

[Erich Reck](#) (University of California - Riverside)

“Frege, Cohen, and the Issue of Origins: An Early Parting of the Ways”

Abstract: With the recent increase of interest in the relationship between analytic philosophy and other philosophical traditions, several writers have addressed episodes that constitute a “parting of the ways” between them. At the center of this talk will be an early, so far neglected example, namely a brief interaction between Gottlob Frege and Hermann Cohen in the 1880s. This interaction consisted mainly of a review of Cohen’s 1883 book, *Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode und seine Geschichte*, published by Frege in 1885. Cohen’s book became highly influential not just within Marburg Neo-Kantianism, the school he helped to found, but also other parts of “continental” philosophy. On what later became the “analytic” side, it provoked strong criticisms, e.g., by Georg Cantor and Bertrand Russell. Frege is critical in his review as well, but in a muted, unusual, and interesting way, namely by pointing to a certain methodological difference. This difference illustrates well a main divergence between analytic and continental philosophy that developed subsequently, but also one with respect to which there might be a “merging of minds” again today. The core issue is the role the history of philosophy, or attention to the “origin” of concepts, can play for systematic philosophy.