

## Addressing the Specificity of Social Concepts: Rickert, Weber, and the Dual Contrast Theory

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One of the greatest sources of perplexity in Weberian studies centres upon the fact that Max Weber's epistemological reflexions are located at the intersection between two competing paradigms. On the one side, they are tied to Johannes Von Kries' theory of 'objective possibilities' and causal imputation.<sup>1</sup> On the other, they developed under the much-debated influence of Heinrich Rickert's theory of concept formation in the historical sciences.<sup>2</sup> Now, these two paradigms seem initially hardly compatible with each other, since the first one is generally regarded as having a naturalistic orientation while the second is explicitly supported by an anti-naturalistic form of thought. Hence, the fact that Weber's epistemological reflexions may be properly described as located 'between Rickert and Von Kries'<sup>3</sup> creates a puzzling situation: How are these two competing paradigms supposed to be combined into one single, coherent perspective, as appears to be the case in Weber's early epistemological or methodological essays? Thus, it is not surprising that one recent, important question for investigation has been whether Weber's methodology may be considered to have the character a consistent theory, and, if it does, whether such an integrative approach really is capable of illuminating the methodological procedures actually used in the social sciences – or, at least, some relevant aspects thereof.

In this chapter, it is argued that this question might become less puzzling if we return to the neo-Kantian interpretation of Weber's methodological reflexions, namely, the interpretation that emerged in the middle of the nineteen-twenties within the South-Western School of neo-Kantianism. The basic intuition which underlies this interpretation is that the social sciences are best understood as *generalizing cultural sciences*. On this understanding, they differ both from the natural sciences and the historical sciences: In contrast to the natural, but analogously to the historical sciences, they have a domain of investigation which is broadly 'cultural', however, in contrast to the historical, but analogously to the natural sciences, they consider cultural phenomena within the framework of (relatively) 'general' patterns. In summary: Sharing characteristics of the natural *and* the historical sciences, the social sciences are, at the same time, *distinct from both*.

Let us designate this view the *Dual Contrast Theory*, or DCT for short. Clarifying the scope and the main outcomes of DCT against the background of Weber's neo-Kantian reception will be the central task of this chapter.

To my knowledge, DCT has been most extensively developed by Hans Oppenheimer,<sup>4</sup> who was a student of Rickert. Surprisingly, Oppenheimer's interpretation has attracted minimal attention from Weber scholars. Even proponents of the so-called 'Rickertian' reading of Weber have generally neglected or dismissed Oppenheimer's view as an illegitimate way of understanding Weber on the basis of entirely extraneous presuppositions.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the position adopted here is somewhat different. The proposed assessment of Oppenheimer is more positive. I think, indeed, that Oppenheimer's interpretation, while acknowledging that it diverges from one which presents Weber's position with strict fidelity,<sup>6</sup> nevertheless creates a degree of intelligibility which renders it worthy of careful consideration. The main reason, I

shall suggest, is the following: In distinction from most of the recent Rickertian readings of Weber, Oppenheimer's interpretation is not primarily focused on the concept of 'value-relation' (*Wertbeziehung*), but on the distinction between object or 'material' and 'cognitive direction'. As we shall see, this distinction is central to the neo-Kantian interpretation of Weber. It has its origin in Rickert's two-level epistemology, on which Oppenheimer's interpretation is grounded. It is this distinction, I want to suggest, which furnishes a promising way of understanding how Von Kries' theory of objective possibilities can be accommodated with, and integrated into Weber's methodological reflexions.

The chapter will be developed in the following manner. To begin, I shall briefly outline the current situation in this field of research from considerations of the Rickert-Weber-Von Kries relationship (§ 1). I shall then introduce DCT (§ 2), showing how it emerged within the framework of Weber's reception by Rickert and Oppenheimer (§ 3), and, more particularly, how it is tied to Rickert's two-level methodology (§ 4). Here, the intention is to emphasize that accounting for this two-level methodology is potentially the most effective manner in which to accommodate both Von Kries' naturalistic paradigm of investigation and Rickert's anti-naturalistic theory of scientific concept formation. In the last section (§ 5), I shall concentrate on some of the implications of DCT for the nature of the concepts of the social sciences.

### **RICKERT OR VON KRIES?**

It is commonly agreed that Max Weber did not develop a full-fledged epistemology of the social sciences. Though they remain, arguably, a *passage obligé* for anyone who intends to clarify the epistemic procedures that underlie the social sciences, his reflections on the topic,

which are mainly to be found in his early essays (1903-07), usually took the form of criticisms targeting other, competing views. Moreover, they remained rather fragmentary. Rickert himself was fully aware of this, as he stated in 1926:

Since [Weber's] sociology remained unfortunately fragmentary, it is probable that nobody today is already able to determine which signification it will have for the future. Yet the new direction of his work is clearly discernible, and all future sociology will have to consider his methodically clarified investigations, be it to pursue them or to reject them.<sup>7</sup>

I will focus on Rickert's interpretation of Weber's 'new direction of work' in the section on Weber's neo-Kantian reception. Presently, suffice it to say that one main concern in Weberian studies has precisely been to compensate for this predominantly fragmentary character, by elaborating a pertinent interpretative framework, which might provide an enhanced understanding of Weber's own contribution to the methodology of social sciences.

A number of distinct paths have been created in order to generate this enhanced understanding. One of them consists of reconstructing Weber's methodology from his sociological writings, seeking to illuminate the theory of ideal types by a close examination of Weber's own use of ideal-typical concepts in his research on, for example, Protestantism, capitalism or bureaucracy.<sup>8</sup> This path can be distinguished as the *practical approach*. In addition, there is another, comparatively probably more travelled route, namely, that of *historical approach*.<sup>9</sup> It consists of investigating the intellectual context of Weber's early methodological reflections and, more pointedly, in comprehensively reconstructing the various lines of thought that his *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre (GAW)* indicate

in varying degrees of explicitness. There is no question, indeed, that Weber's own position does not derive from a single line of thought, but, rather, is best described as a synthesis of a number of separate theoretical positions developed at the time, by authors as different as Rickert, Von Kries, Radbruch, Menger, Simmel or Götzl. It has often been stressed that Weber himself does not appear as an 'innovative paradigm builder', but as a 'mediator',<sup>10</sup> or, as someone who is characterized by a sort of 'creative eclecticism'.<sup>11</sup> The underlying commonality of direction behind the historical approach is simply that identifying, and accounting for, Weber's sources of theoretical orientation might help us to understand the main components and achievements of his methodological reflections.

Interpretations of Weber which proceed along the direction of this path are not new, yet it is probably not unfair to suggest that they have experienced an increasingly accelerated development around the last two decades. One of the most significant advances, in this respect, certainly is the rise of a more detailed and balanced picture of the much-discussed Weber-Rickert relationship.

At least from the late 1980s, this topic has become a *locus classicus* within the field of Weberian studies, and generated a correspondingly very extensive literature.<sup>12</sup> The central problem which animates this literature is the fact that Weber's position toward Rickert is rather ambivalent. On the one hand, there is textual evidence – mainly to be found in *GAW* and in Weber's correspondence<sup>13</sup> – to the effect that Rickert's (1902) theory of the historical sciences was the guiding framework for Weber's own epistemological reflections. There is no doubt, for instance, that the notion of empirical reality as an infinite multiplicity has a Rickertian provenance, as with the much-debated distinction between 'value-relation' (*Wertbeziehung*) and 'valuation' (*Wertung*). On the other hand, apologetic references to

Rickert are articulated, in the very same texts, to critical remarks or views, which, initially, seem hardly compatible with those of Rickert: the rejection of any definitive system of values or the explanatory use of the notion of causality. Weber's methodological reflections, therefore, appear as a mixture of Rickertian and non-Rickertian theorems. Hence, the question arises as to whether Rickert's legacy is central to our understanding of Weber.

Strategies of interpretation that have been deployed to address this issue divide, schematically, into two major trends, which stand in opposition to each other. At one extreme, some commentators, in the tradition of von Schelting,<sup>14</sup> considered Weber's apologetic references to Rickert seriously, and maintained that Weber's methodology *depends upon* the validity of the Rickertian arguments.<sup>15</sup> On the other, this claim has been progressively challenged, particularly since the 1990s, by a series of scholars who maintained that it is quite possible to reconstruct a substantial part of Weber's methodology without referring to Rickertian theses or vocabulary.<sup>16</sup> Reading Weber in this vein, some commentators insisted that, for example, while the two first parts of Weber's (1904) 'Objectivity'-article arguably are applications of Rickert's ideas, at least the third part of it, namely, that which corresponds to the introduction of the theory of ideal types, significantly distances Weber from Rickert.<sup>17</sup>

This appears particularly pertinent if we consider the counter-influence of Von Kries' theory of objective possibilities. It is plain that Von Kries' approach to causal imputation is of particular importance for the understanding of Weber's epistemological reflexions. As another representative of the neo-Kantian School expresses it:

In the vein of Mill and Von Kries, [Weber] replaced Rickert's doctrine of individual causality, with which he was unhappy as well [as with the system of

absolute values], by the theory of objective possibilities and adequate causations, that is, of analogical conclusions from other relations of motivation that are likely to be observed with certainty.<sup>18</sup>

This theory of objective possibilities clearly is *foreign* to Rickert's epistemology. Yet, opinions differ concerning the degree to which it is nevertheless *compatible* with a Rickertian approach. While some commentators consider that Weber's appropriation of the theory of objective possibility is a decisive step of departure from Rickert,<sup>19</sup> others maintain that it is guided 'from the start' by Rickertian views.<sup>20</sup> Such disputed questions are symptomatic of the type of perplexity which arises from the historical approach. For, provided that Weber's position can be reconstructed both from Rickert's theory of scientific concept formation and from Von Kries' theory of objective possibility, how is it possible for these two competing paradigms to be unified at all within one single, coherent theoretical framework?

As I suggested at the outset, the central elements of this puzzle arise from the fact that Von Kries' theory of causal imputation corresponds to a naturalistic paradigm, while Rickert's epistemology corresponds to a strong anti-naturalistic paradigm.

In the present context, *naturalism* is the view that a theoretical insight into the world surrounding us counts as scientific if and only if it follows the logical procedures of the natural sciences (e.g., chemistry, physics, biology), that is, if and only if it subsumes the empirical reality under general concepts and causal laws. In other words, one embraces the 'naturalistic dogma' when one refuses to acknowledge any other type of scientific procedure apart from the ones that are used in the natural sciences.<sup>21</sup> Rickert's main concern, in his major book of 1902, is precisely to avoid naturalism by eliminating 'the unconditional and

exclusive domination of the natural sciences'.<sup>22</sup> What he seeks is to create room for other, non-naturalistic ways of gaining insight into the world surrounding us. Central to his epistemology is the claim that there are other ways of forming scientific concepts apart from merely forming *general* concepts of natural or 'meaningless' phenomena. Engaging in historical investigation is such a way of forming concepts that differ from the concepts used in the natural sciences. Rickert also suggests that this difference in the formation of concepts could be exemplified by sociological investigations. So, if we agree with the rejection of naturalism, methodological procedures in use in the social sciences (whatever they may be) might differ in some respect from those procedures in use in the natural sciences. However, Weber's appeal to Von Kries' theory of causal imputation, suggests that 'explanations in the natural and the cultural sciences do not differ very much after all.'<sup>23</sup> So, one way of formulating the central issue is through the following alternative: Is the relevant paradigm for social sciences that of the natural sciences? Or is it that of the historical sciences?

On the neo-Kantian interpretation I want to reconstruct in this chapter, the question of coherent combination from initial opposition is wrongheaded, indeed, even misleading. For, if the social sciences are to be understood as generalizing cultural sciences, then they show *simultaneously* a naturalistic, generalizing dimension, and an anti-naturalistic, cultural dimension. To make this clear, let us start by introducing the basic claim which underlies the neo-Kantian interpretation, namely, the claim that there is a *dual contrast* opposing the social sciences both to the natural and to the historical sciences.

## **AN OVERVIEW OF THE *DUAL CONTRAST THEORY***



The initial epistemological question that underlies the neo-Kantian interpretation of Weber may be stated as follows: What are, if any, the distinctive characteristics of concepts used in the social sciences? On the neo-Kantian view, Weber's methodological reflections may be regarded as a tentative answer to this question. His well-known proposal rests on the idea that social concepts are to be thought of as 'ideal-typical' concepts, that is, concepts that refer to what he calls 'ideal types'. On this approach, the Ideal Types Theory might thus be taken as a contribution to a theory of scientific concept formation of its own.<sup>24</sup> In support of this view, one can emphasize that the Ideal Types Theory is introduced in a text which aims precisely at illuminating the 'logical function' and 'structure' of social concepts.<sup>25</sup>

The claim that the Ideal Types Theory is, in fact, a theory of scientific concept formation is central to the neo-Kantian interpretation of Weber and, thus, to the view that social sciences should be thought of as generalizing cultural sciences. The phrase 'generalizing cultural sciences' derives from the terminology formulated by Rickert.<sup>26</sup> It is designed to capture that which designates and demarcates the conceptual specificity of the concepts formed in the social sciences.

In order to have an initial insight into the meaning of the phrase 'generalizing cultural sciences', one can commence with the following clarification. Suppose, for the sake of simplicity, that there are various (more or less distinguishable) families of concepts, each of them corresponding to one definite (more or less distinguishable) group of empirical sciences. Suppose, moreover, that the following series of terms instantiate three families of scientific concepts:

(f.1) Force, Mass, Speed, Mineral, Mammal, ...

(f.2) Italian renaissance, Napoleon, French revolution, German empire, ...

(f.3) Feudalism, Capitalism, Economic exchange, Democracy, ...

Arguably, terms contained within (f.1) typically express concepts used in the natural sciences, terms contained within (f.2) typically express concepts used in the historical sciences, and terms contained within (f.3) typically express concepts used in the social sciences. They could be designated as natural concepts, historical concepts and social concepts, respectively. There is no need here to settle the question as to whether there are other families of scientific concepts which remain to be further distinguished. Nor do we need, at this stage, to answer the question as to whether each term can be part of more than one single family of concepts. The point, for now, simply is to provide a preliminary clarification of the idea that the social sciences may be conceived as generalizing cultural sciences. Roughly speaking, this idea rests upon three substantive claims about (f.3):

- (1) (f.3) is made up of general concepts that refer to cultural or ‘meaningful’ phenomena.
- (2) (f.3) contrasts with (f.2), which arguably is not made up of general concepts, but rather of individual concepts, namely, concepts of single individuals.
- (3) (f.3) contrasts with (f.1), which, arguably, is made up of concepts that refer only to natural or ‘meaningless’ phenomena.

These claims form the outline of the *Dual Contrast Theory* (DCT). To be sure, they require some further clarification. Yet, at present, they are sufficient to provide us with a provisional formulation of the view I wish to discuss. Although it is probably questionable whether DCT may be directly and immediately ascribed to Weber himself, it obviously forms the basis of the neo-Kantian reception of his methodological and sociological essays.

## DCT AND WEBER'S NEO-KANTIAN RECEPTION

The field opened by the question of the neo-Kantian reception of Weber is vast, and would potentially require consideration of every single neo-Kantian statement about Weber.

However, the explicit purpose of the analysis in this chapter is able to legitimately narrow the parameters of this field to the consideration of only *some* aspects of this reception by Rickert and Oppenheimer.

First, it is necessary to recall that the period during which Weber and Rickert worked together at the University of Freiburg-im-Breisgau was very short, since Weber arrived there in 1894 and moved to Heidelberg in 1897. Though they were, at that time, in close contact, their positions towards science and philosophy were quite different. As Rickert expressed it, Weber was not a philosopher but, rather, a 'special researcher'. He was not interested in the construction of any comprehensive world-view, and cannot be counted among the representatives of the neo-Kantian philosophy of values. At a theoretical level, he was initially involved in investigations that showed a strong historical character. Also, as a scientist, his main concern was with 'conceptual clarity'.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, the quest for conceptual clarity leads him to develop a special sensitivity to 'logical issues' tied to the methodology of the empirical sciences. Now, during the time they were colleagues, this interest in the logical function of scientific concepts brought Weber into close connexion with Rickert, who had just started to write his major book on *The Limits of Concept Formation in the Natural Sciences*.

The impact of this book not only on Weber, but on the entirety of the scientific and philosophical literature of the time cannot be overestimated. As the economist and sociologist Franz Oppenheimer wrote some years later (not to be confounded with Hans Oppenheimer, to whom I will turn below), the reflections on the cultural sciences initiated by Dilthey, Windelband, and Rickert gave rise to ‘a true deluge of logical and methodological investigations’.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, it is without doubt that Rickert’s *Limits* was ‘at that time the most elaborate source of discourse’.<sup>29</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that Weber, referring to ‘the works of modern logic’, in the opening note of his famous ‘Objectivity’ article, explicitly mentions Rickert’s treatise.<sup>30</sup>

During his subsequent Freiburg period, however, Weber was rather sceptical about the idea that the historical sciences use concepts of its own, whose logical function is neither identical nor reducible to that of natural concepts. Rickert’s tentative elucidation of the ‘logical structure’ of the historical sciences appeared to him to be ‘unworkable’.<sup>31</sup> Yet, this negative assessment of Rickert’s view should certainly not be taken as definitive. According to Rickert, Weber changed his position after he moved to Heidelberg and, more exactly, when he came to read the two final chapters of the *Limits*. As one knows from his correspondence with his wife, Weber seems to have been most impressed by this reading, even if he also was reluctant to follow Rickert’s terminology, and if he rejected any ‘metaphysics of values’.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, as some commentators have suggested, other writings of Rickert might have informed Weber’s reflexions at that time, namely, in the period that immediately preceded the publication of his early essays.<sup>33</sup>

Another text which, to my knowledge, is rarely mentioned in the literature, is a short polemical article Rickert published in 1902, in the *Archiv für systematische Philosophie*, as a

reply to objections from Ferdinand Tönnies. While of less central importance, this text remains of note since it contains one of the very few explicit statements by Rickert regarding the status he ascribes to the social sciences. Rickert writes:

All *valuable* investigations that have been recently published under the name of sociology are general theories of the social life or of a part thereof. They want to put their objects under a system of general concepts and follow then the same procedures as the natural sciences.<sup>34</sup>

I will not venture to suggest that Weber knew this passage. Yet, it is symptomatic of Rickert's conception of sociology: The discipline of sociology is a natural science in the very strict sense that it is concerned with the subsumption of social phenomena under general concepts. This should be a continual source of orientation in the further consideration of Rickert's interpretation of Weber's intellectual evolution.

This interpretation is briefly expressed in two significant passages. In the first one, Rickert claims that Weber, as a historian, had 'a strong need for systematic construction'. This personal inclination 'leads him to describe in a generalizing and, therefore, unhistorical way the same material he had previously examined from a historical point of view.'<sup>35</sup> The same idea can be found in the article on Weber that Rickert published in the neo-Kantian journal *Logos* in 1926. After Weber left Freiburg for Heidelberg, Rickert writes, his approach to historical phenomena has been subject to an 'essential modification': instead of continuing to describe historical phenomena as unique events occurring in the world, Weber began to consider them in the light of general connexions between cultural configurations. As Rickert encapsulates it, 'the historian, who deals with singular cases taken in their uniqueness, turned

into the sociologist, who generalizes.<sup>36</sup> The point, again, is that sociology is a natural science in the sense that it uses generalizing procedures that were foreign to the historical sciences.

Although schematic and even laconic, those passages express, in a condensed form, the central idea behind Rickert's (and Oppenheimer's) interpretation of Weber. What distinguishes Weber-the-historian from Weber-the-sociologist is not the domain of investigation (the studied objects or materials), which arguably remains the same in both cases. On the neo-Kantian view, the nature of sociological investigations primarily depends on the aim that is pursued. Between history and sociology, there is only a difference of attitude, that is, a difference of 'cognitive goal' or of 'direction of interest'.

Hans Oppenheimer's interpretation, contained in *The Logic of Sociological Concept Formation* (1925), is similarly orientated. For each science or family of sciences, we should distinguish between two constitutive factors: the nature of the investigated objects (the 'material' of the concepts) and the goal that is pursued when constructing our theory. The central point is that the same material may be subject to various conceptual elaborations. According to Oppenheimer, this is precisely what occurs in the historical, the legal and the social sciences. In contrast to the natural sciences, these sciences are all concerned with cultural phenomena, namely, with objects (or individuals, or actions) that are regarded as embodying some values. However, historical sciences, legal sciences and social sciences remain distinct due to their different elaboration of this material.<sup>37</sup> Consider a given social configuration, for example, feudalism. This social configuration may be regarded (i) as a mere *fact* (*Faktum*) occurring in some definite, spatio-temporal context, as is the case in the historical sciences. We can speak, in this sense, of a 'history of feudalism'. It may be regarded (ii) as normative, namely, as the embodiment of conventional norms, articles of faith and

legal rules that people are expected to conform to. It then becomes an object of the legal sciences. Finally, it may be regarded (iii) with respect to some objective possibilities which are more or less realized in historical instances of feudalism.<sup>1</sup> This last method is that of sociology. In short, one single cultural phenomenon may be regarded as factual, as normative, and as objectively possible or plausible (*wahrscheinlich*). It can, therefore, be considered, respectively, as a historical, a legal and a social object of investigation.

On the neo-Kantian approach, this interpretation forms the basis for an enhanced understanding of Weber's Ideal Types Theory. According to Oppenheimer, Weber's 'ideal types' are precisely only 'historical sense-configurations taken as objective *possibilities* of sense-connexions'.<sup>38</sup> On the one hand, Oppenheimer claims, ideal types are nothing but *generalizing* concepts. They are designed to capture some 'nomological' or general elements within the sphere of the cultural phenomena. The concept of <capitalism>, for instance, is general in the sense that it captures connexions which have a likelihood to be repeated during the course of history and which, therefore, show a certain degree of generality (on a higher level of generality, this is precisely the same connections that are captured by the concept of <Protestantism>, hence Weber's famous thesis of a commonality between <capitalism> and <Protestantism>). On the other hand, ideal types are not generic concepts, as used in the natural sciences, because they are obtained by emphasizing axiological or meaningful elements that are entirely excluded from consideration in the natural sciences. This is why ideal types may only refer to 'sense-configurations' (*Sinngebilde*) and never to 'mere beings'.<sup>39</sup>

These indications are sufficient to indicate the general parameters of Weber's neo-Kantian reception by Rickert and Oppenheimer. As we can see, their interpretation cannot be

separated from the idea of a dual contrast opposing the social sciences, on the one side, to the natural sciences, and, on the other, to the historical sciences. So, Weber's reception by Rickert and Oppenheimer is guided from its inception by DCT. In the following section, I will explore the connection between DCT and Rickert's epistemology of the empirical sciences.

### **RICKERT'S DUAL LEVEL EPISTEMOLOGY**

One disputed issue, among commentators, certainly is the question as to which Rickertian theorem has had the greatest influence on Weber. On the neo-Kantian interpretation in which I am interested here, the understanding of Weber's methodology is not to be sought in the much-discussed distinction between 'value-relation' and 'valuation'. Rather, in this context, this understanding is to be sought in the idea that the method of a science depends on two distinct factors, namely, the nature of its material and its cognitive goal. In this section, I want to suggest that the distinction between material and cognitive goal is developed by Rickert and is pivotal to DCT.

The epistemology of Rickert rests primarily upon the principle of 'formal division' (*formale Einteilung*) of the sciences. This principle stipulates that differences of object or of 'material' are, initially, of lesser importance for the development of a scientific framework. For, scientific methods are determined, to a greater extent, by the objectives of scientific research than by their objects. Rickert, thus, opposes the 'individualising' method of the historical sciences, which aims to grasp the individual as such, to the 'generalizing' method of the sciences of nature, which aims to subsume reality under general laws.



Historically, Windelband is the first to have defended the principle of formal division. In his Rectoral Address, he denounced the aporia generated by the ‘universalist tendency’, dominating the majority of scientific classifications, from which all objects would be studied with the same, single aim, and, therefore, would be subject to ‘one and the same method’.<sup>40</sup> In opposition to this conception, Windelband introduced the idea that there are many legitimate scientific aims: Besides the establishment of general laws, the sciences can also aim to describe phenomena in their singularity. To describe singularity is a legitimate scientific goal, and it is precisely, according to Windelband and Rickert, the goal of the historical sciences.

The recognition of such a ‘teleological pluralism’ completely alters the manner in which to describe and to classify the procedures enabling the construction of scientific theories. If the empirical sciences were dominated by a single goal (to grasp the general and to formulate laws), then, in order to enable their articulation, ‘there would remain only concrete (*sachliche*) points of view, *which would mean metaphysical points of view.*’<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, once it is accepted that the study of the particular can also constitute a scientific goal in itself, it becomes possible to articulate the sciences on the basis of ‘the formal character of the goals that they pursue in relation to knowledge’ (*der formale Charakter ihrer Erkenntnisziele*).<sup>42</sup> Since these goals are not themselves dependent on the material studied nor on any ontological distinctions, they permit a *formal* articulation, namely, an articulation which, precisely, is not subjected to the divisions affecting the objects or the ‘material’ of scientific knowledge. Every logic of the historical sciences after the theory of Windelband-Rickert, as Georg Mehlis emphasises, must adopt as its point of commencement the distinction between the object of the science and its goal – both, object and goal, capable of functioning as ‘determinant factor’ (*maßgebende Bestimmung*) in order to analyze the method of the historical sciences.<sup>43</sup>

The essential point, for the question which occupies us, is that the principle of formal division and the principle of material division do not coincide.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the distinction of the materials and that of the cognitive goals had been conceived by Rickert as *complementary*. While it is a question of describing the procedures for the construction of scientific knowledge, the sole consideration of the formal level or of the material level is insufficient. It is necessary to consider *both* of the pursued goal and the nature of the investigated object. Hence, the epistemology of scientific procedures elaborated by Rickert is a *dual level epistemology*.

The idea of a complementarity between two principles of division has important consequences. First, it implies that the *same* objects can be thematized by means of different methods: a nomothetic or generalizing method, which makes them mere interchangeable exemplars, and an ideographic or individualizing method, which makes them unique individuals. A particular language, for example, can be studied as a system of syntactic and semantic laws, or, as a singular, historical phenomenon, possessing determinate chronological and geographical details.<sup>45</sup>

A further consequence of the thesis of complementarity is, contrary to that which is sometimes affirmed,<sup>46</sup> that the formal distinction, relative to the cognitive goals, cannot in any way ‘replace’ (*ersetzen*) the material distinction, relative to the objects. It simply possesses, at the most, a type of logical priority.<sup>47</sup> Rickert expressly affirms that the two points of view are ‘*equally justified*’.<sup>48</sup> This is why he also insists upon the importance of the distinction between ‘meaningless’ (*sinnlos*) or ‘free of sense’ (*sinnfrei*) materials and materials ‘endowed with sense’ (*sinnvoll*)<sup>1</sup>. Thus, those distinctions are supposed to combine to offer a complex framework, which should embrace a large number of empirical sciences – if not, in Rickert’s view, all the *possible* empirical sciences (*Fig. 1*).

It is, therefore, the combination of these two levels which enables one to conceive of the social sciences as *generalizing cultural sciences*. The term ‘generalizing’ denotes the formal or teleological dimension of social investigations, while the term ‘cultural’ denotes their material.

Fig. 1

‘Direction of interest’:	Generalizing	Individualizing
Natural phenomena	Natural sciences	Phylogenetic biology, etc.
Cultural phenomena	<i>Social sciences</i>	Historical sciences

The dual-level methodology is pivotal to DCT, and, as presented in the previous section, Rickert himself conceived of Weber’s epistemological reflections as the result of this two-dimensional approach. This is why he writes that Weber’s methodological papers ‘remain the most splendid result of my efforts to reach enlightenment concerning the logical nature of all history’.<sup>49</sup> This statement should not be misunderstood. In accordance with the proposed interpretation, sociology is a generalizing cultural science: Analogous to historical, but in contrast to natural sciences, it is concerned with cultural phenomena; yet analogous to natural, but in contrast to historical sciences, its interest is centred upon the apprehension of the general patterns of those phenomena. Weber himself, it must be emphasized, explicitly refers to sociological procedures of investigation as *generalizing* procedures.<sup>50</sup>

This specific combination of a cultural object and a generalizing goal manifests itself through the concepts used in the social sciences. For example, consider the phrase <medieval urban economy>. This phrase may show various logical functions, each of them being relevant for scientific discourse. Suppose (i) that you are involved in historical investigation of the forms of economy that developed in Europe. Within the framework of your investigation, you can

use the phrase <medieval urban economy> to refer to a single phenomenon, which is an historical instance of an economy. So, the phrase is used in some individualizing way; it has the cognitive value of a historical concept. Now, suppose, on the contrary, (ii) that the very same phrase occurs within the framework of historical investigation devoted, say, to the city of Nürnberg during the Middle Ages. In this case, the cognitive function of the phrase <medieval urban economy> is not to distinguish a single phenomenon among the mass of historical facts. Rather, it is to characterize some cultural phenomenon in some generalizing way: <Medieval urban economy> is no longer a token of the <urban economy>, yet the <city of Nürnberg> is a token of the <medieval urban economy>. In this case, namely when used in some generalizing way, <medieval urban economy> should be regarded as a sociological concept. This is, importantly, the *same* concept *from the perspective of content*: In both cases, it grasps the same cultural phenomenon or it refers to the same portion of reality. However, the concept is used in two different and opposed directions. If it is used as a mere description or name for a given individual object, it is a historical concept. If it is used as an ‘auxiliary mean’ to capture some explanatory connexions within the sphere of culture, it is a sociological concept:

The concept of some sense-configuration [*Sinngebilde*] is a historical concept if we apprehend and state in it this individual as realized at some fixed point in cultural life; it is a sociological concept if we take it to be a concept of understandable-possible connexions and in its subsequent function as a cognitive mean for the knowledge of historical connexions.<sup>51</sup>

This suggests that relying upon Rickert’s two-level epistemology might be one way of integrating Von Kries’ theory of objective possibilities into reflections upon concept

formation in the social sciences. The notion of objective possibility captures the generalizing dimension of the social concepts, while the notion of cultural, axiological or meaningful phenomena captures their domain of application. As Oppenheimer states:

In the form of the ‘objective possibility’, we found the method of sociology; in the historical configurations, we found its material. All the difficulties related to the conceptual determination of sociology as a generalizing cultural science converge and resolve in the ‘structure’ of these two features.<sup>52</sup>

In the remainder of this chapter, I want to outline some implications of this interpretation regarding the nature of social concepts.

### **SUBSUMPTION, GRADUALISM, COMPARISON**

Let me recall of the three families of concepts I introduced above:

- (f.1) Force, Mass, Speed, Mineral, Mammal, ...
- (f.2) Italian renaissance, Napoleon, French revolution, German empire, ...
- (f.3) Feudalism, Capitalism, Economic exchange, Democracy, ...

The leading question for the neo-Kantian interpretation of Weber, I suggested, was the following: What is the nature of social concepts, that is, concepts pertaining to (f.3)? Do they indicate an intrinsic typology or specificity?

For Rickert, clarifying the nature of a concept is a matter of logical investigation. Yet the word ‘logical’ should not be understood too narrowly. It refers to the active procedures or methods by means of which the scientists appropriate empirical reality and elaborate a theoretical discourse in relation to it. Weber can plausibly be understood to have inherited this view. For him too, clarifying the ‘logical status’ of a concept is nothing but clarifying the way it relates to the portion of empirical reality to which it refers.<sup>53</sup>

From Hans Oppenheimer’s position, it may be suggested that this relation must be described as a relation of subsumption. In contrast to historical concepts, sociological concepts are not individual concepts, but concepts showing a certain degree of generality. A particular social group, historically identifiable, falls under the concept, for example, of <feudalism>.

Conversely, one can say that the notion of <feudalism> is instantiated by such a socially existent and historically identifiable group. In this regard, sociological concepts operate in a manner analogous to that of natural concepts: They subsume this or that portion of reality.

There is, therefore, a ‘structural sameness between ideal type and natural concept’.<sup>54</sup>

But DCT also suggests that sociological concepts should not be *identified* with natural concepts. This is precisely to capture this fact that Oppenheimer introduces the notion of gradualism. Consider the natural concept of a <mammal>. To be sure, it makes sense to say that one given animal – say, my dog – instantiates the concept of a <mammal>. Yet, it is absurd to say that my dog is more or less a mammal, or that it is a mammal in a lesser extent than the cat of my neighbourhood. To put it differently, the subsumption relationship, when natural concepts are concerned, is nongradual. In a slightly more formal way:

(Non-Gradualism) For every object *O* and every natural concept *F*, either *O* instantiates *F* or *O* does not instantiate *F*.

Sociological concepts, Oppenheimer suggests, do not work like this. They are general but, in opposition to the natural concepts, they express cultural *values*. Now, a value is something like an ‘ideal’, which is likely to be *more or less realized in the world*. When we speak of something that embodies some values, thus, this values-embodiment may show various degrees. A given social group, which is historically determined, can possibly instantiate the concept of <feudalism> in a more exemplar way than another given social group. In the same way, a given capitalist system may be said to be more or less representative of the capitalist values than another. In this case, the relationship between concept and reality is not an *either-or* relationship, but a *more-or-less* relationship.

However, this interpretation is not without its difficulties. One could object that the very idea of a gradual subsumption is so weird that one can hardly make sense of it. The issue is that gradualism is not *prima facie* compatible with subsumption. Indeed, it is tempting to think that, if the relationship between social concepts and cultural phenomena is subsumptive, then it is not gradual, and conversely (if it is gradual, then it is not subsumptive). How are we then supposed to understand the relationship at issue?

One way of escaping the difficulty would be to replace the question-begging notion of ‘gradual subsumption’ with the much less problematic notion of ‘comparison’. The concepts of ideal types, it could be argued, are precisely obtained by ‘comparative generalisations’, that is by isolating and exaggerating the *most representative* features of the social phenomena, rather than by picking out their common features.<sup>55</sup> The appeal to the notion of comparison,

which may also be found later by Carl Hempel,<sup>56</sup> would offer the advantage of capturing the various relationships at issue by means of distinct terms: The phenomena of our surrounding world should be said to be *subsumed* under natural concepts, *described* by means of historical concepts, and *compared* with ‘ideal types’ by means of social concepts. So, the three families of concepts I introduced above would ultimately correspond to three ways of elaborating the phenomena: *subsuming*, *describing*, and *comparing*.<sup>57</sup>

## **SOME LESSONS**

The chapter began by outlining the following puzzle: Given its fragmentary and multi-faceted character, how can we obtain a unified picture of Weber’s methodology? More specifically, how are we to seek to understand the fact that Weber’s methodology shows the equally strong presence of a naturalistic dimension, due to the influence of von Kries theory of causal imputation, and a strong anti-naturalistic dimension, due to the influence of Rickert’s theory of concept formation? Should we make a choice between those two paradigms?

Oppenheimer’s neo-Kantian interpretation, I suggested, offers one potential approach which enables one to escape these exegetic perplexities. The central element of this interpretation lies in an often-neglected aspect of Rickert’s approach itself, namely, in his two-level methodology. As we have seen, the possibility to combine investigations of cultural phenomena with a generalizing ‘direction of interest’ is at the centre of Rickert’s methodology. Given this possibility, I think there is no need to choose between the two paradigms mentioned in the opening section. On the one side, Von Kries’ theory of causal imputation is compatible with the generalizing orientation shown by sociological investigations: Sociology aims at discovering general connexions within the realm of cultural



phenomena. As Oppenheimer expresses it, it is a science of *connective possibilities* between cultural phenomena. On the other side, the idea that sociological investigations involve ‘value-relations’ fits with their anti-naturalistic dimension: Such investigations concern cultural or meaningful phenomena, i.e., phenomena that are regarded as realizing some values. On the basis of this interpretation, both the naturalistic and non-naturalistic elements deserve equal recognition and emphasis since it is their *combination* which distinguishes sociology as a generalizing cultural science.

While this interpretative reconstruction requires further, more detailed elaboration, in relation to the entirety of Weber’s œuvre, it nevertheless is already of pertinent interest for several reasons. In particular, and to conclude, it enables one to indicate both the specificity of concept formation in Weberian social science and its implications for the juridico-political.

First, the pertinence of the proposed reading is not merely of a default option or of an interpretation that should be adopted *faute de mieux*. Rather, a central rationale for adopting DCT is that it offers a challenging way of delineating the special character of social concepts. At stake is the specificity of the social sciences. Reflexions on this topic have been usually developed around the following alternative: *Either* the social sciences are subordinated, from a methodological point of view, to the ‘nomothetic’, natural sciences, *or* they are subordinated to the historical, ‘idiographic’ sciences. Yet, there are probably some good reasons to think that such statements are ‘untenable under closer examination’.<sup>58</sup> The interpretation of Hans Oppenheimer that I have reconstructed here suggests that there might be a third way of dealing with the methodology of the social sciences. From the perspective of DCT, the social sciences are *neither* a branch of the historical sciences *nor* a branch of the natural sciences. They have, instead, to develop their own methodological character autonomously and, thus, to

establish their specific place or domain within the sphere of the empirical sciences as a whole. I do not pretend that this demand of autonomy is perfectly sound in itself.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, it is certainly part of the neo-Kantian approach: On the view held by Hans Oppenheimer, the meaningful character of the cultural phenomena *transforms* the generalizing concept formation, which is proper to the natural sciences, into *another kind of generalization*, which is proper to the social sciences.<sup>60</sup> This original approach seems to me to be appealing enough to deserve more than a minimum of consideration.

Second, the proposed reconstruction might illuminate Weber's evolution from his first works, as a historian of law, to his methodological and sociological writings. As we have seen, one central idea of Rickert's bi-dimensional epistemology is that the very same *material* may be considered from several perspectives and may, thus, be subject to a scientific elaboration in various directions. This is what I have called 'teleological pluralism', whose introduction may be traced back to Windelband. Weber's progression from legal analysis to sociological investigations might precisely be understood in the light of this distinction between the *material* and the *perspective* from which it is elaborated. As Weber himself suggests in the 1910 meeting of the German Sociological Association, the very *same* legal rule (*Rechtssatz*) that was studied from a 'dogmatic' perspective, namely as a 'general norm', receives a social signification as soon as it is considered from another, non-legal (sociological, economical or political) perspective, namely as the expression of an objective probability. It '*is*' therefore 'something quite different' depending upon the perspective we choose to adopt.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, it must be noticed that, for Weber, there is a progression from the legal or 'dogmatic' perspective to the sociological perspective and not conversely. The reason is that the content of the legal rules benefits in principle from a higher degree of '*logical clarity*', and is,

therefore, superior to their sociological meaning.<sup>62</sup> This is why it qualifies as a good starting point for sociological investigations.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, on an exegetic note again, this reconstruction also places the Weber-Rickert relationship in a new perspective. Following Hans Oppenheimer, there is a certain *analogy* (not an identity) between Rickert's and Weber's methodological reflexions. Rickert's theory of historical concepts aims at demonstrating that *historical* sciences require a distinctive type of concepts, which contrasts with the kind of concepts used in natural science – hence the title of Rickert's book, *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* (whose translation would be correctly rendered as *The Limits of the Concept Formation Proper to Natural Science*). Similarly, Weber's Ideal Types Theory arguably aims at demonstrating that *social* sciences, in turn, require a distinctive type of concepts, which are differentiated by their contrast with both natural and historical concepts. On this analogy, Weber's theory of sociological concepts should not be regarded as a theory of 'the limits of the concept formation in *social* science', as it has sometimes been claimed,<sup>64</sup> but, rather, as one which entails 'the limits of the concept formation in *natural* and *historical* sciences'.

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I am very grateful to Peter Langford for his patience and his valuable help in the revision of previous drafts of this chapter, as well as for his assistance for the English translation.

<sup>1</sup> J. Von Kries, 'Über den Begriff der objektiven Möglichkeit und einige Anwendungen desselben', *Vierteljahresschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie* 12 (2-4), 1888, 179–240, 287–323, 393–428. Weber refers to Von Kries in several passages of his first methodological writings. See, e.g., M. Weber, 'Kritische Studien auf dem Gebiet der kulturwissenschaftlichen Logik', part II: 'Objektive Möglichkeit und adequate Verursachung in der historischen Kausalbetrachtung' (1906), in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* (= *GAW*), Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 7<sup>th</sup> ed., 1988, p. 269. For an excellent reconstruction of Von Kries'

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influence on Weber, see M. Heidelberger, 'From Mill via von Kries to Max Weber: Causality, Explanation, and Understanding', in F. Uljana (ed) *Historical Perspectives on Erklären and Verstehen*, Dordrecht: Springer, 241–66.

<sup>2</sup> H. Rickert, *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1902. See, among many other commentaries, A. Von Schelting, *Max Webers Wissenschaftslehre. Das logische Problem der historischen Kulturerkenntnis. Die Grenzen der Soziologie des Wissens*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1934; Th. Burger, *Max Weber's Theory of Concept Formation. History, Laws and Ideal Types*, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1976; G. Oakes, 'Max Weber and the Southwest German School: Remarks on the Genesis of the Concept of the Historical Individual', in W. Mommsen, and J. Osterhammel, (eds) *Max Weber and his Contemporaries*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1987, 115–31; *id.*, *Weber and Rickert. Concept Formation in the Cultural Sciences*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988; P.-U. Merz-Benz, *Max Weber und Heinrich Rickert. Die erkenntniskritischen Grundlagen der verstehenden Soziologie*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 1990; Fr. Bianco, 'Vita activa und Vita contemplativa. Zur Auseinandersetzung Heinrich Rickerts mit Max Weber', in E. W. Orth, and H. Holzhey, (eds) *Neukantianismus. Perspektiven und Probleme*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1994, 296–308.

<sup>3</sup> E. Massimilla, *Max Weber zwischen Heinrich Rickert und Johannes von Kries. Drei Studien*, Köln: Böhlau, 2012 (this is the German translation of *id.*, *Tre studi su Weber. Fra Rickert e Von Kries*, Roma: Liguori, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> See H. Oppenheimer, *Die Logik der soziologischen Begriffsbildung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Max Weber*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1925.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Burger, *op. cit.*, p. x.

<sup>6</sup> Hans Oppenheimer himself, it must be noticed, did not pretend to offer an 'historical presentation' (*historische Darstellung*) and 'non-falsified reproduction' (*unverfälschte Wiedergabe*) of Weber's view, but rather an 'interpretation' and a 'systematic foundation' (*systematische Unterbauung*) of the Ideal Types Theory 'and therewith of the Weberian sociology as a whole' (Oppenheimer, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–8).

<sup>7</sup> H. Rickert, 'Max Weber und seine Stellung zur Wissenschaft', *Logos* 15 (2), 1926, 222–37, here p. 229.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., D. McIntosh, 'The Objective Bases of Max Weber's Ideal Types', *History and Theory* 16 (3), 1977, 265–79; G. Wagner, and H. Zippran, 'Methodologie und Ontologie: Zum Problem kausaler Erklärung bei Max Weber', *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 14, 1985, 115–30. Reprinted under the title 'Max Weber und die

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Neukantianische Epistemologie', in H.-L. Ollig (ed) *Materialien zur Neukantianismus-Diskussion*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987, 184-216. English version: *id.*, 'The Problem of Reference in Max Weber's Theory of Causal Explanation', *Human Studies* 9, 1986, 21-42.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, S. Eliaeson, 'Influences on Max Weber's Methodology', *Acta Sociologica* 33 (1), 1990, 15-30; S. Turner, 'Weber and His Philosophers', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 3 (4), 1990, 539-53; Heidelberger, *op. cit.*; Massimila, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Eliaeson, *op. cit.*, 22.

<sup>11</sup> Wagner and Zipprian, 'The Problem of Reference...', *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Oakes, *op. cit.*; Merz-Benz, *op. cit.*; Bianco, *op. cit.*; M. Havelka, 'Bis zu welchem Punkt kann man Max Weber neukantianisch lesen?', in E. W. Orth, and H. Holzhey, (eds) *op. cit.*; H. Bruun, 'Weber On Rickert: From Value Relation to Ideal type', *Max Weber Studies* 1 (2), 2001, 138-60; S. Wöhler, 'Das heterologische Denkprinzip Heinrich Rickerts und seine Bedeutung für das Werk Max Webers. Die Einheit der modernen Kultur als Einheit der Mannigfaltigkeit', unpublished thesis, University of Erfurt, 2001; Massimila, *op. cit.* For a recent and extensive overview of the literature on Weber and Rickert, see Massimilla, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>13</sup> See M. Weber, 'Roscher und Knies, und die logischen Probleme der historischen Nationalökonomie' (1903-06), in *GAW*, p. 4, footnote; *id.*, 'Die "Objektivität" sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis', in *GAW*, p. 146, footnote. As for the correspondence, the most famous, often-quoted passage comes from a letter Weber sent to his wife in March or April 1902. See Marianne Weber, *Max Weber. Ein Lebensbild*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1926, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1987, p. 273. Bruun (*op. cit.*) gave an interpretation of this letter in the light of an unpublished fragment coming from notes Weber took in January 1903 in Nervi (Italy).

<sup>14</sup> Von Schelting, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Typical proponents of this view are Burger, *op. cit.*, and Oakes, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Turner, *op. cit.*; J. Drysdale, 'How are Social-Scientific Concepts Formed? A Reconstruction of Max Weber's Theory of Concept Formation', *Sociological Theory* 14 (1), 1996, 71-88; Heidelberger, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Bruun, *op. cit.*, as well as *id.*, *Science, Values and Politics in Max Weber's Methodology*, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007, pp. 211 sq. (this is the new, updated edition of *id.*, *Science, Values and Politics in Max Weber's Methodology*, Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1972).

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- <sup>18</sup> E. Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme*, 1<sup>st</sup> book: *Das logische Problem der Geschichtsphilosophie*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1922; reprinted in *id.*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3, Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1977, p. 566.
- <sup>19</sup> For example, Wagner & Zipprian, ‘Methodologie und Ontologie...’, *op. cit.*; Heidelberger, *op. cit.*
- <sup>20</sup> Massimila, *op. cit.*, pp. 144 sq.
- <sup>21</sup> H. Rickert, ‘Über die Aufgaben einer Logik der Geschichte’, *Archiv für Philosophie*, second section: *Archiv für systematische Philosophie* 8 (2), 137–63, here p. 163; *id.*, *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis. Einführung in die Transzendentalphilosophie*, 6<sup>th</sup>, revised edition, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1928, p. 429.
- <sup>22</sup> Rickert, *Die Grenzen...*, *op. cit.*, 1902, p. 4.
- <sup>23</sup> Heidelberger, *op. cit.*, p. 242.
- <sup>24</sup> Notable supporters of this view are Burger (*op. cit.*), Oakes (*op. cit.*), and Drysdale (*op. cit.*).
- <sup>25</sup> Weber, ‘Die “Objektivität”...’ (1904), in *GAW*, p. 185.
- <sup>26</sup> See the multiple editions of Rickert, *Die Grenzen...*, *op. cit.*, 1902, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 1921, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. 1929 (reprinted with an introduction by R. A. Bast (ed), Hildesheim: Olms, 2007); ‘Über die Aufgaben...’, *op. cit.*; *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 6-7<sup>th</sup> ed, 1926.
- <sup>27</sup> Rickert, ‘Max Weber...’, *op. cit.*, pp. 227 and 231.
- <sup>28</sup> F. Oppenheimer, ‘Tendencies in Recent German Sociology’, *Sociological Review* 24, 1932, 1-13, 125–37, 249–60, here p. 10. On the reception of Rickert’s *Grenzen...*, see A. Dewalque, ‘Heinrich Rickert’s Philosophy of History and Its Reception 1896-1936: An Annotated Bibliography’, in Ch. Krijnen (ed) *Neukantianismus-Forschung Aktuell*, online edition 2012.1, 10-22.
- <sup>29</sup> S. Eliaeson, ‘Value Orientation and the Secularization of Post-Enlightment Social Science’, *History of the Human Sciences* 25 (3), 2012, 3-31, here pp. 8-9.
- <sup>30</sup> Weber, ‘Die “Objektivität”...’ (1904), in *GAW*, p. 146.
- <sup>31</sup> Rickert, *Die Grenzen...*, *op. cit.*, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 1921, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. 1929, p. XXIII–IV: ‘After he has read the three first chapters of this book and seen that what I demanded for the history was not “Gestalten” like Windelband but individual *concepts*, he also considered my tentative logic of the history as *unworkable* (*nicht durchführbar*).’

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<sup>32</sup> See Bruun, ‘Weber on Rickert’, op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> The most significant part of the literature has focused on the first full-edition of Rickert’s major work, *The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Sciences* (1896-1902), to the exclusion of other texts by Rickert. This limitation might eventually prove to be unsatisfactory. Relying on passages from Weber’s famous biography by his wife (Marianne Weber, op. cit., p. 216), and from Weber’s own correspondence, some commentators recently began to enlarge the research field by including other texts by Rickert, such as, ‘Das Eine, die Einheit und die Eins’ (Wöhler, op. cit., pp. 7 sq.) or ‘Les quatre modes de l’ “universel” dans l’histoire’, which undoubtedly is of special relevance for the understanding of Weber’s methodology (see Massimilla, op. cit., pp. 35–104). Cf. H. Rickert, ‘Les quatre modes de l’ “universel” dans l’histoire’, *Revue de synthèse historique* II/2 (5), 1901, 121–40 ; reprinted in *Les Études philosophiques* 2010 (1), 9-23. Original German Text: ‘Die vier Arten des Allgemeinen in der Geschichte’, in Rickert, *Die Grenzen...*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. 1929, 737–54.

<sup>34</sup> Rickert, ‘Über die Aufgaben...’, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>35</sup> Rickert, *Die Grenzen...*, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 1921, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. 1929, p. XXIV.

<sup>36</sup> Rickert, ‘Max Weber...’, op. cit., p. 228.

<sup>37</sup> H. Oppenheimer, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>40</sup> W. Windelband, ‘Geschichte und Naturwissenschaft’ (Rectoral Address, University of Strasbourg, 1894), reprinted in *id.*, *Präludien. Aufsätze und Reden zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte*, vol. 2, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 9<sup>th</sup> ed. 1924, 136–60, here p. 139. Rickert explicitly acknowledged his debt to this text, see, e.g., *Die Grenzen...*, first ed. 1902, p. 302, footnote.

<sup>41</sup> Windelband, op. cit., p. 139.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>43</sup> G. Mehlis, *Lehrbuch der Geschichtsphilosophie*, Berlin: Springer, 1915, pp. 120–1: ‘Every meditation on the logic of history starts with the opposition between object and goal.’

<sup>44</sup> Windelband, op. cit., pp. 142–3; see also *id.*, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), first ed. 1914, second ed. 1920, p. 242 ; Rickert, *Kulturwissenschaft...*, op. cit., ed. 1926, p. 10.

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<sup>45</sup> Windelband, ‘Geschichte...’, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>46</sup> See A. Dewalque, ‘À quoi sert la logique des sciences historiques de Rickert?’, *Les Études philosophiques* 2010 (1), 45–66, in particular p. 59.

<sup>47</sup> Rickert, *Kulturwissenschaft...*, op. cit., ed. 1926, p. 15; *Die Grenzen...*, op. cit., ed. 1929, p. 27; ‘Geschichte und System der Philosophie’, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 40 (1931), 7-46 (first part), 403–48 (second part), reprinted in *id.*, *Philosophische Aufsätze*, R. A. Bast (ed), Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 231–317, here p. 236; for a more detailed reconstruction, see Dewalque, ‘À quoi sert...’, op. cit.

<sup>48</sup> Rickert, *Kulturwissenschaft...*, op. cit., ed. 1926, p. 56, footnote.

<sup>49</sup> Rickert, *Die Grenzen...*, op. cit., ed. 1929, p. xxiv.

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., M. Weber, ‘Kritische Studien...’, in *GAW*, pp. 275 (*Isolationen und Generalisationen*), 279 (*Generalisierung*), etc.

<sup>51</sup> H. Oppenheimer, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>53</sup> Burger, op. cit., p. 155. Weber’s Ideal Types Theory may be regarded as a ‘rational reconstruction of a procedure in use’ (*ibid.*, p. 160).

<sup>54</sup> H. Oppenheimer, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>55</sup> Troeltsch, op. cit., p. 566: ‘Above all, [Weber] has clarified the important layer of the relatively nomothetic and relatively idiographic concepts, that is the historical concepts of laws, types and levels, by introducing to this purpose the doctrine of the “ideal-typical” concept formation. All such comparative generalizations (*comparative Verallgemeinerungen*) would not be mere abstract and generic concepts (*Gattungsbegriffe*) of the features that appear everywhere, but characterizations of the general direction [of investigation] through the most representative, [...] ideal case.’

<sup>56</sup> C. Hempel, *Fundamentals of Concept Formation in Empirical Science (International Encyclopedia of Unified Science, vol. I-II: Foundations of the Unity of Science)*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., 1964, p. 54.



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<sup>57</sup> Of course, such distinctions should not be regarded as exhaustive. The concepts used in the legal sciences, it could be argued, show a normative dimension that implies in turn another type of relationship – say, a relationship of *conformity*. Yet, this is not the place to develop such considerations.

<sup>58</sup> A. Schutz, ‘Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences’, *The Journal of Philosophy* 51 (9), 1954, 257–73, here p. 258.

<sup>59</sup> In opposition to this approach, emphasis could be put on the collaborative and heteronomical dimension of the empirical sciences. This collaborative dimension is not at all absent from the neo-Kantian picture offered by Hans Oppenheimer. It manifests itself, for example, through the idea that social concepts may serve as means for pursuing historical investigations. The development of this line of thought, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

<sup>60</sup> See H. Oppenheimer, op. cit., pp. 87–8, 95. The result is an *Entnaturalisierung der Soziologie* (ibid.).

<sup>61</sup> See the retranscription of Weber’s reply to Kantorowicz in the *Verhandlungen des Ersten Deutschen Soziologentages*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1911, 323–30, here pp. 324–5. In sociology, Weber insists, the calculation (*Rechnen*) of probabilities is not in any sense replaced by valuation (*Werten*). In this respect, sociology is very much like the natural sciences. According to the proposed reconstruction, their difference simply lies in the considered material: here the cultural (‘meaningful’) phenomena, there the natural (‘meaningless’) phenomena.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>63</sup> Weber’s evolution may be understood in the light of this principle. As suggested by Melot, ‘the place of the reflexion on the law in Weber appears to be very illuminating to explain the construction of a conceptual terminology which is proper to sociology’ (R. Melot, ‘Le capitalisme entre communauté et société : retour sur les travaux d’histoire du droit de Max Weber’, *Revue française de sociologie* 46 (4), 2005, 745–66, § 2).

<sup>64</sup> Eliaeson, ‘Influences on Max Weber’s Methodology’, op. cit., p. 18.