Rickert, Heinrich, *Unmittelbarkeit und Sinndeutung.* Aufsätze zur Ausgestaltung des Systems der Philosophie. J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck). Tübingen 1939. (xviii and 185 pp.; RM 8.00)

The essays collected in the present volume have, with one exception, appeared in the *Logos*. They are closely interconnected, constituting the prolegomena to the second volume of Rickert's system, which was never completed. They aim at a doctrine of the constitutive forms of the "intelligible" world, which means, for Rickert, the Kosmos of all the empirical subject matters of the cultural sciences. At the same time, they set forth his views on "prophysics," the *prima philosophia.* The treatise on the "knowledge of the intelligible world and the problem of metaphysics" is preceded by discussions on the First in philosophy, the immediately given, and the relationship of the latter to the "understandable," the last concept occupying the central position in the whole book. During his late period Rickert was apparently very strongly impressed by Dilthey, although he does not once mention his name. He expressly polemicizes, however, against the "understanding" psychology and the doctrine of the "structural whole" (*Strukturzusammenhang*), trying to translate Dilthey's psychologism into a neo-Kantian theory of the objective spirit. The theme of the book is the problem of how a non-speculative knowledge of the objective spirit is possible.

The treatise on the "First in Philosophy" (*Vom Anfang der Philosophie*) is, in a certain sense, a counterpart to Husserl's *Méditations Cartésiennes:* "From a . . . psychological beginning which might vary greatly in character the critical thinker first tries to get at that which is absolutely certain in order to put it at the beginning of the system as the 'logically immediate.' So doing, he still has to leave undetermined that which is the beginning of the world or the ultimate ontological principle." (14) This comes very close to Husserl's method of reductions, the "phenomenological" reduction—which Rickert correctly characterizes as still a psychological one—and the "eidetic" reduction which is supposed to lead to that ultimate ontological principle. In Rickert's writing, Husserl's phenomenological residue bears the name "universal minimum." Both conceive the absolutely First as something that is "left over," as it were, as the profit of absolutely secure being which the philosopher can book after having written off the overhead of the categorical "work" of the mind. This minimum which, according to Rickert, is indifferent with regard to subject and object contains the postulate of the system and therewith the harmony of the world: ". . . from the very beginning philosophy takes it for granted that a structural totality of the world (*gegliedertes Weltganzes*) exists, and to this extent one is justified in saying of philosophy that it is more full of presuppositions than any other science." (16) Philosophy is defined *a fortiori* as a system. The identity of subject and object is stipulated, and it is only if that identity is valid that being as a whole fits without any leftover within the residue, as implied in a "principle which links up all parts into a structural totality" (*loc. cit.*).

Rickert's sharp-wittedness comes to the fore in the discussion of the "universal minimum." The criticism of one idealist philosopher very often

hits the weak spots of another. Thus Rickert is superior to Husserl in essential elements of the analysis of the ego, however much he is his inferior as far as conceptual differentiations and concrete richness within the abstraction is concerned. He has a more drastic idea of subjectivity than Husserl. He knows that the correlate of the "act," of the "givenness," of everything that Husserl would label as a mere datum, is a man who "means," to whom something is given, who finds something. Paradoxically enough, it is this very insight which makes Rickert more clearsighted against psychologism than the author of the *Logische Untersuchungen.* By "heterothetically" referring the immediately given to one's "own ego" he cannot any longer regard that ego as a mere form of organization of the data. The ego has to be added, to some extent independently, to everything objective and is therewith from the very beginning much more substantial than the ego is in Husserl's philosophy. This very substantiality, however, makes this ego fall victim to Rickert's critique. Starting from the ego as from "myself," Husserl sees the individual as unproblematical because the individual actually means nothing to him. Rickert, however, realizes that the "exceptional position therewith attributed to one's ego" (22) is accidental. His analysis of solipsism as the starting position of prima philosophia still shows traces of the great idealist tradition lost in phenomenology: "Why at the beginning of philosophy should I not think myself . . . alone with my ideas? . . . but everything depends on what is meant by 'alone' . . . alone means . . . as much as lonely, and this concept loses its meaning if one does not think of a community from which one has separated. It is precisely the ego that knows itself as alone, that is to say, as lonely, that must necessarily presuppose a community of other individuals coordinated to it by their being. There is not and cannot be a lonely ego qua 'world.'" (23) Rickert's insight goes even farther. He despises the easy way out, that of substituting the individual ego through a collective consciousness—in Husserl, "intersubjectivity." His *prima philosophia* leaves room for the experience of alienation: "We have an abundance of immediately given data of our consciousness which do not refer to persons and their interrelationships. Hence, even the content of a self-consciousness broadened into collective consciousness deteriorates into a mere particuliarity within the orbit of the immediately given." (25) He reaches the resolute formula that "we can never hope to penetrate from a mere piece of immediately certain data to the universal minimum." (25). Here, however, the movement of the concept slackens. Rickert is incapable of dissolving the belief in immediateness itself. The "abstract ego element" (*abstraktes Ichmoment*) of something which is utterly beyond objectification, which Rickert claims as the actual residuum, is indeed so abstract that it not only cannot be perceived as Rickert holds against phenomenology, but it cannot even be thought. With Rickert, too, the pure ego of idealism remains an impasse.

The transition from Rickert's *prima philosophia* to his theory of the "understandable" is made in the article "The Method of Philosophy and the Immediate," which is a critique of what Rickert calls "hyletic sensualism." This term covers every philosophic position which accepts only sensual elements as immediately given. Oddly enough, Rickert holds that Kant and Husserl also were guilty of such sensualism. Some misunderstandings are

involved at this point. Thus Husserl believes in a hyletic kernel of every knowledge but reckons the acts (*noeses*) as such, as well as the sensations, to be among the immediate data of consciousness. To be sure, he does not reckon among them the objects of the acts, that which is "meant" by them (*noemata*). These, however, are the things that matter to Rickert. Their totality coincides with his *mundus intelligibilis*. He takes over the object of the act with all its Husserlian characteristics, particularly the timelessness, but ignores Husserl's theory of act correlation and hypostatizes that which is "meant" by the act as an immediateness of its own. His uncritical attachment to the notion of immediateness leads to a confusion which is dispensed with only in the last sections of the book, in implicit contradiction with the middle section (Cf. also p. 89). Yet even this middle section contains some remarkable observations, notably that the historical is basically inaccessible to eidetic phenomenology (58). Almost Hegelian is the formulation against the "stream of experience" (*Erlebnisstrom*): "Without thinking a content to be the same content or within the form of identity . . . we cannot say anything about it at all. Even the idea of the 'stream' must presuppose identity in order to 'sublate' (*aufheben*) it afterwards." (67) The description of preobjective immediateness as a "state" (*Zustand*), however, betrays the limitation of this critical insight within the form Rickert gives it. In the identity of the state, the stream, the becoming, (das Werdende) freezes and Rickert's descriptive concept of "state" is seen to lack that potentiality of sublating itself (*sich selber aufzuheben*), the program of which he maintains.

The final essay puts the not quite humble question, "How can we achieve knowledge of the *mundus intelligibilis* in its proper being when we attempt as far as possible to distinguish it conceptually from the sensual world, and what place is taken in the whole of the world by the *kosmos noetos* thus grasped?" (114) The emptiness of any possible reply is prescribed by the nature of the question itself. Then comes a critique of the platonic doctrine of ideas. It is first arbitrarily transvaluated into a metaphysics of "understandable" being and afterwards rejected because of the transcendence of such a being. Rickert contrasts to it his own problematic "immediateness" of the intelligible. There follows a polemic against Dilthey, underscoring the objective spirit and playing off the timelessness of the *noemata* against the "psychological products" (*psychische Gebilde*): "We ought finally to learn fully to separate the psychological being of single individuals who perceive and understand from the content which is grasped through these, that which is perceived and understood, and which might go far beyond the psychological life of the individuals." (132) The chapter contains—one hardly believes one's eyes—a footnote about Proust, a rumor of whom has reached Rickert through E. R. Curtius. The novelist would have enjoyed the touching final passage of this reference: "Should poetry here precede science and show it new paths?" (134) In spite of such naiveties, however, Rickert still seems capable of some daring exploits. Thus he ascribes to the silent bodily world, as the bearer of understandable meanings, "language and face" (*Antlitz*). He maintains an objectivity of expression far beyond the range of human signs and reaches the conclusion "that the sensual material we need in order to find in it the matter of our knowledge of the intelligible world necessarily always must be allegorical." (147) The physiognomics of the objective spirit were not sung at the cradle of German neo-Kantianism. Such physiognomics

include genuine insights pertaining to the philosophy of language and music, for example, "that the poetic content of any structure of words that we call a poem is as little exhausted within the perceptible (that is to say within the sensuous representation of the meaning of the word) as the theoretical content of a scientific proposition." (149) This, incidentally, is the main idea of the significant but totally forgotten book by Theodore A. Meyer on the law of poetry (*Stilgesetz der Poesie*, 1901). Another example: "Particularly with regard to the sense of a melody the meaning of the individual tones show an analogous relation to the whole of the musical structure as the meaning of individual words do to the meaningful totality of a whole poem." (150) Put this together with Rickert's statement that music consists of tones "which do not enter as words" (*ibid.*) and you have implicit no less a conception than that of music as a non-intentional language *sui generis*. For the sake of such findings one is ready to forgive the fact that Rickert's theory of the intelligible finally evokes his theory of values, through the somewhat sad assertion that everything logically or aesthetically intelligible is either valuable or valueless.

What characterizes the strange book above all is the configuration of sagacity and weakness of thinking which is disclosed in it. Rickert has the merit of striving for precision and for unambiguity of concept within a realm which otherwise, under the title of "life," is the unprotected prey of chat. But again and again the formulations fall short of their aim either through emptiness or through obvious mistakes, as in the case of the "immediateness of the intelligible." There are objective reasons for this. Most of the arguments are belated auxiliary constructs for insights which cannot be "reduced" to basic facts but can only be won within theoretically explicit societal experiences. Hence Rickert's impotence. He either works with pseudo-deductions where nothing can be inferred from mere concepts, or he charges scientific induction with a task which it cannot possibly fulfill: "Hence in the realm of the intelligible, too, nothing is left to us but to attempt to come from the particular to the general. It ought not to be demonstrated expressly (!) that here, as in the sensuous world, we have to proceed towards a general that is more than relatively or conditionally general." (178) This demand falls back behind Kant. The impossibility of Rickert's system cannot be explained through the so-called irrationality of a life that itself is quite able to be permeated by reason. That impossibility has rational reasons of its own. The contradictions of "life" have taken possession of the concepts to such an extent that they are as little to be reconciled as life itself. The belief in their systematic reconcilability has become a mere superstition. To think the world as a unity, this thinking too much today, involves a thinking too little. Already, sharp-wittedness and weak-wittedness belong together.

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