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Max Weber as Philosopher: The Jaspers–Rickert Confrontation

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Abstract
Heinrich Rickert and Karl Jaspers were two philosophers who knew Max Weber well. Rickert was a life-long friend and colleague whereas Jaspers became a close friend only in Weber's last decade. Despite their affection for Weber, they were often at odds with each other, especially over the question whether Weber was a philosopher. Rickert held that he was not, on many grounds, while Jaspers insisted that he was, if even a philosophy. By looking at the Jaspers–Rickert confrontation we can learn much about two of Weber's closest friends, but, more importantly, more about Max Weber himself.

Keywords: Weber, Rickert, Jaspers, philosophy, neo-Kantianism

Weber's death in 1920 profoundly affected his friends but did nothing to alter his reputation as the 'myth from Heidelberg' (Glockner 1969: 100-14). His death intensified people's efforts to come to a better understanding of who Max Weber was. Heinrich Rickert and Karl Jaspers were two very close friends of Weber's who had strongly opposing views of him. 'If only Weber still lived' each of them complained, not only because of their personal loss, but also because each believed that Weber would validate their convictions: for Rickert that meant traditional systematic philosophical thinking; for Jaspers that meant replacing systematic philosophy with a new philosophy of existence (see Glockner 1969: 113-14). For Rickert, Weber was interested in certain philosophical questions but was no philosopher. For Jaspers, Weber was a philosopher, if not philosophy incarnate. Their disagreement about Weber turned into a confrontation, not simply regarding the question of whether Weber was a philosopher, but on the larger question of who Max Weber was. In what follows I will set out the Jaspers–Rickert confrontation, not only because of its historical value, but also because it may lead us to a better understanding of Weber.

Few scholars have investigated the relationship between Jaspers and Rickert regarding Weber. Neither Jaspers nor Rickert are even men-

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tioned in Reinhard Bendix's *Max Weber* (1977). Dieter Henrich concentrated on Weber's methodological writings and thus touched on the topic (Henrich 1952). Scholars such as Guy Oakes and Wolfgang Schluchter frequently simply make use of Jaspers (see Oakes 1988: 9, 167 n. 3; Schluchter 1996: 1-2). H.H. Bruun tackles the question whether Weber was a philosopher but does not address the Jaspers–Rickert confrontation. Gustav Ramming devotes three pages to the topic, but does not shed much light on it. (See Ramming 1948: 85-88). Despite this neglect, the Jaspers–Rickert confrontation goes to the heart of the question regarding Max Weber as philosopher.

The Background

Heinrich Rickert was born in Danzig in 1863 but spent his childhood and youth in Berlin (Ollig 1979: 59). Weber, born a year later in Erfurt, also grew up in Berlin. Both were sons of prominent political men. During their years in Berlin their paths must have crossed occasionally. Writing in 1926 Rickert says that as boys Weber's wealth of knowledge intimidated him (Rickert 1926b: 110). Although they did not appear to encounter each other very often at Berlin University, when they did Rickert's high regard for Weber's intellect and knowledge were reinforced. Like Weber, Rickert attended other schools—in 1885 he went to Strassburg where he studied under Wilhelm Windelband. He received his Dr Phil with the dissertation *Zur Lehre von der Definition* ('On the Doctrine of Definition'). In 1889 he moved to Freiburg where he earned his *Habilitation* under Alois Riehl with *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis* ('The Object of Knowledge') and became a *Privatdozent*. He became an 'extraordinary' (associate) professor in 1894.

Weber joined Rickert in Freiburg in 1895 where the men and their wives established a firm and lasting relationship (Weber 1988). August Faust wrote that Max Weber was one of Rickert's closest friends (1936: 215). Marianne Weber writes that Max was impressed with the sharpness and clarity of Rickert's *Zur Lehre von der Definition* and *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis* (Weber 1988: 204). She was the first woman at Freiburg to take philosophy courses and participated in Rickert's seminar and she reported to Weber what they had studied.

In 1896 Rickert, with Weber's help, became an 'ordinary' (full) professor and took over Riehl's position when he moved to Berlin (Rickert 1999: 437; Weber 1988: 204-206). The same year the Webers moved to Heidelberg. After recovering from his nervous breakdown Weber read Rickert's *Die Grenzen der Naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* ('The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science'), which had appeared in completed form in 1902. Again he was impressed with Rickert's work,

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writing to Marianne: 'I have finished Rickert. He is *very* good; in large part I find in him the thoughts that I have had myself, though not in logically finished form.' Weber's reservations concerned only his terminology (Weber 1988: 260). In 1915 Rickert succeeded Windelband at Heidelberg. In 1918 Weber moved to Vienna and the next year to Munich. Several months before his death, Weber returned to Heidelberg and met Rickert again (Rickert 1926: 109). Thus, Rickert and Weber had a friendship that lasted almost their entire lives.

It was very different with Karl Jaspers. Weber was in his mid 40s when he met Jaspers. Weber and Rickert were almost ready to become university students when Jaspers was born in 1883. He received his DMed in 1909 at Heidelberg where he met Weber. He was unable to habilitate in the medical faculty, but was able to do so in the philosophical faculty in 1913 with his *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (General Psychopathology). He did so under Wilhelm Windelband—Rickert's old teacher and co-founder of the Heidelberg school of neo-Kantianism. (Jaspers 1957: 23).

There is no disputing Weber's influence on Jaspers. Jaspers himself states that his *Allegmeine Psychopathologie* and even more his 1919 *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Psychology of Worldviews) were written under his influence (Jaspers 1957: 29). In some notes Jaspers admits, 'none of my philosophy was done without the thinking of Max Weber' (Henrich 1987: 529). Dieter Henrich concludes, 'the philosophy of Jaspers originated in the life and death of Max Weber' (Henrich 1987: 529). As much as this is so, Jaspers confesses that he was always very shy around Weber and never really discussed things with him (Kohler and Saner 1992: 661). He did admit occasionally to asking 'impertinent questions' Jaspers is silent on the question of whether Weber gave him *Narrenfreiheit* ('fools freedom') to say anything that he wanted (Jaspers 1957: 30). Rickert *had done so* and Jaspers says that from 1916 until 1920 they had interesting conversations. According to Jaspers, Rickert was really concerned about Jaspers saying to him: 'you sat down between two chairs, you have given up psychiatry but yet are not a philosopher?' (Jaspers 1957: 30). But, evidently Jaspers thought his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* was philosophical if for no other reason than it fit into the contemporary philosophical debates concerning *Weltanschauungen* (Lehmann 1943: 368).

The Confrontation

According to Gustav Ramming, Rickert thought of Jaspers as a 'psychologist' and Jaspers regarded Rickert as a *Fachmann* ('specialist') in

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philosophy (Ramming 1948: 87). Thus, there was bound to be confrontation between Jaspers and Rickert and it began after the calamity occurred—Weber's premature death. Ernst Troeltsch, Weber's close friend and colleague at Heidelberg wrote: 'What to the friends appeared totally unbelievable and impossible is true: Max Weber is really dead' (Troeltsch 1925: 247). Rickert echoed Troeltsch's remarks saying, 'In fact, it appeared unbelievable and impossible' (Rickert 1926: 109). For Jaspers, it was devastating: 'it was for me as though the world had changed' (Jaspers 1957: 32). Five days after Weber's death, Jaspers summoned enough courage to call on his colleague Rickert. Jaspers recounts that they both said emotional words over Weber's death and Rickert spoke of Weber's great personality and their friendship, but when he referred to Weber as his *Schüler* ('disciple'), his 'tragic wrecking of his work and the slight chance of any of his insights' Jaspers believed that 'the disaster had occurred' (Jaspers 1957: 32). He apparently lost control and blurted out:

> If you think that you and your philosophy will be known at all in the future, you may perhaps be right, but only because your name is mentioned in a footnote in one of Max Weber's works as the man to whom Max Weber expresses his gratitude for certain logical insights. (Jaspers 1957: 32-33).

It is not clear which footnote in which work of Weber's Jaspers had in mind. It was very likely the first footnote to Weber's 'Die "Objectivität" in der Sozial-wissenschaftlicher und Sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis' (translated as '"Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy') first published in 1904 in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* (*Archive for Social Science and Social Policy*) where Weber refers to work of the 'modern logicians', and above all to Rickert (Weber 1922: 146).

After Weber's death Heidelberg university rejected the notion of an official university commemoration. Instead, the student body organized its own and invited Jaspers to speak. As I will go into detail below, it just needs to be mentioned that Jaspers referred to Weber as a philosopher. Jaspers tells how he went to visit Rickert, who had just finished reading Jaspers' speech, when Rickert 'angrily addressed him' with: 'That you construct a philosophy out of Max Weber may be your rightful privilege, but to call him a philosopher is absurd' (Jaspers 1957: 33). From that time on Jaspers regarded Rickert as 'my enemy' (Jaspers 1957: 33).

Jaspers' Psychologie der Weltanschauungen

Jaspers writes of his last visit with Weber, when in leaving Weber said: 'I thank you; it was very much worthwhile: I wish you further productivity' (Jaspers 1957: 29-30). Weber was referring to *Psychologie der Weltan-*

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schauungen, which had appeared in October of 1919. In Jaspers' own copy there was a handwritten note where he elaborated on the April 1920 visit. Upon leaving Jaspers' house Weber said:

> 'Your book tempts one to dip into it here and there; I haven't read all of it yet.' (Of course!) 'It's very worthwhile.' (Really?) 'It's *very* worthwhile.—Thank you for the book, *thank* you.' Pause. 'I hope you will continue to be productive.—I shall comment on your book on another occasion.' (Kohler and Saner 1992: 792).

It is unfortunate that Jaspers never got to hear Weber's thoughts about the book.

Psychologie der Weltanschauungen is a lengthy and difficult work. Later Jaspers voiced some concerns about it and he regarded it as his first philosophical attempt. In the work itself he has little regard for philosophers and their philosophies and he contends that with this book he is embarking on a new path. He suggests that his only 'predecessor' was Hegel in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*Phenomenology of Spirit*); however, in Jaspers' view that work was fundamentally flawed because it was a systematic attempt to achieve the whole, which Jaspers conceives of as being a hopeless task (Jaspers 1919: 11, 42). Jaspers has an obvious dislike of systems. Systems are frozen and lifeless so he rejects the notion in favor of that which is flowing and full of life. In this he follows Kierkegaard and especially Nietzsche who of course follows Heraclitus. It is with approval that he refers to Fichte's claim that what type of man one is determines what type of philosophy one has (Jaspers 1919: 35). Jaspers' 'philosophy', then, is like Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's but also like Weber's 'philosophy'. I put 'philosophy' in quotations marks because Jaspers distinguishes among three general *Einstellungen* ('attitudes towards life'). There is the *kontemplative* ('contemplative') attitude of one who does not create but remains passive. There is the *mystische* ('mystical') attitude of one for whom there is no rationality. The ecstasy of the mystic lies in that absolute peace of merging with divinity and in giving up the 'ich'—the 'I' (Jaspers 1919: 103-104). Then there is the *activ* ('active') category. The active person is the dynamic one who fundamentally believes in *Kampf* ('struggle') (Jaspers 1919: 44). *Kampf* is a central motif in Jaspers' book and it recurs a number of times. (Jaspers 1919: 109-10, 192, 227). For Jaspers, Weber is the personification of someone who holds the active attitude.

Just as there are three types of 'attitudes' there are three types of philosophical thinkers: the 'showing' type who is interested in the 'afterworld', the 'substantial' type who is interested in concepts of reality, and the 'empty thinker' who can reach something positive only by way of the negative (Jaspers 1919: 187-88). Again, Jaspers makes it clear that he does

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not believe that any of the three philosophical types has any worth. He holds this view because to him all three types of thinker appear to reject the antinomical view of the world, that is, that the world is full of antinomies that cannot be reconciled (Jaspers 1919: 204-10). Mystics, religious people and philosophers all want antinomies and paradoxes to disappear because they cannot deal with them. In Jaspers' opinion, only Kierkegaard seemed to appreciate the paradoxes of life (Jaspers 1919: 214-17). Most people seek to avoid any confrontations with antinomies and paradoxes.

To clarify this claim Jaspers sets out four *Geistestypen* ('spiritual types'). One type is simply resigned to the ways of the world; another wishes to flee the world. Another is the religious-metaphysical type who seems to belong to one or the other of the first two. Jaspers approves of only the 'heroic' type, such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, for he is the one who comes to the consciousness of his individuality through struggle, suffering, and his responsibility for himself (Jaspers 1919: 225-26).

Jaspers claims that there are four different reactions to struggle. There are those who flee from the challenge, those who take it up as last resort, those who are willing to engage in it, and those who live for the challenge (Jaspers 1919: 227-28). The first would be Jesus with the Sermon on the Mount; the last would be Weber. The first believes in absolutes and in consistency, while the last believes in life and freedom (Jaspers 1919: 277-82, 289-93).

Again, to justify this observation Jaspers delineates three types of men: The *chaotische* ('chaotic'), the *rigoristisch-konsequente* ('rigorously consistent'), and the *dämonische* ('dämonic') (Jaspers 1919: 313). Jaspers' disdain for philosophers is again apparent when he maintains that the philosopher has as the highest principle the principle to be consistent (Jaspers 1919: 312). Jaspers has little sympathy for the 'chaotic' man because while he begins with strength he tends towards nothingness. He does approve of the 'dämonic' man because of his 'non-averageness' and his 'riddleness'. Here he includes Heraclitus, Socrates, Nietzsche and, surprisingly, Kant. It is surprising because he claims that the 'dämonic' man always meets the world with fragments (Jaspers 1919: 316). To this he opposes the 'consistent' man who believes in systems. Jaspers counts Aristotle and Hegel as 'consistent' men who believe in rationality. The 'dämonic' man lives happily in inconsistency, moving between 'all is right' and 'all is false'. And the 'dämonic' man has the answer to Tolstoy's question 'What should I do?'. The *Weltanschauungen* particularly gives the answer: you should live and live through to new crises; in a word: it demands that you be a 'dämonic' man' (Jaspers 1919: 319). This passage is crucial because it answers Weber's own question in *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (*Science*

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as Vocation), 'What should we do? How should we live?' (Weber 1992: 93). In effect, Jaspers is telling Weber how to live. The 'dämonic' man appears as a riddle—people do not understand him and the intensity with which he experiences life (Jaspers 1919: 334). This connects with another of Jaspers's threefold classifications: the realist, the romantic and the holy man. Whereas the romantic wills to himself and the holy man wills to the community of love, the realist (like Nietzsche) wills to power (Jaspers 1919: 381-87).

From the foregoing we can conclude that Jaspers approved of the active 'dämonic' man who approached reality with vital intensity. This is how Jaspers saw Max Weber and in many respects the picture is accurate. Jaspers writes like Weber when in the Foreword he maintains 'Who wants a direct answer to the question how one should live will seek it in vain in this book' (Jaspers 1919: v).[1] Yet, he also seems to maintain that to live like Weber was right, to live like Hegel was wrong. Jaspers was too cautious or too intimidated to say that to live like Rickert was wrong. Rickert believed that he needed to respond to *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*.

Rickert's Response

In 1910 Rickert along with Weber, Simmel, Troeltsch, Windelband and others founded the journal *Logos*. The subtitle is just as important as the title: 'The International Journal for Philosophy of Culture.' The first volume appeared in 1910/1911 with an introductory notice setting out the claims for it dealing with the philosophy of culture from an international perspective. The first article was by Rickert and centered on the concept of philosophy (Rickert 1910/1911). For Rickert, this also meant taking up the problem of the relationship between values and reality, a topic that had preoccupied him from the time of writing *Die Grenzen*. In the 1913 volume of *Logos* Rickert again took up the theme of values, but here he was also insisting on the *systematic* approach to them, hence the title 'Vom System der Werte' ('Of the System of Values').[2] He begins by quoting Nietzsche's comment: 'I mistrust all "*Systematiker*" and get them out of the way. The will to system is a defect to honesty' (Rickert 1913: 295). There is no need here to go into his objections to Nietzsche; the point is that he was aware of the anti-system attitude more than seven years before Jaspers referred to it.

1. 'Wer directe Antwort auf die Frage will, wie er leben solle, sucht sie in diesem Buche vergebens.'

2. Rickert stresses the importance of systems as early as 1892 in his *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis*.

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Rickert begins his article 'Psychologie der Weltanschauungen und Philosophie der Werte' ('Psychology of Worldviews and the Philosophy of Values') with a reference to Kant's 'Copernican' turn where he found 'objectivity' in the subject (Rickert 1920: 1-2). He notes that this leads to the question of what it means to be the subject. He reminds the reader that Kant rejected both the metaphysical notion of the soul of Cartesian rational psychology and the Humean 'positivistic' conception of the mind. For Kant, the important question was not what the soul/mind was but what it did. And that was to use concepts, which meant subsuming representations under rules. This leads to the question of validity, which Rickert connects with the question of values. He compliments Emil Lask, Richard Kroner and Bruno Bauch for having had many of these realizations (Rickert 1920: 2-5). Kant's subjective turn raises the issue about subjective values—are they then relative? Rickert says that the preceding remarks were preparatory to the discussion of the recently published *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Rickert 1920: 9). He notes that Jaspers was a recognized authority in abnormal psychology and had published a noteworthy book on psychopathology.[3]

Turning to *Psychologie* itself Rickert says that he will not deal with the totality of this important book but will rather center on the question of the relationship between the psychology of the *Weltanschauungen* and the philosophy of values. Rickert suggests that Jaspers correctly begins with a question regarding what psychology is, and that is because psychology as an empirical science was still in its infancy (Rickert 1920: 10-11). Jaspers had claimed that philosophy and psychology were closely related in that both looked at the universal and that both appeared to deal with *Weltanschauungen*. However, Jaspers believes that 'prophetic' philosophy is obsolete and that there is no 'true' philosophy—only logic, sociology, or psychology (Rickert 1920: 11-12). Rickert immediately raises the objection that Jaspers' delineation omits ethics and aesthetics. He also objects to Jaspers' claim regarding psychology's universal observation. But, he does allow that Jaspers insists that his work is merely a *Versuch* (an inquiry) and it is not a completed theory (Rickert 1920: 14).

Rickert moves to discuss Jaspers' treatment of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. He notes with some approval Jaspers' recognition of both of them as the greatest psychologists of *Weltanschauungen*. However, Rickert contends that both are, contrary to Jaspers' belief, part of the 'discredited' prophetic philosophy in that they both subscribe to a system of values.

3. Rickert also has a positive note where he listed Weber and Jaspers as *Spezialforscher* (special investigator) and gives high marks to Jaspers' *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (Rickert 1929: 558-59).

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Rather than go into this he turns to a discussion of *pathos* ('solemnity') that Jaspers connects with both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and especially with Max Weber. Rickert appears to question how much Jaspers understands Weber (Rickert 1920: 18).

Rickert now says that he cannot deal with Jaspers' total rejection of systems and so will limit himself to discuss only a section of the book (Rickert 1920: 21). He wonders about Jaspers' apparent distinction between 'systematic' and 'system' because he likes the first and despises the second. Rickert claims that Kierkegaard's dislike of Hegel's system stemmed from conceptual as well as religious grounds. Nietzsche's contempt for systems came from his 'philosophy of life' (Rickert 1920: 22). But, Nietzsche does have a system of values; otherwise he could not maintain his contention that *Beweglichkeit* ('movement') is better than *Starrheit* ('immobility'). Of course, this opposition between 'evolutionism' and 'stability' is the same as between Heraclitus and Parmenides (Rickert 1920: 26). And, as Heraclitus and others have maintained that life is chaotic, then the only way, Rickert emphasizes, to come from theoretical chaos to theoretical cosmos is through system (Rickert 1920: 24).

Much of the next ten pages of Rickert's article is his attack on the contemporary *Lebensphilosophie* with its preoccupation with biology. This he does at greater length in *Die Philosophie des Lebens* (*The Philosophy of Life* ([1920–1922]). In his preface to the second edition, he insists that in struggling against *Lebensphilosophie* ('Philosophy of Life') he serves the 'Life of Philosophy' (Rickert 1922: xiv). Part of Rickert's objection to *Lebensphilosophie* is its reduction or elimination of the importance of theory. He believes that Jaspers is a theoretical man and he believes that 'Happily Jaspers did not act upon his biological "*Weltanschauung*"'. He congratulates Jaspers: 'His book is scientifically highly interesting and is full of significance' (Rickert 1920: 34).

Rickert does have major objections. One is his complete rejection of Jaspers' linking of Kant to Heraclitus, Socrates, and Nietzsche. We know, he says, very little about the first two, but we certainly know plenty about Nietzsche and his dislike of Kant—whom he referred to as the 'Chinese from Königsberg' (Rickert 1920: 36). Furthermore, it is ridiculous to consider Kant, the man of the architectonic, as having written fragments. And his discussion of values is 'conspicuously incomprehensible' and may stem simply from animosity (Rickert 1920: 38). Nonetheless, Jaspers' book is an important book even if he does blur the line between philosophy and psychology. Rickert concludes by saying that he hopes Jaspers will move beyond the biological Kierkegaard–Nietzsche 'cage' towards a fuller understanding of philosophy. Rickert hopes that Jaspers will metamorphose from a 'psychological pupa' into a 'philosophical butterfly'

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(Rickert 1920: 42). Jaspers writes that he had given Rickert the proofs to *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* to read and that he thought that Rickert believed that his *Logos* article was a 'devastating critique' (Jaspers 1957: 30). This, however, seems a misinterpretation of Rickert's article. It is a careful review of Jaspers' book written as even he concedes in a 'friendly manner'. What Rickert objects to mostly is the lack of clarity in the work that causes so much confusion. In hindsight even Jaspers expressed dissatisfaction with its form (Jaspers 1958: 27). Rickert could have, and perhaps should have, treated Jaspers far more roughly. Instead, he still held out philosophical hopes for him.

Jaspers' Rede

Rickert should not have been so optimistic. Jaspers' *Rede* (Speech) given on 17 July 1920 proved that Jaspers was on a different course and was trying to develop a new type of philosophy. His 'existentialism' was based upon Max Weber (Jaspers 1989: 9). Jaspers sets out what Weber was *not*. He was not a stoic because apathy and peace of mind were foreign to him. He was not a Christian because for him the ethics of conviction from the Sermon on the Mount were crucial. Despite Weber's admiration for those who held to an ethics of conviction, for Weber working in the world demanded an ethics of responsibility (Jaspers 1989: 22). Jaspers quotes Weber's remark 'Thank God I am a German' and he notes that Weber was certainly a patriot.[4] However, Weber waited for the call to political action that never really materialized. Furthermore, he never sought power for power's sake —which for Jaspers is the mark of the true politician (Jaspers 1989: 16-18). In one passage Jaspers insists that Weber was *not* a scholar; however, earlier Jaspers suggested that Weber's interest in specialized science indicates that he thought Weber was one (Jaspers 1989: 23, 18). Jaspers makes the rather astonishing claim that 'Neither politics nor scholarship was of central, absolute importance to him' (Jaspers 1989: 20). And, while he claims that sociology was of paramount importance to Weber, he also maintains that Weber believed that most of what went by the name of sociology was 'fraudulent' (Jaspers 1989: 6, 20). Jaspers repeats his assertion from *Psychologie* that it is difficult to say what sociology is. For Weber, sociology was primarily the investigation into why capitalism arose in the West and that meant investigating the 'entire complicated system of causal connections' (Jaspers 1989: 6). Since sociology, like philosophy, deals with human self-knowledge, Jaspers wonders whether Weber's sociology is philosophy

4. The German reads 'Ich danke Gott daß ich als Deutscher geboren bin', 'I thank God that I was born as German' (Jaspers 1921: 16).

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under another name (Jaspers 1989: 7). This question leads us now to Jaspers' conception of philosophy and why he thought of Weber as a philosopher.

Jaspers begins his second paragraph of his *Rede* by saying that Weber 'appeared to many of us as a philosopher' (Jaspers 1989: 3). This is not the same thing as 'is a philosopher' for Jaspers would have known the Kantian distinction between appearances and reality (phenomena—as they appear to us; and noumena—as they are in themselves). Jaspers moves immediately to question his claim—'If he was…' Implicit in the *Rede* is Jaspers' distinction between the academic philosophers (the ones he denounced in *Psychologie*) and those who he calls the living philosophers. Seeing that Jaspers was in the Philosophy department it was hard for him to denounce all philosophers. He includes Rickert and Troeltsch in the former, whereas he puts Weber (and himself) in the latter. The living philosopher 'is therefore a human being who is always true to his personality, standing up for himself, wherever he sets himself up' (Jaspers 1989: 9). That also meant that Weber saw without illusions and demanded this of others as well of himself. His great moral authority and powerful temper often intimidated others, but he was quick to recognize this and to apologize that 'I make mistakes' (Jaspers 1989: 10-12). For Jaspers, the distinguishing mark of the Greeks was their capacity to listen to reason, which, given Weber's willingness to question and to listen makes him 'a Greek of high rank' (Jaspers 1989: 11). But, Jaspers insists that Weber would decline to be considered a philosopher. Philosophical questions were only means to other solutions. He was interested in it as logic, not as system. And Weber had no interest in the absolute or the whole (Jaspers 1989: 12-13). Jaspers concludes with the suggestion that Weber lived a 'philosophical existence' (Jaspers 1989: 26).

Rickert's Later Responses

In 1921 Rickert published the third/fourth edition of *Die Grenzen.* He dedicated it to the memory of his friend Weber and he took this opportunity to describe their professional relation. Like Jaspers, Troeltsch and others, Rickert did not yet want to say anything about their personal relationship—he would need more time for that. In contrast to Jaspers Rickert claimed that Weber was certainly both a scholar and a politician (Rickert 1986: 8). But like Jaspers Rickert suggested that he had a powerful personality that carried over to all aspects of his life, including and especially his scholarly work. Rickert recounts how Weber thought Windelband's distinction in his 1894 Rector's speech between nomothetic and ideographic knowledge would lead proponents of the latter to

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aestheticism. Weber was also extremely dubious about Rickert's own efforts to develop a logic of history. It was only after the publication of both parts of *Die Grenzen* in 1902 that Weber was convinced of Rickert's success. This was no idle boast by Rickert; Weber wrote to Marianne about the book that Rickert 'is *very* good' (Weber 1988: 260). Almost 20 years later Rickert wrote that as he was working on his *System der Philosophie* (*System of Philosophy*) that there was no one other than Weber that he could think of who could bring such a critical eye to his work (Rickert 1986: 10). Rickert emphasized Weber's philosophical abilities but he firmly rejected calling Weber a philosopher. First, Weber often stressed that it was not his intention to work in academic philosophy (Rickert 1986: 9). Second, it is virtually impossible to classify this 'incomparable man'. Thus, he takes issue with Troeltsch's claim to list Weber along with Windelband and Rickert as the three main figures of the southwest neo-Kantian school of philosophy (Troeltsch 1922: 565, Rickert 1986: 9). If these were true, Rickert says, 'We could take pride in it…' If Rickert had to classify Weber he would rank him as one of the greatest historians—with the added bonus of having a great desire for systematic thinking. If, in agreeing with Jaspers that Weber left primarily fragments, Rickert is of the opinion that only Weber's premature death prevented him from developing a system of 'sociology' (Jaspers 1989: 4-5, 25; Rickert 1986: 9).

Rickert returned to the topic of Weber in 1926 shortly after Marianne Weber published *Max Weber: Ein Lebensbild* (Translated as *Max Weber: A Biography*). In this book she drew a portrait of her husband and it prompted a number of approving responses. One was Rickert's piece in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on 16 June 1926 (Rickert 1926a). He later expanded parts of it and published it the same year in *Logos*. As Troeltsch had so accurately put it, with Weber's death the unthinkable had happened (Troeltsch 1925: 249; Rickert 1926b: 222). Rickert had seen Weber a few months before and Weber had said that he could work like he did 30 years earlier. From all those fragments it seemed that Weber could construct a 'whole' regarding social life. Rickert praised Marianne's biography because it fulfilled two tasks: it showed much of Weber's thinking as well as who he was. Those who never knew the 'Myth of Heidelberg' (Weber) could know him through this book (Rickert 1926b: 223). Undoubtedly thinking of Jaspers, Rickert wrote of those who rejected the conception of Weber as a political thinker and a specialist in history and sociology. Instead they embraced an image of him as a philosopher, a 'dämonic' type, even an '*Übermensch*' (Overman) (Rickert 1926b: 224). It is to Marianne's credit that she showed Weber as really being both a scholar and a politician. Rickert notes that Weber's name was associated

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with *Logos* from the beginning and he now makes it his task to discuss Weber's position in relation to *Wissenschaft*. He adds that because he is speaking of him as a friend he will refrain from all superlatives for they would not be to Weber's liking (Rickert 1926b: 225). He reminds his readers that he had known Weber when he was 'young, healthy, and joyful'—something that not many people 'today' could say. He recounts their time in Freiburg, Weber's illness and recuperation. He counts Weber's methodological works from 1904 to 1906 as extremely important but he believes that they were simply means to clarify historical and sociological problems. Rickert put it forcefully: 'Any thought to render sociology as "philosophy" always laid furthest from him' (Rickert 1926b: 228). In 1916 Rickert moved (at Weber's insistence) to Heidelberg where he found Weber profoundly altered. Seldom did his 'golden humor' break through, instead he 'carried an ascetic, indeed a dark streak' (Rickert 1926b: 229). His interests in *Wissenschaft* were not simply scholarly but were intended to lead to action. And that involved the sphere of values. However, what Weber desired was clarity regarding issues, not the contemporary inclination to illusions. Rickert quoted Weber's comment, 'Who wishes a show [should] go to a movie, who wants a sermon [should] go to a conventicle' (Rickert 1926b: 231).[5] Rickert suggests that many of Weber's important thoughts, including the rejection of being a 'personality' and his affirmation of the academic calling, are found in his 1917 Munich speech 'Wissenschaft als Beruf' (Rickert 1926b: 231-32).

Rickert concludes with a number of observations. Questions regarding the ultimate nature of man, between the active and contemplative 'sides', were foreign to him and he confessed to not understand them (Rickert 1926b: 236). According to Rickert Weber never wanted to be a philosopher and he was not a philosophical specialist. Nonetheless, all of his works, not just the methodical ones, are of exceptional importance to philosophy. Finally, Weber never solved the ancient question regarding the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*—but his thinking showed that this old question is also the most modern question (Rickert 1926b: 236-37).

Jaspers' Later Conception of Weber

In 1932 Jaspers published *Max Weber: Deutsches Wesen im politischen Denken, im Forschen und Philosophieren (Max Weber: German Essence in Political Thinking, Research, and Philosophizing*). In it he dealt with Weber's political and scholarly work, but what is of interest here is his discussion

5. 'Wer Schau wünscht, gehe ins Lichtspiel; wer Predigt wünscht, gehe ins Konventikel.'

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of Weber as philosopher. He confesses that Weber refused to be called a philosopher and that he taught no philosophy; nonetheless, he insists: 'he was a philosophy' (Jaspers 1989: 103). He also allows that Weber never philosophized 'directly, yet he was always concerned with clarifying ultimate standpoints and that usually meant exposing contradictions' (Jaspers 1989: 108-109). In this he was showing his contradictory nature (Jaspers 1989: 110-11). Yet, he was the personification of impersonal reason (Jaspers 1989: 117). Whereas earlier Jaspers had criticized Weber's obsession with politics, now he takes it to be central to his being. And for Jaspers that meant that Weber had an absolute belief in individual freedom (Jaspers 1989: 116, 119). If Rickert always stressed Weber's contemplative side, Jaspers has now moved to accent Weber's political side. Rickert's opinions of Weber occasionally did change during Weber's lifetime, but afterward they seem to have held firm. In contrast, Jaspers' views of Weber appeared to have changed only after Weber's death. It is only after Weber died that Jaspers seriously considered Weber a 'philosopher'.

Conclusion

In 1931 Rickert published a speech as a small book entitled *Die Heidelberger Tradition in der Deutschen Philosophie* (*The Heidelberg Tradition and German Philosophy*). In this work Rickert laid out criteria for belonging to this tradition. He noted the teacher–student relations beginning with Kuno Fischer to Windelband to himself to Emil Lask and their students (Rickert 1931: 4-7). He also claimed that two marks of the Heidelberg school were the emphasis on systems and on the past (Rickert 1931: 8, 15). The past is deeply connected to the 'one time', the particular, and the individual. This is not the same as the 'modern' thinking of Nietzsche with the emphasis on 'Life' and 'Existence'. It also has nothing to do with 'prophecy' as Weber the 'great historian and sociologist' called it (Rickert 1926: 10-11). Instead, it has to do with Hegel's 'courage of the truth'. And this also means that 'logic' is at the basis of the Heidelberg tradition (Rickert 1931: 12). By this, Rickert means that one must use logic to understand the past. This does not mean that the person is somehow 'timeless'; indeed Rickert denies this possibility and instead maintains that the philosopher 'always philosophizes as [a] child of his time' (1931: 17-18). He concludes that when the historian (Weber?) and the *Systematiker* (Rickert?) work together then there will be significant progress (Rickert 1931: 21).

In his *Autobiography* Jaspers voiced his frustration and anger at Rickert for leaving Jaspers' name out of the Heidelberg tradition. As he put it: 'I

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was ignored' (Jaspers 1957: 34). He complained that 'every young *Privatdozent*' was mentioned by name. This is a distortion—Rickert certainly did not list everyone, as always he was careful with facts. More importantly, Jaspers had always made it clear that he was not 'one of them' and had always moved to disassociate himself from the Heidelberg philosophical tradition. Rickert was correct to emphasize the tradition's preoccupation with system and history and he was equally correct to leave out Jaspers who was anti-system and who was more interested in the present and the future.

After Weber's death Rickert continued his attempt to formulate his own neo-Kantian system. And, for many years he continued to attract a following. Unfortunately, his real hope for philosophy's future, Emil Lask, was killed in the First World War. Ultimately his philosophy became outdated. Perhaps Jaspers was close to being correct about Rickert being remembered solely because of Weber—although there is a slight renewal of interest in him.

After Weber's death Jaspers worked on his philosophy of existence, publishing his three-volume *Philosophie* in 1932—the same year that he published *Max Weber.* Weber continued to be present in Jaspers' thinking, even when in 1936 he published *Nietzsche: Einführung in das Verständnis seines philosophieren.* (*Nietzsche: Introduction to the Understanding of his Philosophizing*). Rickert praised this book, telling Jaspers 'I consider it an excellent book, Herr Jaspers; it is, I hope you don't mind my saying so, a "scientific" book' (Jaspers 1957: 34). Jaspers does not tell us what his reply was to Rickert.

All his life Rickert wanted philosophy to be 'scientific' and that meant a closed system. Although Weber's methodological writings from 1903–1907 show interests similar to Rickert's, for Rickert Weber was not a philosopher. Weber's later writings indicate that his interests have shifted to larger sociological and philosophical questions. In *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (*Economy and Society*) he sought to write 'a universal historical scheme of all known civilizations' (Mommsen 2000: 373). And he had planned an article on Tolstoy's ethics for *Logos* (Weber 1998: 2, 250, 278). Perhaps Weber's most 'philosophical' work is *Wissenschaft als Beruf* for there he fights against illusions. He also takes up questions of ultimate values as well as Tolstoy's questions about life and death (Weber 1992: 87, 93). Jaspers took up many of Weber's themes from *Wissenschaft als Beruf* when he published his 1923 version of *Die Idee der Universität* (*The Idea of the University*). These include the importance of clear thinking and of self-knowledge. He also adheres to Weber's conception of a world of continuous change and struggle. Weber's *Wissenschaft als Beruf* is the first in a short list of works cited (Jaspers 1923: 81).

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The Jaspers–Rickert confrontation concerning Max Weber as philosopher tells us a great deal about both men, but it tells us even more about Weber. Both Jaspers and Rickert believed that they knew Max Weber well and each tried to defend his own philosophical conception of him. In *Nietzsche und das Christentum* (*Nietzsche and Christianity*) written in 1938 but not published until 1947, Jaspers links Nietzsche with Pascal, Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky. Like them, 'Nietzsche is not to be classified' (Jaspers 1952: 68). Jaspers often linked Weber to Nietzsche—perhaps Weber too defies classification.

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