

Arvi Grotenfelt and neo-Kantian philosophy of history

LAURI KALLIO*

Univ. of Turku, Finland

Abstract

The paper discusses Arvi Grotenfelt's (1863–1941), professor of philosophy in Helsinki 1905–29, reading of Heinrich Rickert's (1863–1936) philosophy of history. Rickert was one of the key figures of the so-called south-west German neo-Kantianism. In the center of attention of the south-west neo-Kantians was the topic that Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) himself had omitted: how to philosophically establish the humanities and the social sciences and separate them from the natural sciences? Rickert's philosophy of history was essentially an attempt to ground the historical knowledge in a strictly transcendental philosophy in the Kantian sense. His argumentation relied on his concept of value (Wert). Grotenfelt did not share Rickert's definition of values. According to his view, the fundamental foundation of our judgements of value is beyond scientific reasoning. I will also argue that Grotenfelt's standpoint has a general affinity to Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833–1911) philosophy of world view (Weltanschauung).

Keywords

Arvi Grotenfelt, Heinrich Rickert, Neo-Kantianism, philosophy of history, philosophy of values, Wilhelm Dilthey.

Abstrakti

Teksti käsittelee vuosina 1905–29 Helsingin yliopiston filosofian professorina toimineen Arvi Grotenfeltin (1863–1941) tulkintaa Heinrich Rickertin (1863–1936) historianfilosofiasta. Rickert oli yksi uuskantilaisuuden niin sanotun lounaissaksalaisen koulukunnan pääedustajista. Uuskantilaisuuden lounaissaksalaisen koulukunnan mielenkiinnon kohteena oli aihe, jonka Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) itse oli sivuuttanut: humanististen tieteiden ja yhteiskuntatieteiden

* Lauri Kallio (PhD University of Helsinki, 2017), post-doctoral researcher. His doctoral dissertation (*J.V. Snellmans Philosophie der Persönlichkeit*) discussed the philosophy of the most important Finnish Hegelian J.V. Snellman (1806–81) and the German Hegelianism of the 1830s. In his post-doctoral research Kallio has focused on the 19th Century idealist philosophy in Germany and in the Northern Europe. Over the past few years, he has worked in collaboration with the discipline of philosophy at the University of Turku. Email address: lauri.kallio@alumni.helsinki.fi.

filosofinen perusta sekä niiden eroavuus luonnontieteistä. Rickertin historianfilosofia oli pohjimmiltaan yritys perustaa historiallinen tieto kantilaisen transsendentaalifilosofian pohjalle. Rickertin argumentaatio rakentui hänen arvon (Wert) käsitteelleen. Grotenfelt ei omaksunut Rickertin määritelmää arvolle. Hänen näkemyksensä mukaan arvojen viimekätinen perusta ei ole tieteellinen kysymys. Osoitan myös, että Grotenfeltin kannalla on tiettyä yhtenevyyttä Wilhelm Diltheyn (1833–1911) maailmankuvan (Weltanschauung) filosofian kanssa.

Asiasanat

Arvi Grotenfelt, arvofilosofia, Heinrich Rickert, historianfilosofia, uuskantilaisuus, Wilhelm Dilthey.

Introduction: Grotenfelt and neo-Kantianism

Arvi (also Arvid) Grotenfelt (1863–1941), professor of philosophy in Helsinki 1905–29 and the chairman of the Philosophical Society of Finland 1905–36, made pioneering work in the philosophy of history in Finland. He was also the first to publish extensive commentaries on the history of philosophy in Finnish (Niiniluoto 2000, p. 181). His focus was particularly on the classic German philosophy.

Grotenfelt's standpoint in the philosophy of history was heavily influenced by the so-called south-west German neo-Kantianism, whose key-figures were Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1915) and his student Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936). In his main works on the subject Grotenfelt commented especially on the latter's views of history as a science. Grotenfelt was a frequent visitor to Germany, and he met both Rickert and Windelband in person at the mid-1890s (Luukanen 1988, p. 111).

In the center of attention of the south-west neo-Kantians was the topic that Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) himself had omitted: how to philosophically establish the humanities ('Geisteswissenschaften') and the social sciences and separate them from the natural sciences (Hösle 2013, p. 232; cf. Rickert 1899, p. 12)?¹ Rickert's neo-Kantian philosophy of history was essentially an attempt to ground the historical knowledge in a strictly transcendental philosophy in the Kantian sense (Schnädelbach 1984, pp. 56–7).

Worth noting is that although Grotenfelt shared the same interests as the south-west neo-Kantians, he was open-minded about the more positivist currents of thought of the time (Väyrynen 2017, p. 308).² Grotenfelt had studied in Wilhelm Wundt's (1832–1920) famous laboratory of experimental psychology in the 1880s. Probably (at least partly) due to non-philosophical and non-academic reasons (e.g. the political situation in Finland) (Luukanen 1988, pp. 105–6), Grotenfelt decided to leave the more positivist approach behind and focus on the philosophy of history.

¹ "For Kant [...] science meant mathematics and physics" (Bambach 1995, p. 92). See also Beiser 2011, pp. 366–7.

² South-west neo-Kantianism proceeded from anti-positivist sentiment, best exemplified by Windelband's famous lecture in Strasbourg in 1894 (Beiser 2011, p. 380).

In this paper I address Grotenfelt's reading of Rickert's magnum opus *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* (*The Limits of Concept-Formation in Natural Science* (1896, 1902)) in his work *Die Wertschätzung in der Geschichte* (1903).³ Later Grotenfelt also published a review of Rickert's work (1905b). Worth noting is that Rickert published five editions of his work, and the subsequent editions did not include only minor revisions: he rewrote entire chapters and took the critique of the previous editions into account. Grotenfelt addressed *Limits* right after the publication of the second volume of the first edition in 1902.

History as a science

Already in the preface of his work *Wertschätzung* Grotenfelt adheres to several of Rickert's key principles. Rickert's main concern is the possibility of history as a science (Beiser 2011, p. 399).

In what follows, I will, like Grotenfelt, focus on Rickert's criteria for the scientific status of history. Within the limits of this paper, I cannot discuss Rickert's answer to the question, why the history must have a scientific status in the first place. Concerning this fundamental question, I make two introductory remarks. First, Rickert's philosophy of history in the 1902 version of the *Limits* stems from Windelband's famous Strasbourg lecture (1894). (Later both Windelband's and Rickert's views changed, but for Grotenfelt's interpretation of Rickert, the Strasbourg lecture is the central point of reference.) In his lecture Windelband gave no straightforward explanation for the scientific status of history. But he saw no reason to deny it. He argues that the methods of the natural and the historical sciences are of equal value to the quest for knowledge (Windelband 1894, pp. 12, 19).

Second, Windelband's definition of the scientific methodology arises from the Kantian framework (Windelband 1894, p. 7; Beiser 2011, pp. 380, 383). Given the increase of historical knowledge over the course of the 1800s, Windelband complements Kant's definition of science, which is essentially limited to the natural sciences and mathematics.⁴

Rickert's argument for the science of history challenges both naturalism and historicism (Rickert 1902, pp. 21, 331–2, 612–3). He opposes historicism (as represented e.g. by Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886)) because it involves the danger of relativism (Beiser 2011, p. 405). Rickert believes that science can attain eternal and necessary truths. Accepting historicism would eventually challenge this; all thought would be historically

³ Grotenfelt summarized some ideas of this work in his article “Ueber Wertschätzung in der Geschichtsbehandlung”, published in 1902. In his *Wertschätzung* Grotenfelt refers also to Rickert's 1899 booklet “Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft”, which was one of his ‘spin-off’ works of the *Limits* (Rickert 1902, p. IV; 1899, pp. 3–4) and to some other articles. The English translation of Rickert's work *Limits* is based on the 1929 edition. For Grotenfelt's complete bibliography, see Manninen and Niiniluoto (ed.) 2007, pp. 62–9.

⁴ This objective is explicitly stated e.g. in Windelband 1905, pp. 105–6.

limited (Beiser 2011, pp. 395–6). Thus, for Rickert, securing history as a science means limiting it.

Grotenfelt (1903, pp. III, 44, 138–9) maintains against Rankean historicism that although historians strive for objectivity, their judgements concerning history are always subjective to some extent.⁵ E.g. a historian has to choose the events during an era which he or she regards as essential. The main task of Grotenfelt's work of 1903 is to define the extent of subjectivity in historical appreciations ('Wertschätzung') (Grotenfelt 1905a, p. III). As an example of a historical appreciation, Grotenfelt presents a historian of philosophy, whose world view is positivistic (Grotenfelt 1903, p. 193; Luukanen 1988, p. 114). Such a historian does not regard the era of speculative idealism as important due to his or her own philosophical standpoint.

Furthermore, Grotenfelt (1903, pp. 20–1) denies that there could be a historic event, which is not comparable to any other event. Or, a that kind of an event would be describable, Grotenfelt maintains, neither in art nor in science. Such a description would require e.g. vocabulary (cf. Rickert 1902, pp. 338–40). But a vocabulary is universal in its essence; the words acquire their meaning through their relationship to other words.

Following Rickert, Grotenfelt (1903, p. 19; 1905b, p. 61; Rickert 1899, p. 43; Suolahti 1947, p. 279) emphasizes the scientific status of history. Contrary to Ranke, who had argued that history resembles more art than science, because it addresses individual things (Beiser 2011, p. 400), Grotenfelt stresses that also science can deal with unique and individual events (Grotenfelt 1903, pp. 7, 20, 24; cf. Rickert 1902, pp. 339–41). Yet, the uniqueness he has in mind is relative uniqueness, or uniqueness which can be studied with ordinary scientific methods (Luukanen 1988, p. 118).

This brings us to naturalism. Grotenfelt seems to share Rickert's understanding of naturalism according to which naturalism features the positivist principle that the methods of natural sciences are the only scientific methods (Beiser 2011, p. 405). Grotenfelt (1903, p. 4) states that the task of history is not to find universal laws and thus rejects this principle. But he also stresses that a historian should strive for generalizations whenever they are well justified (Grotenfelt 1903, pp. 31–2). A historian should also never address historical events as isolated, because a historical event is significant only because it contributes to a certain historical development (Grotenfelt 1903, pp. 9–10; cf. Rickert 1902, p. 307).

On the other hand, Grotenfelt agrees with Windelband's and Rickert's attempt to diminish the tension between humanities and natural sciences (e.g. Grotenfelt 1903, p. 57; Rickert 1902, pp. 659–60; Bambach 1995, p. 30). Grotenfelt argues with Rickert that historical phenomena can also be investigated with the methods of natural sciences (Rickert 1902, pp. 29, 320–1). Yet the natural sciences cannot grasp all sides of history (Grotenfelt 1903,

⁵ For Grotenfelt's summary of Ranke's standpoint, see Grotenfelt 1903, pp. 140–1.

p. 9; Rickert 1902, pp. 249–51, 363; 1899, pp. 18–9). As already the title of Rickert's work suggests, there are limits for the concept formation in the natural sciences.

But how do the historical sciences actually differ from the natural sciences? Rickert's answer to this question can be introduced by explaining his critique of Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833–1911) well-known concept 'Geisteswissenschaften', which included both the humanities and the social sciences. Following Windelband, he was discontented with it. Dilthey was an inspirational opponent of neo-Kantianism not only because he was heavily influenced by Kant but also because like neo-Kantians, he waged a two-front war against positivism and German idealism (Hösle 2013, p. 234).

Rickert had many reasons for abandoning Dilthey's concept of 'Geisteswissenschaften'.⁶ First, he contributed to the so-called epistemological turn in the philosophy of history (Schnädelbach 1984, pp. 50–1). Like the epistemological turn in other branches of philosophy, it was essentially a countermove against Hegelianism. For Rickert, Dilthey's concept of 'Geisteswissenschaften' is a remnant of Hegelianism: it is too metaphysical. Rickert himself grounds the historical sciences without any material reference to their objects (Rickert 1902, pp. 28–9; Schnädelbach 1984, p. 129; Bambach 1995, p. 103). His standpoint is decidedly Kantian: the focus is on our way to approach the objects and not on the objects themselves.

According to Rickert, the difference in our epistemic interests constitutes the difference between the natural and the historical sciences: "The generalizing interest is characteristic of the natural sciences, whereas the individualizing interest is characteristic of the historical sciences" (Beiser 2011, p. 400).⁷ That is to say that in the historical sciences the focus is on the uniqueness of events or things, whereas the natural sciences attempt to find the general principles, which apply to all particulars. As mentioned above, the same phenomena can be addressed both in natural and in historical sciences. But the different sciences aim to answer different questions.

Rickert admits that his theory is a simplification: for example, in reality, the historical sciences feature also generalizing interest (Beiser 2011, p. 401). Grotenfelt emphasizes this point. He highlights the fact that historical sciences have benefitted greatly from the recent development of sociology (Grotenfelt 1903, pp. 4, 26).

Yet there is also a substantial disagreement between Grotenfelt and Rickert. According to Grotenfelt, Rickert argues eventually for a purely logical distinction between the sciences. Grotenfelt (1905b, p. 62) appreciates this attempt, but problematizes the way Rickert imposes this distinction on the actual practice of historical sciences. It is legitimate to say, for example, that some natural objects are the objects of the natural sciences alone

⁶ To some extent, Rickert also substitutes his concept of cultural sciences ('Kulturwissenschaften') with Dilthey's concept of 'Geisteswissenschaften' (Rickert 1899, pp. 52–3).

⁷ Rickert's conception has its roots in Windelband's distinction between nomothetic and idiographic sciences (Beiser 2011, p. 381; Hösle 2013, p. 233).

(Grotenfelt 1903, pp. 25–6). The best counterargument against Rickert's theory is yet the case of sociology. Sociology and history are so tied up to each other that classifying them into different classes of science contradicts the coherence of scientific work (Grotenfelt 1903, p. 27). Grotenfelt's point is that in reality it is impossible to distinguish the epistemic interests within the scientific practice. In most fields of science, the different epistemic interests interpenetrate ('sich durchdringen') to each other.

Rickert (1902, pp. 308, 480–1) admits that science rarely operates neither with pure individual nor with pure universal concepts. This is why Rickert prefers the terms relative universal and relative individual concept (cf. Grotenfelt 1903, p. 36). That is to say that also the universal concepts in natural and historical sciences differ. The former are 'class concepts' ('Gattungsbegriff'), whereas the latter are 'wholes' ('Ganze') (Rickert 1902, pp. 393–4). Rickert (1899, p. 58; 1902, pp. 308, 636) emphasizes that the difference between the concept formation in the natural and in the historical sciences is permanent.

Grotenfelt (1905b, pp. 63–4) disagrees with this claim. He points out that it is not exceptional for a historian to classify and explain events similarly to a natural scientist. On the other hand, Grotenfelt argues that it is also legitimate for a natural scientist to foreground singular events. E.g. examining the human evolution as unique series of events belongs to the realm of the natural sciences (Grotenfelt 1903, pp. 24–25). Examination of the unique human evolution does not have to lead any universal truths about the evolution in general. I do not find Grotenfelt's line of reasoning very clear. However, the point that he wants to make is that the different epistemic interests intermingle within a certain branch of science. Rickert (1899, p. 40), on the contrary, stresses that the uniqueness of an event is not of equal value in the natural and in the historical sciences.

Grotenfelt (1903, p. 27) concludes that, unlike Rickert, he embraces the material division of sciences. He refers to Ernst Bernheim's (1850–1942) definition: history is the study of the development of human being as a social being (Grotenfelt 1903, p. 5). Since Grotenfelt repeatedly emphasizes the interconnectedness of sociology and history, one asks, what actually constitutes the difference between the two disciplines in his view? In his answer Grotenfelt (1903, p. 28) points out that the objects of the historical study are not immediately present. They are rather reconstructed on the basis of (always to some extent) incomplete material. On the contrary, in sociology as well as in natural sciences the objects are present. This is why the historical science can never become a nomological science ('Gesetzeswissenschaft') like sociology, which discovers the regularities of social life.

For Grotenfelt, the scientific character of history is thus not due to its ability to demonstrate laws or regularities. In order to be scientific, the emphasis must be placed on careful study of particular facts (Grotenfelt 1903, p. 31). Historical documents are rarely wholly objective descriptions of an event, and scepticism concerning the historical knowledge can be rejected only through cautious source criticism, Grotenfelt (1903, pp.

29–30) concludes. Thus, the objectivity of history, eventually a weak objectivity, is grounded on empiricism.

Eventually, Grotenfelt understands history as a basic science. Its task is to produce elementary information, which can be used in further studies in other fields of science. His theory has affinity to Rickert here: Grotenfelt also insists that limiting historical study is a precondition for its scientific status.

Grotenfelt's attitude towards the study of history is best described as practical, whereas Rickert's approach is more theoretical. Grotenfelt's practical approach to the problems of philosophy of history stems from his conviction that writing (or documenting) and studying history are inseparable (Luukanen 1988, p. 116; Suolahti 1947, pp. 271, 286). This basic principle is though not clearly worded in Grotenfelt's writings. Generally speaking, this principle explains the vagueness of his position, which shall be exemplified in the following chapters.

Grotenfelt is not particularly concerned with the borders between different fields of science, but encourages historians to use all the tools available in order to enrich the knowledge of the past. Grotenfelt's standpoint mediates between different modes of explanation for example. Grotenfelt, a former student of Wundt, believes that psychology can in part elucidate the motives behind human actions of the past (Grotenfelt 1903, pp. 50–1; Väyrynen 2015, pp. 313–4; Luukanen 1988, p. 124). Wundt's name surfaces as Grotenfelt stresses historian's right to speculate, to use his or her ability to fantasise, “[...] under the strict control of critical thinking” (Grotenfelt 1905b, p. 65). By contrast, in Rickert's model the ability to fantasise is restricted to clarification of the subject matter (Rickert 1899, p. 44; Grotenfelt 1905b, p. 64). Grotenfelt maintains that the abilities to understand and fantasise are not that distinct at all. His definition of a proper historical study allows for imaginary elements, which though have to be verified as well as possible (Grotenfelt 1903, pp. 51, 53, 55–6).

Grotenfelt's studies with Wundt might also explain, why he does not address Dilthey at all, although he extensively discusses German figures of the time. Wundt's experimental psychology was distinct from Dilthey's descriptive psychology, or psychology of ‘Verstehen’ (Väyrynen 2015, p. 317; Rickert 1902, p. 150). Generally speaking, understanding psychology essentially as a natural science is common to both neo-Kantians and Grotenfelt (Beiser 2011, pp. 380, 401).

From a historical point of view, Grotenfelt's statements concerning the interrelatedness of history and sociology are noteworthy. Namely, Grotenfelt's early career was closely related to the arrival of sociology in the University of Helsinki by Edvard Westermarck (1862–1939), internationally the most renowned Finnish philosopher of the time.⁸ In his

⁸ Nowadays Westermarck is remembered primarily as a sociologist. During the first two decades of the 20th Century, Westermarck and Grotenfelt were the sole professors of philosophy in Finland.

Wertschätzung Grotenfelt engages into theoretical discussion of the prehistory of sociology, which Westermarck had avoided (Luukanen 1988, p. 122). Like Westermarck, Grotenfelt understands sociology in a positivistic way. On the other hand, he explains the difference between sociology and history in the Rickertian way, since the difference is due to the different epistemic interests and not due to the objects of study (Grotenfelt 1903, pp. 71–2; Luukanen 1988, p. 124).

Philosophy of values

As explained in the previous chapter, Rickert identifies the historical sciences with their individualizing interest. Yet, one asks how do we actually define an event or a thing as essential and unique? Rickert answers that we do this on the basis of our values (Beiser 2011, p. 404; Rickert 1902, pp. 372, 379–80). The concept of value ('Wert') is the key concept of his neo-Kantian philosophy.⁹ Rickert addresses the objectivity of values in the second part of his work *Limits*, which is at the center of Grotenfelt's attention.

Within the limits of this paper, Rickert's extensive theory of values cannot be discussed in length. In order to introduce it, I denote some of its basic features. First, values are to be separated from facts. According to Rickert, facts and values are ontologically different: facts 'exist' but values 'have validity' (Schnädelbach 1984, p. 131; Bambach 1995, p. 101). Another essential distinction is the distinction between 'objects which are valuable' and 'the act of valuing'. That is to say that values are to be separated from the objects, which are regarded as valuable.

Thirdly, the concept of value is a truly Kantian element in Rickert's thinking: values direct our experience of the world. It is illustrative that Rickert does not claim that the natural sciences would be a value-free enterprise. The natural sciences are also dependent on the act of valuing, because their attempt to construct a system of knowledge has to be seen as valuable by the subject (Rickert 1902, pp. 663–64). Thus, there is no reason to claim that the natural sciences provide 'more objective' knowledge than the historical sciences. Besides, even the material of science is dependent on the subject: precondition for a scientific study are the facts ('Tatsache'), which are regarded as true, or attached to truth value ('Wahrheitswert'), by the subject (Rickert 1902, pp. 664–65). "[...] [T]he recognition of truth value is the logical precondition of any science", Rickert (1902, p. 671) concludes.

Apropos of Rickert's fear of relativism (mentioned in the previous chapter), the crucial question concerns the historicity of values. Different cultures have different values, and

⁹ Neo-Kantian concept of value originates from Windelband's teacher, Hermann Lotze (1817–81). In Finland, Lotze's philosophy was introduced by Grotenfelt's uncle, teacher and predecessor as professor, Thiodolf Rein (1838–1919). Rickert's philosophy of value relies heavily on Windelband's example (Schnädelbach 1984, p. 183; Bambach 1995, pp. 83–4, 94). Within the limits of this paper, the relationship between the two cannot be discussed in length. Neither does Grotenfelt discuss this relationship.

even within a specific culture values change over the course of time. How the values can serve as the basis for the objective knowledge?

My understanding of Rickert's answer to this dilemma at the turn of the century is as follows. Rickert strictly denies value-relativism and argues for a non-relativistic theory of values (Rickert 1902, pp. 389–91). He though admits that some values are historically dependent. Rickert terms these values cultural values ('Kulturwerten') (Rickert 1899, p. 47). But, Rickert stresses, even the cultural values are directed by more general values, which are to be found in the transcendental discourse (Rickert 1902, p. 701). To conclude: the expression of cultural values is historical, but their ground is transcendental.¹⁰

Grotenfelt does not address the transcendental realm of values in his 1903 work (cf. next chapter): his focus is on the role of values in historical sciences. Grotenfelt explains that according to Rickert a historian, who studies the historical information, distinguishes between essential and inessential on the basis of cultural values. Rickert believes that a historian can empirically observe these values (Rickert 1902, pp. 638–9). The cultural values are normative social values, which are accepted by all members of the society; the totality of these values constitute a culture for Rickert, Grotenfelt explains (1903, pp. 186–9; Rickert 1902, pp. 577–8).

Essential for achieving historical objectivity is the distinction between the values themselves and having a relationship to values (Rickert 1902, p. 364; Grotenfelt 1903, p. 186). For example, a historian can note that bravery was important for the ancient Romans without having to judge whether bravery is valuable or not. That is to say that the primary task of a historian is to distinguish between essential and inessential instead of separating between valuable and non-valuable as such (Grotenfelt 1903, p. 188).

The task of distinguishing between the essential from the inessential can be completed wholly empirically and objectively, Rickert claims (Grotenfelt 1903, p. 190). For example, two historians from politically opposed communities could disagree whether bravery is valuable or not. But they must agree that the ancient Romans regarded bravery as valuable, because it can be empirically verified. Claiming that bravery was an essential characteristic of the ancient Rome is thus objectively valid.

The arguments above are sufficient to guarantee the objectivity of historical knowledge. It is, of course, possible to demand that a historian must consider more fundamental questions (like the question whether history entails constant progress or not) too. Rickert's concept of the cultural values provides also a paradigm for that. A historian is bound by the cultural values of his or her time. The objectivity of historian's work can be recognized only by a community. Historian's work is always meant for a certain audience and it has to conform to the values of that community (Grotenfelt 1903, p. 188). On the basis of these

¹⁰ Bambach 1995, p. 106. In my view, Bambach's explanation captures Rickert's idea, although Bambach refers to a later work by Rickert.

values it is possible to produce, for example, a view of the world history (Rickert 1902, p. 701).

The key question of Grotenfelt's commentary on Rickert is whether the objectivity of history can actually be achieved this way. Grotenfelt (1903, p. 186) agrees with Rickert's principle of the cultural values as the basis of historical sciences. In my view, Rickert's focus on the culture explains Grotenfelt's interest in his work. Yet, Grotenfelt claims, Rickert's concept of the normative social cultural value is too indefinite in order to be empirically verified (Grotenfelt 1903, p. 191).

Grotenfelt argues that commonly accepted cultural values determine rather areas like science or religion but not the society in its entirety. For example, a certain aesthetical value can be very important to the artists but irrelevant for the rest of the society. Yet, even within a certain area of societal life there are no such commonly accepted values as Rickert suggests. There is, for example, a commonly accepted narrative of the history of Western philosophy. But this narrative is only very superficial (Grotenfelt 1903, pp. 192–3). In order to provide a detailed account, there are no commonly accepted values to be found, which could be empirically verified.

As concerns e.g. political history, Grotenfelt reflects on the possibility that the cultural values could be defined as 'an average' of the values of people in a certain point of time. But this is impossible too, Grotenfelt maintains (1903, p. 194), because most of the people have only a very vague understanding of their values. Different kind of example of this superficiality is the statement that the welfare of a nation improved during an era. Verifying this statement requires a proper definition of welfare. Yet, it is almost impossible for a historian to follow just the definition of the time. In reality, Grotenfelt concludes, historian's own concept of true welfare gets mixed with the historical definition in order to produce a meaningful account of the past.

Grotenfelt further points out (1903, pp. 190–1) that besides events, whose importance is unquestionable, there are cases, whose importance is widely contested among the historians. For example, a cultural historian can regard an event as important whereas an economic historian considers it as irrelevant. That is to say that unlike Rickert suggests there are disagreements about whether an event is important and not just disagreements about whether an event is valuable. Accordingly, there is no basis for the concept of culture in Rickert's sense.

Eventually Grotenfelt (1903, p. 195; Luukanen 1988, p. 116) points out that even if it would be possible, a historian should not describe an era solely with respect to the values of that particular era. Namely, that kind of description would not be meaningful for the contemporaries. A historian should take both the present and the past cultural values into account. For example, as concerns the Middle ages, a historian should address the fact that certain developments of that time led to the formation of some modern states. In short,

every particular description of history is not separate from our overall conception of history (Grotenfelt 1903, p. 194).

The main task of Grotenfelt's 1903 work was to define the extent of subjectivity in historical appreciations. He concludes that there is always a subjective element in all historical appreciations (Luukanen 1988, p. 119; Suolahti 1947, p. 281). Though often this element is almost invisible; there are commonly accepted explanations of many historical events.

Principles of the historical appreciations

According to the traditional reading of Grotenfelt (e.g. Niiniluoto), his stance to the philosophical controversies of his time was cautious and moderate. As we have seen, his attempt to mediate between different positions lead to a certain relativism: eventually he ascribed only a relative objectivity to the historical sciences. Grotenfelt himself was probably somewhat disappointed with this result: in his next major work, *Geschichtliche Wertmassstäbe in der Geschichtsphilosophie bei den Historikern und im Volksbewusstsein* (1905a), which was originally meant to be the third subdivision of the 1903 work, he approached historical appreciations from a different angle.

In his earlier work Grotenfelt did not address the principles, which serve as the ground for our historical appreciations. These principles, as Grotenfelt indicates (1905a, p. III), touch upon the fundamental questions of the general theory of value and ethics. Yet, in the preface of his work he explains (1905a, pp. III–IV) that he cannot exhaustively discuss the theory of value. He gives no explanation, why he almost completely ignores the neo-Kantians, while he comments extensively on Kant. He mentions Rickert, who was in the center of attention in the earlier work, only in one paragraph.¹¹

So, there is no explicit account of Grotenfelt's view of the core Rickert's philosophy of history, or his idea of the transcendental realm of values. For the most part, *Wertmassstäbe* merely describes and contrasts different views. At the end of the book, Grotenfelt (1905a, p. 179) finally outlines his own standpoint. This paragraph is, as I read it, interesting in the face of a passage at the end of his review of Rickert's *Limits*. In this passage Grotenfelt (1905b, p. 66) explains that besides methodological questions of the historical sciences, Rickert's argumentation for values touch upon more general philosophical questions. Then he favorably outlines Rickert's Kantian worldview: For Rickert, a historical paradigm as well as ethics ('sittliches Wirken') and religion are possible only when the world is not conceived as wholly rational and metaphysical (Rickert 1902, pp. 652, 739); the highest ethical value is the dutiful ('pflichtgemäß') will; the highest duty for human being is the duty to develop his or her individuality; the assertion of this kind of a will necessitates though a belief on the objective authority of the good.

¹¹ This observation would not be significant in some other case. But Grotenfelt's writings are characterized by constant references to other authors.

In *Wertmassstäbe* Grotenfelt declares (1905a, pp. 179–180) that the fundamental foundation of our judgements of value is beyond scientific reasoning. It is common to explain the values on the basis of final ends ('Endzweck'), but the highest final end has to be accepted as such, with no justification. The highest final end is a matter of belief.

Grotenfelt himself sees the development of spiritual individuality, or personality, as the final end. The principles of historical appreciations are possible only if the higher spiritual life is regarded as a value in itself. Or, only the higher spiritual life – not “[...] a mere methodological study of the historical concept-formation” – can provide the guiding ideas for a complete presentation of history (Grotenfelt 1905a, pp. 180–1).

Since Grotenfelt asserts that we cannot have a clear definition of the highest values, he also rejects that the progress of history could be objectively demonstrated. Grotenfelt does not reject the idea that e.g. higher values could in some sense realize over the course of history. But he thinks (Grotenfelt 1905a, pp. 187, 189) that this cannot belong to the proper definition of historical development. E.g. Kant errs as he insists the historical development to bring forth higher ethical values in individuals (Grotenfelt 1905a, pp. 67, 187–8; Kant 1917, pp. 331–33). The realization of higher, absolute values is always only partial and cannot be expressed in a conceptual form (Grotenfelt 1905a, p. 189).

These Grotenfelt's statements, condensed into few words, are vague and superficial. Yet they make it evident that Grotenfelt conceives values differently from Rickert. The latter does not ascribe rationality sovereignty over all areas of philosophy, but he definitely believes that reason has authority over historical knowledge. The former argues that the judgements of history are always dependent on our general conception of history. And that conception is dependent on our metaphysical and ethical commitments, which are not grounded on theoretical paradigm but on practical beliefs ('Lebensüberzeugung'). Grotenfelt (1905a, p. 183) withdraws from Rickert's attempt to rationalize the principles of historical judgements and stresses that there is always an irrational remnant in our thinking.

As mentioned above, Grotenfelt does not refer to Rickert by name. Given that he has Rickert in mind as he criticizes 'mere methodological studies', it is fair to point out that in the last main paragraph of his *Limits*, comprising roughly 100 pages, Rickert addresses exactly metaphysical commitments and paradigms. He does not formulate any systematic standpoint (Rickert 1902, p. 10), but he (1902, p. 14) states that formulating a more complete world-view is a further task for philosopher. Rickert has thus more to offer (unlike Grotenfelt possibly implies) than 'a mere methodological study'.

What is decisive concerning the philosophical questions at stake in this paper is that the distance between Grotenfelt and the project of the south-west German neo-Kantianism is obvious. Namely, the southwesterners argued precisely that the problems of historicism, relativism, subjectivism and so on do not find their solution in any metaphysical

paradigm.¹² On the contrary, these problems originate from problematic metaphysical commitments, which are revealed in a critical or, – to use Rickert's term (1902, p. 10) – logical study.

Furthermore, Grotenfelt's reference to the practical beliefs reminds Dilthey's theory of world-view ('Weltanschauung'). It is essentially an attempt to synthesize knowledge and relate "[...] all experience of the world to the subjective life-conditions of the individual" (Bambach 1995, p. 26). In my view, Grotenfelt's emphasis on 'practical beliefs' has a general affinity to Dilthey, which explains his separation from Rickert, because the concept of world-view inspired – among other things – Rickert's exhaustive criticism of Dilthey.¹³

One has to be careful here however. Like Dilthey also Rickert operates with the concept of world-view (e.g. Rickert 1910, p. 2).¹⁴ So, it is not the concept of world-view that separates Dilthey from Rickert but his definition of it. In short, Rickert argues that the means for acquiring a world-view are scientific, theoretical and logical (Rickert 1910, pp. 8–10, 33–4). Dilthey (and Grotenfelt) consider scientific tools alone as insufficient for the task: grasping the world as a whole is always dependent on individual experience of the world. Dilthey stresses that human intellect is steered by emotiveness and will (Staiti 2013, p. 797).

There is also another general affinity between Dilthey's and Grotenfelt's standpoints. Namely, both Dilthey and Grotenfelt agree that values are of primary importance for the historical sciences (Bambach 1995, p. 119). They just do not share Rickert's exclusively transcendental definition of values.

It is fair to point out that as concerns the philosophy of world-view, the most pivotal of Dilthey's works appeared after 1905 (Scholtz 2015, pp. 456–7), that is after Grotenfelt's main works on the philosophy of history. Yet, Dilthey was one of the key figures in the philosophical discussion, which is central to Grotenfelt. Thus, Grotenfelt errs in ignoring Dilthey. It remains unclear, why Grotenfelt does not refer to Dilthey (Väyrynen 2015, p. 317), while he constantly refers to other authors.

For Grotenfelt, the question of history became more than a mere question of the limits between academic disciplines. Rickert widened – especially during the postwar era – his discussion of the philosophy of history too (Bambach 1995, pp. 84–5). But he was not doubtful about his initial principle that the questions concerning historical knowledge were essentially scientific questions; "[...] every problem of a universal world view [...] is transformed for us into a problem of logic and of epistemology" (Rickert 1902, p. 13).

¹² That the neo-Kantians in fact succumb into a metaphysical thinking of their own has been argued by Bambach (1995, p. 13).

¹³ On the influence of the Dilthey–Rickert Dispute on the analytic–continental divide, see Staiti 2013, pp. 795, 804.

¹⁴ Windelband discusses the world-view e.g. in his 1894 lecture (Windelband 1894, pp. 24, 27). He does not use the term 'Weltanschauung' though.

Rickert did not disagree with Dilthey (or Grotenfelt) on the demand that philosophy should tackle the world as a whole. But he does adhere to the primacy of theoretical reason: our “[...] prejudices, personal emotions and practical goals [should not] *co-determine* and even provide justification for our philosophical claims” (Staiti 2013, pp. 800–1).

Conclusion

At the time of its emergence Kant's critical philosophy did not gain such a strong foothold in Finland as G.W.F. Hegel's (1770–1831) idealism later, although several important scholars (like F.M. Franzén (1772–1847) and G.I. Hartman (1776–1809)) studied and advocated Kant's philosophy.¹⁵ Grotenfelt was the most important Finnish contributor to the neo-Kantian philosophy of his time, but describing him as a neo-Kantian is somewhat misleading. Namely, in neo-Kantianism neither in its early nor in its later phase preserving Kant's philosophy as such was not essential. Moreover, Rickert and other neo-Kantians were interested in developing Kant's philosophy further. Grotenfelt, on the contrary, embraced both Kant's metaphysics and his ethics. Yet he was critical of both Kant's own philosophy of history and the south-west German neo-Kantian alternative.

As concerns the more specific questions of the history as a science, Grotenfelt agreed with Rickert on many principles, e.g. the importance of cultural history and anti-naturalism. But regarding Rickert's extensive anti-metaphysical reading of Kant and his theory of values, Grotenfelt clearly distanced himself from his German colleague.

Grotenfelt's standpoint was neo-Kantian but not in the common sense of the word: he associated himself with neither of the two schools of neo-Kantianism. I would propose the hypothesis that whereas the neo-Kantians were primarily interested in epistemology on the basis of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and Dilthey departed from Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, the Finnish professor got his inspiration from Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*. For Grotenfelt, metaphysics cannot be separated from ethics. He described his standpoint as ‘ethical idealism’ (Niiniluoto 2000, p. 181).

On the other hand, Grotenfelt often refrains from proclaiming his own views. His overall view of Rickert is not clearly worded, and his views of the key questions of the philosophy of history lack, to say the least, clarity. It is also unfortunate that Rickert never fulfilled his promise to review Grotenfelt's work of 1903 (Luukanen 1988, p. 121). If Grotenfelt's criticism influenced the later versions of Rickert's *Limits*, a question worth considering, is a matter of another study.

¹⁵ On the early Finnish Kantianism, see Oittinen 1999.

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