

INTERPRETING PRACTICE: DILTHEY, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND THE HERMENEUTICS OF HISTORICAL LIFE

Eric Sean Nelson

Abstract: This paper explores Dilthey's radical transformation of epistemology and the human sciences through his projects of a critique of historically embodied reason and his hermeneutics of historically mediated life. Answering criticisms that Dilthey overly depends on epistemology, I show how for Dilthey neither philosophy nor the human sciences should be reduced to their theoretical, epistemological, or cognitive dimensions. Dilthey approaches both immediate knowing (*Wissen*) and theoretical knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) in the context of a hermeneutical phenomenology of historical life. Knowing is not an isolated activity but an interpretive and self-interpretive practice oriented by situated reflexive awareness (*Innewerden*) and self-reflection (*Selbstbesinnung*). As embedded in an historical relational context, knowing does not only consist of epistemic validity claims about representational contents but is fundamentally practical, involving all of human existence. Empirically informed *Besinnung*, with its double reference to *sense* as meaning and bodily awareness, orients Dilthey's inquiry rather than the "irrationalism" of immediate intuition or the "rationalism" of abstract epistemological reasoning.

1. Introduction: Questioning Epistemology

Wilhelm Dilthey's project of a "critique of historical reason" has been criticized by Heidegger and Gadamer for its "epistemological orientation."¹ Yet for Dilthey neither philosophy nor the human sciences are reducible to their epistemological and theoretical dimensions (GS 8: 179).² In response to such criticisms, this paper will illustrate how Dilthey accounts for both "immediate knowing" (*Wissen*) and "theoretical knowledge" (*Erkenntnis*) in historical inquiry and the human sciences in the context of what can be described as a hermeneutical phenomenology of historical life. In Dilthey's radical contextualizing transformation of epistemology, which does not reject it completely for the sake of ontology as Heidegger and Gadamer advocate, knowing is not an abstract, disembodied, and isolated theorizing. Knowing is an interpretive and self-interpretive practice oriented by reflexive awareness (*Innewerden*) and potentially by self-reflection (*Selbstbesinnung*). Knowing is embedded in a social-historical relational context or nexus (*Zusammenhang*) such that for Dilthey it is never merely epistemic but fundamentally practical (GS 19: 79). Although Dilthey is accused of objectivism and scientism by proponents of ontological

hermeneutics and subjectivism and relativism by advocates of transcendental philosophy and logical positivism,³ I argue that it is empirically informed *Besinnung*, with the double significance of “sense” (*Sinn*) as meaning and bodily awareness rooted in the relational life-nexus, that orients Dilthey’s endeavor rather than the “irrationalism” of a direct and immediate intuition or feeling of life—as in popular conceptions of romanticism and life-philosophy—or the “rationalism” of abstract epistemological reflection.

Dilthey’s thinking of *Erlebnis* and *Besinnung*, lived-contextual-experience and interpretive reflection, transformed but did not break all links with the epistemological and critical legacy of modern philosophy, as Dilthey reinterpreted rather than rejected the propensity of philosophy and the sciences toward achieving objectivity, universality, and truth. Inquiry necessarily involves epistemic and methodological questions in philosophy and the sciences, yet this pursuit of knowledge and self-knowledge can only become intelligible in relation to the context of historical self-interpreting life from which it emerged and unpredictably reemerges anew and by itself being both philosophical and empirical or—to employ a presently fashionable term—interdisciplinary.

I contend in this paper that this “context of historical life” (1) consists of interconnected and often conflicting practices allowing for various forms of identification and differentiation, socialization and individuation, and (2) operates as the nexus or crossing from which relations and dis-relations of self and world, action and structure, theory and practice can be articulated. Whereas philosophical reflection on the human sciences pursues the latter, the human sciences investigate the former nexus of the singular and the whole in one or more of its concrete forms. This includes the affinities and differences of the processes and structures of history and society as well as the human actions and events occurring in the context of these processes and structures. Historical life is a complex and differentiated nexus of structures and events, systems and actions, groups and individuals, reflexively disclosed in awareness and understanding and engaged in interpretation, reflection, and empirical-theoretical research.

Dilthey is often supposed to have radically separated the natural and the human, reproducing the idealistic duality between nature (*Natur*) and spirit (*Geist*) or the Neo-Kantian distinction between facticity and validity.⁴ It is interesting, however, that this difference is not an ontological one postulating two different kinds of world (nature and spirit) but is an epistemic and methodological one concerning the point of departure and aims of the natural and human sciences. The human sciences *as* sciences (*Wissenschaften*) share the same tendency toward objectivity, universality, and validity as the natural sciences, yet this aim and its functions diverge through the practices of the human sciences. Objectivity in the human sciences does not so much concern the value-neutral and mathematical-deductive model of physical objects as it does the linking of lived-experiences with the social-historical structures that inform them (GS 7: 3). This objectivity cannot consist of a copying of reality as it is or in a mimetic reproduction of how it was, is, or will be (*ibid.*). The constructions of the human sciences are always bound to and mediated by the formations of historical life, already relating the unique, the accidental, and the momentary to the nexus of norms, values, and meanings operative in social-historical reality. Such inquiry presupposes and explicates this context of relations between the unique and the general without being able to sublimate or eliminate it to the extent that natural scientific inquiry does, as their very practice and aim is the “historical presentation of the singular occurrence.”⁵

Dilthey argued for relating the human sciences to their contextual whole, which as open, plural, and conflictual evades systematic totalization, in which the historical presentation and the occurrence of the unique and individual can be illuminated. The significance of the event of the singular indicates that Dilthey's concern is not reductively epistemological, although questions of knowledge need to be included in the self-reflection that accompanies the possibilities of historical vision (GS 7: 4). As it is no longer the founding of conceptual knowledge in rational consciousness, empirical perception, or their transcendental conditions, epistemology is reoriented by reinterpreting knowledge, consciousness, and perception in relation to their lived, embodied, and performative life-contexts. Dilthey resituated epistemology and scientific inquiry, which are determined by their object and the way (how) the object is given (GS 7: 18), in relation to a pre-reflective reflexive awareness (*Innewerden*) of life, the inherently historical performance and practice of a life, and the lived hermeneutical categories of expression, understanding, and interpretation. Epistemology is not the grounding of conceptual knowledge in consciousness, whether in rational cognition, speculative self-intuition, or empirical perception, but the articulation of knowledge and consciousness in their relational life-contexts, which involve the fullness, plurality, and conflicts of worldly existence. Dilthey accordingly situated the sciences in relation to a prescientific life-nexus or life-world and its various forms of understanding.⁶

2. *Knowing in the Context of Historical Life*

Jürgen Habermas notes in *Knowledge and Human Interests* that both the human and natural sciences presuppose the symbolic interaction through which the life-world is reproduced, but the human sciences also take this "comprehensive life-context" as an object of research.⁷ It is from this relational context that the human and natural sciences emerge, which are differentiated by how they relate to this context. According to Habermas, the primary difference is epistemic and methodological, rather than ontological, and is constituted by a different cognitive interest.⁸ Whereas the natural sciences are constituted by a technical interest in controlling and using things through objective methods, the human sciences are constituted by a practical interest in intersubjectively reproduced meanings, norms, and values.⁹ Although Habermas's account clearly relies on Dilthey, Dilthey did not simply develop an epistemology of the methodology of the human sciences, as Gadamer negatively and Habermas positively claim. Dilthey's thought is twofold as (1) he problematized the modern project of the theory of knowledge by approaching knowledge through his "critique of historical reason," and (2) he reinterpreted methodological concepts inherited from traditional hermeneutics such as understanding and interpretation in relation to the lived practices and expressions of historical life.

Whereas hermeneutics traditionally focused on the philology of Biblical and classical texts, and commenting on canonical texts remained central to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, it becomes—via Schleiermacher's broadening of hermeneutics beyond literary works and products of spirit to all varieties of communication¹⁰—the empirically oriented interpretation of historically situated practices in Dilthey. As empirically informed, the interpretive strategies of the human sciences cannot be merely literary or philological, and they cannot a priori exclude considerations of epistemology, methodology, and

theory in the name of “truth.” Likewise, the distance (*Abstand*) purportedly introduced by reflection and theoretical cognition in modernity is not an alien and rootless construct invented by scientific inquiry and “theory.” Distances and interruptions already operate in the immanence of the everyday life-world insofar as it is not a seamless totality and its transmission through tradition is not a continuous and unalterable stream. For Dilthey, the present is not even purely present to itself, as the present “as such” cannot be experienced (GS 7: 73). Temporality is not only lived as continuity but as discontinuity, it involves distances in relation to the past, the future, and even the present moment itself.¹¹ The plural character of historicity and temporality entails the necessity of experientially and experimentally engaging the world. Georg Misch described this as Dilthey’s “life-positivism.”¹² This non-reductive “positivism” advocates uncoerced empirical inquiry (“unbefangene Empirie”; GS 1: 81), or empiria without doctrinal empiricism (“Empirie, nicht Empirismus”; GS 19: 17), in contrast to the eliminative and reductive programs of logical positivism and scientific empiricism.¹³

Dilthey’s debts to the “philosophy of spirit” from Leibniz and Kant to Hegel and Schleiermacher did not prevent him from rejecting idealism and transforming the notion of “spirit” (*Geist*) through its contextualization. Contrary to foundationalist epistemology and speculative metaphysics, Dilthey argued that there can be no one single theory of knowledge that encompasses and systematizes all forms of knowing (GS 7: 4). Dilthey bases this radical epistemic pluralism on the past failures of such projects in contrast with the historically actual, philosophically legitimate, and pragmatically successful multiplicity of the sciences. Indeed, such epistemic an-archy is not only a historical fact but a genuine goal of inquiry (GS 7: 4). The philosophy of spirit (*Philosophie des Geistes*), which is still one systematic discipline for Hegel and Schleiermacher, becomes the multiple yet interconnected “spiritual” or human-sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) in Dilthey.¹⁴ Dilthey’s pluralism undermined the idea of systematic totality driven by one determinate goal—whether understood as the unity of science, a speculative actuality, or a regulative demand—by suggesting what I call a “weak holism” without finality. That is, a sense of the whole as fluid and multiple relational context or nexus that evades being grasped through a formula or as a unity. Knowing is not so much concerned with achieving or imposing an abstract unity as it is with reflectively and practically engaging the lived connectedness or nexus (*Zusammenhang*) of the tendencies of life, which are temporally-historically formed (GS 7: 185).

Dilthey’s anti-systematic tendencies are often decried but can be positively interpreted. Based on Dilthey’s works, the whole as an infinite depth, texture, and indeterminate-determinate context of relations (*Zusammenhang*) can be distinguished from relative “wholes” or “totalities” of structural-functional systems of the external organization of society (economy and state), the realms of cultural reproduction (from ordinary life to the arts and sciences), and of the purposiveness of the individual person. A differentiated or structural “totality” in Dilthey’s sense is a singular within a wider context and network of relations. This relational yet non-identical context cannot be fully disclosed to or comprehended by any person, group, or society to the degree that they are perspectival participants within it. Human life is accordingly not transparent to itself in its immanence. As it fails to directly or immediately grasp, intuit, or know itself, it strives to understand, express,

and interpret itself, and by doing so it transforms itself. Human life is only accessible through its mediated expressions and practices, i.e., through experience, language, and history (GS I: xviii/SW I: 51). Nevertheless, life is characterized not only by experiential, linguistic, and historical finitude in Dilthey but further by a constitutive ungroundability (*Unbegründbarkeit*), unfathomability (*Unergründlichkeit*), and immeasurability (*Unermesslichkeit*). These can be experienced in “limit-situations” of uncanniness, yet for Dilthey such feelings and experiences are also disclosed as the fullness and openness of life. As we do not know whether this ineffability is immanent to life or transcends it, it provides no cognitive justification for metaphysics or theology. Life is not so much revealed as one cosmic mystery or religious secret, guaranteeing or reestablishing the authority of traditional philosophy and religion; it is felt and experienced in diverse ways of “multiple provenance” that are hermeneutically and empirically investigated in the human sciences. Likewise, as the wholeness of life and singularity of a life are partially and perspectively revealed in sensuous experience, imagination, reflection, and cognition, life is addressed yet not fully or definitely comprehended through the activities of “spirit” or art, philosophy, and religion. Given its inherently plural and conflicting character, in an argument that influenced Rudolf Carnap, metaphysics at best expresses a particular feeling and attitude about life rather than its unconditional truth.¹⁵ As all thought is rooted in and oriented by a “feeling of life,” which does not a priori or analytically contain its own answer, it should not be reduced to scientific rationality pace Carnap but calls for the indirect, experimental, and revisable approaches of hermeneutical interpretation tracing the complex features of historically mediated life.

Historical life is addressed in a number of ways in the human sciences, including causal, structural-functional, and interpretive approaches. These are related to the dynamic productive nexus (*Wirkungszusammenhang*) of historical life, which requires an interpretive orientation to the extent that even the most constant causal relations are appropriated, utilized, and reinterpreted through human practices. Similarly, even the most persistent structural systems such as the state and the economy cannot assume, fixate, or ignore their environment (their “outside”) without significant consequences.¹⁶ Causality and functionality are not ineffective in human life, since Dilthey is not the dualist he is occasionally thought to be, but practically taken up in a given productive nexus that historically interlinks facticity and meaning, nature and spirit. The infinity of relations that constitute a form of historical life are not primarily to be approached through a hypothetical-deductive or structural-functional logic, which subsume particulars under a universal covering law or systematic teleological principle, insofar as historically mediated and plural life calls for an “oscillation” between singular and whole, individual and society, and practice and structure. This incessant fluctuation, due to human finitude and later called the “hermeneutical circle,” moves between the concrete givenness of lived-experience and its contexts. Wavering between the singular and whole without deciding for one over the other, this is not a “circle” in the sense of a closed circuit or systematic totality. Nor is it a speculative circle that explicates self-related meaning while re-appropriating every disruption of appropriation, nor the functionalist interaction of an organism or system with its environment. The so-called hermeneutical circle is an intercrossing and between, i.e., the relatedness of the whole and the singular frequently articulated by Schleiermacher

and Dilthey in terms of the typical and the unique. As the complex relations of life cannot be captured in thought without excess and remainder, antinomy and aporia, the circle is constituted in the incomplete relation between meaning and facticity. In this anti-reductive logic, neither singular nor context is taken as reducible to the other as in teleological, functional, or causal-efficient explanation.

3. *Revisiting Understanding*

Ordinary everyday understanding (*Verstehen*) is a primary example of oscillation in human life, as it occurs in real processes between self and other involving relations of reciprocity and dependence (GS 7: 141, 143, 152). Understanding, as Habermas also notes, is reciprocal to the extent that each reaches out toward the other. Understanding that is non-reciprocal or a one-way grasping of the other cannot be understanding at all, although it can be perhaps some form of feeling or knowledge. Unlike Habermas, the reciprocity of understanding does not necessarily presuppose or aim at symmetry, identity, and equality, as it involves myriad incalculable differences of individuality. Not to mention that even living others can be absent, and unable to respond for a variety of reasons, interpretation is inevitably short-circuited and incomplete. The differences between individuals are elucidated through various social categories and types, including consensus, yet are irreducible to them as these types are indefinite nominal approximations that need to become more determinate through experience of the individuality of the other. As understanding involves (1) the performative reciprocity of self and other and (2) awareness of what is general and unique (GS 7: 152), it is caught up in an explicatory circle between identity and alterity and typicality and singularity. Schleiermacher noted that interpretation takes its point of departure from this midpoint, or oscillating between, as sameness would already be understood and utter difference is incomprehensible.¹⁷ Likewise, interpretation does not take its point of departure from pure universality or singularity, as these are what it seeks to articulate. Already bound to the endless task of understanding, and therefore of interpretation and reflection, because of its finite and interrupted character, the self does not experience itself as an independent monad positing and constructing its world but as dependent on, interdependent with, and conditioned by others and its world (GS 5: 135). The situatedness of understanding is its very possibility. Not only is it informed by its own presuppositions and prejudices, understanding only reaches toward others and back to itself in its social and bodily dependence, conditionality, and contextuality.

Understanding moves from the self toward the other as a unique whole of its own, yet the indeterminability of the finite particular (i.e., the singular) destabilizes the movement of articulating the unique whole of a life, compelling understanding to waver and backtrack to the typical and schematic even in the midst of great biographical and psychological detail. According to Dilthey the “individual is ineffable” (GS 13/1: 1; GS 5: 330), and this impossibility of knowing the individual other constitutes the movement of understanding and the explicative circle between self and other as intrinsically fluctuating. Common to all ways of understanding “is the progression which goes from the apprehension of indeterminate-determinate parts to apprehend the sense of the whole, and which alternately attempts to use this sense to determine the part more precisely. Failure occurs, since particular parts resist being so understood” (GS 7: 227). The interpretive circle of knowing and life in

lived-experience is infinite: “Since lived experience is unfathomable and no thought can penetrate behind it, since cognition itself only arises in connection with it, and since the consciousness of lived experience is deepened in that experience, this task is accordingly unending” (GS 7: 225). The apparent “bad infinity” of hermeneutics from Hegel’s perspective, and the lack of a conclusive transcendence or absolute, is the very possibility as well as the risk of understanding and knowledge for a finite relational being.

Verstehen can be but is not necessarily the abstracting, inherently intellectualized, process that Tina Chanter following Levinas criticizes in Heidegger.¹⁸ Levinas’s criticism fairly or unfairly places Heidegger in the Neo-Kantian tradition of his teacher Rickert. For Rickert, understanding aims at the non-sensuous meaning and intelligible validity of cultural goods and ideal values. It has no pertinent perceptual, psycho-physical, or psychological dimensions, insofar as these are excluded from understanding and included in the natural scientific causal investigation of value- and meaning-free nature.¹⁹ Dilthey, notoriously for his transcendental and ontological critics, did not exclude psychology, giving rise to the charge of a “psychologism” that reduces meaning and validity to the facticity of the perceptual and the sensuous. This criticism distorts the significance of understanding in Dilthey, for whom it is a reflexive, bodily-perceptual, and social-historical practice.

First, Dilthey situates understanding in the pre-reflective and reflexive self-awareness in which the bodily self is co-given or co-original with others and things through their mutual resistance. From out of this bodily and perceptually experienced between of the co-givenness of self and other, self, others, and world are differentiated through experiences of the facticity, materiality, and resistance of that which confounds and reverses will, thought, and emotion (GS 5: 90–138). Life is, Dilthey contends, first “there” (*da*) in this pre-reflective and reflexive self-feeling.²⁰ The reflexive awareness of the cogiveness of self and world is the non-reflective basis from which consciousness and self-reflection emerge. They are formed in the cogiveness, resistance, and tension of self and world in which a life is “there-for-me.” Consciousness and reflection are bound to the alterity and non-identity that does not preclude but allows the differentiation and social-historical individuation of the self to occur.

Second, prior to Merleau-Ponty, Dilthey promoted the “primacy of perception” over representation (GS 19: 117). Although Dilthey contributed to the critique of spatializing the temporal also seen in Bergson and the early Heidegger,²¹ he argued that spatiality is irreducible to temporality since feeling, which is “originally there” and does not originate in representation (GS 18: 152), is spatially as well as temporally oriented (GS 18: 148). Through spatial orientation and worldly resistance to the body, the lived-category of thingliness emerges from how the world is experienced (GS 19, 23). The self as lived body is hence already the basis for treating the body as a thing rather than this being merely an imposition of modern scientific thought. Understanding, situated in yet more than reflexivity and feeling, likewise retains a reference to spatially oriented bodily feeling (GS 18: 148).²² Understanding is first of all based in the self-feeling of bodily being in the world. It is from out of this prereflective yet reflexive bodily feeling of life that the “self” is formed (GS 18: 175) and reflective self-consciousness is grounded (GS 19: 154). Understanding is fundamentally bodily and worldly, and the other cannot begin to be understood through disembodied values and norms.

Understanding is reflexive (self-relating), bodily-perceptual, and social, historical and cultural. Without each of these, it could not begin to encounter the other. Contrary to both physicalism and mentalism, the body can and needs to be articulated both in relation to its physical as well as its social-historical environment rather than being ahistorically isolated as a physiological apparatus or reduced to a function of consciousness (GS 5: 225). Dilthey advocated an account of understanding situated in the body and a particular environment and epoch.²³ The strength of his approach lies precisely in articulating the connectedness of the bodily and historical aspects of understanding. For Dilthey, embodiment and culture, materiality and historicity, are interconnected both in the formation of historical worlds and in their human scientific inquiry.

4. *Understanding Truth, Action, and Expression*

In a late posthumously published work, *The Understanding of Other Persons and their Expressions of Life* (written around 1910), Dilthey locates the interpretative strategies of the human sciences within the context of the elementary forms of understanding that characterizes human life. Interpretation and explanation both presuppose understanding within a life-nexus. Such understanding is not only a question of scientific access, as Dilthey described it as fundamentally world-opening (GS 7: 205). Understanding can aim at the truth or validity that concerns Gadamer and Habermas and, indeed, Dilthey portrayed this kind of understanding as the most complete (GS 7: 206). More basically, however, understanding can concern itself with the relatedness and facticity in which human expressions occur. The understanding of validity claims says nothing to the person who explores understanding in relation “to the dark background and the fullness of psychic life. No indication of the peculiarities of life from which it arose is found here, and it follows directly from its specific character that we are not required to go back to the psychic context” (GS 7: 206). Contrary to the psychologism ascribed to Dilthey, validity claims *as* validity claims require no reference to the context from which they genetically arose. As such, they are the most complete forms of human expressions in the sense that their form and content can be considered on their own terms.

The human sciences, including psychology, do not investigate the universal objects of mathematics and logic. They are motivated to understand individuals by addressing the psycho-physical and social-historical contexts in which human expressions and practices occur, including practices concerning universal values and validity claims. The human sciences should investigate what appears as a discourse of pure validity claims from a practical perspective, as when the sociology of science investigates the contingent origins and motives associated with the formation of a new scientific theory. In this sense, as Neo-Freudian cultural analysis illustrates, psychological inquiry can play a fruitful role in human scientific inquiry. More radically, the human sciences need to engage the very facticity of human existence by investigating its never fully visible context and the richness and multiplicity of life in which human practices occur. Understanding the other entails approaching the other through interpretation *as* singular in its relational context, and this is only possible by acknowledging the uncertainty and impossibility of understanding, i.e., that the individual is ineffable and for that very reason—contrary to the early Wittgenstein—we must communicate and interpret.²⁴

Dilthey maintained both the ineffability of the individual and the possibility of understanding any expression of human life. These claims are consistent, according to Eugene Gendlin, as any human expression is in principle understandable, no matter how unique, because the more unique a human expression is, the more it is overdetermined by a multiplicity of meanings and, hence, the more possibilities there are for understanding it.²⁵ As expressive in the world, and as plural in contrast to an inapproachable, isolated, and self-enclosed monadic unity, the other cannot be completely other to me even as her otherness cannot be eliminated. Understanding the other presupposes understanding the other's non-identity, i.e., that the other is not me. Instead of inevitably being an imposition of a schema or standard onto the other, understanding and interpretation can potentially be the widening and transformation of our own experience. "Transposition is transformation" according to Dilthey (GS 5: 354/ SW IV: 253). Emphasizing the transformative role of memory and imagination in encountering others, intersubjective interactions can lead beyond the gathering of additional cognitive information to altered understandings of the other and of oneself. The other is not a construct or product of the self; it can answer, challenge, and change the self that addresses it.

Dilthey claimed that we have "experience of ourselves; but we do not understand ourselves. Everything about us is of course self-evident to us, but we have no standard with which to measure ourselves" (GS 7: 225). Since we knowers do not know ourselves, much less others, understanding is tentative and in need of constant renewal: "In our lived experience, our own self was comprehensible neither in the form of its flow nor in the depth of that which it contains. For like an island, the small sphere of conscious life rises out of inaccessible depths. But expression comes up from these depths. It is creative; and thus life becomes accessible to us in understanding, accessible as a re-creation of creation" (GS 7: 220). Understanding of self and others is inherently recreative and transformative under conditions of uncertainty such that interpretation, no matter how methodologically informed, is an art rather than the mechanical application of a rule. It is also an art to the extent that understanding has a singularity (*ein Einzelnes*) as its object (GS 7: 212). Although such uniqueness signifies the impossibility of understanding as a cognitive knowledge that subordinates the particular to the universal, understanding can open up a world and elucidate it through the fundamental expressiveness and responsiveness of life. Understanding enacts itself as a situated practice through the mediations of the life that it is and the life other than itself: The unknownness of the singular individual "invites, for its own sake, newer and deeper investigations by the understanding; and in such understanding the realm of individuals, which embraces humans and their creations, becomes accessible" (GS 7: 212).

Individuals understand (*verstehen*) lived-experience (*Erlebnis*) indirectly or interpretively through their own and other's mediated life-expression (*Lebensausdruck*). Dilthey distinguished in *The Understanding of Other Persons and their Expressions of Life* three classes of "life-expressions" (later adopted in Habermas's theory of communicative action): (1) concepts, judgments, and theories concerning validity claims that can be true or false (GS 7: 205); (2) actions; and (3) expressions of lived-experience (*Erlebnis*) (GS 7: 206). Whereas the first group of expressions expresses a cognitive interest in truth, and can be evaluated as true or false, the two subsequent groups concern enactment, performance, and practice rather than validity as such.

An action, according to Dilthey, “does not originate from an intention to communicate, but because of its relation to a purpose, this purpose is given through it” (GS 7: 206). Actions can be considered in their historical situation and life-context, figure and background, and are the enactment of a life in relation to purposes or goals, such that the multiplicity and fullness of life (i.e., possibility) becomes something particular in the act (GS 7: 206). Through his analysis of action, Dilthey presents life as a realm of multiplicity and possibility, and the virtuality discussed with York in their correspondence. Life becomes a life associated with a biography, or is individuated, through its own activity in relation to its conditions. Here too validity claims can be made about the rightness and wrongness, correctness and incorrectness, appropriateness and inappropriateness of actions. These actions are evaluated according to individual and social purposes, norms, and values that are themselves matters of communication.

The third group consists of the expression of lived-experience: “There is a special relation between it [i.e., the expression], the life from which it sprang, and the understanding which it brings about. The expression can indeed contain more of the psychic nexus than any introspection can reveal. It raises life out of depths which are unilluminated by consciousness; but at the same time it lies in the nature of lived experience that the relationship between this expression and the spiritual or human meaning which is expressed in it can only very approximately be taken as a basis for the understanding. The expression of lived experience does not fall under the judgment ‘true’ or ‘false’ but rather that of truthfulness and untruthfulness” (GS 7: 206).

Action and the expression of lived-experience are not validity claims, although they can be brought into relation to them as moral rightness and personal expressiveness through language. Action and lived-experience relate back to the relational life-nexus, which cannot be assumed to be transparent and intelligible in communication free of domination or mutual understanding. It is the detachment of the analysis of understanding and expression from its basis in lived-experience and its life-context that undermines Habermas’s appropriation of Dilthey’s hermeneutics, as this life-nexus is not directly cognitively or intentionally available. Language is fundamentally rooted in the facticity of life that constantly challenges its expression and interpretation. Life is not only conscious life, it is “unconscious” in the sense of being virtual (i.e., characterized by multiplicity and possibility) and unmasterable in its facticity by an individual or collective subject.²⁶ Dilthey recognizes the facticity of life without reifying it into the irrational. Rather, given the conditions of human knowledge and understanding, “in the confines between knowing and doing, a sphere emerges in which life is disclosed at a depth not open to observation, reflection and theory” (GS 7: 125).

5. *Experience, Reflection, and History*

Interpretive reflection (*Besinnung*) presupposes and engages a relational sphere of self and other given in a pretheoretical reflexive awareness (*Innewerden*) that occurs prior to conceptual thought.²⁷ The crucial difference between reflection and the reflexivity that it presupposes is lost in Gadamer and Habermas’s appropriation of Dilthey’s hermeneutics. Both reduce Dilthey’s category of the reflexive to the reflective, categorizing him with the “philosophy of consciousness.”²⁸ Contrary to such assessments, I propose that

Dilthey contextualized consciousness and the epistemological subject of modern western philosophy. He did not consider the methodological and theoretical considerations of the human sciences the whole of understanding nor, however, is such reflection on the human sciences extrinsic to the question of understanding itself.

Reflection strives through language for the universal, typical, and general. Yet reflection cannot escape its tension with the facticity of life and the multiplicity of the given (GS 7: 6–7). Although thought moves from the singular, accidental and the already given to the necessary and the universal, it is persistently bound through need, desire, and compulsion to the lived and the given (GS 7: 7). Such considerations are not an invitation to irrationalism or skepticism but rather to more rigorously relate thoughts and concepts back to their context in lived-experience (GS 7: 12). From this context, Dilthey described the cogiveness of self and world and the correlation between lived-experience (*Erlebnis*) and givenness (*Gegebenheit*). In this sense, Dilthey's philosophy of the human sciences has a phenomenological dimension in which "phenomenology" is the interpretation of historical consciousness and the empirical life to which it is bound. The early Dilthey accordingly claimed that he is pursuing the tendency of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* under altered conditions (GS 18: 5). That is, a phenomenology of the empirical rather than the ideal subject, of empirical consciousness and its conditions (GS 7: 12).

The interpretive fore-concepts (*Vorbegriffe*) of Dilthey's descriptive psychology are not unalterable or unchanging conditions but rather historically variable. They do not reach back to a priori conditions or a pure ego behind life but establish the conditions of articulating the structural relations of the empirical life of consciousness (GS 7: 13n). Descriptive psychology is only concerned with the factual (*Tatsächlichen*: GS 7: 14). This description is only of lived experience, and the historical expressions of life through which it is understood and interpreted, the content of which is not reducible to the whole (GS 7: 19). Description reveals the structural relations that Dilthey analyzed as comportment, content, and act (GS 7: 21–23). Ordering occurs through the recognition of multiplicity and its differentiation (GS 7: 23). Dilthey described consciousness through its mode of comportment. Lived-experiences are differentiated not just by content and context but by the mode or way (the how) of the comportment. Lived-experience is structured in the occurrence of the relationship between modes of comportment and their contents and contexts (GS 7: 25). Dilthey articulated the "self" from its comportment and contexts rather than from consciousness or even a prereflective intentionality or passivity. It is the spatial-temporal comportment and social-historical orientation of the self that allows it to individuate itself in relation to itself, others, and the world.

Consciousness is only conceivable within the concrete conditions of life and the horizons of spatiality and temporality (GS 19: 42). In every moment (*Augenblick*) of our life, we are not without spatial orientation. Similarly, in each moment in which we find ourselves and call the present, we are bound to the past (GS 19: 97). As consciousness is spatial, and bodily-worldly, as well as temporal, and social-historical, it can only be understood in addressing its facticity (GS 19: 51). Prior to the objectivity of the object and the subjectivity of the subject (GS 19: 68), this facticity is the "there," the cogiveness of self and world in reflexive awareness. This "there" is not neutral and indifferent but "there-for-me," which unfolds itself as the givenness of the object and the experience of

the subject. The “I” originates in the psycho-physical differentiation of self and world, of the “there,” through the “force of reality,” i.e., in the irresistible and irresolvable “violence of reality” (GS 19: 86). As it is conditioned by physical and social resistance, the self is always already conditioned and dependent on a reality external to itself; a reality that is thus not first given much less constructed through theory or conceptual thought (GS 5: 85). Lived-categories such as externality and internality arise from the bodily experience of the resistant world, as the self experiences the external world as beginning with its body and extending into an immeasurable distance (GS 5: 90). There is no absolute origin of the self for Dilthey, as it is constituted through an interruption that can be called traumatic. Reality is thus certain and given for a self-reflexive bodily being in the world, but this certainty and givenness presents itself as a question resisting resolution (GS 19: 87).

Dilthey corrected the precedence of theoretical thought without abandoning reflective and theoretical inquiry. There is a difference in kind and not just degree between being and validity for him (GS 19: 87). Assertions of truth do not assert existence, but rather the character of reality in a hypothetical mode (GS 19: 87). Hence, contrary to the fundamental assumption of logicism and identity philosophy, thinking does not exhaust experience nor does the thought exhaust the experienced (GS 19: 36–37). Dilthey is depicting the worldly conditions of concept-formation rather than reducing their claim to truth and validity to their psychological and historical formation. He does not deny the legitimacy of abstraction and conceptualization, i.e., their claim to ideal validity, insofar as their “objects” are not taken to be entities outside of the discourse that formed them (GS 7: 81). Dilthey’s “nominalism” is not a reductive “historicism” and “psychologism” except from the problematic perspectives of Platonism and transcendental philosophy.

When thinking is divorced from considerations of its particular language and history, of context and content, thinking becomes purely representational and propositional. Thinking represents, according to this perspective, ideal validity and indicates it in statements without regard for the facticity that would be its undoing and which exposes its vulnerability. The weakness and fragility of knowing is hidden in the light of timeless and sovereign truth that knows no shadows. Contrary to metaphysics, Dilthey proposed interpreting, that is, describing and analyzing the given. Through such analysis, “the feeling of fragility, the power of hidden instincts, the suffering from darkness and illusion, [and] the finitude of all that is life” becomes visible (GS 7, 150).

Dilthey’s experientialism entails encountering the historicity of experience. Experience is more than the sense-impressions and associations of classical empiricism, as it is interpreted through its life-context with feeling (GS 7: 52) and will (GS 7: 61–62). As lived, experience is an event in relation to a context, and both sides of this oscillation are historical. Reflecting the formation of historical worlds, concept-formation in the human sciences addresses the occurrences, structured processes, and practices that shape a historical form of life. The apparently fixed objectivities and structures of historical life can be analyzed in relation to their productive nexus (*Wirkungszusammenhang*; GS 7: 153–154), which also discloses the transitoriness and disquiet of life (GS 7: 157).

The historicity of experience does not mean that experience can be subsumed in universal history or under a hierarchical principle of history, for this at best separates and prioritizes one experiential thread. Historicity entails in a sense the impossibility of the

philosophy of history taken as one unifying teleological order or narrative. Nonetheless, for Dilthey, individuals purposively and reflectively engage in and narrate history even if there is no one inevitable metaphysically or theologically pre-determined teleological purpose or narrative to nature and history. Whereas historicity refers to the plural and temporal facticity of our socially mediated individual existence, history can be reflectively articulated as a preliminary “guiding thread” (*Leitfaden*) for practice and reflection. Through historically oriented reflection, lived-experience and the various conceptual constructs of the human sciences can be related to the realities of historical life.

Dilthey emphasized in his late work the formation of the historical world in the human sciences, a formation informed by and informing the historical character of human life (GS 7: 88). This formation is ideational yet needs to be receptive and answerable to the way (how) its object is given, just as all sciences need to respond to the mode of givenness of the objects that are their concern (GS 7: 89). Each science abstracts from a practical comportment toward the givenness of what it interprets and explains. The differences between the sciences occur through the experiential differentiation of their comportment in relation to the way in which their objects are given (GS 7: 89). Such givenness (*Gegebenheit*) does not necessarily imply transparency or intelligibility, since there is always further and new facticity to the given (GS 7: 91). Facticity consequently haunts every science, as the phenomenality of the reality which disturbs conceptualization is irrevocable (GS 7: 92). This haunting is a provocation that leads to the dynamics of scientific and conceptual transformation. Without the a posteriori, empirical, and non-conceptual challenging thought, history would be the logical self-unfolding of a concept.

Historicity for Dilthey signifies an occurrence involving both passivity and activity (GS 7: 147). The historical is not the exclusive product of conscious activity, such that we could directly know it as our own product, since it is implicated in the facticity and the conflict of forces (*Kampf der Gewalten*) of human life (GS 7: 187, 287–288). Historicity indicates then not the mastery but the finitude and fragility of human existence in the infinity of its possibilities (GS 7: 150). Historical reflection risks the incoherence of “bad infinity” in exposing itself to what is other than itself and what cannot be digested; i.e., an infinite folding of context and singularity, of whole and individual, of texture and overdetermination to which representation and the concept remain inadequate.

Dilthey proposed that the historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) of “free human nature,” a “nature” that is plural and singular rather than an essence or substance, is the basis of the study of history (GS 6: 108–109). As Dilthey noted: “We are historical beings before we are observers of history, and we are the latter only because we are the former” (GS 7: 278). In this case, the study of history is already structured by and cannot evade the historicity of human existence. Because of this basic historicity, understanding and interpretation are the reflexive ways by which humans understand their history. Yet the fact of historicity does not remove the need for the scientific study of history, as understanding is not direct intuition or revelation and requires the labor of conceptualization. Ordinary historically embodied understanding is transformed into the study of history, as empirical history is not irrelevant to confronting the historicity of human existence. Dilthey defended the study of history by historians, as interpretive from the first person perspective of participants and as scientific from the third person perspective of observation and theory. Dilthey approached

history both through the interpretive relation of context and singular as well as the theoretical and explanatory relation between structure and event. The former is prioritized in the human sciences, given their relation to historical lived-experience and the life-nexus, yet the latter “objectifying” tendencies are not marginalized. There is no absolute separation between validity and facticity or cultural value and value-free nature.

The historical is the crossing of the singular and its contexts, in which it appears as singular. It is primarily occurrence or event rather than structure, and narrative rather than teleological purpose. Historical events evoke the narratives and self-narratives of individuals and groups, and these have an often implicit priority even for the most scientific of historians. Such narratives are not the universalizing narrative of reason but attempts to indicate and evoke singular relations between individuals and groups through the equally universalizing and forgetful medium of language. In this way, history is close to poetry. Narrative, in relation to the singular that is its truth, occurs as biography, autobiography, the history of groups and nations, but also in fiction, prayer, and address. The linguistic styles that address the singular do not remain within the bounds of language’s representational and propositional structure. Language slides back into its own element of tensions, moods, feelings valuations, willing, wishing, praying, gesturing, and evoking the other (GS 19: 5), and the “greatness” of the historian consists in the ability to give her- or him-self over (*hinzugeben*) to the other in her context (GS 7: 201).

Dilthey did not positivistically eliminate the immanent purposiveness of historical life and its narrative presentation in rejecting the strong external governing teleology of traditional metaphysics, theodicy, and the philosophy of history, as his “empiricism” is non-reductive and there are lived-experiences of purposiveness. Rudolf Makkreel has ascertained the importance of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, in particular its accounts of reflective judgment and purposiveness without purpose, for Dilthey’s thought.²⁹ Purposiveness, without one predetermined final purpose that governs the whole, is articulated from out of the expressions and practices of historical agents located in the field and tension of practical interests, while narrative is pluralized according to the multiple norms, values, and worldviews that inform it. Purposiveness and narrative are rethought by Dilthey in relation the immanent self-generating “categories of life,” the first of which is temporality itself (GS 7: 192, 228–229).³⁰ The categories of life are the immanent modifiable structures of lived-experience itself and articulate the generative and emergent significance of life (GS 7: 232–233). These historically lived and enacted categories do not subsume particulars under a universal, they spring from the tension and confrontation of self and other, identity and alterity. The subject of these life-categories is, paraphrasing Dilthey, a concrete temporal and historical occurrence of life (*Lebensverlauf*) that is played forth in a body and individuated as a self in relations of the purposive and counter-purposive, i.e., through the force of externality, otherness (*Fremden*), and that which evades being experienced (GS 7: 203). The self is bound to a context of relations and conditions and is intrinsically related to an alterity that resists and possibly reverses it. History is never simply then the history of the plans, projects, and efforts of individuals and groups but also all the ways in which these fail, fall short, and produce a variety of new and unintended consequences.

6. Conclusion

Life, history, and society are not appropriately conceived as an undeviating teleological development, an unchanging system, or seamless totality. A historical life faces issues of its own incomprehensibility, incommensurability, and indeterminacy, as it is located in an immediacy and immanence lacking transparency and a relatedness missing unambiguous determinacy and undisturbed unity. Life resists universalization in confronting itself as its own life, e.g., me as my own life (GS 19, 346–47), in relation to the life that is not my own; that is, as an exposure to facticity, singularity, and contingency.³¹ Cognitive thought often ignores the singular that it finds unnecessary, yet truth does not only consist of the continuities and uniformities of tradition and common life but of “the unique, the singular and the individual” in their relation to what is typical and shared (GS 7: 71, 87).

We can cognize ourselves only indirectly (GS 7: 87), i.e., interpretively through our actions and expressions, insofar as the self is inexorably related to the alterity of the forces of life that Dilthey describes as “resistance, distance and strangeness” (GS 7: 131). There is no object or subject that we know as such, without interpretation, and that we do not experience as both “pressure and demand” (GS 7: 131). The individual does not exist as an isolated subject in and for itself; it becomes itself practically and historically in relation to itself, others, and its world. According to Dilthey, “The infinite richness of life unfolds itself in individual existence because of its relations to its milieu, other humans and things. But every particular individual is also a crossing point of contexts which move through and beyond its particular life” (GS 7: 135). These intercrossing contexts constitute a relational medium or “between” in which the embodied individual responds, acts, and reflects through its practices in relation and potential fidelity to historical life.

University of Massachusetts at Lowell

Notes

1. I discuss Heidegger and Gadamer’s criticisms of the “non-ontological” hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and Dilthey in more detail in “Schleiermacher on Language, Religious Feeling, and the Ineffable,” *Epoché*, vol. 8, no. 2 (Spring 2004): pp. 297–312; and “Disturbing Truth: Art, Finitude, and the Human Sciences in Dilthey,” *theory@buffalo*, vol. 11: *Aesthetics and Finitude* (2007), pp. 121–142. Tom Nenon describes the often problematic strategies of Gadamer’s critique of Dilthey in “Hermeneutical Truth and the Structure of Human Experience: Gadamer’s Critique of Dilthey,” in Lawrence Schmidt (ed.), *The Specter of Relativism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), chap. 2.

2. Unless otherwise noted, Dilthey references are to the pagination of the *Gesammelte Schriften* (GS) and, when available, the translations of the *Selected Works* (SW): GS 1: *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften: Versuch einer Grundlegung für das Studium der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte*, ed. B. Groethuysen, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1959); GS 5: *Die Geistige Welt: Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens. Erste Hälfte: Abhandlungen zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften*, ed. G. Misch, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1957); GS 7: *Der Aufbau der Geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, ed. B. Groethuysen, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1956); GS 8: *Weltanschauungslehre*:

Abhandlungen zur Philosophie der Philosophie, ed. B. Groethuysen, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1960); GS 18: *Die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte: Vorarbeiten zur Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften (1865–1880)*, ed. H. Johach and F. Rodi (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1977); GS 19: *Grundlegung der Wissenschaften vom Menschen, der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte*, ed. H. Johach and F. Rodi, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1997); SW I: *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, ed. R. Makkreel and F. Rodi (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989); SW III: *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, ed. R. Makkreel and F. Rodi (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); SW IV: *Hermeneutics and the Study of History*, ed. R. Makkreel and F. Rodi (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

3. On this double-bind that Schleiermacher and Dilthey are placed in by their critics, see Gunter Scholtz, *Ethik und Hermeneutik: Schleiermachers Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995), pp. 66–67.

4. Whereas psychology is a mediating link between the human and natural sciences for Dilthey, since it has both explanatory and interpretive tasks, Neo-Kantians such as Heinrich Rickert reduce psychology to a natural science in order to divide the norms and values of the cultural sciences from the facticity of nature. Rickert thus differentiated the intelligible realm of value and validity, which oriented practical philosophy and the cultural sciences, from the brute facticity and sensuous materiality of nature and the natural sciences in his *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 1986), pp. 38–39. On the different senses of facticity, see the introduction to François Raffoul and E. S. Nelson, *Rethinking Facticity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008).

5. “[D]ie historische Darstellung des einmal Geschehenen” (GS 7: 3).

6. For an account of the concept of life-nexus in relation to Husserl’s related notion of “life-world,” see Rudolf Makkreel, “Lebenswelt und Lebenszusammenhang” in *Dilthey und Philosophie der Gegenwart*, ed. E. W. Orth (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 1985), pp. 381–413.

7. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 140.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 308–310.

10. Friedrich Schleiermacher makes this widening to all communicative phenomena clear in assessing the hermeneutics of F. A. Wolf and Friedrich Ast in his 1829 Academy Address: “Über den Begriff der Hermeneutik mit Bezug auf F. A. Wolfs Andeutungen und Asts Lehrbuch” in *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, ed. Manfred Frank (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), p. 314.

11. Maintaining the continuity of language and history, Gadamer claimed: “Daß ich Sprache als der Weise der Vermittlung ansehe, in der Kontinuität der Geschichte über alle Abstände und Diskontinuitäten zustandekommt, scheint mir durch die angedeuteten phänomene wohlbegründet.” Gadamer, *Hermeneutik II* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), pp. 143–144.

12. Georg Misch, *Vom Lebens- und Gedankenkreis Wilhelm Diltheys* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag G. Schulte-Bulmke, 1947), p. 14.

13. Compare Rudolf Makkreel’s discussion of Dilthey’s empirical orientation in his introduction to SW I, 8. Kuno Fischer distinguished empiria as the experiential fullness of life from empiricism, which posits experience as a basic principle and can thus be experientially impoverished, in his *Francis Bacon und seine Nachfolger Entwicklungsgeschichte der Erfahrungsphilosophie* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1875), 510. I explore in greater detail the empirical-factual dimension of Dilthey’s hermeneutics in “Empiricism, Facticity, and the Immanence of Life in Dilthey,” *Pli: Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, vol.18, *Superior Empiricism* (2007): pp. 108–128.

14. G. Scholtz views this change critically in *Ethik und Hermeneutik*, pp. 67–68.

15. Dilthey's critique of traditional metaphysics as an indemonstrable and unjustifiable attitude rooted in a "feeling of life" and articulated as a "worldview" was taken up, via Hermann Nohl, and modified by the young Rudolf Carnap in his critique of metaphysics and defense of the scientific life-stance, as Gottfried Gabriel shows in *Carnap Brought Home the View from Jena*, ed. Steve Awodey and Carsten Klein (Chicago: Open Court, 2004), pp. 10–17. I address the relationship between epistemic justification and ungroundability further in "Begründbarkeit und Unergründlichkeit bei Wilhelm Dilthey," *Existentialia*, vol. 12, nos. 1–2 (2002): pp. 1–10.

16. Although the "cybernetic" or "systems" theory of society explains society as a functional interaction between structural systems and larger environments that are not simply given, it is committed only to explanatory holism and fails to articulate the interpretive and normative dimensions of individual and social life that are found in Dilthey. See Peter Krauser's *Kritik der endlichen Vernunft: Diltheys Revolution der allgemeinen Wissenschafts- und Handlungstheorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968), which articulated multiple connections between Dilthey and cybernetics or systems theory.

17. *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, pp. 313–314.

18. Tina Chanter, *Time, Death and the Feminine* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 83–84. Taking up Levinas's critique of Heidegger, Chanter interprets understanding and projection as having priority over thrownness and facticity in the economy of Heidegger's thought (pp. 84–85).

19. Rickert, *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft*, pp. 36–37.

20. See GS 18: 157. The feeling of self is also described as the feeling of life in which reflexive awareness is conditioned by the world (GS 19: 161): "The root of self-consciousness, self-feeling, is primitively cogiven with consciousness of the world" (GS 19: 171).

21. "[I]t is impossible to represent striving, duration, consequence, time from non-temporal elements" (GS 19: 220).

22. The significance of the body for Dilthey is developed in opposition to representationalism in his essay on the reality of the external world (GS 5: 90–138).

23. Compare further GS 19: 308–309/SW I: 467–468.

24. For Schleiermacher, it is the ineffable and what cannot be spoken that compels communication, as I argue in "Schleiermacher on Language," pp. 297–312.

25. Eugene Gendlin, *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1997), p. 198.

26. Dilthey required a hermeneutics of the unconscious, since the "acquired psychic nexus" is not transparent even to itself. We only interpret ourselves and others through our and their expressions. He remained skeptical of using the unconscious as a cause of consciousness according to a hypothetical causal-explanatory model (GS 5: 179–180). Habermas develops a reading of Freud in *Knowledge and Human Interests* that connects Freud to Dilthey by exploring the interplay of interpretive and causal approaches to the unconscious (Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, pp. 214–215), claiming to correct Freud's positivism and follow him beyond Dilthey in subordinating interpretation and explanation to emancipatory self-reflection (pp. 246–247).

27. R. Makkreel explores the significance of this crucial distinction in SW I, 3–43.

28. This claim is true insofar as Dilthey prioritized the experience of consciousness and phenomenality; it is false to the extent Dilthey broadened and contextualized consciousness through

pre-reflective reflexive awareness, situated lived-experience, and its historical life-contexts, see Jos De Mul, *The Tragedy of Finitude: Dilthey's Hermeneutics of Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 142.

29. Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Dilthey: Philosopher of the Human Studies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); for an overview, see De Mul, *Tragedy of Finitude*, p. 364.

30. Dilthey's categories of life are a precursor to Heidegger's "existentials." Between his early description of life as categorial and the later analysis of the existential-existential structures of Dasein in *Being and Time*, Heidegger used Dilthey's language of the "fundamental categories of life," although these categories of life are themselves reconsidered in relation to their ruination, in GA 61: *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles*, second edition (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1994), pp. 85–155.

31. "In der Struktur des Lebens äußert sich eine individuelle Tatsächlichkeit, eine *haecceitas*, welche vom Verstande nicht als notwendig aufgezeigt werden kann" (GS 19: 348).