess extraordinarily wide and profound knowledge, he was also very capable of conveying it to the students. From written testimonials we must conclude that he was an outstanding academic teacher. His auditoriums were always packed, although he used to lecture in the largest lecture hall of Tartu university. He used to speak freely, without any notes. Although his talk was very system-

¹ See the letter of Caroline Teichmüller to her father Georg Cramer of November 29, 1870, Teichmüller *Nachlass* Basel (hereafter: *Nachlass*), B 347, printed in (Schwenke 2006, 51–52).

² See the various lecture notebooks in *Nachlass* A VIII 1–65, and (Schwenke 2006, 30–31).

³ For the following, see (Schwenke 2006, 17–21).

⁴ For the identification of Prime’s character “Heinrich” with Gustav Teichmüller, see (Schwenke 2006, 21–25).

atic, it was intriguing and peppered with examples from many fields.⁵

According to contemporary witnesses, Teichmüller's personal interaction with his students was fascinating. Each semester he held a "practicum," a practical course, where everybody could ask him questions without fear that they would be ignored or ridiculed. In discussions he never exercised his professorial authority. Rudolf Kallas, an Estonian theologian, not only praised Teichmüller's capacity to respond to the level of his students, his lucidity and the simplicity of his explanations, but also his humbleness before his students. He always wanted to learn, Kallas wrote. But most impressive for Kallas was Teichmüller's joy of contact with his students, joy of their personal development.⁶

With regard to academic achievements, Teichmüller did Tartu credit, too. He was a ground-breaking researcher and a prolific author. In his seventeen Tartu years he authored eighteen books,⁷ some of them seminal and comprehensive.

4. Loneliness in Tartu

Perhaps Teichmüller was not quite as happy with Tartu as Tartu was with him. Admittedly, he did not seem to have a serious shortage of money any more, despite his huge family. Moreover, his teaching load was lighter than in Basel, so more time remained for research and writing (see Schwenke 2006, 52 n. 103). But it was disadvantageous that he was the only academic philosopher in Tartu. Therefore, he had no interlocutor at his own level. Moreover, he certainly had many listeners, but only a few regular students of philosophy (in 1881, only one).⁸ Only a couple of these strove for an academic career and were capable of a more profound philosophical discussion. In addition, the remoteness of Tartu cut him off from German philosophical discourse. His works were largely disregarded there. Hence, he felt quite isolated in Tartu and repeatedly tried to return to Germany (see Schwenke 2006, 54–58).

5. Teichmüller's theme: the reality of the person

Teichmüller's philosophical guiding theme or leitmotiv was the reality of the person, a term he uses almost interchangeably with self, individual, and soul. At the age of 22 he wrote a treatise on the immortality of the soul

⁵ See (Bobrov 1899, 33–34), German translation in (Schwenke 2006, 38–39), and (Lutosławski 1888, 15–16), reprinted in (Schwenke 2006, 39–40).

⁶ Letter of Rudolf Kallas to Caroline Teichmüller of June 30, 1888 (*Nachlass* B F 1d), partly published in (Schwenke 2006, 40–41).

⁷ See bibliography.

⁸ See *Nachlass* F III 67.

in Plato, which he published in revised form in 1874 in his important *Studien zur Geschichte der Begriffe* (*Studies in the History of Concepts*) (Teichmüller 1874a, 105–222).⁹ The doctrine of immortality is the best touchstone for “individual principles,” he wrote (Teichmüller 1874a, 108; all translations by H.S.). He criticised the fact that there were no individual principles in Plato, the individual being only a transient composition of general elements (Teichmüller 1874a, 114–115).¹⁰ Teichmüller concluded that personal immortality is not compatible with Plato’s scientific philosophy.¹¹ He also blamed Leibniz for equating his monads with Plato’s ideas (Teichmüller 1874a, 108). But it took thirty years until Teichmüller presented his own philosophy of the person to the academic public.

6. Scrupulosity and an untimely death

Provoked by the disregard and polemical disparagement of his books, Teichmüller’s later writings are full of irony and sarcasm about his philosophical opponents. One might think of him as a quite self-confident thinker lacking in self-criticism. The reverse is true. Although his foremost goal was the development of a new philosophy, he first studied the history of philosophy for almost three decades. He wanted to learn for his own benefit to avoid an unconscious reproduction of old ideas and to be sure to produce something really new. He dared to communicate the beginnings of his own philosophy only in some ‘popular writings’. When he had sent the manuscript of *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt*, his first systematic masterpiece, to his publisher, Rudolf Kallas met him the next morning and found him quite afflicted and agitated. When Kallas asked him for the reason, he answered: “All night I have been shaken by the fear that all the new things I have written are wrong.”¹² His death at the age of 55, due to a sudden outbreak of stomach cancer, was a tragedy, for it prevented him from elaborating his philosophy in full. On his deathbed he wrote to his disciple Jakob Ohse: “When I think of my unfinished works [...], I want to weep.”¹³

7. Studies in the History of Concepts

Before giving a survey of Teichmüller’s works, I wish to point out that many of his writings are very demanding and complex—notwithstanding their un-

⁹ For the history of this essay, see (Teichmüller 1884, 135).

¹⁰ See also (Teichmüller 1876a, 3–4).

¹¹ See also (Teichmüller 1873, 145, 154; Teichmüller 1874b, 161; Teichmüller 1876a; Teichmüller 1879, 383–385, 426–428; Teichmüller 1881, 246–247; Teichmüller 1884, 135–178). Teichmüller especially attacked his opponent, Eduard Zeller (Teichmüller 1876a).

¹² Letter of Rudolf Kallas to Caroline Teichmüller of June 30, 1888 (*Nachlass* B F 1d).

¹³ Letter to Jakob Ohse of April 27, 1888, partly printed in (Schwenke 2006, 61).

pretentious, accessible language. My overview will therefore necessarily remain sketchy and superficial.

At first Teichmüller acquired his philosophical armamentarium from studies in Aristotle (Teichmüller 1859a; Teichmüller 1859b; Teichmüller 1867; Teichmüller 1869; Teichmüller 1873). But already in the third volume of his *Aristotelische Forschungen* (*Aristotelian Researches*), the *Geschichte des Begriffs der Parousie* (*History of the concept of parousia*), he turned towards a history of concepts.¹⁴ For Teichmüller, a history of concepts was the first requirement for philosophical progress. It helps to recognise more clearly the roots of current philosophical problems and to avoid answers that have already failed (Teichmüller 1874a, iii).¹⁵

8. Egyptian roots of Greek Philosophy

In his attempts to understand the origins of philosophy, he made not only Plato and Aristotle, but also the presocratics a theme of a series of remarkable treatises (Teichmüller 1876b, 1–248).¹⁶ It was quite uncommon that Teichmüller did not assume that philosophy started with the Greeks. He employed his knowledge of the hieroglyphs and archaeological findings to show an at least indirect impact of Egyptian thought on early Greek philosophy (Teichmüller 1878, 103–253),¹⁷ a thesis which deviated from the prevailing opinion of his time.¹⁸

9. Platonism and Christianity

Teichmüller's main philosophical theme, the reality of the person, shaped his historical studies. Again and again, he discussed the relation of Platonism to Christianity.¹⁹ He argued that Christianity possesses a true principle of the individual, but that it has been obscured by the cloak of Hellenistic idealism.

¹⁴ For a detailed analysis and discussion of Teichmüller's history of concepts, see Gottfried Gabriel, "Gustav Teichmüller and the systematic significance of studying the history of concepts" (this volume) and Wolfgang Rother, "Gustav Teichmüllers Theorie der Begriffsgeschichte" (Rother 2010).

¹⁵ See also (Teichmüller 1876b, viii; Teichmüller 1882, xxii–xxiv and *Nachlass* A X 6, printed in (Schwenke 2006, 114–116). On Teichmüller's project of a history of concepts, see also the remarks of Nicolai Hartmann (1909, 6).

¹⁶ (Teichmüller 1878, 103–253, see also 279–288).

¹⁷ See the recent article of the Egyptologist Sergei Stadnikov (2007). Teichmüller had journeyed through Egypt in 1863/64 and had learned the hieroglyphs with Heinrich Karl Brugsch in Göttingen.

¹⁸ See the quote of Wilamowitz-Möllendorff in (Stadnikov 2007, 83 n. 9).

¹⁹ See e.g. (Teichmüller 1884, 1): "The most important and most interesting problems of the history of the human intellect are about two events that exerted the strongest influence on the development of mankind, Christianity and Platonism."

This might have inspired one of Teichmüller's students, Adolf von Harnack, whose slogan of the Hellenisation of Christianity became quite famous later on.

10. **Early sketches: monadological panpsychism, projectivism, and perspectivism**

Besides his voluminous historical works, Teichmüller published some minor, popular writings which contained early drafts of his own philosophy. In his *Ueber die Unsterblichkeit der Seele (On the Immortality of the Soul)* of 1874, probably his most read book, we come across a monadological panpsychism. The real world consists of a multitude of independent psychic individuals. There is no material world. Sensual appearances or ideas arise from the impact of one psychic being on another. The belief in the reality of a material world is caused by an unconscious projection of our sensual ideas onto the external world. This projectivism is probably partly inspired by Teichmüller's teacher in physiology, the eminent Johannes Müller.

His essay *Darwinismus und Philosophie (Darwinism and Philosophy)* from 1877 is dedicated to Karl-Ernst von Baer, whom Teichmüller personally knew from his Petersburg period of 1856-1860. *Darwinismus und Philosophie* already contains Teichmüller's perspectivism, which was to explain the illusion of time and space. This illusion results from the fact that a finite individual is bound to a certain position and therefore necessarily has a perspective on the world. Before and after, right and left do not exist in themselves but only in relation to a certain point of view. Without a certain standpoint, one would be at the same moment everywhere and therefore would not be able to measure an interval, and time and space would disappear (Teichmüller 1877, 40–50).

In his *Ueber das Wesen der Liebe (On the essence of love)* of 1879, Teichmüller applies his perspectivism to ethics. In 1879 Lotze's *Metaphysik* also appeared; here Teichmüller's friend abandoned the substantiality of the person. This was something of a shock for Teichmüller,²⁰ and he apparently felt urged to elaborate and publish his own philosophy. He wrote three large books which built upon each other. The first was, as already mentioned,

11. ***Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt—Neue Grundlegung der Metaphysik (The Real and the Apparent world: New Foundation of Metaphysics) (1882)***

Very much like Martin Heidegger almost 50 years later in his *Sein und Zeit (Being and Time)*, on the first page of the book, Teichmüller raises the ques-

²⁰ See his letter to Lotze of March 12, 1879 (*Nachlass B 1752*), printed in (Lotze 2003, 659–660).

tion of the sense of being. The concept of being seems to him the most neglected question of metaphysics.²¹ The reason why this question is so important for Teichmüller lies at the core of his personalism. If psychic individuals represent actual reality and the material world is only appearance, then we cannot take the concept of being (and of substance) from the material world but only from the psychic realm. Because we have only indirect, semiotic access²² to other individuals,²³ and can only infer their being (Teichmüller 1882, 73), the only source of the notion of being is the immediate knowledge a person has of herself. Teichmüller calls the immediate access to oneself *self-consciousness*. The self is the paradigm, *the prototype of being and substance*, as he puts it in a later book (Teichmüller 1889, 171–174). For him, the idea of substantiality is not taken from somewhere else, e.g. the material world, and applied to the self, but taken from our experience of the self and applied to other phenomena. The self is no theoretical construct, but a reality with which we are intuitively acquainted. Self-consciousness is a main pillar of Teichmüller’s personalism. He strictly distinguishes it from inferential *self-knowledge*.²⁴

Especially interesting is Teichmüller’s distinction of three kinds of being. Firstly, the content of our thinking possesses *ideal* being (Teichmüller 1889, 99–102, see also 17, 182).²⁵ Ideal being approximately corresponds to later concepts like Frege’s “third realm” (see Frege 1918), or Popper’s “World 3” (Popper 1977, 36–50). Secondly, the acts and states of the soul or self have *real* being. Here the issue is not *what* we think or feel, but *that* we think or feel (Teichmüller 1882, 53–54).²⁶ Thirdly, psychic or mental acts and states always belong to someone, to a self, who thinks, senses, feels, and wants (Teichmüller 1889, 160). This self has *substantial* being (Teichmüller 1882, 56–59, 67–79; Teichmüller 1889, 171–174).

In this book, Teichmüller elaborates his relational theory of concepts as the methodological basis for his conceptual investigations.²⁷ For him, the sum of concepts forms a “net” or a “map” (Teichmüller 1882, 14–15) in

²¹ Dickopp (1970) noticed already that the beginnings of Teichmüller’s and Heidegger’s book were quite similar.

²² For Teichmüller’s concept of semiotic knowledge, see (Schwenke 2006, 181–190). Teichmüller already used ‘Semiotik’ for knowledge from signs in a lecture on logics in 1860 with reference to medical diagnostics where “semiotics” was a common *terminus technicus* at that time (see *Nachlass* A I 4). See also (Teichmüller 1878, 187).

²³ See e.g. (Teichmüller 1882, 137).

²⁴ See e.g. (Teichmüller 1889, 158–161).

²⁵ An earlier, broader concept of ideal being is developed in (Teichmüller 1882, 51–53).

²⁶ Husserl’s distinction between *noësis* and *noëma* resembles to a certain extent Teichmüller’s concepts of real and ideal being, respectively.

²⁷ For Teichmüller’s relational theory of concepts, see Wolfgang Rother’s elucidating article (Rother 2010).

which every concept is defined by its place and by its connections with other concepts. This “topography” (Teichmüller 1886, 16) of concepts represents the “form,” the structure of the real world (see Teichmüller 1886, 217). In an unclear, unconscious form it exists in every human mind (Teichmüller 1882, 13–16). The philosopher’s task is to raise these pre-existing concepts into consciousness and to determine their true place within the whole system.

After dealing with the real world and ontology, Teichmüller turns to the apparent world and phenomenology in the second part of the *Wirkliche und scheinbare Welt*. He elaborates his perspectivism in detail in order to prove that the physical world is not real. Time, space, and motion are constructs of the mind. Knowledge about them is no knowledge about the external world, but only about our own constructional activity.²⁸ It is generally acknowledged that Teichmüller’s former Basel colleague, Nietzsche, adopted and radicalised Teichmüller’s perspectivism, though without mentioning him.²⁹ It should further be mentioned that Teichmüller’s operationalist arguments for a strict relativity of duration (Teichmüller 1882, 210–212) resemble Einstein’s later reflections on the concept of simultaneousness (see e.g. Einstein 1988, 14). Moreover, Teichmüller’s strict distinction between time and duration (see Teichmüller 1882, 207–215) and between a subjectively experienced duration and an infinitely divisible objective duration (see e.g. Teichmüller 1882, 306) might have inspired Bergson to develop his concepts of “temps” and “durée” (see Bergson 1889, 57–106).³⁰

In the last chapter and in the long, substantial preface, Teichmüller obviously extends the scope of perspectivism. Now he not only considers a sensual, but a conceptual perspectivist worldview as well. He is seeking a general explanation of why most earlier philosophies missed the reality of the self. Teichmüller’s diagnosis is *self-oblivion*: Either the previous philosophies dissolve the self into physiological, material elements or processes or they lose it in general concepts and constructs. In both cases, a certain content of consciousness—that is, a part of the ideal being—is projected onto an external world and taken for true reality. Materialist-empiricist philosophies take primarily sensory-content, idealist philosophies conceptual content, for reality. In doing so, they utterly *forget the self*, the real person who

²⁸ Teichmüller’s constructivism resembles the methodical constructivism of the Erlangen School, except for the fact that he takes not bodily but only mental actions into account. See e.g. Peter Janich: A proposition about space is no empirical judgement (“Erfahrungsurteil”), but expresses knowledge of our own actions (“Wissen über unsere Handlungen”) (Janich 1997, 125).

²⁹ See (Nohl 1913; Small 1994, 183–184; Schwenke 2006, 257–262).

³⁰ Bergson might have learnt about Teichmüller’s thoughts through his teacher Émile Boutroux, who obviously read and appreciated Teichmüller’s works (see his letter to Teichmüller of March 6, 1887, partly printed in Szykarski 1940a, xlvii).

senses and thinks (Teichmüller 1882, 346). The reality of the self cannot be found within the field of ideal being. But without a self there would be no thinking, feeling, and sensing, and no ideal being at all.

The book's outlook refers to the next project, the philosophy of religion. Philosophy does not discover new truths, but can only clarify the natural philosophy of mankind, like the extraction of metals from ore (Teichmüller 1882, 347). If no singular problems but whole worldviews are in question, the ore, the material of philosophy, are the religions (Teichmüller 1882, 347). They contain the different worldviews in "unschooled form." Therefore, Teichmüller was deeply interested in the *philosophical content of religions*. Following this line, he wrote his largest book, the

12. *Religionsphilosophie (Philosophy of Religion) (1886)*

This work is not so much a philosophy of the phenomenon of religion in general, as the title might indicate, but rather an analysis of the philosophical content of the various religions. Teichmüller not only draws on written doctrines, but also takes cults into account. The book is an early instance of an inter-cultural philosophy of religion. Although Teichmüller favours the putative personalist content of Christianity, he argues for an absolute independence of philosophical argumentation from religious doctrine and revelation (Teichmüller 1886, xxvii–xix).

Against a Hegelian or Darwinian history of the development of religions, Teichmüller places a systematic classification. He epistemologically divides the religions into three levels: the projective, the pantheist and the Christian-personalist (Teichmüller 1886, 99–107). Initially he intended to deal with all three levels, but then postponed the third level for another book. On the level of projective religion, man projects his concept of God onto the external world and thereby creates a god (Teichmüller 1886, 101, 114). Religious projection is unmasked by atheism. It prepares the ground for the second level of religion, pantheism, in which god is taken back into the self. But thereby the self is displaced by god (Teichmüller 1886, 104–105, 378–380).³¹ In Pantheism, there exists no multitude of independent beings, but only god. The book ends with an outlook on the still to be written personalist philosophy of Christianity. On this level, man as a self-dependent being faces god without perspective illusiveness and without pantheistic volatility of the self (Teichmüller 1886, 101–102). However, most of the elements of Christianity have nothing to do with the personalist, third level, but belong to the first or second level of religion: not only the belief in miracles, but also the doc-

³¹ Teichmüller does not say much about why the self is displaced by god when the projection of god is taken back into the self.

trine of substitution which says that Jesus suffered and died as our proxy and thereby added to our merits and redeemed us (Teichmüller 1886, 326–328, 333–334).

Teichmüller probably postponed the philosophy of Christianity because new problems had emerged. Like *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt*, the *Religionsphilosophie* is only a snapshot of the development of Teichmüller's thought. Again a comprehensive preface presents new ideas. For the first time he regards a *strict distinction between consciousness and knowledge* as the very centre of his philosophy (see Schwenke 2006, 192–194, 217–224). It seems that he began to realize more clearly that direct cognitive access to reality was not reconcilable with his own coherentist concept of knowledge. He undertook a preliminary investigation in which the nature of consciousness and its separation from knowledge was to be established. For Teichmüller, this topic belonged to psychology, for it was a question of the correct division of the functions of the soul (Teichmüller 1886, vii). This is one of the reasons why he named his new book the

13. *Neue Grundlegung der Psychologie und Logik (New Foundation of Psychology and Logics) (postumous 1889)*

Because of his untimely death, Teichmüller could not quite finish this book. It was edited by his disciple and confidant Jakob Ohse and published one year after his death. It appears quite complete, but Teichmüller intended to revise some paragraphs and to add two more chapters.³² One of the main themes is the distinction between *consciousness and knowledge*. Furthermore, the book contains an eminent chapter on the self. Therein Teichmüller refers to his philosophy as *personalism* for the first time.³³ Although it is not mentioned in the text, it is clear from the context of his work and also from his correspondence that with this book he wanted to pursue his project of a personalist philosophy of Christianity. In a letter he wrote: “The theory of consciousness which I foreshadowed [in *The Philosophy of Religion*] is the real scientific road that leads to Christianity.”³⁴

Because of conceptual obscurity and ambiguity, Teichmüller's central distinction of consciousness and knowledge requires careful analysis and reconstruction (see Schwenke 2006, 159–224). Basically, he takes consciousness for immediate knowledge or immediate access to reality. Consciousness

³² See the preface of Ohse in (Teichmüller 1889, ii-iv).

³³ The *Enzyklopädie Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie* erroneously claims that “personalism” as a self-description of a philosophical position first occurred in Renouvier in 1903 (Mittelstraß 1995, 92).

³⁴ Letter of November 4, 1886 (*Nachlass B* 3186). The recipient was probably Bernhard Weiss (1827–1918), professor of theology in Berlin.

constitutes an element of direct realism in his epistemology. In my view, it is a reaction to the loss of reality of modern European philosophy (Schwenke 2006, 150–157). Not only the so-called external world, but also the reality of the self and its states and actions were in danger of becoming only ideas, concepts, or, as Teichmüller puts it, “ideal being.” The epistemological situation to which Teichmüller reacted shall be described in some detail below.

14. Background: The failure of representationalism³⁵

In European epistemology, varieties of representationalism—according to which knowledge consists in either a pictorial or an abstract correspondence of a person’s ideas (representations) with reality—prevailed. One main weakness of representationalism lies in the impossibility of checking the correspondence, i.e. determining truth and error. If the epistemic subject has no direct access to reality, but access only by mediation of representations, it can never find out whether its representations reliably correspond to reality. Even more, the subject cannot determine whether there exists a reality beyond its representations at all. In modernity, this problem was increasingly addressed. Because one could not take the unreachable reality as the yardstick of truth, philosophers sought properties of the representations themselves which might indicate their relation to reality, such as their clarity, distinctiveness, spontaneousness, or their coherence with other representations. But this strategy had to fail, for one cannot check the reliability of certain properties of representations as a criterion of truth without already knowing reality and truth in another way. The introduction of external guarantors of the reliability of our representations, e.g. god or natural selection, only meant begging the question, because claiming knowledge about these guarantors presupposes that the problem in question has been solved already.

15. Flight to idealism

It is striking that modern European epistemology abstained from a satisfying access to reality or even from reality itself rather than amending or replacing representationalism with elements of direct realism. David Hume stated without regret that one can never reach any kind of existence beyond our perceptions (Hume 1739, I. II. 6). Immanuel Kant paved the way for a complete elimination of a reality beyond representations. In fact, he assumed things-in-themselves as an external cause of appearances (that are represen-

³⁵ See (Schwenke 2006, 126–150) for more detail and references.

tations in my sense).³⁶ However, according to his own system, this was an illegal application of the category of causality. Hence, it was not surprising that external things-in-themselves were abolished by later philosophers.³⁷ Only the world of representations, ideal being, remained.

16. The disappearance of the real self

This is also true of the so-called internal world. Locke had applied representationalism to the inner world, too (Locke 1690, II. I. 4). Between the epistemic subject and its thinking, sensing, and feeling, there were representations as well. Furthermore, the inner world could not be known directly.³⁸ The psychic and mental acts and states, and their bearer, vanished behind representations and finally became only ideas themselves. Man did not only lose the world, but also himself.³⁹ Because there was no reference to a world beyond representations any more (Willaschek 2003, 2), knowledge was subsequently often seen to consist in a *coherent system* of representations or ideas.

17. Metaphors of isolation

The isolation of the epistemic subject in modern philosophy is illustrated by the epistemic metaphors of the time. The epistemic subject was locked up in a kind of vessel or dungeon.⁴⁰ Sociologist Norbert Elias called the man of modernity the “homo clausus” (Elias 1976, lxi). Teichmüller also spoke of “immured souls” when he referred to modern epistemology (Teichmüller 1889, 58). The idea that the epistemic subject is isolated from reality not only furthered *epistemological* idealism, but also *ontological* idealism, which I take as the doctrine that there is nothing except ideas or representations (see Schwenke 2006, 147–148).

³⁶ “[V]on dem, was sie an sich selbst sein mögen, wissen wir nichts, sondern kennen nur ihre Erscheinungen, d. i. die Vorstellungen, die sie in uns wirken” (Kant 1783, 63).

³⁷ *Inter alia* by F.H. Jacobi, A. Schopenhauer and F. Nietzsche. For references see (Eisler 1904, 223–225).

³⁸ See (Kant 1781/1787, A 22 / B 37): “[D]er innere Sinn [...] gibt [...] keine Anschauung von der Seele selbst,” and (Kant 1781/1787, B 158): “[I]ch habe also demnach keine Erkenntnis von mir, wie ich bin, sondern bloß, wie ich mir selbst erscheine.”

³⁹ See Hume, for whom there were only “impressions and ideas,” but no self any more (Hume 1739, I. IV. 6); see also (Willaschek 2003, 116).

⁴⁰ See (Schwenke 2006, 131–132). Examples are Locke’s *cabinet* or Leibniz’s *monad without any windows*.

18. Teichmüller's objective: back to reality

Teichmüller's distinction between consciousness and knowledge ranks among the epistemological attempts to regain reality. His concept of consciousness allows for direct epistemic contact with reality. But Teichmüller could only partly elude idealism. The epistemic isolation of the subject regarding the outside world was self-evident to him. The only object of consciousness is the so-called inner world: the self, its actions and states (Teichmüller 1889, 160; Teichmüller 1882, 32), and God, who is present within the self, but not identical with it (Teichmüller 1886, vii; Teichmüller 1889, 40, 79). Immediate access to the external world is impossible (Teichmüller 1874b, 95–96; Teichmüller 1882, 129, 137).

19. Entangled with idealism

Teichmüller found it extremely difficult to introduce direct knowledge because his concept of knowledge stands within the Hegelian tradition. For him, true knowledge is always mediate and inferential. Knowledge is a conclusion, he states every now and then, and even more: knowledge is only possible within a coherent logical system (see Schwenke 2006, 165–171). He therefore did not want to call immediate knowledge “knowledge,” but named it “consciousness,” or, at most, “knowledge in an improper sense of the word” (Teichmüller 1882, 101; see Schwenke 2006, 191–192).

20. Further development of Teichmüller's anti-idealism by Lossky

Teichmüller's anti-idealist project did not go far enough. In his view, we only have mediate knowledge of other beings, save God. In my opinion, his epistemology can at best support the belief in the existence of some other being or beings in general, but it is not able to elucidate our life-world commerce with our *Umwelt* and our fellow man in particular. Moreover, his purely subjectivist concept of the material world is somewhat counter-intuitive, to say the least (see Schwenke 2006, 250–253). However, there was a continuation of Teichmüller's anti-idealist project by Russian philosophers. With his concept of the consciousness of God, Teichmüller had opened a gap in the wall around the isolated epistemic subject. God was directly known but was not the self. The consciousness of God represented the first step towards direct knowledge of the so-called external world, as Nicholas O. Lossky recognised. He wrote: “If you remove the partition wall, firstly, between the monad and God, and, secondly, between it and the rest of the monads, then you will derive the doctrine of intuition on the largest scale” (Lossky 1908, 193–194). The first step, the introduction of the concept of a consciousness of God, Lossky

attributes to Aleksey A. Kozlov (Lossky 1908, 193–194).⁴¹ But Kozlov had obviously adopted it from Teichmüller, unfortunately without citing him for this (see Schwenke 2006, 265–269 and Schabad 1940, 52, 152–153). In his intuitivism, Lossky extended the scope of consciousness, that is, of direct knowledge to everything. For Lossky, one can in principle know psychic states of other persons as if they were one's own. The sharp modern line of demarcation between the internal and the external world, between subject and object disappears. The epistemic subject is no longer trapped in a vessel, but is capable of direct contact with every part of reality. However, Lossky went too far in limiting knowledge to intuition and dismissing inferential knowledge. This precludes the possibility of scientific knowledge, which is always inferential. But to allow for direct access to reality seems to me the only reasonable way to remedy the shortcomings of pure representationalism (see Schwenke 2006, 269–286).

21. Philosophy of Christianity

The philosophy of Christianity, the ultimate goal of Teichmüller's philosophy, remained unwritten (Schwenke 2006, 60–61). Therefore, we do not know exactly how Teichmüller wanted to show that his personalism matched the philosophical essence of Christianity. In fact, in 1931, the Estonian theologian Eduard Tennmann published a *Philosophie des Christentums (Philosophy of Christianity)* from Teichmüller's literary remains (*Nachlass*). But this text of 60 pages does not compensate for the unwritten book Teichmüller beweped on his deathbed. It does not contain his new theory of consciousness, which should have constituted the foundation of the unwritten book. I believe that Tennmann's text was penned by Teichmüller's widow, Caroline Teichmüller.⁴² Her raw material was Teichmüller's manuscript of his lecture on the *Philosophie des Christentums* which he gave in 1886. She transformed the sketchy notes into whole sentences and also incorporated notes of students (*Nachlass A I 28a-c*).

22. Teichmüller's *Nachlass* in Basel

Teichmüller left extensive, important literary remains (*Nachlass*). Among many other things, the *Nachlass* comprises the manuscripts of 31 lectures, many unpublished writings, drafts and fragments and a very extensive correspondence with many scholars from all over the world. The fate of the

⁴¹ Lossky especially refers to Kozlov (1895); see (Lossky 1951, 160).

⁴² *Nachlass A I 28d*. I dissent from Szyłkarski (1940a, xlii–xliii), who attributes this manuscript to a student. See (Schwenke 2006, 105–106).

Nachlass was quite eventful.⁴³ Soon after the death of her husband, Caroline Teichmüller moved to Jena and took it with her. After her death in 1894, the *Nachlass* was kept by Teichmüller's eldest daughter, the composer Anna Teichmüller (1861-1940), who moved to a colony of artists in the Giant mountains in Silesia. There the *Nachlass* was examined in 1920s and '30s by several scholars, above all Vladimir Szyłkarski from Kaunas and Eduard Tennmann from Tartu. Various longer and shorter manuscripts were published (Teichmüller 1928; Teichmüller 1931a; Teichmüller 1931b; Teichmüller 1931g; Teichmüller 1931d; Teichmüller 1931e; Teichmüller 1931f; Teichmüller 1931c; Teichmüller 1940).⁴⁴ After Anna Teichmüller's death in September 1940, the *Nachlass* got lost in the turmoil of the war. In 1948, a German-Polish physician discovered it in an attic. It was completely disorganised. The physician reported his discovery to Anna's younger sister, Hertha Brückner-Teichmüller, whose address he found amongst the papers. She was living in Basel and had become a Swiss citizen. Her husband Arthur Brückner, a son of the Tartu historian Alexander Brückner (1834-1896), had become director of the Basel ophthalmic university clinic in 1923. With great efforts, Hertha Brückner-Teichmüller succeeded in transferring the *Nachlass* from Poland to the Archives of the University Library of Basel. After her death in the same year, the *Nachlass* fell into almost complete oblivion, although her family continued to live in Basel. It extends to seven and a half metres on the shelf. By means of pre-war lists, I discovered that at least the correspondence suffered some losses during World War II, but it is still a very comprehensive and significant collection.⁴⁵

23. Reception and influence

Teichmüller's works were read in many countries. As the examples of Nietzsche and Kozlov show, he was more read than cited.⁴⁶ His reception took place in several threads that were quite isolated from each other. Teichmüller's personalism exerted its strongest influence in Eastern Europe.⁴⁷ It

⁴³ Most of the following information has been drawn from the Document in *Nachlass* B* 2.

⁴⁴ The most important is the *Logik und Kategorienlehre* (Teichmüller 1940), the unfinished second part of *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt* (Teichmüller 1882).

⁴⁵ For a more detailed description of Teichmüller's *Nachlass*, see (Schwenke 2006).

⁴⁶ The young Nietzsche was already familiar with Teichmüller's thoughts (see e.g. Venturelli 1994); he was probably also inspired by Teichmüller's approach to the history of concepts (see Tuusvuori 2000, 314, 357).

⁴⁷ Apart from the aforementioned reception by Kozlov and Lossky, see (Kallas 1897; Tennmann 1928b; Tennmann 1928a; Tennmann 1931; Kulpa 1934; Vaska 1964; Strods 1984; Bobrov 1898; Szyłkarski 1935/1936; Szyłkarski 1938; Szyłkarski 1940a; Szyłkarski 1940c; Szyłkarski 1940b; Szyłkarski 1954). For Teichmüller's influence on philosophy in Eastern Europe, see (Szyłkarski 1940a, xlvi); for his influence on Russian philosophy in particular,

was suppressed by communism, but after the dissolution of the Soviet Union some new interest in Teichmüller emerged (see e.g. Trošin 1998; Schwenke 2009a; Schwenke 2009b; Hiršš 2015). Among German philosophers, he was first of all perceived as a source of Nietzsche's perspectivism (see Nohl 1913 and Dickopp 1970), much like in Spain (see e.g. Ferrater Mora 1981, 3202 and Marías 1967, 348), whereas in France and Italy his historical works were mainly discussed.⁴⁸ The Suisse National Science Foundation recently funded an annotated edition of Teichmüller's major theoretical works (see Teichmüller 2015a,b,c). It is quite striking that Teichmüller received much less attention in Germany than in some other countries.⁴⁹

It is also worth noting that, on the one hand, Teichmüller is quite unknown; but, on the other hand, he enjoyed remarkable esteem among scholars from various countries who had studied his works more closely. In his popular *Geschichte der Philosophie (History of philosophy)*, Johannes Hirschberger places Teichmüller alongside Bolzano and ventures to forecast that his time is still to come (Hirschberger 1991, 453). The aforementioned Estonian, Eduard Tennmann, opined that Teichmüller has been widely ignored "to the great detriment of science and mankind" (Tennmann 1931, iii). The Spaniard Julián Marías (1999) rates Teichmüller on the same level as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Dilthey. The Russian philosopher Aleksey A. Kozlov praised him as "a star of the first magnitude within the philosophical world" (Kozlov 1894/95, 524).⁵⁰ The eminent French historian of science and philosophy, Paul Tannery, admired Teichmüller's "puissant génie" (Tannery 1889, 495), and the Lithuanian-Polish philosopher Vladimir Szyłkarski took Teichmüller for "one of the greatest German philosophers" (Szyłkarski 1929/1930, 205 u. 207).

see (Zenkovsky 1953, 630–703).

⁴⁸ Paul Tannery devoted a whole series of articles to Teichmüller's historical researches (Tannery 1880; Tannery 1880/1881; Tannery 1882a; Tannery 1882b; Tannery 1882c; Tannery 1883a; Tannery 1883b; Tannery 1885). For the influence of Teichmüller on Tannery, see also (Szyłkarski 1940a, xlvi). For the Italian reception, see e.g. (Chiapelli 1881). Masci (1887) discussed aspects of Teichmüller's systematic philosophy. The correspondence of Teichmüller with various Italian scholars is rendered in (Orsucci and Savorelli 1997).

⁴⁹ In Germany, only some minor theological (e.g. Pfennigsdorf 1895; Pfennigsdorf 1897; Pfennigsdorf 1938; Pfennigsdorf 1939; Posselt 1960; Posselt 1964) and philosophical (e.g. Müller 1900; Müller 1908; Sandmayer 1944) works were devoted to Teichmüller's philosophy. After the Second World War, there were virtually no publications about Teichmüller in Germany (except Szyłkarski 1954, which was a recapitulation of previous articles, Dickopp 1970, and Kühne-Bertram 2007). In Switzerland, (Schabad 1940; Schwenke 2006; Schwenke 2011) and Schwenke's introductions and commentaries in (Teichmüller 2015a; Teichmüller 2015b; Teichmüller 2015c) deal extensively with Teichmüller.

⁵⁰ The expression "star of the first magnitude" was also used by Goethe about Martin Wieland (see Falk 1832, 62).

24. Appraisal

Be this as it may, I personally appreciate Teichmüller for choosing an excellent topic, namely the reality of the person, for being a very creative, keen and systematic thinker, for discussing problems from all sides, so that you can learn a lot from reading him, and above all, for being an enlightener in the true sense of the word. He wanted to free mankind from deep-rooted delusions. Usually enlightenment is thought to be inextricably linked with modern philosophy and science. But apart from light, modern philosophy and science have also brought forth darkness, and need to be enlightened themselves. The idealistic extinction of the individual in favour of the general, which Teichmüller so harshly criticised, has contributed to the totalitarian disasters of modern history, as Karl R. Popper (1945) pointed out in his *Open Society and its Enemies*. Materialistic scientism, on the other hand, is apt to lower the respect for the person as well, and does not add to the ethical progress of mankind either. In the name of science, the existence of the self is denied (see e.g. Metzinger 2003) and the best traits of man, love, charity, and compassion, are exposed as a hidden egoism which only serves our biological success (see e.g. Wilson 1975; Dawkins 1976).

At the end of my essay, I wish to come back to biography, to life, again. Those philosophers who decisively shaped modern epistemology, which entertains doubts concerning the existence of the external world, the existence of the self, and the possibility of contact with other beings; those philosophers were men—not women, of course—who had neither wives nor children. Teichmüller, in contrast, was married and had nine children. Moreover, he was—despite his rationalistic traits—a deeply loving person. Other persons mattered a lot to him. Both his encounter with Samuel Irenäus Prime in the High Alps and his friendship with Wilhelm Dilthey in Berlin (see Schwenke 2006, 34–36) bore the mark of deep affection, almost passion. After the death of his beloved first wife, Anna Cramer, who died of childbed fever at the age of nineteen, he was little short of a breakdown (see Schwenke 2006, 58–59). His love for the younger sister of his deceased wife was barely less intense, and they married against the strong resistance of her father.⁵¹ Teichmüller himself was a very responsible father to his many children. I already mentioned the joy he found in teaching and dealing with his students. For him not isolation, but love is “the metaphysical nature of all beings” (Teichmüller 1879, 102).

⁵¹ See the private correspondence between Gustav Teichmüller and Caroline Cramer, *Deutsches Tagebucharchiv Emmendingen*. A typescript of the correspondence is kept by Teichmüller’s great-grandson, Markus Brückner, in Basel.

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