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Max Frischeisen-Köhler's Vindication of the Material Component of Cognition

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Résumé : Cet article présente la philosophie des sciences de Max Frischeisen-Köhler, conçue comme une réponse critique aux néo-kantiens. Frischeisen-Köhler tire son enseignement à la fois de son professeur Wilhelm Dilthey et d'Edmund Husserl. Dans les quatre premières parties j'examine la critique que Frischeisen-Köhler adresse au néo-kantisme de l'École de Marbourg et à celui de l'École de Baden. Cette critique défend l'idée que la réalité joue un rôle dans la cognition en tant qu'élément totalement indépendant que la cognition doit reconnaître et qui ne peut jamais se développer en dehors de sa propre légalité. Dans la cinquième section, je m'attache à la phénoménologie de Frischeisen-Köhler. Sa thèse principale est que la réalité est expérimentée comme telle dans l'action, de sorte que notre conscience de la réalité ne provient pas de considérations théoriques sur les causes hypothétiques de nos sensations, mais de nos activités dans le monde en tant qu'agents. La science part de cette expérience pré-scientifique de la réalité. Je conclus par une critique de la distinction que Frischeisen-Köhler établit entre conscience en général et subjectivité individuelle d'un point de vue phénoménologique.

Abstract: In this paper I present Max Frischeisen-Köhler's philosophy of science, which he developed as a critical response to the Neo-Kantians. Frischeisen-Köhler drew on insights from both his teacher Wilhelm Dilthey and Edmund Husserl. In the first four sections I examine Frischeisen-Köhler's criticism of Marburg and Southwestern Neo-Kantianism. This criticism revolves around the view that reality factors into cognition as a fully independent element that cognition must acknowledge and can never construct out of its own intrinsic lawfulness. In the fifth section I focus on Frischeisen-Köhler's "phenomenology". His main thesis is that reality is experienced as such in action in such a way that our consciousness of reality does not stem from theoretical considerations about the hypothetical causes of our sensations but from our transactions in the world as agents. Science is thus founded on this

pre-scientific experience of reality. I conclude with a criticism of Frischeisen-Köhler's distinction between consciousness in general and individual subjectivity from a phenomenological viewpoint.

Our implicitly monumental way of writing and teaching the history of philosophy often effaces from view the work of thinkers whose merit isn't due to the invention of new concepts, but rather to the patient examination and appraisal of dominant philosophical trends in order to gauge their value and viability for future research. This kind of work is admittedly less spectacular, but no less important, and sometimes even more instructive than the solitary efforts of celebrated philosophical giants.

It is in this spirit that this paper sets out to explore the philosophical work of a forgotten early twentieth century German philosopher, Max Frischeisen-Köhler (1878-1923). Frischeisen-Köhler was a student of Wilhelm Dilthey in Berlin, where he received both his doctoral degree (1902) and his *Habilitation* (1906). After a period as *Privatdozent*, in 1915 he moved to the University of Halle where he was promoted to *Ordinarius* in 1921, just two years before his untimely death in 1923. His brief portrayal in the *catalogus professorum halensis*¹ describes Frischeisen-Köhler as an engaging teacher and esteemed scholar, whose appointment was strongly supported by the prominent Kantian philosopher Hans Vaihinger.

Frischeisen-Köhler was a prolific writer and an active editor. When he died prematurely at the age of forty-five he had published three major books and a handful of papers in some of the most important philosophical journals of his time, including *Kantstudien* and *Archiv für die Geschichte der Philosophie*. Moreover, starting in 1913 he worked as the editor of a short-lived but highly innovative project, the *Jahrbücher der Philosophie*, which published survey articles in the various subfields of philosophy. The *Jahrbücher* bear witness to Frischeisen-Köhler's encyclopedic and syncretic spirit, which enabled him to spot affinities and intersections between *prima facie* very different philosophical projects.

This last remark leads me straight to the philosophical substance of Frischeisen-Köhler's work. In this paper I will focus primarily on his *opus magnum* *Wissenschaft und Wirklichkeit* [*Science and Reality*] published in 1912 and on a few other papers dealing with the same issue. *Wissenschaft und Wirklichkeit* has two chief merits. First, it presents a wide-ranging and penetrating criticism of the two main schools of neo-Kantianism (the Marburg school and the Baden or Southwestern school) conducted from a Diltheyan standpoint. This is an extremely valuable contribution, one that Dilthey himself failed to deliver. In spite of extended criticism especially from Wilhelm Windelband [Windelband 1915] and Heinrich Rickert [Rickert 1926], Dilthey

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1. Online resource:

<http://www.catalogus-professorum-halensis.de/frischeisenkoehlermax.html>.

never managed to produce a sustained counter-criticism of the neo-Kantian approach to the demarcation of the sciences. Second, in *Wissenschaft und Wirklichkeit* Frischeisen-Köhler articulates a sophisticated version of what he calls “phenomenology” drawing heavily on Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* but combining it with insights about the structure of our consciousness of reality [*Realitätsbewusstsein*] stemming from his teacher Dilthey. Remarkably, one year before the appearance of Husserl’s *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* [Husserl 2014] and without having any access to Husserl’s unpublished manuscripts or exposure to Husserl’s lectures in Göttingen, Frischeisen-Köhler realized that the project put forward in the *Logical Investigations* could have a bearing on the theory of the empirical sciences over and above the clarification of the logical structures of scientific theorizing in general. Thus, it can be argued that Frischeisen-Köhler is the first philosopher to understand and bring to fruition the deep-seated affinity between Husserl’s and Dilthey’s projects, thereby showing a much keener philosophical instinct than, for instance, Georg Misch, whose book *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie* [Misch 1930] only manages to insist on differences and is still unduly considered the first study to have compared and contrasted these two traditions of thought.

I follow the structure of *Wissenschaft und Wirklichkeit* and start with a *pars destruens* where I present Frischeisen-Köhler’s critique of the two neo-Kantian schools. As the title of this paper indicates, the gist of this critique is a Kantian vindication of the matter of cognition, arguing that intuition (which, in a Kantian framework, delivers the matter of cognition) cannot be plausibly construed as a mere limit-concept to be further resolved into underlying logical processes (Marburg school) or as a mere chaotic residue that conceptual thought has to organize (Southwestern school). In his work on the foundations of the human sciences Dilthey had forcefully argued that in this theoretical domain we do not encounter inchoate jumbles of data that our intellect has to weave together on the basis of extrinsic hypotheses. Both at the individual and the communal level, the world of spirit [*die geistige Welt*] presents itself as a multifarious array of meaningful nexuses [*Lebenszusammenhänge*] that conceptual thought has to disentangle and clarify. In this context, intuition is not just a blind source of inputs, but rather a cognitively laden dimension, against which conceptual thought has to constantly measure itself up. Frischeisen-Köhler sets out to fully exploit and generalize this Diltheyean view, arguing that, in an appropriately modified manner, intuition has an independent cognitive import also in the investigation of nature. In the second part of the paper I move to the *pars construens* of Frischeisen-Köhler’s phenomenology. Unlike the Husserl of *Ideas*, Frischeisen-Köhler believes that a correctly executed phenomenology leads us to embrace a form of sophisticated realism. This is not the naïve realism of common sense, which takes things in the world to exist in exactly the way in which they appear to our senses. Frischeisen-Köhler’s brand of realism considers “reality” to be an ineradicable factor in our experience of the world, although it falls upon empirical science to determine what

this reality actually is like, thereby departing from the immediate deliverances of the senses [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906a, 252]. I conclude with a few remarks on strengths and weaknesses of Frischeisen-Köhler's phenomenology.

1 Frischeisen-Köhler's critique of Marburg neo-Kantianism

Frischeisen-Köhler indicates the central fixture of his inquiry in the "problem of reality" [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 4]. What does *Wirklichkeit* means? Do we have to posit things in themselves over and above the things we directly experience? How can we decide between the divergent theories handed down by the philosophical tradition (realism, phenomenalism, conscientialism, idealism, etc.)?

In order to begin to tackle the problem of reality, we need to take our departure in what Frischeisen-Köhler labels "the critical standpoint". This means, in a genuinely Kantian fashion: "Whether the task of our cognition consists in the grasp of a cognition-independent reality can only be decided from the standpoint of cognition itself, that is, only through an insight into the means of cognition". In this respect, the critical standpoint claims to be free of presuppositions. This claim, however, can be disputed if one considers cognition merely as an empirical fact pertaining to the psychology of human beings. If this were the case, then the critical standpoint would presuppose the validity of human psychology. On this point Frischeisen-Köhler sides with critics of psychologism such as Husserl and Riehl in rejecting the characterization of cognition as a mere psychological fact and accepts the autonomy of logical laws, however, with one caveat: in spite of their autonomy, logical laws are only accessible through our concrete experience of thinking [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 13].

Frischeisen-Köhler begins by setting out the most general principles of "pure thinking" that must be captured by a theory of reality: (1) *the concept of object*, as that toward which thought is directed; (2) *the positing of the object*, as a normative commitment to the validity of what is thought under the concept of object at hand; (3) *the determination of the object*, as the ability to establish and verify relations holding among the object's constitutive elements and among a plurality of objects [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 20–31].

However, the acknowledgment of these three components does not have any direct bearing on the problem of reality. They only determine the framework in which the problem of reality can be meaningfully posed.

The Marburg school of neo-Kantianism attempts to solve the problem of reality exclusively by way of elaborating on the logical functions of pure thinking. Frischeisen-Köhler therefore characterizes Marburg neo-Kantianism as "logical idealism" [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 34], in that it denies the existence of a thought-independent given [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 35]. There

is, of course, room for experience in the Marburg school's philosophical system, however, "experience" only names the nexus of that which has to be determined conceptually. In particular, sensory experience is considered to be accessible only through the mediation of ordering concepts, such as spatio-temporal systems of coordinates. As such, sensory experience does not play an independent role in cognition. Cognition is interpreted as a never-ending process in which the conceptual functions of thought articulate themselves and become increasingly complex. Frischeisen-Köhler quotes Cassirer's *Substance and Function* [Cassirer 1923] as the culmination of Marburger logical idealism, in that Cassirer replaces the old dualism of subject and object with a "series of levels in the degrees of objectivity within the one system of experience", such that the "core of the concept of reality is understood as the logical differences of the contents of experience and their integration in an articulated system of interdependences" [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 39]. In Paul Natorp's famous dictum: the given [*das Gegebene*] is actually nothing more than a task [*ein Aufgegebenes*] for cognition to solve [Natorp 1887, 282–283].

Against this "dissolution of the given into a phase of the process of cognition" [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 52], Frischeisen-Köhler argues that while it is perfectly plausible to consider all determination and order in experience to be reducible to a system of relations stemming from our conceptual functions, the *material* factor of cognition can never be deduced or somehow derived from such system. Evidence for the underivability of the material factor of cognition can be found, for instance, in the ubiquitous presence of *numerical constants* even in the most sophisticated and advanced scientific theories [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 43]. The logical idealist attempt to reduce the object of cognition to a determinable *X* within a systematic nexus of logical functions does not do justice to the fact that in actual cognition our logical apparatus "rubs against" a material factor that possesses a determination in itself, prior to and independently from the operations of thought. Moreover, constructivist theories like the Marburg neo-Kantians' tend to downplay the fact that scientific theories nonetheless have to relate back to factual situations that are fundamentally extrinsic to such theories. In Frischeisen-Köhler's words:

No matter how high up to ever more general laws theory ascends in its aspiration to comprehensiveness, since they are not meant to hold for an arbitrary possible world in general but for our unique world, these laws must entail a determination that expresses this relation to our world and makes possible to revert back to appearances in this world. [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 47]

Here Frischeisen-Köhler speaks of a characteristic historicity and facticity of the object of scientific cognition that logical reason has to take into account and cannot construct out of its own inner lawfulness. Full consideration of this point leads Frischeisen-Köhler to rehabilitate sensibility as an irreducible component in our scientific thinking. As he explains quoting Pierre Duhem as an ally:

We can only have sensations within spatial and temporal orderings and in relation to their kinds; but this does not mean that sensation is itself a relation. [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 54]

Frischeisen-Köhler explains this point with the example of the evolutions in our image of the Earth. We transitioned from the idea that the Earth is a disc, to the idea that it is a sphere, and further to the idea that it is a rotating spheroid. These are not just stages in a never-ending process of cognitive sophistication, but rather progressive adjustments motivated by the desire to harmonize what we think and what we see.

Frischeisen-Köhler's position does not amount to a crude empiricism or to a pre-critical realism, according to which the deliverances of our senses simply dictate what we ought to think. In accordance with Kant, he considers thinking as a spontaneous and independent force that brings its own intrinsic potential to fruition in cognitive acts, thanks to the objective validity of its own principles. A full embrace of this perspective, however, does not exclude the possibility of positing further categories that do not stem from the functions of judgment, but are phenomenologically ascribable to the very material of experience. The task of scientific thinking is thus the harmonization of the demands stemming from thinking's intrinsic lawfulness (logic) and the demands stemming from a phenomenologically grounded consideration of structures and categories rooted in sensory experience. Frischeisen-Köhler aligns himself here with a tradition of thought that goes back to Hermann Lotze's theory of first universals in the *Logik* [Lotze 1887, §14], is recast by Carl Stumpf in *Zur Einteilung der Wissenschaften* [Stumpf 1906, 37], and finds its most complete expression in the late Husserl's celebrated notion of passive synthesis [Husserl 2001]. In Frischeisen-Köhler's own rendition:

The "passive" sensations contain also those relations that, of course, thinking alone is able to develop, but that thinking does not create. [...] These relations can be only experienced alongside with sensations, albeit not as independent sensations in addition to the former. [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 91]

In a way that anticipates much later reflections by French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Frischeisen-Köhler speaks of a "tacit thinking [*schweigendes Denken*]" that operates in perception itself" [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 91].

2 Frischeisen-Köhler's critique of Southwestern neo-Kantianism on epistemology

It is now time to turn to Frischeisen-Köhler's critique of Southwestern neo-Kantianism, in particular, of Heinrich Rickert's monumental project of tran-

scendental foundation of science in *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* [Rickert 1929]. This critique is particularly significant, since it is Rickert, and not the Marburger, who subjected Frischeisen-Köhler's mentor Dilthey to the most scathing criticism. Frischeisen-Köhler thus takes it upon itself to vindicate his teacher's position.

The gist of Frischeisen-Köhler's critique of Rickert's philosophy of science is already present in two long articles published in 1906 [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906a,b]. The sections on Rickert in *Wissenschaft und Wirklichkeit* are lifted almost verbatim from these two articles. Compared to them, however, *Wissenschaft und Wirklichkeit* entails both less and more. A thorough paraphrase of Rickert's theses is omitted, but the discussion of Rickert's philosophy of science is prefaced by a critical discussion of his more general epistemological commitments as they are presented in the article *Zwei Wege der Erkenntnistheorie* [Rickert 1909] and in his Rickert's systematic work *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis* [Rickert 1928].

In both writings Rickert construes the object of knowledge as a *transcendent truth-value*, rather than a mind-independent reality. In very brief compass, when we issue the judgment “the cat is on the mat” (and supposing the judgment is true at the time of utterance) what we are affirming is neither the cat, nor the mat but rather the transcendent value “truth”, insofar as this value exerts its normative force on our thinking through the necessary connection of the elements in the complex presentation “cat-on-the-mat” [Rickert 1909, 186]. The subjective echo of the objectively valid truth-value is the feeling of evidence we directly experience in concomitance with the judgment [Rickert 1909, 188]. On Rickert's account, what elicits our approval in this case cannot be a being [*Sein*]. Mere facts do not possess normative force. Only something experienced as a *Sollen* can come forward as a demand and require our approval [Rickert 1909, 184]. This is why, as Rickert puts it, the object of knowledge grasped by true judgment cannot lie in the sphere of being, but only in the sphere of ought. The demand comes from an objectively valid value and not from a subjectively experienced being. While being is through and through a content of consciousness, i.e., it is experienced or at least experienceable in principle, only values for Rickert are genuinely transcendent, that is, only values exceed the scope of what is experienced through the senses and force the subject to go beyond consciousness in order to acknowledge them.²

Frischeisen-Köhler outright rejects this construal of judgment and cognition. First, he rejects Rickert's characterization of truth as a value and of judgment as a kind of valuation on phenomenological grounds:

Decisions about values [*Wertentscheidungen*] presuppose a reaction of feeling as their psychological foundation. We consider a thing agreeable because it arouses in us feelings of pleasure.

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2. For a more comprehensive account of Rickert's theory of judgment, see [Staiti 2015].

However, the decision about true and false is never a matter of feeling. The *feeling* of evidence or certainty is neither the psychological, nor the logical foundation that determines the affirmation or negation, or better, the decision about true and false. [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 120–121]

This is in essence the very same phenomenological distinction advocated by Husserl in an unpublished manuscript about Rickert's *Zwei Wege* essay [Husserl 1910] and later in the context of his lectures on ethics [Husserl 2004]. Husserl points out that "Windelband and his school" (read: Rickert), misled by the equivocal meaning of the word "value" and its derivatives, conflate the feeling-based activity of valuing and normative consciousness in general [Husserl 2004, 316]. Husserl continues:

The insight in which a logical truth is given to me, the process of grounding [*Begründungsprozess*] in which an intention is measured up against the corresponding insight and thereby acquires its normative status [*Normhaftigkeit*]³—these are not emotional acts [*Gemütsakte*], but rather acts of the cognitive sphere. In the same sense in which judging is not valuing, truth is not value. [Husserl 2004, 316]

The similarity between Frischeisen-Köhler's and Husserl's criticism is striking. Considering the abundant marks on his personal copy of *Wissenschaft und Wirklichkeit*³ Husserl may have been directly inspired by Frischeisen-Köhler in his later formulation of this line of thought. In sum, for both Frischeisen-Köhler and Husserl, Rickert's theory of judgment is based on a terminological equivocation and a phenomenologically untenable conflation of normative consciousness in general and valuation. This leads Rickert to falsify the phenomenological data and suggest that we experience some kind of psychological necessitation to judge when we are confronted with evident states of affairs [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 121]. True, as Husserl argues, we can always direct second-order intentions toward first-order acts of cognition and their correlates. Such second-order intentions can be the vehicles for feeling-based valuations. We can, for instance, rejoice at a scientific discovery. But such second-order intentions are not in turn cognitive acts and should not be conflated with the latter (see also [Husserl 1912, 156]).

Importantly, Frischeisen-Köhler agrees with Rickert that the object of knowledge lies beyond the mere given. This is the guiding principle of transcendental philosophy and "must be acknowledged" [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 127]. What Frischeisen-Köhler wants to suggest is that the object of knowledge sought after by scientific cognition need not be identified with transcendent values and norms. Simple perceptual intentionality is characterized by reference to a transcendent object that exceeds the manifold perceptual appearances through which it is given. This has nothing to do with cognitive judgments or

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3. Preserved at the Husserl Archive in Leuven, Belgium, under the code BQ 152.

value-consciousness. The given always points by itself beyond itself toward an object of which it is a manifestation. From Frischeisen-Köhler's perspective this fact about perceptual intentionality is reflected in natural science, which relates what is immediately given in our experience to entities that cannot be directly observed. Rather than simply ordering our sensations according to a priori principles—as Rickert's phenomenalist account seems to imply—natural science invokes unobservable entities such as atoms, molecules, forces, and the like. If one considers such unobservable entities pure figments or fabrications, then, Frischeisen-Köhler remarks, “physics and natural science in their entirety deal always and exclusively with these fabrications, to which they relate individual appearances” [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 138]. Like Stumpf [Stumpf 1906, 16], whom he quotes approvingly, Frischeisen-Köhler defends scientific realism *contra* positivistic and idealistic phenomenism.

3 Frischeisen-Köhler's critique of Southwestern neo-Kantianism on natural science

In spite of his rejection of Rickert's theory of judgment and the misleading implications it has for our understanding of science, Frischeisen-Köhler credits Rickert for his original contribution to another area of the philosophy of logic, namely, the theory of concept-formation in *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906a, 231].

As Frischeisen-Köhler recognizes, Rickert's work can be read as an attempt to develop and partly correct an insight originally put forward by Rickert's teacher Wilhelm Windelband [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906a, 228]. In his rector's address *Geschichte und Naturwissenschaft* Windelband famously rejects the distinction between *Geisteswissenschaft* and *Naturwissenschaft*, arguing that the overwhelming bulk of the human sciences do not deal with mental processes, as the word “*Geist*” suggests [Windelband 1980]. Moreover, if we consider the only science that fits the wording *Geisteswissenschaft*, i.e., psychology, it turns out that it works in a patently different way than other putative *Geisteswissenschaften*. Unlike, say, art history, psychology makes abundant use of experiments and quantitative models. Windelband suggests that we shift our perspective and demarcate different provinces of science first and foremost by reference to their methodological outlook. This shift leads him to distinguish between nomothetic and idiographic sciences, i.e., sciences that set out to determine general laws and sciences that set out to portray individual events. These two methodological tendencies correspond to the province of natural science and the province of history, respectively. In keeping with Windelband, Rickert speaks of the natural sciences as characterized by a *generalizing method*. The natural sciences form their concepts by disregarding

the individual, unrepeatable content of our experiences and looking only at lawfully regulated patterns that are common to an infinite number of individual occurrences. *Qua* generalizing, the natural sciences craft their concepts by departing from immediately experienced reality. On the contrary, history is characterized by an *individualizing method*, that is, it forms its concepts in order to grasp unrepeatable individual occurrences. *Contra* Windelband, Rickert refuses to characterize the method of history as idiographic because this term seems to downplay the fact that history, too, creates genuine concepts, and not just intuitive portrayals of past events. Thus, in keeping with the title of Rickert's book, individual reality is the limit of natural scientific concept-formation. A complementary kind of concept-formation is therefore both possible and necessary. This is the individualizing concept formation of history, whose grounding principle is, as mentioned above, *value*. According to Rickert, only the reference to culturally recognized values makes individual occurrences *relevant in their individuality*. Values thus function as criteria to select both the objects of historical inquiry and the elements in these objects that are relevant to the inquiry at issue. Suppose, for instance, that I decided to investigate scientifically the recent history of the United States. I would then have to choose events and people that are relevant to my narrative, and furthermore I would have to select the specific aspects of these events and people that are historically significant. I would probably choose to speak about Barack Obama rather than my best friend at high school, and to focus on Barack Obama's political career rather than the color of his suits.

Frischeisen-Köhler levels a number of critiques at Rickert's position, although he admires the consistency and systematic comprehensiveness of Rickert's approach. As for the natural sciences, Frischeisen-Köhler agrees that they are characterized by a tendency to generalization. However, the generalizing method is neither the *only* nor the *most significant* aspect of natural scientific concept-formation.

First, prior to all generalization the natural sciences employ an analytic method that does not depart from individual appearances but rather organizes and selects elements *within* them. Following Wilhelm Wundt, Frischeisen-Köhler calls this procedure "isolating abstraction" [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906a, 236], [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 153]. Isolating abstraction is a method to organize analytically the complex phenomena given in experience. The disregarded elements of a complex phenomenon are temporarily set aside but they can be retrieved at any time for the pursuit of different lines of research. This mode of thinking seems to be preeminent, for instance, in chemistry. To give but one example, the periodic table cannot be seen as the product of mere generalization from individual givens of experience. Different chemical elements must be abstractly isolated from experienced compounds before they can be generalized and systematized in the periodic table. A correct theory of natural scientific conceptualization should thus study the interplay of isolation and generalization, rather than focusing on generalization alone.

Second, both Windelband and Rickert seem to consider “generality” and “law-based necessity” as synonymous. Rickert is right that in order to be able to master theoretically the unsurveyable multiplicity of experience we need to be able to grasp individual occurrences as instances of universally valid natural laws. However, this does not follow from the notion of generality *per se*. Aristotelian forms would do the job as well. They, too, are characterized by generality in the sense that they pick out aspects of things that are taken to be eternally recurrent and common to an infinite number of factual individuals [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906a, 239]. But the system of Aristotelian forms is not a system of laws. Thus, law-based necessity in accordance with the principle of causality is an additional and crucial component of natural science that cannot be reduced to mere generality. Careful consideration of this fact adds weight to the overall argument of the book that the material of scientific cognition has an import of its own for the cognitive process. In fact, Frischeisen-Köhler argues, “only the content-related insight that an encompassing nexus of cause and effect constitutes the natural whole takes us beyond merely classificatory concept-formation to real concepts of laws” [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906a, 241]. In other words, the fact that we need causal laws as opposed to other forms of generality in order to investigate nature does not follow from a merely logical consideration of how we form concepts. It is based on the fact that the real nature we experience is causally structured and therefore amenable to law-based explanation.

Third, Rickert’s characterization of natural science as aspiring to ever-increasing levels of generality, all the way up to an “ultimate natural science” [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906a, 243–244] or what contemporary idiom would call a theory of everything, seems to forget two important things: (1) laws presuppose something which is not law and for which they hold; (2) even the most sophisticated and general scientific theories must allow for a “return to the particular” [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906a, 257]. For Rickert, since the physical world is a unitary whole, all natural sciences should be seen as elements of one overarching scientific system or as preparatory stages toward a unified general theory of the physical world. This, however, does not follow. It could be the case that the physical world only appears to be overall unified in immediate, pre-scientific experience, but upon scientific scrutiny turns out to consist of a plurality of mutually irreducible elements governed by a plurality of mutually irreducible laws. Frischeisen-Köhler invokes the fact of consciousness and its irreducibility to matter as evidence that the ultimate constituents of reality cannot be seen as law-based specifications of an underlying, more fundamental level.

Finally, Rickert’s argument that natural scientific concepts are unsuitable for the representation of individuals is disputable. Astronomy is a glaring example. It does not merely set out to determine general laws, but also their realization in a factually determined portion of reality. True, most natural sciences are not particularly interested in the determination of this or that particular occurrence in the world. However, this does not mean that their

concepts are intrinsically unsuitable to fulfill this task. In fact, several natural sciences do not only move from the particular to the general, but rather from the particular, to the general, and back to the particular.

4 Frischeisen-Köhler's critique of Southwestern neo-Kantianism on history

As for the historical sciences, Frischeisen-Köhler finds Rickert's insistence on value as the fundamental governing principle of historical concept-formation unwarranted. Recall that for Rickert value-relatedness is the ground of historically relevant individuality. Values are the principles that throw certain experienced objects into relief as unique individuals in contrast to value-free natural objects. In a passage from *Grenzen* Rickert tries to elucidate his view on this matter by comparing two objects: a lump of coal and the famous Koh-i-noor diamond. Both are individuals in the broad sense of being unique and unrepeatable occurrences in the world. However, only the Koh-i-noor is an individual in the etymological sense of being indivisible, or better, not-to-be-divided [Rickert 1986, 82–83]. The lump of coal can be destroyed and replaced at any time, but the Koh-i-noor will be carefully preserved from destruction. Rickert comments:

There is no doubt that it is only this difference between two kinds of individuals that is applicable to all bodies in such a way that, from this perspective, the entire physical world falls into two groups of realities. [Rickert 1986, 83]

Frischeisen-Köhler counters that Rickert's distinction is by no means convincing. There is a group of objects whose individuality rests on an inner principle of organization that is not value-related, and yet cannot be equated to inert physical things such as lumps of coal. These objects are living organisms [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906b, 456]. For living organisms the principle of unification is even more objectively grounded than for items like the Koh-i-noor, since it does not rest upon the observer's valuations but is inherent in the organisms' very existence. The kind of objective unity pertaining to living organisms is particularly prominent in psychophysical beings such as humans, whose psychic life, too, is governed by autonomous principles of unification that have nothing to do with values. If this is true, however, then Rickert's claim that the principle of value-relatedness is "the only difference" for a comprehensive demarcation of entities in the world is false. There is an even more substantive and significant principle: the presence or absence of a directly experienceable structural principle of unification in the entity at issue [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906b, 458].

Even if we assume for the sake of argument that value-relatedness does have some central function in historical concept-formation, it is not clear that it is *sufficient* (as Rickert would have it) to pick out historically relevant objects and, within these objects, historically relevant features. If the task of historical concept-formation is to produce knowledge about individuals, then before we select their historically relevant features we need a sufficiently rich description of such individuals, one that includes a broader number of features than the ones we can directly relate to values. According to Rickert's methodology, however, this preliminary characterization of the individual under consideration would have to enumerate features that by Rickertean standards are only relevant for natural-scientific purposes [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906b, 462], [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 164]. To stay with Rickert's example, suppose we decided to write an essay on the Koh-i-noor and its various historical vicissitudes. We would probably need to start by characterizing the diamond in terms of its extraordinary size, carat weight, and cut. These features, however, would not be listed for the sake of natural-scientific generalization but precisely in order to capture the individuality of *this* diamond. The enumeration of relevant features obviously presupposes our ability to subsume them under some general concepts, therefore, it presupposes the work of natural-scientific concept-formation. This has two fatal consequences for Rickert's argument: (1) individualizing concept-formation is independent from value-relatedness; (2) individualizing concept-formation is not independent from, but rather presupposes generalizing concept-formation.

Rickert's answer to this criticism is that Frischeisen-Köhler is right to highlight elements of generalizing concept-formation at work in the historical sciences [Rickert 1929, 438–439]. The fact that we use words having a *general* meaning to describe individuals is the most obvious example. However, in historical research the enumeration of qualities and features that are not value-related has a merely ancillary function vis-à-vis the overarching goal of grasping the value-related aspects of the individual(s) under scrutiny. To return to my earlier example, a meaningful inquiry about recent American history would likely include some reference to Barack Obama, and privilege his political views over the color of his suits. However, in order to characterize Barack Obama's overall personality a savvy historian might very well turn to consider in some detail his fashion style, thereby recurring to general concepts such as "color", "shape", and "textile". None of this would be historically relevant per se, but it would serve the purpose of enabling a better grasp of the historical individual "Barack Obama". Moreover, Rickert does acknowledge the detachability of individualizing concept-formation and value-relatedness. We can in principle form concepts of individuals that are not related to any value, such as a random pebble found on the street. This is because "individualization" is a logical, i.e., purely formal pattern of conceptualization, whereas "value-relatedness" is a substantive, i.e., material, characterization of an object-domain. Rickert's argument, then, is not that value-relatedness is sufficient for individualizing concept-formation, but rather that individual-

izing concept-formation is only *meaningful* for value-related individuals, and that for such individuals the enumeration of non-value-related features has a merely ancillary function.

A more to-the-point criticism revolves around the necessity of temporal individuation for historical objects. Frischeisen-Köhler argues that value-relatedness alone is not sufficient to conceptualize a historical object. We need to be able to locate the object at issue in historical time [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906b, 467]. Frischeisen-Köhler articulates here a position that finds its most complete expression ten years later in Georg Simmel's essay *Das Problem der historischen Zeit* [Simmel 1980] and is recast by Rickert's student Franz Böhm in the short book *Ontologie der Geschichte* [Böhm 1933, 114]. The point is that history is not just about understanding general *kinds* of events or personalities (such as "earthquake", "famine" or "tyrant"), but rather about the unique individuation of such general kinds in an unrepeatable time-venue. This makes for an added layer of meaning, which is genuinely historical without being derivable from mere elaboration on general historical kinds. In other words, the mere specification of a definite time-venue transforms, as it were, an otherwise natural-scientific concept into a historical concept. In Frischeisen-Köhler's terms:

For instance, in the formation of the concepts "earthquake" or "famine" [...] the consideration of generality was dominant. However, the earthquake of November, 1st 1755, which destroyed Lisbon, or the famine in Fulda in 750 AD denote specific individual events. [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 168]

Interestingly, the characteristics that set apart these two historical events from other earthquakes or famines are not explicitly stated by the simple indication of a historical time-venue. However, the addition of a temporal index to an otherwise ahistorical configuration of meaning ("earthquake" or "famine") inaugurates, as it were, the possibility of an historical investigation spelling out and conceptualizing these characteristics.

This last point leads to the core of Frischeisen-Köhler's critique of Rickert's view of historical concept-formation. If we ask how historians concretely go about spelling out these characteristics, it seems that reference to values plays no role. Frischeisen-Köhler argues that the real method of historical inquiry consists rather in *specification* [*Präzisierung*] and *differentiation* [*Angabe der Differenzen*]. As for specification, the historian will first want to determine the "variables" left open from the general meaning employed in her inquiry. For instance, the concept "famine" means a shortage of food affecting the population of a certain geographical area, but it leaves open what kinds of food were scarce, how many people in what geographical area were affected, and the like. In order to grasp the famine in Fulda the historian will have to fix these variables. Second, given a more or less explicitly determined "normal type" [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 469–470] (in the case of a famine, say, average number of deaths, social groups normally affected, typical political causes, etc.),

the historian will set out to determine how the event under scrutiny diverges from the normal type. If a description of the method by which historians form their concepts has to be more than a generic indication of their overarching theoretical aims, then it seems that specification and differentiation in Frischeisen-Köhler's sense are better candidates than Rickert's principle of value-relatedness.

Finally, Frischeisen-Köhler's takes issue with Rickert's positing of supra-historical values as criteria for the selection of historically relevant objects from the manifold of experience. Frischeisen-Köhler denies that there are such values. In keeping with the foregoing point about objects endowed with an immanent structure and in accordance with Dilthey's theory of the historical world, Frischeisen-Köhler argues that the principal concept of history is not "value" but rather "system" [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906b, 474] or, following Dilthey's later terminology, "effective nexus" [*Wirkungszusammenhang*] [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 176]. Historical events and persons are structured wholes of individual or communal life. They are, indeed, teleologically organized nexuses, but their governing principles are not timeless, supra-historical values. Effective nexuses are organized around goals and clusters of goals whose origin is in the concrete psychology of the living subjects involved, and as such they are inherent in such nexuses.

Positing a system of timelessly valid values is thus irrelevant to historical concept-formation. A correct understanding of the material under scrutiny, that is, the structural nexuses characterizing historical life, provides the criteria for its conceptualization. We can still call the goals governing the life of a historical person or community "values" but then these are not epistemic yardsticks employed by the historian in order to make sense of otherwise disconnected historical facts. Values in Frischeisen-Köhler's (and Dilthey's) sense are substantive structures of historical reality that the historian *finds* as givens in the material he or she sets out to understand [Frischeisen-Köhler 1906b, 475], [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 186].

5 Frischeisen-Köhler's phenomenology

Let us now move to the *pars construens* of Frischeisen-Köhler's philosophical project. The result of his critical *Auseinandersetzung* with the neo-Kantians is that:

Reality is neither a determination of thought, nor a recognized validity. [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 188]

This is, of course, only a negative determination. In order to attain a positive concept of reality it is imperative to clarify the enigmatic relationship of reality and consciousness. This is because "reality" is often defined in terms of independence from consciousness. However, given the equivocal nature of the

term “consciousness” what this definition actually asserts is unclear. A solid philosophical appraisal of reality must therefore begin with a clarification of the concept of consciousness.

Frischeisen-Köhler identifies two broad groups of theories about consciousness. One group conceives of consciousness as a “specific function that adds itself to the given” [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 194]. The other group considers consciousness as the sum total of all experiences, and thus as coincident with the given. Epitomes of the functional theories of consciousness are Descartes and Kant, while empiricists such as Hume and Mach are prominent exponents of the second group. Frischeisen-Köhler finds both groups of theories problematic. As for the functional theories of consciousness, Frischeisen-Köhler remarks, a distinction between consciousness *qua* thinking and the given is derivative and only arises in reflection. If I suddenly hear a sound, in this immediate experience there is no trace of a distinction between the sound as given and my consciousness of the sound as a separate component. The presentation of the sound and my consciousness of it are one. They can only be separated abstractly upon reflection. Empiricist theories of consciousness, on the other hand, fare no better. While they are correct in underscoring that in concrete pre-reflective experience the given has no superadded “consciousness” grafting onto it, as it were, empiricists unduly overlook the fact that reflection does reveal a duality of elements in experience, namely, a given and a consciousness of it. The fact that we normally do not live in the reflective mode does not invalidate the subject/object distinction invariably arising from reflection.

For Frischeisen-Köhler a phenomenologically correct view of consciousness has to strike a middle ground between these two groups of theories:

Every experience [*Erlebnis*] is accompanied by a kind of awareness [*Wissen*] that can be expressed in a specific judgment. This expression in judgment does not occur in the act of experiencing itself; however, it can certainly occur in an act of reflection directed upon the act of experiencing. In every feeling, in every sensation, in every action there is something equivalent to an existential judgment having this feeling, sensation, or action as its object. [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 199]

Should an existential judgment be factually expressed (e.g., “There is this feeling going on in me”), the corresponding act of judging would be accompanied by an implicit awareness of the same kind, which could be made explicit in a further existential judgment about the underlying act of judging, and so on *ad infinitum*. This means that consciousness *qua* implicit awareness of acts of experiencing “encompasses all contents to the same extent” [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 201]. For this reason, it is impossible to equate consciousness and thinking. Thinking, too, occurs *in* consciousness as much as feeling or willing.

Friseisen-Köhler considers the unity of consciousness and given in the act of experiencing as a basic fact that cannot be further accounted for:

This is the mystery of consciousness: consciousness is the condition of all experiences but it is itself not experienced. [Friseisen-Köhler 1912, 202]

Part of this mysterious unity has to do with the intrinsically *temporal* nature of consciousness. The main riddle pertaining to time and temporality, at least since Kant, revolves around their formal character. Is time experienced as the *form* of consciousness or as one of its *contents*, for instance, as particular temporal index attached to otherwise atemporal sensations? Insight into the original unity of consciousness and the given in the act of experiencing has the potential to dissolve this alternative:

[Time] is the form of being-given [*Gegebensein*] in general. Therefore it can never be detached from consciousness and its content. [...] Something present, an awareness that knows about this presence, and the presence itself are indivisible, and the given can always be characterized as content of consciousness and fulfillment of time [*Zeiterfüllung*]. [Friseisen-Köhler 1912, 214–215]

This conception of consciousness as immediate awareness and as indistinguishable from the given underwrites a distinctive interpretation of the “principle of consciousness” [*der Satz des Bewusstseins*], the principle according to which “all reality is given and determinable only as a content of consciousness” [Friseisen-Köhler 1912, 215]. The “consciousness” for which the principle can be meaningfully asserted “is not identical with the subject coming onto the scene in the accomplishment of judgment, in all objective cognition, and in all intentional experiences” [Friseisen-Köhler 1912, 221]. Accordingly, “the content of consciousness is not only a phenomenon for a subject [...]”. This consciousness is not *my* consciousness; there is nothing individual to it; it is present in all being as a component of it, it encompasses the totality of all experiences” [Friseisen-Köhler 1912, 221]. Crucially, however, this view should not be taken as a concession to idealism. For Friseisen-Köhler the demand of realism bears on the impossibility to remain stuck in the fragmentary processes of individual consciousness. Realism combats *subjective* idealism, i.e., the view that there is nothing beyond the experiences of an individual psychic subject.

The problem of realism is not the “transcendent”, but rather the “trans-subjective”. Realism does not relate the whole of experience to something independent from experience. Rather, realism relates the partial experiences of individual cognitive subjects to an object of cognition that is common to them all. [Friseisen-Köhler 1912, 229]

None of the entities realism posits are transcendent in the sense of being completely independent from consciousness in general. Evidence of this fact is that for centuries philosophical realism sat comfortably with a theological perspective according to which all beings essentially exist in God, who, in turn, is conceived of as an all-encompassing consciousness. Realism is concerned with the existence of a world that transcends the fragmentary experiences of empirical human subjects and not with the existence of a world that is thoroughly impervious to consciousness in general.

For the post-Kantian epistemologist, however, to say that everything exists as a content of consciousness does not have a theological coloring, as if “consciousness in general” named a divine onlooker or a ubiquitous *anima mundi*.

Rather, for us consciousness—from which we have to remove the character of subject, ego, or substance—is only the inescapable condition, from an epistemological standpoint, in order for something to be there in general. The whole world with its suns and stars and peoples and heroes is only a world of appearances, it exists only to the extent that it is in consciousness; but this consciousness is not mine, it is not yours. I am not the one to whom the whole world appears; for me and for you the world is full living reality, which encompasses both of us spatially and temporally in its totality. [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 251–252]

We must, then, very well concede that the world exists in consciousness, however, “being in consciousness” is nothing but “the most general predicate that we can assert of reality” [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 253], both the inner reality of acts of experience and the outer reality of the physical world. Therefore, the problem of reality has to be reformulated. The question is not whether there is a reality that is entirely transcendent vis-à-vis consciousness in general, or experience as a whole. The question is rather “whether and in what sense we are entitled to posit something trans-subjective as the immanent object of cognition beyond the circle of our own personal experiences” [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 267]. In other words, the problem of reality ultimately boils down to a rejection of *solipsism*, and not to a rejection of the standpoint of consciousness.

Frischeisen-Köhler argues that in light of the absolutely private character of our experiences, from a purely theoretical standpoint the reality of the external world is nothing but a necessary hypothesis, a presupposition that the fragmentary character of our sensory experience seems to require. For the philosopher asking theoretical questions about the trans-subjective object of cognition, reality is nothing more than a “necessary thought” [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 268]. This is because, according to Frischeisen-Köhler, the origin of our experience of reality is not in thinking but in action. It is in our capacity as agents, and not as contemplators, that we encounter reality [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 275]. The justification for our belief in the existence of a world of objects outside our private experiences thus precedes scientific thinking and

stems from life itself. By way of shifting from the theoretical to the practical in order to justify our belief in reality, Frischeisen-Köhler reenacts a move that is somewhat classical in German philosophy at least since Fichte's popular writing *The Vocation of Man*, where the very same shift occurs [Fichte 1981] for the very same purpose. Frischeisen-Köhler's mentor Dilthey took a very similar route in his early writing *On the Origin of our Belief in the Existence of the External World* [Dilthey 2010] in which he argues that the experience of something opposing *resistance to our will* underlies such belief. In spite of these historical precedents, Frischeisen-Köhler's point differs from both Fichte and Dilthey. Unlike Fichte, who argues that our inborn impulse to act requires a *leap of faith* in the reality of the world upon which action is directed, Frischeisen-Köhler argues that in action we have an original *experience* of reality and not merely a motivation to believe in it. The insistence on an original experience of reality, rather than a mere belief in it is also a point of differentiation from Dilthey, whom Frischeisen-Köhler nonetheless approvingly quotes [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 277, note].⁴

The most interesting and original aspect of Frischeisen-Köhler's contribution to this line of thought is his reliance on phenomenological and descriptive-psychological sources to support his argument. He takes it as an indisputable result of recent phenomenology to have identified two distinct components in experience. Different thinkers have referred to these components with different termini, such as content and act (Twardowski), sensation [*Empfindung*] and experiences [*Erlebnisse*] (Husserl) or appearances and psychic functions (Stumpf). These distinctions have a bearing on the problem of reality. From the agent's perspective the domain of appearances is experienced as a field of resistances and hindrances to the exercise of her own psychic functions. The impediment of some impulse is not experienced as an immanent development of the impulse itself, but rather as a something interrupting from the outside in concomitance with some modification of the sensory materials:

For the volitional ego appearances are not just phenomena, or better, they are not given only in relation to the ego; rather, they disclose to the ego something other, something that strives *against* [*entgegenstrebt*] the ego and that the ego experiences as something through which it feels itself *limited*, and with which it stands in reciprocal relation. [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 277]

For Frischeisen-Köhler it is important to underscore that the experience of resistance and counter-striving is *not* the premise for some kind of logical inference to the existence of reality. We do not posit reality as the unexperienced

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4. A parallel treatment of Dilthey's and Frischeisen-Köhler's concept of reality is offered in Josef Frings's doctoral dissertation [Frings 1927]. This is the only existing piece of scholarship (partly) devoted to Frischeisen-Köhler's theoretical philosophy. Unfortunately, the discussion of Frischeisen-Köhler is limited to a handful of pages and it is merely expository. Frings also does not address differences between Dilthey and Frischeisen-Köhler and treats them as endorsing the same position.

cause of the resistance we experience in action. Rather, “we *experience reality in action* [*wir erleben wirkend Wirklichkeit*]” [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 280].

Crucially, in this original experience the world itself shows up as “volitional”, that is, as a kind of counter-agent whose goals often clash with mine. For instance, the door “refuses” to open, the cork “doesn’t want” to come out. Ordinary languages are full of metaphors that point in this direction. These metaphors are not mere remnants of an archaic past dominated by animistic thinking. Rather, they bear witness to an original *living* experience of reality that continues to underlie our transactions in the world even at the most advanced stages of science and civilization. The original experience of reality as a volitional whole also short-circuits the problem of attributing a mind to other bodies. Recognizing other living subjects as volitional centers is nested in an overarching experience of the world as volitional; other subjects merely emerge as particularly prominent and self-governed sources of volitions within an overall volitional nexus.

This characterization of our experience of reality should not be taken as an irrationalistic celebration of action *against* thought and science. On the contrary, Frischeisen-Köhler points out that

science does not create reality or the object of its cognition in the first place. However, only through science does our awareness of the real surrounding us receive clarification, determination and coherence. [...] Our consciousness of reality is rooted in experiencing. However, a *concept* of reality arises for us only through thinking, i.e., through science. [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 311–312]

Frischeisen-Köhler’s adversary is not science, but only what he considers an overstatement of the function of science as can be found among the neo-Kantians.

In the last section of Frischeisen-Köhler’s book, the problem of reality is formulated as the problem of how such enhancement of our immediate experience of reality through science is possible. Frischeisen-Köhler tackles this problem by attempting a deduction (in the Kantian juridical sense) of the a priori principles for the cognition of nature. The premises underlying this deduction are: (1) experience is absolutely private (each subject only has access to his or her own experience; (2) scientific cognition is not about sensory appearances, but rather about common objects beyond such appearances; (3) factually, there is mutual understanding between different subjects. In keeping with Kant, the contingency and relativity of individual experiences can only be overcome on the basis of an objective system of relations [*Bezugssystem*] and of a universal causal order [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 318]. Starting from our immediately lived experience of coexistence and succession we can move to build a mathematically formulated spatio-temporal system, in which all of our experiences receive definite positions. Frischeisen-Köhler hastens to add that, unlike Kant, he is not committed to the view that space and time can

be treated as parallel magnitudes. Time is much more fundamental and, unlike space, does not admit of construction according to arbitrarily chosen sets of axioms. True, the advent of relativity in physics deeply transformed our conception of time. However, Frischeisen-Köhler argues, this transformation pertains more to how we think about *events* in time, rather than time itself. The basic temporal categories of duration, succession, simultaneity, etc., through which physical phenomena are intellectually accessible to us do not seem to be affected by transformations at the conceptual level as is the case with spatial categories.

Causality, on the other hand, cannot be derived from experience. However, for the reasons described in the above critique of neo-Kantianism, it cannot be reduced to an a priori category of thought either. Frischeisen-Köhler's opts for a *teleological* strategy of justification. Given the *goal* of mutual understanding among empirical subjects and given the subjectivity of immediate experience, spatio-temporality and universal causality *must* hold, in order for the goal to be attainable under the given circumstances. This position, however, is not meant to be just a vague form of pragmatism. The *objective* validity of these a priori principles is justified by their continual *confirmation* in our practical and experimental transactions in the world [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 344].

The same issue can be raised for the other “half” of the world, namely, the human or spiritual world [*die geistige Welt*]. Do we need to establish some a priori principles, so as to warrant the unity and intelligibility of the world of psyche and history investigated by the human sciences? In keeping with his teacher Dilthey, Frischeisen-Köhler answers this question negatively. Unlike the world of nature, the human world is *experienced* as unitary, first and foremost in each individual's self-consciousness [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 361] and then in the supra-individual phenomena of human culture writ large. This, of course, does not mean that historians merely have to reproduce historical reality. History, too, is a form of knowledge that presupposes a conceptual reconfiguration of the material under scrutiny. However, unlike natural science history does not need a priori principles in order to justify the applicability of its concepts to its object-domain, but only empirical hypotheses (largely of psychological nature) to navigate the complexity of living nexuses whose intelligibility is, so to speak, already secured from the start.

6 Conclusion

The result of our investigation is that all science relates to a reality, which constitutes the concrete content of science, entails the material of cognition, and can never be understood merely on the basis of the formal conditions of knowledge. [Frischeisen-Köhler 1912, 457–458]

For Frischeisen-Köhler reality factors into cognition not just as a limit concept, but rather as something determined that theoretical thinking sets out to conceptualize and not to create.

Frischeisen-Köhler's endeavor to articulate a version of realism in keeping with the tenets of Kantian transcendental philosophy has various merits. It avoids both the facile psychologization of the a priori characterizing early neo-Kantianism and the positivistic identification of the object of cognition with the object of sensation. However, Frischeisen-Köhler's clear-cut distinction of "consciousness in general" as the impersonal encompassing ground of all reality and individual psyche leaves a number of questions unanswered. Isn't the notion of a fully impersonal consciousness ultimately a wooden iron? Can we really make sense of it? The function of *Bewusstsein überhaupt* in Frischeisen-Köhler's argument is clear. It grants the overall accessibility of reality for theoretical thinking while acknowledging that individual subjects only have limited access to reality, thus requiring the patient work of science to make full sense of the world around them. No doubt, from an epistemological point of view *Bewusstsein überhaupt* is an extremely useful notion. However, the fact that it is useful does not make it automatically legitimate, let alone true. Frischeisen-Köhler's phenomenology thus seems to ignore the requirement of intuitive fulfillment at a crucial joint of its articulation. The complexity of this matter is well documented in Husserl's life-long struggle with the distinctions between transcendental, personal, and human subjectivity. Cutting the Gordian knot of subjectivity by removing individual selfhood from the transcendental dimension of consciousness is certainly an effective move, but one that a self-styled phenomenologist ought to resist.

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