

## Conclusion

Weber once distinguished two types of intellectuals: *Stoffhuber* and *Sinnhuber*, i.e. the collector of material data and the collector of meaning.<sup>1</sup> The data collector is like an intellectual bookkeeper who collects and organizes data mindlessly, the meaning collector searches restlessly for understandable meaning and significance. Rickert, remaining even in this respect loyal to his heterological habitude, is in a sense indeed a *Stoffhuber*, the data being primarily theoretical concepts, but one misreads and misinterprets his work, if one fails to discover that he certainly was also, and in my view predominantly, a *Sinnhuber*! He is indeed an at times irritating collector of concepts, in particular when he tries to catch intellectually the world-*in-toto* by means of a philosophical system built up diligently and consistently by logical, abstract, formal, and thus empty categories. His systematic philosophy ending in the metaphysics of an allegedly ‘full-filled totality’ does not carry the pretensions of the Hegelian grandiloquent philosophy which claimed to represent the end of history, and the fulfillment of the good direction of it. Rickert’s metaphysical end station is not much more than a postulate, a possibility, consisting of symbols, metaphors, or even allegories, not of solidly scientific concepts. It is actually just a philosophical dream with the features of a surrealistic painting. However, despite his emphasis upon the openness and flexibility of his system, it still carries all the characteristics of a product of material collecting.

But he is at the same time a *Sinnhuber*, and a virtuoso at that. He is permanently and restlessly in search of meaningful and significant concepts which help us to grasp cognitively and to understand emotionally the world we live in. In fact he is driven by what he once called, as we have seen in the last chapter, the Socratic *Logosfreudigkeit*, the joy of rational thinking, the sheer pleasure of forging meaningful and significant theories. And he does so in a playful, heterological manner. Paul Hazard once wrote about Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), ‘the play of pro and con was for him a supreme pleasure.’<sup>2</sup> It takes a while, it is my experience, but sooner or later one begins to sense the same pleasure in Rickert’s often playful conceptualizations. Copernicus, it is asserted, introduced two criteria for the appraising of a scientific theory, and it is only the combination of these two, he claimed, which constituted the so-called ‘Copernican revolution’, which put an end to the medieval faith in tradition and dogmatic scholasticism: first of all, theories should conform to empirical observations, and second, they should be “pleasing to the mind”, i. e. elegantly phrased.<sup>3</sup> It has been my experience that, after one has become familiar with Rickert’s style of thinking and writing, one discovers his *Logosfreudigkeit*. Indeed, his theories which he keeps in touch with empirical experiences, i.e. with ‘reality’, are indeed pleasing to the mind.

But Rickert would dismiss such appraisals as ‘atheoretical’, more pertaining to aesthetic than to scientific norms. His philosophical relevance must transcend the level of aesthetics. We must now try to come to an appraisal of his work which naturally consists of a set of value-judgments. In other words, in accordance with his philosophy we must now try to perform a meaning-bestowing act in which we confront Rickert’s concept formation, methodology and philosophy of values, with values. The two basic values, as far as the

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<sup>1</sup> Weber, *Wissenschaftslehre*, o.c., p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> ‘le jeu du pour et du contre était pour lui le suprême plaisir.’ Paul Hazard, *La crise de la conscience européenne 1680-1715*, (‘The Crisis of European Consciousness 1680-1715’), (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1961), p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Jerzy Neyman, ed. *Theories “More Pleasing to the Mind”*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, UK: The MIT Press, 1974), p. 9.

sciences and philosophy are concerned, are 'reality' and 'truth'. Can we attribute reality and truth to Rickert's philosophy?

As to reality, since his philosophy is not meant to be a specialized, empirical science, it does not make sense to apply an empiricist conception of reality to his brand of philosophy. The question is rather how realistic, in the sense of understandable within the context of our present socio-cultural situation, his philosophy really is. Or phrased negatively as a question: is his neo-Kantian style and content of thinking and writing not hopelessly old-fashioned and out-of-date? Should we not bury Rickert's books and articles in the cellars of the history of philosophy, or, store them in the footnotes of the history of ideas? In fact, that has happened since his death, but the question is, whether that has been correct, legitimate and fair.<sup>4</sup>

As to the judgment that neo-Kantianism in general, and Rickert's epistemology, philosophy of values and methodology in particular are old-fashioned and out-of-date, one should ask, if a discipline like philosophy should aspire to be up-to-date and fashionable. It is a sociological fact that, certainly in this day and age, fashions come and go in a rapid succession, not only in the world of consumer goods, but also in the cultural world of the arts, literature and music, and in the world of ideas, views and convictions as well. Weber always stressed the sociological fact that ideas and concepts, even his non-empirical, ahistorical and constructed *ideal types*, will change in accordance with the transformations of society and culture.<sup>5</sup> Rickert has, as far as I know, not responded to this observation, but would certainly have emphasized that empirical (natural and cultural) sciences, necessarily caught in a naïve sort of empiricism, are indeed susceptible to such permanent changes. And indeed, they should always be up-to-date. However, he would add, although philosophy is a scientific (i.e. logically correct and empirically oriented) discipline, it is and ought to be different from the (natural and cultural) sciences in one respect: it should argue relentlessly in terms of transcendental, a priori (non-empirical) categories and then impose its systematic view on reality, including the various sciences. This transcendental approach necessitates a ruthless transcending of fashions and dominant currents of thought. The human value-judgments, incorporated in goods like scientific statements and scores of socio-cultural institutions, are indeed relative, because bound to time and (socio-cultural) space. They are subjected to changes and transformations. But the values, such as beauty, truth, justice, the ethical good (and their counterparts) are formal, abstract and absolute. They constitute the object, the *Gegenstand*, of knowledge and the proper aim of philosophical concept formation. If the verdict is that this is old-fashioned, so be it. Yet, the criterion should rather be, if it is realistic to define philosophy as a science which transcends the empirical (natural and cultural) sciences, and places them in a systematic conceptual order.

This answers another critical question. Rickert, we have seen in the foregoing chapters, defends the statement that philosophy should be systematic. In the former century it has become fashionable to deny the possibility and even the need of a philosophical discipline

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<sup>4</sup> Raymond Aron is a telling example. After a rather sympathetic summary of Rickert's philosophy of history he sentences him to intellectual death: 'his thought is dead, much more so than that of Dilthey or even Simmel. After having been the object of a long quarrel, his doctrine (sic! ACZ) is no longer discussed, and begins to be ignored.' ('sa pensée est morte, bien plus que celle de Dilthey ou même de Simmel. Après avoir été l'objet d'une longue querelle, sa doctrine n'est plus discutée, elle commence à être ignorée.') Raymond Aron, *La philosophie critique de l'histoire. Essai sur une théorie allemande de l'histoire*, ('The Critical Philosophy of History. Essay on a German Theory of History'), (Paris: Librairie philosophique, J. Vrin, 1969), p. 139. The book discusses Dilthey, Rickert, Simmel and Weber.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, o.c., p. 207, where he argues 'that in the sciences of human culture the formation of concepts depends on the position of the problems, and that the latter is changeable with the content of culture.' ('dass in den Wissenschaften von der menschlichen Kultur die Bildung der Begriffe von der Stellung der Probleme abhängt, und dass diese letztere wandelbar ist mit dem Inhalt der Kultur.')

which aims at an overarching, theoretical system. Particularly vitalism (*Philosophie des Lebens*) in all its variations has claimed that systems render thoughts and theories abstract and 'lifeless'. The real reality, according to this view, is life, vitality – whatever that may be. This position is rather questionable, because it would be strange to call for a 'lively' mathematics or a 'vitally relevant' astrophysics, chemistry, or physics of particles. But the moment we focus on the socio-cultural sciences the call for vitalistic realism arises loudly and clearly. As we have seen in the second chapter, Rickert dismisses this rather irrational approach as being scientifically worthless. It may satisfy emotions, but does not enlighten our minds and contribute to our knowledge and understanding of socio-cultural reality. Vitalism, in other words, 'feels realistic' and may indeed be aesthetically relevant and gratifying, but in terms of an structured knowledge and rational understanding of reality, it is rather counterproductive and thus not at all 'realistic'.

As to the argument that philosophy cannot and should not even try to be systematic, this has become a fashionable cliché with a doubtful content. In the former century we have witnessed the 'linguistic turn' in philosophy, which has admittedly brought an impressive innovation in the philosophical discipline. However, this Wittgensteinian innovation, which has been the main cause of the emergence and distribution of analytic philosophy, has by now grown rather stale and even dogmatic, which is, incidentally, the ultimate fate of most socio-cultural and intellectual innovations. Certainly in the Anglo-Saxon world analytic philosophy has deteriorated into a dominant paradigm which carries the features of a well-nigh medieval scholasticism, although the latter was highly systematic, whereas most analytic philosophers abhor the idea of a philosophical system. Wittgenstein was still the virtuoso of the condensed, aphoristic statements. But his followers generally lacked his virtuosity and often excelled in seemingly profound, yet in reality often superficial observations. Nevertheless, analytic philosophy often determines paradigmatically, what is philosophically acceptable and sound, thus fashionable, and what is not. One thing in particular is characteristic of this philosophical current, namely its anti-systematic animus. The production consists predominantly of articles and, though hesitantly, of essays, not of systematic treatises.

Meanwhile, however, many former adherents of analytic philosophy have turned away from its scholastic rationalism and embraced one or the other European philosophical trend, such as French deconstructionism, phenomenology, or the neo-vitalism of Heidegger's ontology. Richard Rorty is a telling example. His often brilliantly formulated observations, made public in essays on, among others, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Derrida, Foucault and writers like Kundera and Dickens, are not meant any longer to enlighten our minds, but to gratify aesthetically our moods.<sup>6</sup> In any case, there is now a bewildering array of currents and fashions which have one thing in common: the anti-systematic animus based on concept formations which are more aesthetic than cognitive, more ontological (if not metaphysical) than epistemological. It is often labeled loosely and therefore inadequately as 'post-modernism'. This is actually a label for different currents of thought which have one thing in common: the aspiration to render philosophy 'lively', emotionally gratifying. In view of these currents of thought outside analytic philosophy, Rickert's treatise on vitalism is still very much up-to-date.

Nietzsche is once more the towering model-philosopher for many today. Rickert and certainly Weber admired this great thinker who excelled above all in intellectually sharp and often witty aphorisms. But Rickert in particular believes that philosophy should be more than an rhapsodic accumulation of aphorisms. It should try to formulate a systematic view of

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Richard Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others. Philosophical Papers*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For his aesthetic approach in which irony plays a dominant role and literature is deemed more valuable than (traditional) philosophy: *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

reality. As we have seen, he finds it the task of the (natural and cultural) sciences to analyze and scrutinize specialized portions of reality, whereas philosophy should aim at a systematic knowledge of reality-*in-toto*. This cannot be realized by merely adding up rhapsodically all the compartmentalized philosophies and methodologies of the different sciences. In the former century most philosophers abandoned this systematic task and almost slavishly followed the scientific compartmentalization of reality by the different scientific disciplines. In their view philosophy is only possible as an accumulation of the methodologies of the different scientific specializations: philosophy of (natural) science, philosophy of law, philosophy of art, philosophy of religion, philosophy of history, socio-economic philosophy, etc. Such philosophical specialisms are, of course, legitimate, useful and thus necessary, but the question still remains, what it is that justifies their categorization as 'philosophy'. What is the specific philosophical nature of all these specialized philosophies? Or, in logical terms, what is the generic concept of all these individual specimens? What is 'general philosophy'? This question begs for a systematic answer. Is such an answer old-fashioned and out-of-date, or is it in view of the current, disintegrated position of philosophy still adequate and necessary? To ask the question is to answer it.

As we have seen, Rickert wants to keep metaphysics out of his epistemology, ontology and philosophy of values. He does so up to the point where he finalizes his system by adding the Fourth Realm which is dominated by the concept of 'full-fulfilment'. As we remember, he distinguishes within reality-*in-toto* three correlated domains: the First Realm of empirical sense-data, the Second Realm of non-empirical (non-sensual) values, and the Third Realm of judgments which impose the (formal) values on the (material) sense-data in terms of the heterological concepts ethically good/evil, aesthetically beautiful/ugly, erotically lustful/painful, and scientifically real/unreal, true/false. But, as we have seen, this does not yet conclude his system since it still does not present a unitary vision of total reality. He adds a Fourth Realm which overarches, as it were, the mentioned three domains in terms of a metaphysical view of human life (*Lebensanschauung*). This domain, however, is not just unreal like the values are, but supra-real, i.e. metaphysical. It cannot be formulated by means of theoretical (scientific) concepts, since these pertain to empirical reality. This metaphysical domain can only be indicated, or surmised, by means of symbols, metaphors, or allegories, and its 'theory' is more of a tale of possibilities than a scientific theory of facts. Rickert sees it indeed as a virtual reality that has sur-real features. This surreal reality can only be thought as a postulate, or maybe even only be dreamed as a dream. It is, of course, hard to fathom, if one sticks to the empiricism which is natural and legitimate in the empirical (natural and cultural) sciences. But if one searches for a systematic philosophy that transcends the specialized compartmentalization of reality, it stands to reason, Rickert believes, to complete the system by such a virtual and surreal Fourth Realm.

Can Rickert's philosophy also be rendered meaningful by attributing the formal value of truth to it? Rickert, as we have seen, ties the value of truth to that of reality. A statement about reality is true, if it demonstrably pertains to reality – i.e. the reality of the experienced and perceived sense-data. This is, of course, a distinctly positivistic position. A statement about an allegedly existing unicorn is not true, because no human being has ever 'experienced' (seen, heard, smelled, touched) a unicorn. It simply is not a real sense-datum and thus is the statement about the existence of the unicorn false. This identification of 'reality' and 'truth' poses a considerable problem, because it is correct in the case of theoretical (scientific) statements, but cannot be applied to atheoretical (non-scientific) statements, such as the statements of mythology or the doctrines of theology. In medieval legends and myths the unicorn did 'exist', and it did function in the medieval mythological view of the world. We may trust that those who narrated the unicorn myths, knew perfectly well that this mythological animal did not really exist, but it occupied a functional, heuristic

position in the contemporary mythological view of the world. Or, to give another example, Socrates and Plato knew, of course, that Poseidon, god of the seas, did not really, in the flesh, live and roam around in the surrounding seas. Poseidon was a mythological symbol, not an empirical fact. We encounter here Frege's previously discussed distinction between meaning (*Sinn*) and significance (*Bedeutung*). The medieval unicorn or the Greek god Poseidon were meaningful, but scientifically speaking insignificant. There is, in other words, a theoretical truth which ties the idea of truth to that of reality and renders statements about reality significant. However, there is also an atheoretical truth as in the case of mythological or theological statements. The atheoretical truth is not significant but it is meaningful. Theoretical truth can be proven or disproved empirically, and is a matter of rational knowledge. A-theoretical truth, on the other hand, is a matter of belief and not of rational knowledge. Genesis 1 which tells the story of creation, is scientifically insignificant but to the believing Jew and Christian it is highly meaningful. It tells the story of Yahweh's dealings with history, man and the world. Darwin's evolution theory, on the other hand, is significant and scientifically true, but it is in the metaphysical terms of a view of history and the world meaningless.

This then poses a problem to Rickert's residual metaphysics of a virtual, 'full-filled' sur-reality. It cannot be true in the sense of significance (*Bedeutung*). It can only be true in the sense of meaning (*Sinn*). But that conclusion leads necessarily to the next conclusion, namely that Rickert's Fourth Realm as a philosophically insignificant surreality cannot occupy any place whatsoever in a philosophical system that claims to be theoretical and scientific. The Fourth Realm is a balloon which is too fully filled and must explode in the face of its author and of its readers. Yet, another, more graceful conclusion is also possible: by the conceptual formation of the Fourth Realm, Rickert's philosophy changes rather radically from a theoretical (scientific) into an a-theoretical system, comparable to religion, literature and the arts. This 'full-filled', metaphysical reality reminds the religious reader of the phantasmagoric world of the Apocalypse in the New Testament, a world filled with symbolical, metaphorical and allegorical meaning. Still, theoretically (scientifically) it is a totally insignificant world. The more aesthetically inclined reader of Rickert's metaphysical sur-reality will be reminded of surrealism, more specifically of the magical, fascinating paintings of Giorgio de Chirico, Salvador Dalí or Yves Tanguy. They are, so to say, loaded with symbols and allegories and present a phantasmagoric reality. However, strictly logically argued, this metaphysical turn to a 'full-filled' surreality at the conclusion of Rickert's philosophical system is an inadmissible *metabasis eis allo genos*. Inadmissible, but not the less fascinating.

Now, is there still any solid reason for a book like the present which makes an attempt to re-introduce as completely as possible Rickert's transcendental philosophy, logic and methodology? To my mind there is, otherwise I would, of course, not have travelled for at least two decades in order to begin to understand what neo-Kantianism in general and Rickert's thinking and writing in particular are all about. Why should we not leave this philosopher in the footnotes of the history of philosophy, why should we try to bring him back into the center of attention where he once, around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, has been?

There are several reasons for a renewed interest in Rickert's brand of neo-Kantianism. The most important one is, in my mind, the ongoing attempt of Rickert to bridge the old and never really solved antitheses of philosophy without neutralizing them in an Hegelian, metaphysical synthesis – rationality versus irrationality, subjective concepts versus objective facts, non-empirical values versus empirical objects, culture versus nature, cultural science versus natural science, liberty versus causality, etc. He does not solve the tensions of these dilemmas by means of the dialectical method but tries to bridge them conceptually while maintaining their respective autonomies. He thereby rejects the rationalism of what he called

‘intellectualism’ which is an attempt to impose conceptual schemes on a reality which is in and of itself non-rational and often very irrational. Intellectualism usually ends up in metaphysics, as in the case of ‘scientism’ which is the normative belief that the rationality of (natural) science should and in the end does pervade all of reality, including our minds and actions. If there are realities which do not fit this belief, as is the case of values and meanings, they must be discarded as scientifically irrelevant. However, Rickert, as we have seen in the second chapter, opposes vehemently also the irrationalism of the so-called ‘vitalists’ who define not reason (*Vernunft*) but life (*Leben*) as the leading concept of an encompassing worldview which normatively evaluates everything – human minds and actions, culture and even nature – in vitalistic terms.

The problem with intellectualism is, to summarize and paraphrase Rickert’s position, its abstractness, its lack of intuitive understanding of the non-rational and irrational dimensions of reality. It is a basic misunderstanding of Kant and the neo-Kantians, if their fundamental thesis that the thing-in-itself (*das Ding-an-sich*), or, in Rickertian terms, the heterogeneous continuum, cannot be known, is declared to represent an hypertrophically rationalistic view of human reason (*Vernunft*). This autonomously (‘objectively’) existing reality is experienced by means of the sense-organs in a non-rational and often irrational manner. And it is these non-rational or irrational sense-data which are the content being put into a rational shape by the a priori categories. Knowledge is not, as the intellectualists have it, a one-sidedly rational affair of the *Verstand* and the *Vernunft*, but an intricate interplay of *Verstand*, *Vernunft* and *Anschauung*. After all, Kant claimed that it needs *Einbildungskraft*, imaginative power, to acquire rational knowledge of an in itself irrational reality.

Rickert was worried in particular by the onslaught of the ‘irrationalists’ in philosophy, the ‘vitalists’ who following Kierkegaard and Nietzsche put Life on a metaphysical pedestal, or declared Being or *Dasein* as the *prima causa* of all that exists. Today he would certainly point at the intellectualism of analytic philosophy which elevated Language to a metaphysical level, where philosophers turn around and around in rather dogmatic and highly abstract circles. A closely related fashion, he certainly would add, is French deconstructionism which has lifted the Text to a well-nigh metaphysical status, from where it absorbs meanings, values, and the human subject into intellectual obscurantism. And there are, of course, also the structuralists which have proclaimed Structure as the definitive phenomenon absorbing and neutralizing in particular the changes and transformations of history and human culture. Life, Being, Language, Text, Structure – they embodied the fashions of philosophical thought in the twentieth century. But as is the fate of fashions, they come, they rule, they grow stale and they just fade away, leaving their true believers in confusion, despair, or fits of ironic laughter.

The most sensible reaction may be to bury oneself intellectually in one of the philosophical specializations, and to forget the original task of philosophy, formulated in Ancient Greece, namely to try to understand reality, i.e. the world as it is experienced by us human beings. It may be sensible, but it hardly testifies to intellectual courage. It is also rather despondent, since it lacks what Rickert calls *Logosfreudigkeit*, the joy of rational thinking and concept formation. Most of such philosophical specialists are *Stoffhuber*, intellectual bookkeepers who may well be virtuoso’s in their craft, yet totally miss the features of the *Sinnhuber*, the philosopher who searches for meaningful knowledge of the world we live and work in. Maybe the most attractive element of Rickert’s philosophical endeavors is the heterological interplay within his mind and mood of the *Stoffhuber* and the *Sinnhuber*. Rickert’s philosophy has not been and will never become the core of a fashionable school of thought. He will not emotionally warm the moods of young people, and it needs hard work and concentration to catch his thoughts, concepts and theories cognitively. But it is my experience that a confrontation with Rickert does in the end enlighten the mind. He even

warms one's mood because of his *Logosfreudigkeit*. His joy of concentrated and consequent thinking, his pleasure in forging meaningful concepts and theories, has a catching impact on the one who seriously sets out to read and understand him.

However, there remains one great fault in Rickert's philosophical system. It is in a sense a magnificently planned building with a solid, epistemological foundation and maybe a groundfloor and a first floor, consisting of the formal values and the meaning bestowing acts. But after the completion of the first volume of his General Philosophy, he got stuck. In the planned second and third volume he wanted to complete the system with a grand cultural philosophy. His death in 1936 prevented him from executing this plan. But reading the basic ideas which he published in a summarizing manner at the end of his life, it is questionable whether we miss much by this intellectual abortion. As we have seen before, at the end of his life Rickert's philosophical thought drifted off in a rancunous and reactionary direction which was intensified upon the fateful events in Germany after 1933. This stands in sharp contrast to the transition from neo-Kantian transcendentalism to an interdisciplinary cultural philosophy by Ernst Cassirer who, as we have seen in the Introduction, designed an indeed grand and impressive cultural philosophy in his justly famous philosophy of symbolic forms and his essays on man and on the state. Cassirer's twenty five volumes of collected works present a towering building of epistemological, cultural philosophical and even political thoughts and theories. Rickert's books and articles which in the coming years will be re-published in fifteen volumes by the Rickert Research Institute at the University of Duesseldorf, present an equally impressive, yet unfinished intellectual construction. However, the conclusion must be that in all probability Rickert has been unable to finish his philosophical system in an acceptable manner due to the reactionary and rancorous mood that sadly overshadowed his brilliant mind at the end of his life.

In which direction should Rickert's unfinished system have been completed? It should have been, I think, a combination of *constructivism* and *institutionalism*. In neo-Kantian philosophy in general and Rickert's transcendental philosophy in particular there is the basic idea at work that the world we live in is not a reality-in-and-of-itself which reveals itself to us and next directs and controls our cognitive and active interventions. This reality is, on the contrary, in a sense made by us, *constructed* by our structured sensations and perceptions, by our formal concepts, and through them by our value-oriented and value-directed judgments. Moreover, these constructions are social and meaningful events, symbolic interactions which occur in a context of traditional, historical *institutions*, which, as we have seen, were labeled 'cultural goods' by Rickert. It is in this direction of institutional constructivism that Rickert's philosophical system should have been completed – a completion, by the way, which in the end would resemble Cassirer's system.

This completion of transcendentalist philosophy in an interdisciplinary ontology has been initiated in and outside philosophy already, albeit without any reference to and knowledge of Rickert's transcendental philosophy. In the sociology of knowledge, for example, the treatise *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann presents a systematic ontology of the world we live in. It was inspired by theorists like Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, George Herbert Mead and in particular Alfred Schutz.<sup>7</sup> The pivotal concept in this essay is that of *institutions* which should not be interpreted in terms of 'organizations'. An institution is a traditional, historical *Sinngebilde* (Rickert, Weber), a meaningful configuration within which human beings interact in a meaningful manner, conducted by values and norms.<sup>8</sup> It is but a small step to elaborate

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<sup>7</sup> Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, (New York: Doubleday, 1966).

<sup>8</sup> I elaborated these ideas in greater detail in my *The Institutional Imperative. The Interface of Institutions and Networks*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000).

this trend of institutionalist and constructivist ontology into a more general and critical cultural philosophy which I have tried to do in my *The Abstract Society* (1970) and *On Clichés* (1979).<sup>9</sup>

In the frame of reference of analytic philosophy such a constructivist and institutionalist approach was elaborated by John R. Searle in his treatise *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995). Although he defends a rather traditional brand of realism and thus defends the correspondence theory of truth, he does argue in a Kantian vein, when he describes the world we live in as a social world which is constructed by interacting men within institutional contexts. As I argued before, Searle is mistaken when he claims in the introduction of his book that ‘the great philosopher-sociologists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – one thinks especially of Weber, Simmel, and Durkheim – (...) lacked an adequate theory of speech acts, of performances, of intentionality, of collective intentionality, or rule-governed behavior, etc.’<sup>10</sup> All of these issues are at the heart of the theories of not just the three mentioned masters of sociological thought, but have been discussed broadly and intensively also by such ‘philosopher-sociologists’ as George Herbert Mead, Arnold Gehlen, Helmuth Plessner, e.t.q. It is possible, as I tried to demonstrate in my *The Institutional Imperative* (2000) to distill an adequate and coherent institutional and constructivist theory from these different philosophical and sociological theories. Yet, the basic ideas of Searle’s treatise demonstrate in my view the still relevant dimensions of neo-Kantian ontology and epistemology to which Rickert has contributed a great deal.

Finally, there is nowadays a strong resistance against the sincere study of ‘dead philosophers’. It is part of the contemporary vitalist prejudice that we should focus our attention on the lively here-and-now and on the immediate gratification of our metaphysical yearnings.<sup>11</sup> It is often believed also that progress of our knowledge can only be acquired through the specialized approach of a compartmentalized reality. I have always believed in the importance of the history of ideas. Particularly, the study of the great masters of philosophy and the socio-cultural sciences are intellectually edifying and gratifying. Yet, the sincere and intensive study of their texts should, of course, not end up in scholastic and doctrinarian exegeses of their texts. It does therefore make sense to remind one another of two quotes. The first one is derived from Latin and has meanwhile acquired the status of a time-honored cliché: ‘Pigmies placed on the shoulders of giants see more than the giants themselves.’<sup>12</sup> Compared to the profound thinkers of the neo-Kantian schools, we may well be philosophical pygmies today. Yet, standing on their shoulders, we are able to see more and farther than they did. It makes sense to read and study their works intensively, yet we should not remain stuck in the exegesis of their writings but rather use them in order to look ahead. That after all is the essence of progress. This was phrased nicely by the second quote which allegedly stems from Guiseppe Verdi: ‘Back to the old masters and that will be progress!’<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Anton C. Zijderveld, *The Abstract Society. A Cultural Analysis of Our Time*, (New York: Doubleday, 1970; Harmondsworth, Middleses: Penguin Books, 1972); *On Clichés. The Supersedure of Meaning by Function*, (London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979). For a brief methodological explanation see: ‘Appendix’, *ibid.*, pp. 106-113.

<sup>10</sup> John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p. XII.

<sup>11</sup> I have once called this our ‘staccato culture’, i.e. a culture which lacks an ongoing legato, and is caught in compartmentalizations, driven predominantly by emotions, moods, senses. Anton C. Zijderveld, *Staccato cultuur, flexibele maatschappij en verzorgende staat*, (‘Staccato Culture, Flexible Society and Caring State’), (Utrecht: Lemma, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> ‘Pigmei Gigantum humeris impositi plusquam ipsi Gigantes vident.’ Robert K. Merton, *On the Shoulders of Giants. A Shandean Postscript*, (New York: A Harbinger Book; Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Torniamo all’ antiche e sarà un progresso.’ I found this quote in a brochure about a contemporary Dutch composer: Emil Wennekes, *Tristan Keuris*, (Amsterdam: Donemus, 1995), p. 2.



Despite his faults and weaknesses, if read and studied carefully Rickert was and remains one of those philosophical masters to whom we should return in order to progress.