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The Possibility of Universal Objective Validity in the Human Sciences: A Pragmatic Interpretation of Wilhelm Dilthey's Hermeneutics

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Abstract

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By Courtney Hammond Murphy

This dissertation focuses on Wilhelm Dilthey's question as to the possibility of securing scientific knowledge of the human world while preserving the truth of the human spirit. More specifically, he asks whether universal objective validity is possible in the human sciences. I trace the origins of the question back through Leibniz and Kant, in order to highlight some of Dilthey's main advancements, namely finitude and historicity. Whereas Leibniz fails to recognize the enabling conditions of space and time, Kant fails to recognize that time is not merely an enabling condition, but also experienced content. Furthermore, whereas Kant's project in the first *Critique* is mostly informed by a desire to understand the limits of our knowledge in the natural sciences, Dilthey is concerned with the human sciences. Thus, Dilthey, in his critique of *historical* reason, goes one step further than Kant in insisting that time is a real category and not simply ideal. This, in turn, effects the categories by which we think, since they too must be temporal.

After "realizing" time and the categories by which we think, Dilthey now asks if universal objective validity is possible. I contend that it is, and that Dilthey's hermeneutics provides us with the rules for understanding these real categories, and the method for bringing our initial certainty of immediate lived experience to the level of reliability in articulating that experience. Of course, because of historicity, universal objective validity in the human sciences looks very different from that in the natural sciences. To flesh out this notion, I appeal to John Dewey's pragmatism, which shows us that the real test of validity is to be found in practical activity. I conclude that the judgments we make about the human world have universal objective validity insofar as they offer an interpretation that contributes to the meaning of its object, and does so in a way that expresses our values and our desires as to what we wish to actualize in this world.

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Introduction

The Problem of Universal Objective Validity in Dilthey's Hermeneutics

The general topic of this work concerns the notion of universal objective validity, or more specifically, the publicly accessible character of the subject matter of our experience. The problem of objectivity was originally a concern specific to traditional, i.e., first-person centered, epistemology. Since the nineteenth century this has changed. Along with a newfound emphasis on the historical and cultural character of human cognition came a call for a broader, more inclusive, study of understanding (*Verstehen*); one that would be able to overcome the limitations of traditional epistemology and provide a richer account of the conditions under which it is possible for *stuff*, or the unanalyzed things of experience, to become the *objects* of human experience. Thus, aside from the epistemological question of knowing becomes the question of understanding, coping and dealing. In other words, ontological questions were now at the forefront, and epistemological ones would have to follow their lead.

Classical American Pragmatism and Philosophical Hermeneutics are two of the most important and influential versions of this new endeavor to broaden the scope of our investigations into human experience. The aim of my project is to examine the work of Wilhelm Dilthey in order to bring into focus the advantages gained by a shift from the traditional epistemological approach to objectivity toward a more fundamental and thereby more adequate science of understanding. Dilthey's project of providing a foundation for the human sciences through a critique of

historical reason confronts this changing landscape directly. Therefore, a careful study of the origins and procedures of Dilthey's hermeneutics reveal that our notions of what constitutes universal objective validity will have to change.

In a survey of the history of hermeneutics since the Enlightenment, Kurt Mueller Vollmer remarks that "Dilthey's hermeneutics represents the watershed between the nineteenth-century theories, which were an outgrowth of Romanticism, and those of the twentieth century which comprise philosophical hermeneutics and the methodological concerns of the social and historical sciences."[1] One of the most influential of Dilthey's contributions to what would soon be the hermeneutics of the 20th century is his insight into the notion that understanding is an existential principle, or in his own terms a category of life, or *Lebenskategorie.* In the transition from nineteenth-century hermeneutics, most notably represented by Schleiermacher, to the philosophical hermeneutics characteristic of the twentieth century, this insight marks a crucial step.

Schleiermacher, in a move away from older forms of hermeneutics which were concerned to decipher certain texts or find the route by which a proper understanding of them would be possible, seeks to find (in a Kantian manner) "the conditions for the possibility of understanding and its modes of interpretation."[2] Thus, for Schleiermacher, hermeneutics is a theory about the "Understanding" (das *Verstehen*). But while this move from "outer" textual exegesis toward the investigation of the "inner" processes that enable understanding is itself a great leap in the history of hermeneutics, Dilthey goes one step further. Still concerned with

[1] Mueller-Vollmer, Kurt. , ed., *The Hermeneutics Reader*. (New York: Continuum, 1989), 23.
[2] Ibid, 9.

the conditions of the possibility of understanding[3], Dilthey aims to show that understanding itself is a *way* in which human beings exist, that is, understanding is an existential principle. In other words, in everyday life, we human beings make our way through the world "understandingly" in that we always find ourselves in situations which require that we behave or react in certain ways. This behavior is a result of the fact that we have taken a situation in a certain way, either as meaning something to us, or as requiring something from us, or as calling on us for a response, etc. Thus because we understand ourselves to be in situations, we are able (or unable as it may be) to react accordingly. The reaction or response is one of understanding. And so by understanding, we make our way in the world.

But this is not all. For Dilthey, understanding is not only an existential principle, a fundamental way that we exist, but also serves as the basis for all of our higher and more complex modes of understanding, e.g. interpretation and re-experiencing. The need for higher forms of understanding is brought about by the subject matter to be understood. As Dilthey states, "understanding will differ in kind and scope in relation to different classes of manifestations of life."[4] Thus, for example, the interpretation of a work of art is but a more complex situation in which we must utilize more sophisticated modes of understanding than those we normally use in our everyday affairs in order to respond to the work or interpret it "correctly". And it is here that the human sciences come in to play. They provide us

[3] This is perhaps most explicit in that he refers to his project as a 'Critique of *Historical* Reason', in an effort to both supplement and improve upon Kant's first *Critique*.
[4] Dilthey, Wilhelm. *Selected Works, Volume 3.* eds. Rudolf Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton: 2002), 226. (Hereafter this source will be referred to as *SW3*.)

with the methods of these higher modes of understanding by which the complex experience can be brought to cognition.

But now a question arises for Dilthey. What is the guarantee that we have in fact interpreted a work correctly, or any manifestation of life for that matter? More specifically, how can we be sure that we have raised our understanding of it to the level of universal objective validity? This is the guiding question behind his entire endeavor, since for Dilthey, "every science contains the demand for universal validity".[5] And the human sciences, if they are to share the same "scientific" status as that had by the natural sciences must, too, strive for such validity. Of course Dilthey realized the enormity of this task for the human sciences in formulating the question, "how are we to overcome the difficulty which everywhere weighs upon the human sciences—that of deriving universally valid propositions from inner experiences which are so personally limited, so indeterminate, so compacted and resistant to analysis?"[6]

This would be the problem that occupied Dilthey throughout his life, a problem which, when taken in its broadest sense, has come to be known as the "crisis of historicity". It is the crisis of how, given the acceptance of the fundamental historical nature of not only our existence, but also of the human world in which we live, we can hope to secure universally valid knowledge claims about it. Dilthey never solved the problem to his satisfaction despite his life-long efforts to do so, but I will claim that he has provided the tools, which when interpreted carefully, point the way out of this crisis.

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[5] Ibid, 159.
[6] *GS VI*, 107

One of the tools Dilthey gives us in coming to grips with this problem is the notion of objective spirit. It is one of his most important contributions in the history of hermeneutics, in that with this concept, Dilthey is able to explain just how it is possible for us to understand our way through life. In other words, it provides the justification for understanding what it means to say that understanding is an existential principle. According to Dilthey, objective spirit is the structure in which human beings find themselves. It is comprised of the institutions, the history, the religions, the traditions *from* which one understands.

> Every square planted with trees, every room in which chairs are arranged, is understandable to us from childhood because human tendencies to set goals, produce order, and define values in common have assigned a place to every square and every object in the room. The child grows up within the order and ethos of the family that it shares with the other members and in this context it accepts the way the mother regulates things. Before the child learns to speak it is already wholly immersed in the medium of commonalities. The child only learns to understand the gestures and facial expressions, movements and exclamations, words and sentences, because it constantly encounters them as the same and in the same relation to what they mean and express. Thus the individual becomes oriented in the world of objective spirit.[7]

Thus, objective spirit, or "the world of human spirit" as he also calls it, is the background from which we understand anything at all, be it facial gestures, complicated texts, etc. It is our history, and as such is available to us through understanding and interpretation precisely because we are, at root, historical beings. We not only live through history, but history lives in us.

This insight into the role of objective spirit reveals the second tool that Dilthey gives us for solving the problem of historicity and showing how we can

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[7] *SW3*, 229-230

attain universal objective validity in the human sciences; namely, the fundamental historical nature of human beings:

> The first significant result for solving the problem of the conceptual cognition of history emerges here: the primary condition for the possibility of historical science is contained in the fact that I am myself a historical being and that the one who investigates history is the same as the one who makes history. Universally valid synthetic historical judgments are possible…[T]hey must, in accordance with the nature of their object, be based on relationships grounded in lived experience.[8]

In one of Dilthey's most important works on hermeneutics, "The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Manifestations of Life", a third tool is found in addressing the problem of historicity. Here Dilthey explains the relationship between the elementary forms of understanding and the higher modes with which the human sciences concern themselves. One of the key concepts discussed in this essay is that of lived-experience (*Erlebnis*). Lived-experience is for Dilthey the raw data of historical understanding. All of our experiences stem from this most original way that we relate to the world. Lived-experiences are certain in and of themselves simply by virtue of the fact that they are what they are, i.e. experiences. But despite the certainty (*Gewissheit*) which attends lived-experience, they are not yet considered objects of knowledge. In other words, the immediate, certain knowledge we have of these experiences is what Dilthey classifies as *Wissen.* Only when these experiences are reflected upon, understood, and put into a larger context of meaning can they achieve the status of an object of knowledge in the sense of *Erkenntnis*, or conceptual cognition, and thus claim objectivity. In other words, the fact that I have experiences cannot itself be denied. The question now

[8] *SW3*, 298.

becomes how to transform this certainty about having an experience into the universal validity of a judgment claim about what it is.

Dilthey saw the answer to this problem in the cooperation between lived-experience, expression and understanding. He refers to this triad as the "nexus of life." Only because all of our experiences are originally lived-experiences, and only when these lived experiences are expressed in various ways, are they able to become the subject matter of our understanding. Thus, in order to settle the problem of securing universally valid cognition of the human world, we must understand more about the connection and cooperation between these fundamental features of human existence. To do so, we must find a method that takes into account the part-whole relation that exists between individuals and the greater community, or objective spirit, of which they are a part. This method is that of hermeneutics.

For Dilthey, the method of hermeneutics is most appropriate for the tasks of the human sciences if they are to attain the same "scientific" status as that enjoyed by the natural sciences. That is, hermeneutics is to secure the universal objective validity of the claims made in the human sciences, and it is the job of philosophy to bring their results together into a unified coherent understanding of human life. Dilthey asserts that,

> In every sphere and area of mental life the demand for valid knowledge arises. To be sure, life itself precedes all methodical thought as the first and the most important datum, but human life first becomes certain of itself in so far as it investigates and regulates itself according to valid knowledge. Thus man must transcend beyond the naïve consciousness of his immediate reality and its qualities by means of critical knowledge. This process is essential and intrinsic to civilization itself…the individual sciences of man

> accomplish this knowledge within their separate analytical frameworks. Finally, however, it is the function of philosophy to bring together in a comprehensive and validly grounded fashion this scientific reflection upon life.[9]

For Dilthey, the realization of this goal was to be carried out in a "Critique of Historical Reason", by which we could establish the conditions for the possibility of historical knowledge, thereby giving credulity and justification for our claims in the human sciences.

But despite his recognition of the hermeneutic method as appropriate for the human sciences, the crisis of historicity still presents him with the question of how we can reconcile the fact that the human world, including the human beings that comprise it, is thoroughly historical with the demand that is characteristic of a truly scientific endeavor—that of universal objective validity. Charles Bambach refers to this tension as the "Antinomy of Historical Reason", and claims that Dilthey maintained that "'the development of historical consciousness destroys faith in the universal validity of any philosophy at the same time as he charged historical reflection with the task of finding validity within the realm of the relative."[10] While this is a fair criticism of Dilthey's predicament as he himself may have seen it, it need not be as threatening to his project as he may have thought.

As I have previously mentioned, I will claim that this problem is a false one when Dilthey's efforts are more carefully studied. Although Dilthey himself may not have given a unified, complete account of the way around this antinomy, what he

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[9] Dilthey, Wilhelm. *Nachlass*, 78/52-53 (quotation cited from Michael Ermarth's *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 139). See also *SW3*, 26-27.
[10] Bambach, Charles R. *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism*. (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 176.

leaves behind can help us to do so. As Bambach rightly notes, "Dilthey grounded the truth of the human sciences in the inner experience of the historical subject. All truth, he claimed, is rooted in life, in lived experience, in the self-reflection of historical consciousness."[11] And I will argue that this is the key to understanding the possibility of universally valid cognition in the human sciences. What is needed is only to find the way in which this "truth" of experience can be articulated at the level of objective knowledge without losing its truth*fulness*. And Dilthey, in his critique of Kant, has shown us how this is possible by explicating the very categories that raise our experiences to this level and grounding them in life itself. The hermeneutical method, in conjunction with the acknowledgement of these real categories, is then used to justify our claims.

In claiming that Dilthey can be helped out of the crisis of historicism by attending to the problem of method, I am arguing against Heidegger's assertion that Dilthey's problem was *precisely* his focus on method as the way to attain "scientific objectivity". I claim that the problem is not one of method per se, but rather how one construes it. For Dilthey, according to Heidegger, the hermeneutic method was conceived against the ontological framework of traditional epistemology that divides the world up into subjects and objects. Within this framework shared by most of modern philosophy, subjects, through the use of method, secure their objects and claim to know them. Heidegger describes this modern conception of method as that which "is now the name for the securing, conquering proceeding

[11] Ibid, 180.

against beings, in order to capture them as objects for the subject."[12] Moreover, Heidegger asserts that such a method is necessary to attain the truth, or "certitude" that is required of the type of being that is the subject. Only with such certitude can the subject rest assured of its status as subject, as opposed to being a mere object. The certitude attained, however, is the certitude of having correctly "represented" the object in thought. This view of knowledge goes back to Descartes, and as Heidegger explains,

> Knowing as percipere and cogitare in Descartes' sense has its distinctive feature in that it recognizes as knowledge only something that representation presents-to a subject as indubitable and that can at all times be reckoned as something so presented…[O]nly what is secured in this fashion we have described as representing and presenting-to-oneself is recognized as a being. That alone is a being which the subject can be certain of in the sense of his representation."[13]

The knowledge that is therefore procured within this framework is merely knowledge of an antecedent reality. It is represented or "found" rather than produced.

But did Dilthey share this epistemological bias? I will claim that against this ontological framework, Dilthey's goal couldn't possibly be realized. But as a matter of fact, Dilthey can be seen breaking from this framework in his understanding of the human sciences. His critique of Kant is proof that he is aware of the danger of a representational model of consciousness, especially with respect to the understanding of life. To show how Dilthey was breaking from this tradition, I will outline the trajectory from Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics to Kant's critical

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[12] Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche, Volumes 3 and 4*. ed. David Krell. (New York: Harper Collins, 1982), 120.
[13] Ibid.

philosophy. In the first step of this movement, Kant was successful in providing not only logical, but also *real* grounds for our scientific judgments. By contrast, Leibniz had thought that the logical *was* the real. Kant accomplished this advancement by recognizing the importance of sensibility as conditions for the possibility of experience. Dilthey, however, takes this one step further in his critique of Kant, and "realizes" not only sensibility, but also the very categories by which we think. With this, he convincingly argues that the epistemological stance must be replaced by a more fundamental, hermeneutical approach in order to adequately deal with the historical nature of human beings' experience.

After explaining Dilthey's critique of Kant, and his hermeneutical method that will replace Kant's epistemology, I show how attaining universal objective validity in the human historical world can be possible, albeit with a new sense of what it entails. In other words, with the recognition of the fundamental finitude of human beings, and their historicity, a new understanding of universally valid, objective knowledge is necessitated. This new sense is not a watering down of the previous meaning, but rather, as I will contend, a more realistic account of what universal objective validity purports to describe in the human sciences. It is not a surrendering of sorts, but rather the necessary result of a more complete understanding of what knowledge amounts to. Only when we unfairly compare it to the kind of objectivity had in the natural sciences do we think we have had to make some sacrifice. On the contrary, the objectivity of the human sciences as made possible by Dilthey's hermeneutics enjoys more meaning and significance than the objectivity of the natural sciences ever could.

To accomplish my task, I will begin by addressing the shift from Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics to Kant's critical epistemology. An understanding of this shift will help facilitate the later move from Kant to Dilthey with respect to the recognition of the human being's fundamental finitude. Kant saw it necessary to distinguish logical from real grounds in the justification of knowledge claims, whereas Leibniz had conflated the two, and left us with a world that was merely logical. Through a polemical encounter with Johann Eberhard, a self-proclaimed defender of the Leibniz-Wolffian tradition, Kant defends his groundbreaking work in the first *Critique* against the charges that he has done nothing new. In the essay where he makes his case against Eberhard, Kant lays out his argument regarding the critical role of sensibility and understanding in experience in a more forceful way than he had done in the Critique. He also makes very clear the difference between his account of the nature of objects and that of Leibniz. A close analysis of this debate, then, will prepare the way for understanding what is at stake in the rest of my work—namely, the legitimate justification of knowledge claims.

Chapter two will cover Dilthey's critique of Kant. Here I will show how the project begun by Kant in response to Leibniz is carried to its logical conclusion with the discussion of finitude and historicity. Dilthey was able to recognize the incredibly important insights that Kant had provided in his account of cognition, namely the enabling conditions of sensibility as the pure forms of intuition. Where Kant fell short, however, was in his failure to realize that these conditions, or more specifically time, were historical in nature. This would necessitate a new understanding of the subject, namely an understanding that recognized the subject's

immersion in history. Along with this new understanding, the categories by which the historical subject cognizes would have to be rethought; they were no longer purely logical, but real in that they derived from life itself. In other words, rather than being imposed upon our experiences, the categories by which we understand our experiences come from these experiences themselves.

After having given Dilthey's critique of Kant, I proceed to situate Dilthey in the context of the 19th century philosophical scene. Thus, in chapter three, I will focus on Dilthey's position within the historicist tradition, and explain how he differs not only from other prominent historicists, but also from the positivists with whom they clashed. I will also show how the problem of universal objective validity came to the forefront during this time, and how Dilthey became preoccupied with finding a possible solution to it. The ability to articulate and understand human experience was crucial for his project of providing a foundation for the human sciences. If such sciences were to be "truly scientific", our judgments about them would have to achieve some sort of objectivity.

In chapter four, I show how Dilthey paves the way for the possibility of universal objective validity. With his hermeneutical method, Dilthey has traveled a further step in the trajectory I sketched earlier, namely from Leibniz to Kant. By "realizing" the categories of conceptual cognition that Kant had left merely logical, Dilthey arrives at a new way to understand the possibility of objectivity in the human sciences. And with this, he has also arrived at a new way to understand the objects of the human sciences.

In the conclusion of this work, I will briefly point to John Dewey's pragmatism as the direction towards which Dilthey's hermeneutics is headed. Here, I will claim that the appropriate form of universal objective validity for Dilthey's endeavors is found in Dewey's writings. It is Dewey's conception of experience, his take on the nature of "objects," and his emphasis on the experimental method that make turning to his version of pragmatism a fruitful way to complete Dilthey's project. Here we will find that universal objective validity is reached through the conservation and accumulation of meaning in experience, rather than through the correspondence of an idea with its object. While Dilthey may never have considered himself a pragmatist, or approached his subject matter through its lens, it will be clear that his work bears a pragmatist bent. More importantly, a productive interpretation of Dilthey's work, one which sees him reach his goal of achieving universal objective validity, is possible when viewed from the perspective of a pragmatic approach to the human sciences.

Chapter I

From Leibniz to Kant: The Origins of the Crisis of Historicity and its Solution

In Heidegger's lecture course on the *Critique of Pure Reason,* he states that his intention is not simply to "let Kant say what he intended to say," but that he will "let him say more, even if this 'more' lies only on philosophical interpretation."[14] This 'more' that Heidegger is referring to amounts to the problem of finitude. Finitude, as Heidegger will claim in the footsteps of Dilthey's own critique of Kant, is the fundamental problem relating to the possibility of experience. To understand its role in making human experience possible is to begin to understand how knowledge and, perhaps more important for our purposes, *understanding*, are possible. Thus, Heidegger sets out to show that Kant's critical project was teetering on the edge of this most fundamental problem relating to the possibility of experience, but for certain limitations resulting from his approach, he was unable to see his way through it.

Kant's question in the first *Critique* is, How are synthetic a priori judgments possible? In other words, how is it possible for me to make judgments about experience that don't have their source in any prior experience(s), but without which experience would be impossible for me? Heidegger claims that this question did not go deep enough. Whereas Kant was looking to understand the possibility of making objectively valid judgments about *scientific* experience, Heidegger believed

[14] Heidegger, Martin. *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason.* trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press), 64.

the greater problem to be how experience *in general* is possible. His question was then, How is objectivity possible? How am I able to have any experience at all? Finally, what are the conditions for the possibility of experience? Heidegger will eventually claim that this question is identical to the question, What is the meaning of Being?

Given Kant's main question in the first *Critique,* it is clear that he is concerned primarily with *judgment*. In the opening to the section, "On the Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding," Kant states that "jurists, when they speak of entitlements and claims, distinguish in a legal matter between the questions about what is lawful (*quid juris*) and that which concerns the fact (*quid facti*), and since they demand proof of both, they call the first, that which is to establish the entitlement or the legal claim, the **deduction**."[15] Thus, Kant's own deduction will follow in this vein in seeking to establish what must be presupposed for judgments to possess *validity*. His is a question of legitimacy rather than origin.

Furthermore, in keeping with the epistemological framework that precedes him in both the rationalist and empiricist schools, Kant is concerned with how we can be sure of the correct or adequate correspondence between objects and our knowledge of them. Heidegger, on the other hand, believes the crucial question needing to be addressed regards the origin of our knowledge in general. In fact, this origin would show not only how judgments which comprise theoretical knowledge (*Erkennen)* are possible, but also how the other various ways or "modes of Being" are possible, including that of understanding (*Verstehen)*. Thus for Heidegger, as for

[15] Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Pure Reason*, eds and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1998), A84 (Hereafter this source will be referred to as CPR.)

Dilthey, judgment is simply one of many ways that we relate to the world, and therefore it loses the primacy given to it by Kant. Heidegger in fact will claim that judging is a derivative mode of knowing.[16] Due in part to its relation to our current understanding of 'truth', and in part to its somewhat abstract and esoteric nature when compared to our ordinary everyday experience with the world, the possibility of judgment, and especially theoretical judgment is no longer our primary concern.

Heidegger is not the only one to accuse Kant of having missed the fundamental importance of the finitude. As we will see in later chapters, Dilthey too saw the necessity of highlighting this feature in an effort to understand the relationship between ourselves and the historical world in which we live. Thus, certain fixed features of Kant's subject would have to be rethought. Specifically, Dilthey would replace the origin of the logical categories of the understanding in a way more consistent with the recognition of human finitude. And time, as the a priori pure form of intuition, would no longer be something existing independently and outside of the cognizing subject.

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[16] In the Introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger discusses the etymology of the "logos" (λόγος) from Plato and Aristotle to the present. Here he claims that the original meaning of logos is lost in the current interpretation of it as "judgment." Originally, the term had no "basic signification positively taking the lead."(H32). He contends that the general sense of the term meant something along the lines of "discourse" in that logos means "to make manifest what one is 'talking about' in one's discourse." It does not mean, as the term 'judgment' would suggest, "a way of binding something with something else," nor does it lend itself to our current understanding of "truth."(H33) As Heidegger states, "because the λόγος is a letting-something-be-seen, it can therefore be true or false. But here everything depends on our steering clear of any conception of truth which is construed in the sense of 'agreement.' The 'Being-true' of the λόγος…means that…the entities *of which* one is talking must be taken out of their hiddenness…Similarly, 'Being-false' amounts to deceiving in the sense of *covering up*: putting something in front of something (in such a way as to let it be seen) and thereby passing it off *as* something which it is *not*." Finally, he claims that "[i]f, as has become quite customary nowadays, one defines 'truth' as something that 'really' pertains to judgment, and if one then invokes the support of Aristotle with this thesis, not only is this unjustified, but, above all, the Greek conception of truth has been misunderstood."(H34)

The purpose of this chapter is to show how the switch from a "timeless" subject to a historical one has come about. I propose that by looking at Kant's transcendental project as an attempt to show the futility of Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics and offer a legitimate replacement for it, Dilthey's interpretation of Kant can be seen as the culmination of that undertaking. In essence, Kant simply did not go far enough, and Dilthey will attempt to make up the distance.

In order to understand Kant's critique of the Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics, it may be helpful to take instruction from what has come to be called the "Kant-Eberhard controversy." This controversy involves Eberhard's reading of Kant's *Critique*, and his, according to Kant, blatant misinterpretation of that work. Eberhard's refusal to recognize the novelty of Kant's new critical approach as compared to the metaphysical tradition it aimed to overhaul resulted in an, at times, rather hostile back and forth between the two thinkers that would ultimately serve to further illuminate the key elements of the *Critique.*

1. Background: The Kant-Eberhard Controversy

To understand Dilthey's interpretation of Kant as the next chapter in the Kant-Eberhard controversy, the key features of that controversy will be laid bare. Since this controversy revolves around motivations similar to Dilthey's in his critique of Kant, my central concern in elaborating this controversy will be with the differences between notion of the subject and the justification of knowledge in Kant's critical philosophy and that of the metaphysics he seeks to overturn. Dilthey's

critique of Kant also rests largely on these differences in that he thought the Kantian subject was not yet endowed with some of the features necessary to understand the human historical world. Thus it will be seen that Dilthey's criticism of Kant parallels Kant's criticism of the Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics.

Perhaps the most fundamental issue in the Kant-Eberhard controversy was Kant's notion of subjectivity. This notion entailed the relocation of the source of justification for knowledge claims to lie in the "subject." In the Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics, the source for the justification of knowledge claims was found, ultimately, in God. Thus, the Copernican revolution initiated by the first *Critique* brought the question of the possibility and validity of theoretical judgments "down to earth" so to speak. Eberhard, however, failed to acknowledge this crucial moment of Kant's new transcendental philosophy, and rejected Kant's "critical turn" as a result.

In a letter dated May 12, 1789, Kant expresses to his friend Karl Reinhold his deepest disappointment in what he takes to be Johann Eberhard's intentional misunderstanding of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. "That Herr Eberhard, along with a number of people, has not understood me is the least you can say…But I shall show you in my following remarks that he actually sets out to misunderstand me, and even to make me incomprehensible."[17] But Kant does not stop here; in fact, he begins a formal defense of his critical philosophy entitled, *On a Discovery According to Which Any New Critique of Pure Reason Has Been Made Superfluous by an Earlier One.* In this polemical, and hence oddly un-Kantian work, he addresses each of

[17] Kant, Immanuel, *Correspondence*, trans. Arnulf Zweig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 297.

Eberhard's criticisms while simultaneously asserting his new philosophy as distinct from the Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics that had previously dominated the philosophical scene up until the publishing of the first *Critique*.

Despite the argumentative tone of the *On a Discovery* essay, it is important to remember that Kant directs his remarks to Eberhard, *not* Leibniz. After all, Kant sees his new philosophy as a *development* of Leibniz's and thus he is not out to disparage him. And even as Eberhard claims to speak on behalf of Leibniz in his attack, Kant maintains that it is not Leibniz that he is arguing against, but Eberhard and his misinterpretation of Kant's critical project. Kant intends to "leave the great man [Leibniz] out of the picture and to consider the propositions which Mr. Eberhard offers in his name and uses as weapons against the *Critique* as his own assertions."[18] In fact, Kant often defends Leibniz against his supposed disciple and (perhaps a bit tongue-in-cheek) claims that the *Critique* can be seen as a "genuine apology for Leibniz."[19] And in lamenting the misinterpretations of Leibniz's work by certain of his followers, Kant attributes to him the following adage: "God protect us only from our friends; as for our enemies, we can take care of them ourselves."[20]

But insofar as Eberhard claims to speak on behalf of the Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics in his attack on the *Critique*, his basic argument consists in the belief that "the Leibnizian philosophy contains just as much of a critique of reason as the new philosophy, while at the same time it still introduces a dogmatism based on a

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[18] Allison, Henry. *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 107.

[19] Ibid., 250. It is Henry Allison who notes the semi "tongue-in-cheek" tone of Kant's remark, but it is nevertheless to be noted that this remark was also semi-serious. It remains to be seen for our purposes if Dilthey's interpretation of Kant can also be read in this same vein, i.e. as an apology of sorts for the *Critique.*

[20] Ibid., 247-8.

precise analysis of the faculties of knowledge. It therefore contains all that is true in the new philosophy and, in addition, a well-grounded extension of the sphere of understanding.[21]

Of course this is precisely where Kant disagrees. He rejects the claim that Leibniz has provided *any* legitimate justification for the extension of the sphere of understanding. In fact, the project of the first *Critique* can be understood as an investigation into the necessity of providing such a justification for the first time. Kant intends to establish the legitimate bounds of reason which would justify its use and *possible* extension. As he states,

> By critique of pure reason, however, I do not mean a critique of books and systems, but I mean the critique of our power of reason as such, in regard to all cognitions after which reason may strive independently of all experience. Hence I mean by it the decision as to whether a metaphysics as such is possible or impossible, and the determination of its sources as well as its range and bounds—and all on the basis of principles.22

In keeping with this task, Kant criticizes Leibniz with respect to two fundamental errors; namely, the conflation of real and logical grounds for judgments, which includes the subsequent obfuscation of the distinction between truths of reason and truths of fact, and secondly, Leibniz's understanding of the nature of "objects." Eberhard, on the other hand, defends Leibniz's account of these principles, so I will now turn to this part of his critique of Kant to see how the controversy unfolds.

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[21] Ibid., 16. It should be noted that in this passage, the term dogmatism does not carry the current negative connotation. For Eberhard, dogmatism was a positive result of an analysis of our cognitive faculties.
[22] *CPR*, A vii.

While Eberhard's criticisms present a fourfold attack on the first *Critique*, only the two listed above are of importance for us here.[23] The first criticism, to reiterate, deals with Kant's doctrine on the limits of knowledge and includes the discussion of the "transcendental illusion." According to Kant, the "transcendental illusion" is the result of the failure on the part of past metaphysicians to account for the bounds and sources of human reason. Here, the transcendental illusion will not be discussed in its own right, but as more of a symbol of how Kant rejects such dogmatism in favor of critical philosophy. More specifically, the limits of knowledge implied by the discussion of the transcendental illusion will illuminate the precise inadequacy of the Leibnizian metaphysics as Kant sees it; namely, the failure to distinguish between real and logical grounds of judgments.

The second criticism that will be addressed is Eberhard's attack on Kant's claim to have provided an *original* and *significant* distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. This criticism is closely connected with the first, since the distinction between real and logical grounds provides the basis for the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. Thus, Leibniz's failure to distinguish between real and logical grounds also confuses his notion of the types of truths they legitimate. Moreover, we will see how this second criticism reveals one of the most crucial differences between Kant's critical philosophy and Leibniz's metaphysics, namely, how each thinker conceived of the nature of "objects." This point will be

[23] The other two areas Eberhard addresses in his criticism are 1) "the positive justification of knowledge claims concerning the non-sensible reality, " and 2) "a critique of the Kantian conception of sensibility, and the interpretation of the synthetic a priori status of mathematics which is intimately related to this conception." *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy*, 16.

instructive for our later discussion of Dilthey's critique of Kant, as well as for the final comments I will make regarding the similarities between Dilthey and Dewey.

By showing how Kant responds to these two criticisms, the novelty of his critical philosophy becomes apparent. Thus, while Kant views his work as a development of the Leibnizian philosophy, it must be noted that this development nevertheless includes a radical and decisive departure from traditional metaphysics. In other words, whereas Kant may consider his philosophy to have been influenced by Leibniz, it is no small matter that the influence may have been largely negative. Kant recognized several errors that Leibniz fell prey to, and that he believes himself to have avoided in the *Critique*. The main error, in fact, consists in the distinction between the real and logical grounds of judgment that Leibniz failed to make, but which is paramount to Kant's project. And again, its close connection with the analytic-synthetic distinction and the limits of knowledge in general are precisely the issues that lead Kant to the development of the critical philosophy, and more specifically, a theory of subjectivity. Kant's departure from Leibniz marks a move away from a theocentric epistemology toward an anthropocentric one, hence the reference to a Copernican revolution.

So what precisely did Kant have to change in order to replace Leibniz's theocentric epistemology with a new subject-based one? In both cases, what is referred to is that which does the justifying, or the guaranteeing of the validity of knowledge claims. Thus, in both cases, the concern is with the legitimating condition of human knowledge. For Leibniz, God is what allows for the relation between, and correspondence of, our ideas and their objects. For Kant, on the other

hand, it is the structure of human cognition, i.e. the a priori forms of intuition and the pure concepts of understanding and *their* relation, which serves to guarantee the connection between our judgments about objects and the objects themselves.[24] With this new foundation, we need no longer rely on something outside of us, namely God, to be the ground of the correspondence of our judgments and their objects. Instead, we, as subjects, constitute this correspondence in our very way of knowing (*erkennen*) the world. Thus Kant has replaced Leibniz's "God" with the structures of human cognition, i.e. the subject. Of course, this move is made possible only by virtue of an equally novel way of understanding what "objects" are, and how we can come to have knowledge of them.

For Leibniz, objects are things in themselves apart from our knowledge of them. It is up to us to understand them "as they are"—an especially difficult task given Leibniz's belief, in line with traditional rationalism, that our senses actually confuse us in their presentations of these objects. Regardless of this difficulty, though, Leibniz maintains an "intellectualist" position on the nature of objects, whereby he supposes that we actually cognize the "intrinsic character of things" and thus all objects are given to *understanding* to be compared and judged. In other words, given that our senses confuse our otherwise clear understanding, they are conceived of as a hindrance to cognition. It is the understanding that cognizes and intuits the object intellectually by way of concepts. Thus Kant charges that "Leibniz intellectualized appearances" by assuming that the object given to us is "the *thing in*

[24] The term "objects" is used here in the phenomenal sense, i.e. objects of possible experience.

itself' rather than as an appearance that we both sense and conceptualize.[25] "Accordingly, Leibniz compared with one another objects of the senses taken as things as such, merely in the understanding…Hence he envisaged solely their concepts and not their position in intuition where alone objects can be given…"[26]

This criticism is expressed pointedly by H.J. Paton when he writes, "Leibniz assumed that there is no more in an object than is contained in the concept of the object. Hence he compared things merely in comparing their concepts, and naturally he found in things only the differences found in their concepts."[27] There is perhaps no better illustration of Leibniz's position on this issue than in his "principle of the identity of indiscernibles." This principle states that if two objects have exactly the same quality and quantity, then they must be one and the same object. Thus, if there is nothing to distinguish one object from another, other than their being positioned in two different parts of space, then according to Leibniz, they are one object. By failing to take into account the conditions under which it is possible for us to intuit objects, i.e. space and time, Kant claims that Leibniz's system is unable to justify knowledge of real objects. He is left only with the capacity to justify knowledge of concepts.

With Kant, on the other hand, objects do not exist (at least for our possible experience) apart from our cognitions of them. Thus, what we are given in sensibility is the "appearance" and it is precisely this "object" that provides the material for our conceptual knowledge. Moreover, these appearances are made

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[25] *CPR*, A271.
[26] Ibid., A 272.
[27] Paton, H.J. "Kant on the Errors of Leibniz," in *Kant Studies Today*, ed. Lewis White Beck (La Salle, IN, Open Court Press: 1969), 75.

possible by our pure intuitions of space and time, and our pure concepts of the understanding. In addressing Leibniz's position and the resulting principle of the identity of indiscernibles, Kant shows that by neglecting the *constitutive* role of space and time, such a principle was an inevitable, although thoroughly mistaken, result.

Kant's account of the nature of "objects" and our ways of knowing them does not result in the same difficulty. Again, Paton provides a concise explanation of Kant's position: "[O]nce we realize that if an object is to be known it must first be given to *sense* and not merely *conceived*, this artificial difficulty disappears. [Objects], if they are to be known, must be given to sense under the form of space; and even if they are exactly alike, the mere fact that they are in different parts of space means that they must be numerically different."[28] Thus, by giving sensibility a productive role in cognition, Kant escapes the absurdity to which Leibniz fell victim. And we will see that it is in virtue of this constitutive role of our cognitive powers that Kant is able to introduce the idea of a "subject-centered" theory of epistemic justification.

Before moving on to the Kant-Eberhard controversy, I would like to stress one final point of difference between Kant and Leibniz. As previously mentioned, Leibniz seems to operate within a long-standing tradition in rationalist philosophy in regarding the senses as a hindrance to our ability to know the world. Our senses confuse us; they muddle things and our intellect is left playing referee to competing intuitions. Not only does this raise some serious difficulties for rationalism, such as

[28] Ibid., 76.

how the intellect is to adjudicate between sense impressions, but it also divides up the human being into (at least) two parts—one sensory and feeble, and the other intellectual and capable of true knowledge. This split in the human being has done little to help the epistemological project.

Kant, however, seems to recognize, if not fully at least partially, the damage done by this split, and is able to make some headway in bringing the human being back to unity. First, Kant gives the senses a *productive* role in cognition. They are no longer a hindrance to knowledge, but the very enabling conditions of the possibility of any knowledge at all.[29] Given this transformation of the role of the senses in cognition, Kant no longer needs the type of "third factor" we find in Leibniz's reliance on God as the guarantor of true knowledge. Kant can now locate the justification of knowledge in the relation of the faculties in human cognition; there is no need to search outside of ourselves, or our world, for such justification. And second, as will be seen later, Kant paves the way for the important role that anthropology will take in philosophy. With Dilthey, we will not only be concerned with theoretical knowledge had by a "subject," but we will want to understand the human being in its entirety.[30]

[29] This is not to suggest that Kant did not recognize the limitations of the senses, only that by virtue of these limitations, we can now know what to expect from them and judge accordingly. We now know *our* limits with respect to the objects of knowledge.
[30] See de Mul, Jos. *The Tragedy of Finitude*, (New Haven, Yale University Press: 2004), 89.

2. Eberhard's Criticisms of Kant's *Critique*

The first criticism I will address here is Eberhard's attack on Kant's claim that it is illegitimate to move (uncritically) from a logical connection of concepts in thought to a connection of the knowledge provided by these concepts to their objects in reality. In other words, Kant contends that "logical consistency is, to be sure, a necessary, but not a sufficient condition of truth, at least in regard to synthetic judgments, i.e. judgments which claim to relate to an object or to possess "objective validity."[31] But as Eberhard sees it, truth is merely the agreement of the laws of reason and the understanding. Moreover, Eberhard, in defense of what he takes to be the Leibnizian position, contends that "insofar as metaphysics proceeds in accordance with these laws, it can be assured of its 'logical truth,' i.e. the agreement of such knowledge with its object, and need not be concerned either with the requirement to locate this object in intuition or with the danger of falling into illusion."[32] Perhaps this passage, more than any other, serves to illustrate the problem that Kant sees with the "dogmatic" claims of metaphysics and the conflation of real and logical grounds in judgments. To understand this, it will first be necessary to clarify some of the key concepts involved in Leibniz's epistemology, namely "truths of reason", "truths of fact", and "the two great principles upon which all our reasoning is based."

What Eberhard argues, again, in the name of Leibniz, is that nothing else is needed to ground a judgment of an object as long as the logical connection of the

[31] *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy*, 18.
[32] Ibid.

concepts in the judgment proceeds according to the necessary laws of reason. These necessary laws of reason are the "two great principles" of contradiction and sufficient reason.[33] According to Leibniz, the principle of contradiction is the principle by which we ground "truths of reason" or *necessary* truths. When a truth is necessary, its reason can be found by analysis, by breaking it down into "simpler ideas and simpler truths."[34] The opposites of truths of reason are impossible, and this is because of their being necessary. After all, if a truth is necessary, then it cannot be otherwise, which would make its opposite impossible. Thus if x=x is a truth of reason, it is thereby a necessary truth such that x≠x is impossible.

Leibniz's second great principle is that of sufficient reason. This is the principle grounding "truths of fact." Truths of fact are contingent and hence their opposites *are* possible. Thus, "Barack Obama won the 2008 presidential election," is a truth of fact, and therefore its opposite, "Barack Obama did not win the 2008 presidential election," is (at least) conceivable.

Kant does not have an issue with Leibniz's truths of reason, although he'll refer to them as analytic truths, nor does he take issue with the principle of contradiction. In fact, in the *Critique*, Kant secures a place for the principle of contradiction as the "Supreme Principle of all Analytic Judgments."[35] But it is a quite different case regarding the principle of sufficient reason and it's corresponding truths of fact. Kant's critique of Leibniz here is part and parcel of his claim that Leibniz has confused the real with the logical grounds of judgments, and has

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[33] Leibniz, G.W. *Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing: 1989), 217.
[34] Ibid.
[35] *CPR*, B190.

subsequently fallen victim to a dogmatic metaphysical epistemology. To this matter I will now turn.

Truths of fact are, as mentioned above, contingent truths. The existence of these truths, contrary to truths of reason, is not necessary and their opposites are not contradictions. Our question with respect to truths of fact is, On what basis is their truth justified? It is crucial to answering this question that we first understand Leibniz's conception of the nature of truth. By virtue of this definition, we come to see how Leibniz construes the relationship between the concepts in a true proposition. According to him, "in all true affirmative propositions the concept of the predicate is included in the concept of the subject."[36] In explicit identities, e.g. "x is x", this is obvious. And in analytic truths which are more complex than explicit identities, the identity is found by analysis, which separates the whole into its components, and hence present no real difficulty for us in demonstrating their truth, necessity, and the impossibility of their opposites. For example, the proposition, "x.y is x" merely requires us to break up the subject concept x.y in order to locate it in the predicate concept x, thereby yielding an identity. So far, so good.

The trouble begins, however, when we try to do this for contingent truths or truths of fact. But according to Leibniz, the nature of truth as either an implicit or explicit identity holds here as well. Thus he states,

> The connection and inclusion of the predicate in the subject is *explicit* in identities, but in all other propositions it is *implicit* and must be shown through the analysis of notions; *a priori* demonstration rests on this. Moreover, this is true for every

[36] Beck, Lewis White. *Essays on Kant and Hume*, (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1978), 85.

> affirmative truth, universal or particular, necessary or contingent…[37]

It is at this point and for this reason that Leibniz reveals the importance of the principle of sufficient reason as "a wonderful secret, a secret that contains the nature of contingency."[38] In other words, in order to account for truths of fact being demonstrable *a priori*, Leibniz relies upon the principle of sufficient reason to provide their justification. This is necessary in order to remain consistent or else Leibniz would have to concede one of two things: either truths of fact are not, strictly speaking, "truths," or our knowledge of them cannot be justified. And since Leibniz would not be able to claim that *we* can find the implicit identity in every true proposition, specifically in truths of fact, he would instead enlist the principle of sufficient reason to account for their truth. Thus, in the *Monadology*, Leibniz defines the principle of sufficient reason as that principle "by virtue of which we consider that we can find no true existent fact, no true assertion, without there being a sufficient reason why it is thus and not otherwise, although *most of the time these reasons cannot be known to us*."[39]

Now that the role of the principle of sufficient reason has been explicated, it will be possible to understand the next move Leibniz makes. Given that truths of fact are truths that concern "the series of things distributed throughout the universe of creatures," we are unable to locate an *ultimate* or *necessary* ground within this universe. After all, this universe, and all of its contents, are contingent—finite. It is

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[37] *Philosophical Essays*, 31. (Emphasis mine.)
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 217.

for this reason that Leibniz designates God as the "ultimate reason for things" since God, lying "outside the sequence or series of this multiplicity of contingencies" is a "necessary substance."[40] Thus, the principle of sufficient reason has *its* ground in God. Truths of fact, then, are justified by the fact that God knows them, and in knowing them, accounts for them being as they are and not otherwise.

What becomes interesting here is that, given Leibniz's account of the nature of truth and its justification, he seems to regard all truths to be, in the Kantian sense, "analytic," –that is, reducible to identities. We can arrive at this conclusion in either of two ways. First, we know that Leibniz held that all truths are analytic given the definition of truth which states that all true propositions are reducible to identities (whether we can know these or not). And second, since God guarantees truths of fact, it seems that all truths are *analytic to God*. This second way of arriving at the conclusion that ultimately all truths are analytic, rests on Leibniz's understanding of the finiteness of human knowledge in comparison with God's infinite knowledge. The difference between the two, however, is not one of kind, but only of degree.[41] Thus, in theory, we *could* come to know what God knows. Perhaps all we would have to do is find a way to keep our sensuous nature from disrupting our otherwise clear cognitive faculty.[42]

Leibniz's understanding of the limitations of human knowledge led to a rather perplexing conclusion regarding the correspondence of our concepts with

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[40] Ibid., 218.
[41] See Henry Allison's *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1983), 20.
[42] At this point, I want to mention that Kant, in making the senses constitutive, makes some headway against Leibniz in showing that human knowledge is not a lesser degree of God's, but different in kind as well. But it will be up to Dilthey to make the final step in showing that not only do our senses differentiate our knowledge from God's, but so does the historical nature of our understanding. So we are not just shy of being Godlike—we are human through and through.

their objects. Given that all truths, whether necessary or contingent, are ultimately reducible to identities through analysis, Leibniz is unable to maintain a distinction between the type of justification applicable to the connection of concepts in the understanding (logical grounds) and the type of justification needed for the connection of these concepts to their objects in the world (real grounds). In other words, by blurring the difference between truths of reason and truths of fact, Leibniz has also blurred the difference between the logical grounds of necessary truths, and the real grounds of contingent truths. Thus, in thought, our concepts may connect to yield a necessary truth justified by the principle of contradiction, and thus adhere to the laws of logic. But since this is also true, while perhaps only potentially for us, but necessarily for God, of truths of fact, there is nothing to distinguish between what is merely logically grounded and what is actually really grounded. In a sense, the principle of contradiction subsumes under itself the principle of sufficient reason, and is thereby the ultimate guarantor of truths, whether necessary or contingent. We are confined to a logical world.

3. Kant's Criticism of Leibniz and His Solution to the Problem of Epistemic Justification

Now we turn to Kant's *Critique* in order to see how he considers Leibniz's conflation of the real and logical grounds of judgment to be the greatest error to which even "one of the most sharp-sighted among all philosophers" has fallen victim. Kant considers Leibniz to have devised a "system of intellectual cognition—a system that undertakes to determine its objects without involvement of the

senses."[43] For Kant, such a system must be replaced by a new, critical philosophy, which seeks to determine not only the sources of cognition, but also its bounds. What is needed, according to Kant, is an accurate determination of the type of cognitive power to which given presentations belong. In the Appendix to the Transcendental Analytic, *On the Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection*, Kant argues that Leibniz's failure to provide such a determination of the sources of cognition led him to erroneous conclusions regarding the appropriate grounds of knowledge. That Leibniz had conflated truths of fact and truths of reason along with their sources of justification has already been established. Now our goal is to understand what Kant believed the impact of such a conflation to be in regards to a theory of knowledge.

In order to begin the analysis of Kant's critique of Leibniz, it might be helpful to account for the development (and replacement) of certain key concepts. First, whereas Leibniz spoke of truths of reason, Kant will use the term "analytic judgments." The synonymy of these two terms is clear in that Kant defines an analytic judgment as one in which "the predicate B belongs to the subject as something that is (covertly) contained in this concept A…Hence analytic judgments are those in which the predicate's connection with the subject is thought by [thinking] identity."[44] Not only does this definition reiterate Leibniz's notion of the nature of truth, but it also reiterates the analysis necessary to confirm the identity involved in a truth of fact.

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[43] *CPR*, B336.
[44] Ibid., B11.

The next term to trace in Kant is Leibniz's "principle of contradiction." This principle is readily accepted by Kant in that he will secure for it the status of the "Supreme Principle of All Analytic Judgments," and regard it as the "universal, although merely negative, criterion of all truth."[45] But one important point to note is that Kant is intent on restricting this principle to analytic judgments *only*. Whereas Leibniz, by virtue of his conception of truth, gives the principle of contradiction the right to legitimate all truths, whether of reason or of fact, Kant allows no such thing. Instead, he states that "the principle's authority and usability as a sufficient criterion for truth," does not extend past analytic judgment. "For although the fact that no cognition whatever can go against the principle without annihilating itself does make the principle *condition sine qua non* [even] of our [synthetic] cognition's truth, it does not make it a basis determining that truth."[46] In a sense, then, Kant restricts the principle of contradiction to being a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for truth—whether analytic or synthetic. Leibniz had failed to do this.

The next two terms that require examination do not traverse the Leibniz-Kantian gulf quite as easily. In fact, with these terms, we begin to discover the novelty of Kant's critique. The first is that of "synthetic judgment." Kant uses this term to describe those judgments in which the predicate, though connected with the concept, lies outside of it. The connection of subject and predicate in a synthetic judgment is *not* had through thinking identity in the way an analytic judgment is. Furthermore, synthetic judgments "add to the concept of the subject a predicate that had not been thought in that concept at all and could not have been extracted from it

[45] Ibid., B190.
[46] Ibid., B191.

by any dissection. "[47] Here, we might suppose that Kant's synthetic judgment is a development of Leibniz's "truth of fact." However tempting it may be to make this correlation, it is not a legitimate one. In fact, this is precisely the problem to which Kant addresses himself in the *Critique*. If we were to assume that Leibniz's truths of fact have simply become Kant's synthetic judgments, we would immediately have to account for the idea that according to Leibniz's nature of truth, even truths of fact can be reduced to identities—even if only knowable by God, and therefore potentially knowable by us. For Leibniz, the principle of sufficient reason grounds truths of fact providing for them their reason and justification. After all, for Leibniz,

> The connection and inclusion of the predicate in the subject is explicit in identities, but in all other propositions it is implicit and must be shown through the analysis of notions…for the received axiom that nothing is without reason directly follows from these considerations; otherwise there would be a truth…which could not be resolved into identities, contrary to the nature of truth.[48]

In a sense, then, truths of fact are just truths of reason waiting to happen. But Kant's synthetic judgment is quite different from a truth of fact, and the reason for this distinction from this Leibnizian concept lies in the way it is able to claim universal objective validity, and hence be justified.

The final term requiring our attention is the principle of sufficient reason. This term, too, takes on a different meaning in Kant than the one it enjoyed in Leibniz. Thus, as was the case with synthetic judgments and truths of fact, we similarly find ourselves comparing apples to oranges if we assume that Kant's conception of the principle of sufficient reason is a restatement of Leibniz's principle

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[47] Ibid.
[48] *Philosophical Essays*, 31.

by that same name. Kant has redefined this principle in order to secure for it a *legitimate* role in grounding certain truths. His principle of sufficient reason will only hold for possible experience, i.e. "namely the objective cognition of appearances with regard to their relation in the successive series of time."[49] By limiting the principle in this way, we can see already that Kant is making a distinction between what is real and what is merely logical insofar as a relation of concepts is concerned. In other words, Leibniz's principle, because it did not distinguish between logical relations between grounds and consequents, and real relations between grounds and consequents, failed to consider the legitimate bounds of its operation. It simply posited a relation between a ground and consequent and claimed to hold for all such relations. This was due to his conceptual nature of truth, and the belief that concepts were no different from the objects they purport to determine.

Kant will not only reinterpret this principle and determine its legitimate use, but he will also claim for it a constitutive role in our experience. In other words, we do not derive the principle from experience; rather, it is the very possibility of experience. Kant's account of the originality and significance of this principle is as follows:

> To be sure, it seems as if this contradicts everything that has always been said about the course of the use of our understanding, according to which it is only through the perception and comparison of sequences of many occurrences on preceding appearances that we are led to discover a rule, in accordance with which certain occurrences always follow certain appearances, and are thereby first prompted to form the concept of cause. On such a footing this concept would be merely empirical, and the rule that it supplies, that

[49] *CPR* A 201/B 246.

> everything that happens has a cause, would be just as contingent as the experience itself: its universality and necessity would then be merely feigned, and would have no true universal validity, since they would not be grounded *a priori* but only on induction.[50]

In this constitutive principle of sufficient reason, we begin to see more clearly how Kant's philosophy, while being critical and thus defining the limits and legitimacy of human cognition, simultaneously provides a theory of subjectivity. In other words, Kant's subject is responsible for the experiences that are thereby cognized. The pure forms of intuition constitute the possibility for appearances in the first place, and the principle of causality, which lies within the subject, constitutes the possibility for perceiving temporal order, and hence any appearance at all as changing or constant. It therefore remains for us to understand *how* this principle is situated in the subject. What enables the principle of causality, and with it the other synthetic principles of pure understanding, to operate? The answer to this question will provide the Kantian equivalent of Leibniz's God in that all experience is possible through it, and perhaps even more importantly, all epistemic justification is dependent upon it.

4. Kant's Distinctions

In order to understand Kant's "experience-constituting", "knowledge-justifying" subject, and how it operates, we ought to remind ourselves why such a subject is necessary for Kant's project. Kant's guiding question throughout the *Critique* is, How are synthetic a priori judgments possible? But another way of

[50] Ibid. A 195-6/B 240-1

putting this same question is to ask about the possibility of a "real" relation between a ground and a consequent. It is to ask, How am I able to justifiably connect a ground and its consequent in *appearances*, not merely in logical concepts? Without an adequate explanation for this, pure concepts of the understanding have only a logical use, and we find ourselves right back in Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics. Thus, in analytic judgments, the only thing that matters is the agreement of the *logical* predicate with the *logical* subject, by virtue of the principle of contradiction. For example, "all bodies are extended" is immediately analytic because the concept of extension is included in the concept of body and can be abstracted from it through analysis. Similarly, the judgments "all bodies are divisible" is likewise analytic, but only mediately so since the predicate concept is not a direct abstraction from the subject concept, but can be deduced from one of its direct constituents, namely "extension." In these analytic judgments, the logical predicate is derived from the logical subject in a "formal" sense and thereby grounded by the principle of contradiction.

Kant distinguishes this notion of "formal" extension from the notion of "material" extension in judgments. Formal extensions are of the kind just discussed—they do not require us to go outside the subject concept in order to affirm (or deny) the concept of the predicate. In a material extension, however, the concepts in the judgment refer to our intuitions—to appearances given to us. By virtue of this, material extensions refer to synthetic judgments. This is another way of saying that material extensions refer to *real* relations. And as Kant himself states

in a letter to Reinhold, "All synthetic judgments of theoretical cognition are possible only by the relating of a given concept to an intuition."[51]

But Kant applies the distinction of "formal" and "material" to another concept as well. He distinguishes between formal and material grounds *within* real relations. In other words, among synthetic judgments that deal with objects as they appear to us, Kant makes a distinction between a formal ground that concerns only pure intuition, and a material ground that is the "cause" of some effect. To illustrate this division, Kant asserts that the formal ground of the *intuition* of the object refers to, for example, the sides of a triangle that contain the ground for the angle. The material ground, however, refers to the *existence* of the thing, as it appears, insofar as it is the *cause* of it.

We saw that for Leibniz, the cause of something's existence was to be grounded by the principle of sufficient reason. Or in similar terms, Leibniz held that God was the cause of all effects. But in Kantian terms, the principle of sufficient reason, or God, that Leibniz posited is merely a logical principle serving logical relations among concepts. But given Kant's project, a principle to serve as the ground of *real* relations among things in the world (as they appear to us) is needed. Therefore, in Kant, we see a shift not only in the type of questions being asked, but also in the location in which we suppose the answer to be found. Kant will not look outside the world, nor even outside the subject, to locate his justifying principle for knowledge and experience in general.

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[51] Kant, Immanuel. *Correspondence*, ed. and trans. Arnulf Zweig (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1999), 301.

The question that needs answering at this point is how, according to Kant, our thoughts about objects, governed by the pure concepts of the understanding are related to those objects as given to sensibility. In the *Critique*, as Kant begins to address this question, he reminds us of an inherent difficulty: "In all subsumptions of an object under a concept the representation of the former must be homogenous with the latter, i.e. the concept must contain that which is represented in the object that is to be subsumed under it, for that is just what is meant by the expression 'an object is contained under a concept.'"[52] But in trying to subsume an empirical intuition under a pure concept of the understanding, e.g. causality, we find that the concept and the intuition are quite *heterogeneous.* Therefore, in regards to the relations of cause and effect as they pertain to objects of experience, we run into a seemingly impossible situation. How is it possible to apply the *intellectual* principle of causality to our *sensible* intuitions?[53] *That* we use it is clear; *how* this is possible is the question to which we must now turn.

Kant indicates what is needed to legitimate judgments about experience by stating that "[n]ow it is clear that there must be a third thing, which must stand in homogeneity with the category on the one hand and the appearance on the other, and makes possible the application of the former to the latter."[54] Thus, this

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[52] *CPR*, B 176

[53] In Kant's own words, he asks, "Now how is the **subsumption** of the latter under the former, thus the **application** of the category to the appearances possible, since no one would say the category, e.g. causality, could also be intuited through the senses and is contained in the appearance?" He then explains the importance of answering this question in stating that " [t]his question, so natural and important, is really the cause which makes a transcendental doctrine of the power of judgment necessary, in order, namely, to show the possibility of applying **pure concepts of the understanding** to appearances in general." B 176-7

[54] Ibid, A 138/B 177

"mediating presentation" must be "pure (without anything empirical)"[55] and yet both intellectual and sensible; intellectual in order to be homogenous with concepts, and sensible to achieve homogeneity with appearances. And in order for this "mediating presentation" to be demonstrable a priori such that it can claim universal objective validity for every and all possible experience, it must not contain anything empirical. Kant will call this the *transcendental schema*. Its function is to connect pure concepts of the understanding with appearances in judgments, thus making possible a priori synthetic judgments, and fulfilling the main objective of the *Critique*.[56] The difficulty, however, in explaining how the schemata work is matched only by the importance in doing so. Without an understanding of how our pure concepts can have any connection to our intuitions, experience for Kant is impossible.

In what follows, I will give a cursory account of the nature and function of Kant's transcendental schemata. This brief analysis, in which I will rely on many of Henry Allison's insights, will enable us to better assess the criticisms of Kant's transcendental account of the possibility of experience that are to come. Heidegger will address the Schematism chapter explicitly, claiming that it is precisely at this point that Kant "shrank back" from what was truly at stake, namely finitude. He will then offer his own philosophical interpretation of the Schematism chapter in an effort to let Kant say what "he wanted to say". Dilthey's criticisms of this portion of

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[55] Ibid.

[56] In fact, the transcendental schema is the "unknown = X" that Kant sought in the Introduction when he asks: "If I am to go beyond the concept A in order to cognize another B as combined with it, what is it on which I depend and be means of which the synthesis becomes possible, since I here do not have the advantage of looking around for it in the field of experience?...What is the unknown = X here on which the understanding depends when it believes itself to discover beyond the concept of A a predicate that is foreign to it yet which it nevertheless believes to be connected with it?" B 13

the Critique are also crucial, albeit more implicit. In dealing with these two criticisms, we will be in a position to better understand the full trajectory from a Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics grounded by logical relations, to a hermeneutical account of life grounded by the full nature of human experience.

5. Kant's Schematism

In describing the nature and function of the transcendental schemata, Kant provides us with no less than eight different characterizations. Briefly the schemata are defined as follows:

1) As a "third thing" or "mediating representation," A 138/B177,

2) As a transcendental determination of time which, as in the first definition, must also be homogenous with both the category and the appearance, A 139/B178,

3) As the "formal and pure condition of sensibility, to which the use of the concept of the understanding is restricted," A 140/B 179,

4) As the "representation of a general procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image" A 140/B 179,

5) As "something that can never be brought to an image at all, but is rather only the pure synthesis, in accord with a rule of unity according to concepts in general, which the category expresses, and is a transcendental product of the imagination…insofar as [representations as determined by time] are to be connected together a priori in one concept on accord with the unity of apperception," A 142/B 181,

6) As "the true and sole conditions for providing them with a relation to objects, thus with **significance,**" A 146/ B185,

7) As "nothing but a priori time-determinations…the **time series**, the **content of time**, the **order of time**, and finally the **sum total of time** in regard to all possible objects," A 145/B 184-5 and

8) As "only the phenomenon, or the sensible concept of an object, in agreement with the category" A 146/B185.[57]

Allison notes that, with the exception of number four, all of these formulations can be seen as supporting the idea that the transcendental schema is a pure intuition. He notes that this is most obvious in the case of the third and sixth characterizations, but also gleans support for this in that Kant himself calls the schemata pure intuitions in the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment*.[58] Now, however, it is necessary to explain just exactly what a transcendental schema as a pure intuition entails and how it functions.

First off, it should be noted that "pure intuition" can be taken in two senses in the *Critique*. In the first sense, a pure intuition is understood as a "form of intuition," that is, space and time or sensibility. Secondly, however, Kant maintains that a pure intuition is a "formal intuition," an actual representation *of* space or time. The only way in which we can coherently understand the notion of a transcendental schema as a pure intuition is to understand it in this second sense, as a representation in space or time. Otherwise, if we adopt the idea that the schema is a "pure intuition"

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[57]See *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 179-180. In an effort to create uniformity, I have replaced the translations offered by Allison with the more current translations provided in the Cambridge edition of the *Critique* edited by Guyer and Wood to which I refer throughout this work.
[58] Ibid, 180.

as in the first case, we are left with the impossible task of reconciling the idea that the schema must be also be homogenous with the pure concept. As a pure intuition, no homogeneity with a pure concept is possible.[59]

Robert Hanna also supports this reading of the transcendental schemata as pure intuitions in reminding us that for Kant,

> formal intuition is the joint result of what in the B edition he calls (1) the "pure intellectual synthesis of the understanding" and (2) the "pure figurative synthesis of the imagination," so it is necessarily both conceptual and non-conceptual. Moreover, the sensibility has its own "lower-level" or non-discursive type of spontaneity…to the extent that the forms of intuition are generated by what Kant in the A edition calls the "synopsis" of the manifold in sensible intuition, which I would identify with the "pure synthesis of apprehension" in the A edition, and also in turn identify with the pure figurative synthesis of the imagination or synthesis speciosa in the B edition.[60]

Thus, understanding the transcendental schema as both conceptual and non-conceptual in light of Hanna's analysis makes sense out of the idea that they must be homogenous with both the pure concepts of understanding and appearances. Furthermore, by recognizing that sensibility has a spontaneity of sorts, we can also make sense of idea that the schema operate to bring appearances under pure concepts in that a certain degree of prior acquaintance with the object of appearance is necessary to provide the material for the concepts of the understanding to determine. As Hanna further explains,

> empirical cognition or the objective representation of the natural world is the joint product of "bottom up" lower-level non-conceptual processing by sensibility and "top down" higher-lever conceptual processing by the understanding. Each faculty directly contributes

[59] Ibid. 181.
[60] Hanna, Robert, review of *Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant: Categories, Imagination, and Temporality* by Martin Weatherston, available from Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews at http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=1346.

> its own distinctive sort of representational form and content to the outputs of the other faculty, for the overall purpose of cognizing a determinate object: so they operate interdependently.

Thus, with our working definition of the transcendental schemata as pure intuitions, we can begin understanding how the other formulations which Kant gives the schemata fit into this characterization. An important formulation to come to terms with at this point is the second, namely that the schemata are "transcendental time determinations." Since these schemata are to connect concepts with appearances, they must operate according to rules of time, since time is the formal condition for all possible experience. In the seventh formulation of the schemata, Kant asserts that there are four types of transcendental time determinations, or rules by which the schemata operate: time series, time content, time order, and time sum total. To understand what a transcendental time determination *does*, then, we must put together two important concepts. The first, "transcendental", means universal or necessary, and the second, "to determine," means to subsume under a concept. Thus a transcendental time determination amounts to the "conceptualization of time in accordance with an a priori concept which refers time to an object or objectifies it, while also providing objective reality for the concept involved."[61] Thus, the schemata objectify time such that the order of events in the phenomenal world have an intersubjective validity rather than merely subjective validity as would be the case for an isolated individual consciousness not claiming to represent things as they *must* be, but only as it apprehends them.

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[61] *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 183.

We now see even more so how the schemata incorporate, and are homogenous with, sensibility in that they operate according to rules of time determinations, and time is the inner form of sensibility. But they must also be homogenous with concepts, and we have only briefly addressed this feature with Robert Hanna's analysis of pure intuition as partly "conceptual." But how *exactly* does this work? In answering this question, we must understand that, for Kant, categorical thinking is the condition of all thinking—much like space and time are the conditions for all possible experience. The schemata, then, must provide the rules for how we think about appearances. According to Allison, "they tell us how, and in what specific terms, categorical thinking must proceed."[62] To use an example, we might consider how the schema operates with respect to the concept of cause and the principle of causality. Of the four types of transcendental time determinations, it seems that the "time order" rule would be at work in the principle of causality. Somehow, then, in experiencing an event in which there is a certain cause leading to a certain effect, the schema is what unites our sensible intuitions of the objects as they appear with our intellectual concepts under which these objects have been subsumed. And by turning to Hanna again, we remember that this is a joint endeavor on the part of sensibility and understanding wherein both work interdependently to determine an object: "…[s]ensibility is directly nonconceptually acquainted with those given objects…by means of empirical intuition in inner or outer sense, and…the special cognitive role of the understanding is then to

[62] Ibid,189.

'determine' those objects…"[63] Thus we can now make sense of Kant's eighth formulation that, "a schema is really only the phenomenon, or the sensible concept of an object, in agreement with the category."[64]

One last point that needs to be made with regard to the schemata regards their status as judgments. Insofar as the schemata provide the conditions for applying the categories to appearances, we find that they enable objects of experience to have "real" and not merely "logical" significance. But now the question must be asked, what is the basis for the connection of the schemata to the pure concepts? When I apply a schema to a category, I am, in essence, making a schema judgment. Therefore, to be more specific, we must come to grips with the nature and justification of the schema judgments which assert this connection. What kind of judgments are they? Since we know that the schemata are "pure intuitions," or the conditions of sensibility, they cannot be analytic judgments. Furthermore, we know they cannot be synthetic a posteriori since this would mean that "the connection between category and schema is based on experience."[65] This is impossible since the schemata are what *realize* the categories in the first place. Therefore, it seems the only alternative according to the Kantian framework is that the schema judgments are synthetic a priori. This understanding is supported by Lewis White Beck when he asserts that in providing a schema for a concept, "[i]t is not the *concept* of an intuitive condition which might be added to the concept…it is the *condition of*

[63] Hanna at http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=1346
[64] *CPR*, A 146/ B 186.
[65] Ibid.

sensibility itself."[66] And as Allison concludes, "there can be no doubt that any judgment that does this is synthetic in Kant's sense; and if the predicate is an a priori representation (as is the case in a schema judgment), then the judgment is also a priori."[67]

Of course, settling on the idea that the schemata, or schema judgments, are synthetic a priori, leads us to an even deeper question. As synthetic a priori, these judgments, too, require a justification. Ironically, then, the very tools that Kant used to provide justification for the application of concepts to appearances now require justification themselves! The problem of justification has simply been pushed back a level. Unfortunately, as Allison notes, Kant, while aware of this situation, never explicitly addresses it.[68] Allison, however, attempts to do so, and in what follows I will give a brief account of his justification. This is important for our purposes here since I will contend in the next chapter that, in a certain sense, Dilthey can be viewed as addressing this deficiency in Kant. Furthermore, this criticism leads Dilthey to tackle this problem himself by showing the very notion of judgment to be secondary to, and derivative of "lived experience." For now, though, I will proceed with Allison's account which he claims goes beyond Kant, but does so with the tools he has provided for us in the Transcendental Analytic.

To begin, Allison reminds us of two key points: 1) "that the categories, as rules for the transcendental synthesis of imagination, serve to determine time…"

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[66] Quoted from Allison's *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 187. Original source: L.W. Beck, "Can Kant's Synthetic Judgments be Made Analytic?" in *Kant: Disputed Questions*, ed. Moltke S. Gram. (Chicago, Chicago University Press: 1967), 228-246.
[67] *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 187.
[68] Ibid.

and 2) "that the schema is in each case the product of such a determination."[69] Insofar as the categories are the conditions or rules of all thought, and thereby the conditions of all thoughts about appearances, the schemata are said to be "rules for the application to appearances of rules."[70] Because the categories function logically, the schemata are needed to translate the logical concepts into real ones, i.e. to apply them to appearances. Thus, "[the schemata] function as rules in this sense only, if it is assumed that they express the *result* of the translation of the logical functions thought in the categories into temporal terms."[71] For example, I must already know the translation of the logical concept of cause and principle of causality into the temporal, and hence experiential notion of "the real upon which, whenever it is posited, something else always follows" in order to use this schema to actually determine that something, in experience, is a cause. It is in this way that the transcendental schemata can be called "products", but we still don't know how they come about. Of *what* are they the products?

The answer to this question will not only determine the unity that uses the transcendental schema to apply categories to appearances, but will also provide further illumination to the idea that human cognition is constitutive and active. This answer will also give us the source of the epistemic justification of our judgments about objects in the world, i.e. the real grounds of our judgments. And with these issues addressed, we will more fully understand how Kant's system differs from the one offered by Leibniz. In essence, we will have the Kantian replacement for

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[69] Ibid, 188.
[70] *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 189
[71] Ibid.

Leibniz's "God." With that said, the answer to the question of what enables the transcendental schema to operate is to be found in the notion of the "transcendental synthesis of imagination."

If we look to the *Transcendental Deduction* where Kant introduces and explains the transcendental synthesis, we find that, in its employment of the transcendental schemata, it is capable of providing the answer to the above questions in order to establish epistemological justification and a theory of subjectivity. We can begin to understand what the transcendental synthesis is by grasping the notion of Kant's "original apperception" or "transcendental consciousness." It is by virtue of this consciousness that experience is possible since only by having a constant "I" to accompany my experiences can they be *my* experiences—experiences which are unified in *my* consciousness. This is more clearly stated by Kant in a parenthetical remark: "For any such presentations present something in me only inasmuch as together with all others they belong to one consciousness; and hence they must at least be capable of being connected in it."[72] But perhaps the most critical aspect of the transcendental unity of apperception is that it is an "act of spontaneity." For Kant, this entails that this unity belongs to the understanding, and therefore to the pure concepts. It is the formal condition for the possibility of experience with regard to the understanding much like space and time are the formal conditions for the possibility of intuition. This unity operates according to laws in bringing coherence to an experience. "Hence the original and necessary consciousness of one's own identity is at the same time a

[72] *CPR*, A 117.

consciousness of an equally necessary unity of the synthesis of all appearances according to concepts—these concepts being rules that…determine an object for our intuition of these appearances, i.e. determine a concept of something wherein these appearances necessarily cohere."[73]

Next, Kant explains that the "three sources of cognitions" operate together with this unity in order to make experience possible. These three sources of cognition are intuition, imagination, and conceptual thought, and they are directed by the activities of apprehension (of appearances), association (reproduction of appearances), and recognition (of appearances through concepts). Since in any given appearance what is presented to sensibility are a bunch of perceptions without any intrinsic order or coherence, i.e. a manifold, it is up to these three sources of cognition, as pure syntheses, to provide the order and coherence of these perceptions.

Thus the transcendental unity of apperception provides the "intellectual" aspect of experience whereas the three sources of cognition provide the sensible components. But what we need to know now is how these two aspects of cognition are, in fact, brought together. And the answer to this question is the *transcendental synthesis of the imagination*. The transcendental synthesis of imagination, then, provides the necessary unity in the synthesis of appearance. This unity is linked to the transcendental unity of apperception whereby the appearance attains its intellectual character by being conceptualized. In conceptualization, "the formal unity of experience" is made possible, "and with it all objective validity (truth) of

[73] Ibid. A 108.

empirical cognition."[74] This is due to the fact that Kant conceives of the understanding as the "power of rules," and when combined with an appearance given by sensibility in order to "attach to the cognition of the object necessarily," these rules become laws. Ultimately, Kant is able to conclude that "understanding is not merely a power of making rules for oneself by comparing appearances; *understanding is itself legislative for nature,* i.e. without understanding there would not be any nature at all, i.e. any synthetic unity of the manifold of appearances according to rules, *for appearances, as such, cannot occur outside us, but exist only in our sensibility.*"[75]

But with the introduction of the transcendental synthesis of imagination, we still fall short in our endeavor to justify the application of concepts to appearances. And this is why the Schematism chapter is so crucial since it provides the tools, i.e. the schemata, that the transcendental synthesis of imagination employs in cognizing objects of experience. Thus, before the chapter on the Schematism, the Transcendental Deduction had merely established the objective reality of the categories, i.e. that they have sensible reference to the data of human sensibility by connecting the categories with time (and space) through the transcendental synthesis of imagination. Therefore, this shows the categories stand in necessary connection with time, and therefore with temporal objects, i.e. objects of possible experience. But this alone does not allow us to go any further and make any metaphysical claims such as, for example in the case of the concept of substance, "*all* objects of perception are extensive quantities." In other words, we are as of yet

[74] Ibid. A126
[75] Ibid, A 127.

unable to say that the concept of substance applies universally. But with the introduction of the schemata, the transcendental synthesis of imagination is given the power to express concepts in sensible terms, i.e. schematize them. Finally, then, with the chapter on the Schematism, the justification and source of the application of categories to appearances is laid bare.

Thus, regarding the phenomenal realm, the introduction of the transcendental synthesis of imagination and its employment of the schemata enables Kant to claim epistemological justification from *within* our cognitive abilities, understanding and sensibility. The transcendental imagination uses the schema to apply the categories to the appearances that are given to sensibility, thereby subsuming them under concepts in a law-like fashion. And this is possible because these concepts are a priori, and hence precede all experience. In other words, we do not learn them, and subsequently use them; they are the very conditions for experience and as such are prior to it. In the same way, the pure forms of space and time are what enable us to have any intuitions whatsoever. Thus only those "objects" that conform to these conditions are possible objects for us.

Thus, in regards to his predecessor, Kant claims that Leibniz did not make such a distinction, and therefore needed a third factor *outside* the realm of contingent or natural things in order to ensure a correct correspondence between thought and thing. His project, according to Kant, failed, since in the end, all he was left with were logical relations grounded by logical means. His world was purely conceptual. For all its complexities and ambiguities, Kant's system has at least

avoided the problems associated with locating the principle of justification for knowledge claims in an unknown being in an unknown world.

Therefore, it is important to realize the significance of the schemata dealing only with phenomena and not purporting to get at things as they are in themselves. By asserting that the schemata only deal with things as they appear, Kant can be sure of the correspondence between object and concept. If the schemata claimed to unite "objects as such" with categories, they would not be uniting the *sensible* intuition with the intellectual concepts. After all, things in themselves do not come under the pure forms of intuition, space and time, and thus are not objects of possible experience. Leibniz made an error of just this sort in confusing logical with real relations. Since Leibniz thought that we could actually intuit the object, as it is in itself, he thought a connection between our concepts of the object and the object itself was possible. Of course, in order to ground this connection, he ultimately had to rely upon God as the cause of the existence of everything. From these considerations, his theory looks less and less stable. But for Kant, the pure concepts of the understanding and the pure forms of intuition actually constitute and make possible our experience. Furthermore, the experiences we have are limited to those that are possible under these conditions and are therefore experiences only of appearances.

In the next chapter, I will show how Dilthey furthers this trajectory in his criticisms of Kant. In doing so, he will actually do away with the need for a Schematism in that he will realize the categories, along with time and space. Therefore, a "third thing" won't be necessary to be homogenous with both the

category and the intuition. The result will be a de-intellectualized subject—one that is not a purely logical being, but that wills, thinks and feels. Further, this de-intellectualization will result in the possibility of universal objective validity in the human sciences.

Chapter II

Dilthey's Critique of Kant

It is well established that in many ways, Dilthey follows Kant. After all, he refers to his penultimate project as a Critique of Historical Reason. But for the homage he pays Kant in deciding once and for all to provide a critique of our cognitive capacities, Dilthey also realizes that Kant fell short in this endeavor, namely by treating the human being as if she were merely an intellectual being. Thus, when it is said that Dilthey moves beyond Kant, it is in order to provide a critique of reason as exercised by a historical being, one who not only thinks, but also wills and feels.

Furthermore, the critique Dilthey provides is not restricted to the natural sciences, as was Kant's. In being a critique of historical reason, it applies to the human sciences, those that have as their subject this fully vital human being. Thus Dilthey explains that,

> although I found myself frequently in agreement with the epistemological school of Locke, Hume, and Kant, I nevertheless found it necessary to conceive differently the nexus of the facts of consciousness which we together recognize as the basis of philosophy. Apart from a few beginnings…Kant's as well as that of the empiricists—has explained experience and cognition in terms of facts that are merely representation. No real blood flows in the veins of the knowing subject constructed by Locke, Hume, and Kant, but rather the diluted extract of reason as a mere activity of thought. A historical as well as psychological approach to whole human beings led me to explain even knowledge and its concepts (such as the external world, time, substance, and cause) in terms of the manifold powers of a being that wills, feels, and thinks…"[76]

[76] Dilthey, Wilhelm. *Selected Works Volume 1*, eds. Rudolf Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1989), 50. (Hereafter this source will be referred to as SW1.

Therefore, in advancing from Kant, Dilthey would need to revise some of the fundamental tenets of the transcendental philosophy. Or more specifically perhaps, he would need to radicalize one of Kant's main insights, namely finitude. While Kant had recognized this feature of human existence, and while he indeed gave it a central role in unifying human reason, he was unable to see all of the necessary implications that it would have for a full account of the possibility of experience. In Dilthey's work, we'll see how placing finitude as the fundamental feature of human existence will necessitate several changes. To begin, along with a more full-fledged notion of the subject, we must rethink the importance of a theory of knowledge as compared to an account of self-reflection. In other words, a complete account of the subject will necessitate that we take into account more than just the theoretical cognizing capacities of the individual; it will entail that we address the willing, feeling, and valuing aspects that comprise her as well. We will want to uncover how she understands her world and her place in it. Only by addressing the complete individual and her immediate experiential certainty will we be able to determine how that certainty can be brought to the level of universal validity in the human sciences. To do this, we must understand Dilthey's supreme principle of philosophy, namely the principle of phenomenality, and its role in grounding the facts of consciousness. This will, in turn, necessitate that we replace the notion of judgment as the primary activity of the human being in her experience of the world, with a more encompassing account of her relation to it. Finally, we must alter the account of the nature and origin of Kant's formal categories to make room for what Dilthey will call "real categories" which are more primordial, and, in fact, provide the

ground for the formal categories. Similarly, we must understand the sensible condition of time as "real" and not merely a subjective condition for the possibility of experience.

In what follows, I will explicate the above transformations of Kant's transcendental philosophy in order to show how Dilthey's critique is both an advancement and to some extent a rejection of the former. In the process, I hope to make clear that Dilthey's insights into the nature of finitude have resulted in yet another step in the "Leibniz to Kant" trajectory with which this journey began. We will see how Kant's realization of the grounds of experience have led to an even deeper insight into the necessary features of human experience. In fact, whereas Kant had previously charged Leibniz with having "intellectualized appearances," I will show that for Dilthey, Kant had "intellectualized the subject."

1. Dilthey's Indebtedness to Kant

Dilthey's indebtedness to Kant, and to the Kantian framework, cannot be overstated. In fact, Dilthey praises Kant for having, for once and all, shown the futility of a metaphysics of natural science. By distinguishing between real and logical grounds for judgments and locating the real grounds in the finite subject, Kant's transcendental critique has forever cast doubt on any determinant judgment made about objects apart from our experience. Thus Dilthey states,

> the critique of the forms of intuition, categories, substances, and things beyond this world, which came into being in this way, has fulfilled its historical task. It has destroyed forever the objective

> validity of every metaphysical-rational system. It will preserve its validity against every renewed attempt to establish such systems.[77]

But even for all his indebtedness to Kant, Dilthey's insights into the fundamental feature of human existence, namely finitude, required that he move past his predecessor in order to give a more faithful account of human experience. Thus he states, "[t]he fundamental idea of my philosophy is that no one, so far, has based his philosophizing on the full, unmutilated whole of experience, and so on the whole fullness of reality."[78] This "unmutilated whole of experience" will encompass not only the cognizing abilities of the human being, but the feeling and willing aspects as well. Moreover, this human being is historical, and thus the categories by which she relates to the world are always undergoing development. Thus, Dilthey states that the real difference between himself and Kant is that,

> …Kant's a priori is fixed and dead; but the real conditions of consciousness and its presuppositions, as I grasp them, constitute a living historical process, a development; they have a history, and the course of this history involves their adaptation to the ever more exact, inductively known manifold of sense-contents. The life of history also encompasses the apparently fixed and dead conditions under which we think. They can never be abrogated, because we think by means of them, but they are the product of development.[79]

It is clear from this that Dilthey aims to separate himself from Kant in that human finitude or historicity must now be allowed to fully influence our understanding of the conditions of the possibility of experience. But less obvious is the fact that despite this distancing, Dilthey still holds on to the Kantian framework, specifically the categories, the "conditions under which we think." That "they can never be

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[77] *SW1*, 488.
[78] *GS VIII*, 175.
[79] *SW1*, 500.

abrogated" entails that Kant was at least correct in understanding that these categories are necessary features of our experience; his error was in failing to realize that they, too, in belonging to historical beings, must be historical. Dilthey's critique of Kant will therefore encompass a historicization of these formal categories revealing them to be derived from other, "real" categories of lived experience. Thus, he states,

> the activity of human consciousness in relation to the reality that it strives to know and upon which it attempts to act—this is the great fact for which the conditions of conceivability are being sought. But since this fact is historical and unfolds ever more aspects over the course of centuries, the apprehension of its conditions can also advance only gradually.[80]

The details of this critique will be expounded upon later in section IV of this chapter, but for now, a brief consideration of the way Dilthey analyzes and resituates the categories of substance and causality may help to elucidate this point. For Dilthey, in order for these categories to be a priori forms of understanding as Kant claims, "no component of these forms of thought could be given up and exchanged for others." But in fact, "elements originally represented as intrinsic to causes have gradually dropped away and been replaced by others as the process of adapting the original notion to the external world has continued."[81] What Dilthey is explaining here is that in order for a category to be considered a priori and fixed as "given with the intellect", (almost akin to an innate idea a la Descartes), it would have to be fully transparent, and immutable. But as is the case with substance and causality, we find that our understanding of what these concepts entail has indeed changed

[80] Ibid, 501.
[81] Ibid, 233

throughout the centuries. Moreover, there is hardly a consensus as to what they mean. Therefore, Dilthey claims they are "developmental concepts" and that their "true origin" is not in some statically conceived intellect, but rather in the "totality of our mental powers, in the full, living self-consciousness that experiences the efficacy of the Other."[82] This understanding of the categories of causality and substance would easily explain the divergences of different accounts, both between contemporaneous thinkers, and throughout our history.

But as categories that form the backbone of the natural sciences, we find that they are treated in an abstract way—and necessarily so. Thus Dilthey explains,

> as [natural] science advances, the differentiation of conceptual knowledge which is a process of abstraction, can disregard more and more of the elements of this living reality; nevertheless, the indissoluble core remains. In this way we can account for all the properties which these two concepts of substance and causality have displayed in the course of the history of metaphysics.[83]

Thus, Dilthey claims that natural sciences must, despite the fact that these concepts are developmental and originate in the "full, living self-consciousness," abstract from the historical meanings they acquire in their application to the external world. But the human sciences, however, need not make such abstractions. Instead,

> they properly preserve only that in the concepts of substance and causality which is given in self-consciousness and inner experience, and they relinquish everything which stems from the adaption of the concepts to the external world. They may therefore make no direct use of these concepts in characterizing their objects. That sort of use has often harmed these sciences…for these abstract concepts have never been able to teach us any more about human nature than was already given in the self-consciousness where the concepts are rooted.[84]

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[82] Ibid, 234.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

With respect to causality and substance, then, Dilthey explains not only the true origin of these concepts along with their developmental nature, but also shows the difference in the way these concepts are employed in the natural and human sciences. The latter make no use of them at all, at least not as static or fixed concepts, while the former must do so in order to provide a "necessary element" in their operations. For now, this brief analysis suffices to show the direction Dilthey will take in his move away from Kant's notion of the categories, and we will see in section IV of this chapter more of why this move was necessary, and more specifically how Dilthey will ground these newly conceived developmental categories in the "real" categories of life. Finally, I will show how the real categories are *themselves* grounded so as not to leave Dilthey vulnerable to the charge of having simply pushed the issue of justification back another level.

2. The Principle of Phenomenality and the Justification of Facts of Consciousness

In the Introduction to the Human Sciences, Dilthey explains one of the key elements of his philosophy, namely, the facts of consciousness: "If I start with inner experience, then I find the whole external world to be given in my consciousness and all the laws of nature to be subject to the conditions of my consciousness and, therefore, dependent on them."[85] It just so happens that this is also a suitable description of transcendental philosophy. But its importance for Dilthey's project

[85] Ibid., 67.

cannot be understated. The way these facts of consciousness comprise our experience is contained in what Dilthey refers to as the "supreme principle of philosophy." And he explains that, according to this principle,

> every object, as well as every feeling, is given as a fact of consciousness. This entails that existence is attributed to anything and everything that I experience this way. In fact, the certainty with which existence is asserted here is as immediate as it can be. This knowing (*Wissen*) is not only immediate, but unshakeable.[86]

The implications that this principle of phenomenality has for the lived experiences in which they are contained, are significant. In contrast to the more abstract knowledge which comprises the natural sciences and which sometimes appear to be "immediate" and "unshakeable," the facts of consciousness have a certainty about them that is unique. In the formal laws of thought, the immediacy of say, the law of contradiction, must be recognized as only apparent. After all, knowledge of this law is, in reality, "mediated by the development of our intellectual capacities…" and therefore "we cannot possibly grasp it as an ultimate fact…"[87] In other words, it is indeed "unshakeable" or certain, but it is in no way immediate to the experiencing consciousness. Only the facts of consciousness, as they are experienced, have such immediacy. Reality attaches to these facts such that they are "fully transparent and clear for us." They *are* simply by being experienced. Thus, finally, Dilthey is able to conclude that,

> whenever there is reflexive awareness or self-possession of a fact of consciousness the problem of knowledge does not exist…This problem usually involved in knowing does not exist in the reflexive awareness of a fact, that is, when a state of consciousness is present and certain to itself. For I do not need to become conscious of my

[86] Ibid, 248. (parenthetical remark mine).
[87] Ibid, 248-249.

> consciousness, nor do I need to feel my feeling; I know about consciousness from its very occurrence. The existence of a psychic fact and my cognizance of it are not two different things.[88]

Having relinquished the problem of knowledge with respect to facts of consciousness, Dilthey has indeed made progress against earlier epistemologies whose efforts were aimed at discerning just how we could be certain of what we experienced. For Dilthey, our certainty is simply a result of our having experienced in the first place. But another problem is not so easily dismissed, and its solution will be crucial for grounding the human sciences. In fact, this is the very problem of articulating our facts of consciousness and making sure that these articulations are valid.

At this point, Dilthey can be seen as responding to Leibniz—if not directly than at least implicitly. For what is at stake here is, again, the distinction between real and logical grounds. We remember that in Leibniz's metaphysics, what is logical is therefore real. But in discussing the facts of consciousness, and how they are immediately certain, Dilthey asks the question of how we can be assured that our articulations of our facts of consciousness, even those so simple as to express a certain feeling, i.e. I am sad, are valid. As he explains, "as soon as one tries to obtain clear knowledge of what it is one possesses in this immediate way, and tries to communicate it to others, [one sees that] the judgments one pronounces are valid only on a further condition."[89] What is this further condition? According to Dilthey, we presuppose in the articulation of our lived experiences, that "the acts of thought by which experience is constituted from facts of consciousness—the processes of

[88] Ibid, 249-250.
[89] Ibid, 271.

separating and connecting, judging and inferring, place these facts only under new conditions of consciousness, *without adding anything that would alter their content or bring their truth into question*."[90] These operations of judging, separating, etc. take place according to the laws of logic, and so as Dilthey explains, we *presuppose* the "validity of logical laws as applied to facts of consciousness." But are we justified in this presupposition? Indeed, are we justified in our belief that the facts of consciousness, taken as certain and evident in their immediacy, are independent of these laws, or are they dependent, and thus derivative of them?

If we answer that they are dependent upon the laws of logic, then we are back at a place we criticized in Leibniz, namely that logic governs reality. As Dilthey explains, in this case,

> our certainty about the reality of the facts of consciousness is shown to be, in the final analysis, the result of the application of the laws of thought, and therefore falls under the conditions governing their validity and applicability. There could then be no immediate knowledge…Thus the laws of thought would rule over our mental life like a primordial fate. Reality would be derived from logical necessity and would be subordinate to it as an expression of it.[91]

Furthermore, "evidentness would be the arbiter of reality, thought the arbiter of lived experience, and the logic the arbiter of what is real."[92] But in fact, we do not regress in this direction. Rather, Dilthey explains that "it can in fact be shown that knowledge of the reality of the facts consciousness need not be gained by way of reasoning, but rather that we have an immediate knowledge of it."[93] And this is precisely what has been claimed above. Our reasoning's about this immediate

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[90] Ibid, 272 (emphasis mine).
[91] Ibid, 273.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid, 274.

knowledge, therefore, do not "produce" knowledge— they are merely a means for articulation of what is real. Further, our reasoning's "provide directions" for carrying out the psychic act of the lived experience such that I can explicate and articulate what is universally valid in it. Such universal validity serves "only to guarantee from the outset the reality of each psychic act that subsequent investigation will examine."[94] Thus, the lived experience has a universal validity simply by being the immediate knowledge of a reality, and this knowledge is included as an "irreducible unity which is present in each act of consciousness." The unity that Dilthey speaks of here is one of reality, being-there-for-me, and consciousness. Thus Dilthey concludes that "[e]ven lived experience itself, which is this immediate knowledge of a reality, has the character of universal validity to the extent that includes this knowledge as an irreducible unity which is present in each act of consciousness."[95]

With the above analysis of the immediate certainty and universal validity of the facts of consciousness, Dilthey has avoided both lapsing into a Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics, and the problem of having to prove the existence of an external world. After all, with facts of consciousness, we make no separation between subject and object, and thus need not make any claims about the existence of things apart from our consciousness of them. To achieve a certainty about facts of consciousness is as simple as being conscious. But to achieve a certainty about things existing apart from a consciousness experiencing had previously been a different matter altogether. In fact, such was the project of epistemologies which sought to ground

[94] Ibid, 273.
[95] Ibid, 274.

the natural, abstract sciences *independently* of the facts of consciousness. But with Dilthey, knowledge of the facts of consciousness is more primordial than knowledge of the representation of an object existing independently of me. In fact, the latter knowledge is *grounded* upon the former, and as Dilthey claims, "[t]he certainty of the reality of an external world (which, as we shall see, is bound up with the fact of self-consciousness) nonetheless remains unshakeable: *the act of representing objects can be located purely within the nexus of self-consciousness*, thereby abolishing the bridge to the external world."[96] And therefore, great headway is made into securing the universal validity of the claims of these sciences already. As Dilthey claims, "this difference in mode of certainty shows that a completely secure point of departure for the sciences is provided only by the facts of consciousness."[97] This insight will be further developed once we see how Dilthey shows that the real categories of lived experience provide the ground for the formal categories of representational thought[98], thereby securing the legitimacy of its judgments as well.

As Makkreel states,

> the theory of silent or pre-discursive thought (i.e. reflexive awareness of facts of consciousness) has the further function of grounding Dilthey's theory of the categories. Accusing Kant of simply deriving his categories from the traditional theory of discursive judgments, Dilthey sees them as abstracted from the elementary logical operations themselves. Thus formal concepts…are grounded in pre-discursive relations…[99]

With this, then, we see how Dilthey has taken a further step away from the Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics which sought the conditions for what is real in what is logical.

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[96] Ibid, 275 (emphasis mine).
[97] Ibid, 275.
[98] See section IV of this chapter.
[99] Ibid, 34.

Kant, of course, shattered this project by introducing space and time as conditions for the possibility of experience, and further allowing the imagination, operating in temporal terms, to unify our concepts of the understanding with our sensible perceptions. But now, Dilthey has taken this Kantian insight further by analyzing those concepts only to realize that they are not as primordial as Kant had supposed. Rather, the logical concepts of understanding are derivative of the real concepts of lived experience—experience that occurs on a pre-reflective, pre-judgmental level. Furthermore this lived experience is had by a subject that not only "thinks", but also wills and feels.

This brings us to one final point for this section, and that is the role of judgment in Dilthey's thought as a result of his insight into the true ground of the logical, or formal, categories. For Dilthey, in opposition to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* propositional judgments are no longer primary. With the whole human being as the subject of experience, it is the facts of consciousness as given in an immediate lived experience that takes precedence. Thus, Dilthey in effect widens the scope of logic, "by investigating various forms of speech acts, which could not be contained within formal logic considered as the classification of forms of judgment…Besides judgments and the other modes of discursive thought, there are pre-discursive processes of thought which are implicit in our perceptions."[100] It is precisely these pre-discursive processes of thought, namely "comparing, distinguishing, finding similarities, discriminating degrees, connecting and

[100] *SW1*, 32.

separating" that Dilthey has just shown to provide the ground for the formal laws of thought. These processes are what he calls the "sphere of the elementary logical operations."[101] More will be said of this in the following sections, but at this point, I wish to look at how the notion of the subject must be altered as a result of the recognition of the facts of consciousness as the ultimate data for the understanding.

3. The Changing Subject and the A Priori Conditions for The Possibility of Experience

As mentioned above, along with re-locating the grounds for the categories, Dilthey also reshapes the notion of the subject. With the facts of consciousness as the ultimate data of our experience, Dilthey recognizes the human being must be seen not only in its completeness, but also as always situated in a context. As he states,

> it is a false individualism which extracts individuals from the social interaction of which they are elements and equips them with innate instincts. No exact psychology can at present justify an assumption which so far transcends the range of our experience and undertakes to construe the original constitution of an isolated individual who, after all, does not exist anywhere.[102]

Furthermore, he claims that "man as a fact preceding history is a fiction of genetic explanation; the subject matter of a sound, analytical science is individual man as a constituent of society."[103] Here, he is again parting ways with Kant, who had

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[101] *GSV*, 83.
[102] *GSIV*, 60
[103] *SW1*, 83.

constructed not only a logical subject in the first *Critique*, but also one who was essentially an island unto herself. She was isolated as a thinking, cognizing consciousness, in a world devoid of historical influences on her logical capacities.[104] But with Dilthey, the individual is no longer alone, and no longer immune to historical change. Indeed she is in constant interaction with her environment, both in effecting it and being effected by it. And she not only makes determinant judgments about this world as a thinking being, but also feels its forces, and wills changes within it.

By recognizing the historically situated whole individual as the core component of the world, Dilthey articulates the necessity of a "critique of knowledge" that will, at last, be sensitive to the reality of the individual and its world. Thus, in distinction from Kant, he states that the task of philosophy is to

> take what is given as reality, the nexus that is inseparable from this reality, *the thisworldliness that seems to constitute our secure world, and make it the object of a critique of knowledge in a completely systematic and exhaustive manner*. This critique is to include the sciences themselves, psychology, history, our social consciousness, and the extent to which we have reflective knowledge of external reality. Finally, this critique must deal with our ideals, our values, and our consciousness of life itself as that which guides us in reality once the transcendent realm has been abolished.[105]

Thus we can see the difference between the two critiques. Kant's project was limited to the natural sciences and mathematics, whereas Dilthey's is much more complete in incorporating disciplines which provide for a more exhaustive account of the

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[104] It should be mentioned in that in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, he places greater importance on the individual's place in community. In dealing with reflective aesthetic judgment, the third Critique situates man within his historical milieu and it is here that man must learn to be a member of a community by broadening his pursuits to include the happiness and interests of those around him.

[105] *SW1*, 489.

individual and of history. But with this change of focus, the question of objectivity and justification of knowledge claims shifts as well. For Kant, the project of epistemological objectivity or justification lay in "formal logic and mathematics." This formal logic,

> regarded the ultimate abstractions of logic—the laws and forms of thought—as the ultimate ground for the justification of all scientific statements. The laws and forms of thought, above all judgment, from which he derived the categories contained for Kant the conditions of conceptual cognition. To these conditions he added those that, according to him, made mathematics possible.[106]

But as Dilthey rightly asks, will this framework be suitable for an epistemology of history, a critique of historical reason? In some ways yes, but in others, no. Of course one of the more obvious shortcomings of Kant's framework with respect to a critique of historical reason is the fact that he saw the subject as a "timeless entity." But Dilthey's recognition of the fundamental historicity of the individual necessitates that we understand the subject as a product of development, and moreover, constantly developing.

Of course, if the subject is historical, then reason is historical as well, and therefore, again, Kant's notion of a "timeless reason" will no longer suffice. As de Mul reminds us though, once we give up on an ahistorical, static notion of theoretical reason, we find ourselves dealing with the question of relativism. But as Dilthey explains, it is not a relativism that goes unchecked or unaccounted for. Because of the mutual dependence between individual and society, the relativism of the structures of experience "lie embedded in the sociohistorical systems, which

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[106] *SW3*, 214.

transcend the individual."[107] Thus these a priori structures are

> neither arbitrary axiomatic impositions, nor unchangeable laws of thought, but instead *empirically* marked structures of language and thought that are historically and culturally variable and that rest on a foundation of various psychic, somatic and social presuppositions.[108]

Therefore, the relativism inherent in the historicity of the individual and its experiential structures is checked on various levels. Here we see the importance of the empirical nature of Dilthey's approach to a critique. While against the typical empiricist account of knowledge which claimed all knowledge was a result of one form of experience, "namely the outer, which is characteristic of the natural sciences," Dilthey allows for a priori structures and conditions.[109] But these a priori structures are modified by experience, and must "maintain themselves in experience."[110] Thus, the relativism in Dilthey's account is not a free-floating, threatening relativism—the stuff of philosophical clichés. Rather, it is a necessary fact of existence.

At this point, it is necessary to introduce a distinction that de Mul makes between what he calls transcendental structures and transcendental presuppositions. This distinction will help in elucidating the rather paradoxical notion of an "historical a priori" as mentioned above, as well as in addressing the ensuing discussion of the possibility of universal objective knowledge. After all, if the individual is fundamentally historical, subject to and a part of the ever-developing historical conditions of her milieu, then the question of how universally

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[107] De Mul, 148.
[108] Ibid (emphasis mine).
[109] Ibid, 149.
[110] Ibid. 148.

valid knowledge claims are possible must be addressed. For now, I will provide a brief discussion of the distinction between de Mul's transcendental structures and presuppositions, and how it may help clarify some of the issues surrounding Dilthey's critique of Kant. Later, in chapter four, however, I will return to this distinction in order to confront de Mul directly regarding the problem of universally valid, objective knowledge claims in the human sciences.

In considering whether or not Dilthey's philosophy can still be considered "transcendental," and to what extent Dilthey can be seen as developing Kant's philosophy rather than breaking from it, de Mul introduces two new terms: transcendental presuppositions and transcendental structures. Transcendental presuppositions, or "ontological" presuppositions, he explains, are those

> concerning the most fundamental characteristics of human life. The notion that life has a constitutive structure for experience that is continuously in development forms a transcendental assumption that formulates the (onto)logical space within which the Critique [of Historical Reason] can unfold.[111]

Thus these transcendental presuppositions serve as the background for which specific forms of life can take shape. Thus, to presuppose that life is in continuous development is a transcendental presupposition. On the other hand, within this life, where constant development is presupposed as a condition for its possibility, de Mul makes room for what he calls transcendental structures. "We might designate these transcendental experiential structures as conceptual frameworks that disclose

[111] Ibid, 152.

reality in a particular way."[112] For example, if it is a transcendental presupposition that life is constantly developing, we might view the conceptual framework of the present day, e.g. that of modern science, as a transcendental structure occurring within that overarching transcendental presupposition of development. Thus, "[w]e already are being led by a certain conception of 'being' when we speak of entities, observe them, theoretically search for them, and practically deal with them. These conceptual frameworks also function as (historically determined) grounds for justification that make it possible to distinguish between true and false, good and evil, pleasure and pain, and so forth."[113] Therefore, in the example I give above, our presupposition or "conception of being" is one of continuous development. Therefore, the structure of modern science which is a current manifestation of that presupposition enables us to distinguish between true and false based on the scientific criteria accepted by the scientific community. There also exist criteria within the structure of modern science to enable us to judge good and evil by way of understanding how individual purposes and goals are furthered without harm to others or the natural world. De Mul's distinction between transcendental presuppostions and structures enables us to understand that

> [a]s a transcendental philosopher Dilthey was searching for what is most characteristic of human life, that is, that which is presupposed in every human life. In other words, he posed the ontological, or more precisely, the anthropological question of the nature of man. It appears, however, that a characteristic of this nature is that it carries within itself the possibility of a great historical variety of forms.

[112] Ibid, 152-3.
[113] Ibid, 153.

Thus, Dilthey's claim that "[h]uman nature is always the same. However the possible forms of Dasein it entail only become manifest in history…" can be understood as recognizing the relationship between transcendental presuppositions and transcendental structures.[114]

It is important here to note that, as I have quoted above, these transcendental structures, or conceptual frameworks, serve to provide us with the "grounds for justification that make it possible to distinguish between true and false, good and evil, pleasure and pain, and so forth."[115] This entails that the judgments within these particular frameworks are capable of validity. But, as de Mul explains, the framework itself, i.e. the transcendental presuppositions behind the structures, cannot claim such validity, since "strictly speaking, talking in terms of validity is always only possible *within* a conceptual framework."[116] This creates a problem since accepting the very notion of transcendental presuppositions should only be done if in fact it can be shown to be valid. In other words, why ought we accept Dilthey's claim about the fundamental developmental quality of life if there is no way to test it for its validity?

But Dilthey does assume that the transcendental presuppositions he has posited do in fact claim a general validity. This is evident when he speaks of the unchanging nature of humanity as quoted above. When human beings stop experiencing the world according to the transcendental presuppositions that

[114] Ibid, 146.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid, 153.

Dilthey expounds, then, for him, man no longer is. With this, he clearly claims that the presuppositions, or ontological conditions are indeed necessary and valid for human existence as we know it.

One further problem arises, however, when assuming that the transcendental presuppositions can claim a universal validity. As de Mul rightly notes, reflection on this problem itself only occurs within a manifested transcendental structure of those presuppositions. Thus, we are asking the question about the legitimacy of ascribing validity to a transcendental presupposition from a certain standpoint. In fact, we are always situated in some standpoint, some context, some history, and thus our challenging of the claim to validity is also subject to historical development. Moreover, as Dilthey himself would admit, the very formulation of the transcendental presuppositions is done within the standpoint of a particular transcendental structure, (as are all formulations) and is thus open to development as well. In other words, our presupposition that life is one of continuous development is a presupposition we make from a particular standpoint, i.e. the one of the current structure within which we live. We may find in the future that our formulation needs to be revised. Perhaps our presupposition of life as continuously developing is false. If this is so, then how can the presupposition we had once held be valid?

Again, de Mul claims that this tension in Dilthey's thought was simply unavoidable. As he states, "Dilthey became increasingly aware of this tragic contradiction between the philosophical desire for universal validity and the

realization of the fundamental finitude of every attempt to satisfy that desire."[117] However, as I will argue in chapter 5, the philosophical desire for universal validity need not be abandoned due to a historically sensitive transcendental structure as the one Dilthey provides. It must, to be sure, be reconsidered, but a wholesale rejection of universal validity need not follow the recognition of the fundamental historicity of human beings.

4. Dilthey's Categories: Real vs. Formal

I have briefly introduced the distinction between the real categories of lived experience, and the formal categories of thought in section one of this chapter. There I explained how the formal categories are actually derivative of the real categories. In fact, Dilthey claims that the formal categories are *grounded* in the real categories, since the real categories are situated in a realm that governs our most primordial experience, one that is pre-reflective and pre-judgmental. In what follows, I will continue to elaborate on Dilthey's account of the categories, revealing the advancements it has over Kant's theory.

In taking his starting point from Kant, Dilthey reminds us that "[e]ver since Kant's more precise determination and delimitation of the term 'category', every modern system uses the term to designate a concept that expresses or establishes a

[117] Ibid, 154.

connectedness."[118] Thus, he gives the example that "blue" would not be considered a category, whereas the "*relation* between the quality and the unity or substance of the thing first constitutes a category."[119] Furthermore, Dilthey explains that according to Kant, a category is a formula for a "unifying function of thought."[120] The above characterizations then, are appropriate for what we refer to as the "formal" categories. In such categories, the "connectedness in actuality is conceived then as correlative and corresponding to a connectedness in intelligence."[121] At bottom, the Kantian (and post-Kantian) view, is that these connecting formula are products of the laws of the intellect. The connections they ascertain are therefore intellectual connections.

But Dilthey will add to these intellectual, or formal categories, a new set designated as real categories. Whereas the intellectual or formal categories as given by Kant are seated in reason, Dilthey's real categories are grounded in the "nexus of life itself."[122] In grounding the real categories not in the subject, but in a realm that precedes not only the subject but also any sort of subject-object distinction, Dilthey de-emphasizes the epistemological nature of these a priori structures, while emphasizing their more ontological character.[123] Thus, whereas determinant judgments, which are the results of the application of formal categories, were the

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[118] Dilthey, Wilhelm. *Selected Works Volume 2*, eds. Rudolf Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi SW2, (forthcoming), 360. (Hereafter this source will be referred to as SW2.)
[119] Ibid, 361 (emphasis mine).
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] See also de Mul, 156. Also, this will enable the shift from the priority of knowing (*Wissen*) to that of understanding (*Verstehen*). This shift will be addressed further in Chapter 4.

immediate goal of the formal categories, indeed their raison d'être, this is not the case with the real categories. Instead, these categories aim to articulate life. As Dilthey explains,

> The formal categories are forms for making assertions about all of reality. Among the real categories are those that originate in the apprehension of the world of human spirit, even though they are also *transformed* to apply to the whole of reality.[124]

In other words, it is through a transformation or abstraction of the real categories that the logical, or formal categories come to be in the first place. I mentioned this briefly with respect to the formal categories of substance and causality in section two, and I will elaborate on this in what follows. But first, a few more general remarks about the differences between the formal and real categories is necessary. Dilthey explains that,

> [t]he characteristic feature of [the] formal categories is that they are completely transparent and unequivocal. This points to their origin in thought. The mark of the real categories is that their content is unfathomable for thought. They are the nexus of life. This is certain and explicit for reflexive awareness, but unfathomable for the intellect.[125]

A couple of points need to be made here. First is that one of the marks of the real categories is their being 'incomplete' in the sense that a full definition of their meaning is impossible. This ineffability lies in the fact that they are grounded in the "nexus of life" which is itself incapable of a complete description or characterization. As a nexus that is approached by the understanding, life is impossible to define once and for all; it is in constant development. Moreover, the understanding (*Verstehen*)

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[124] *SW3*, 214 (emphasis mine).
[125] *SW2*, 361.

which seeks to make sense of this mysterious realm is incapable of completeness as well. It is always only approximate, as compared to the kind of scientific cognizing (*Erkenntnis*) that regulates the formal categories and the determinant judgments made by way of them. Here, completeness and utter transparency is not only possible but necessary if the categories are to fulfill the goals of the natural sciences over which they reign. Nothing less than an absolute or comprehensive account of their relations is acceptable.

But if we remember the discussion from section one, I explained that, according to Dilthey, the formal categories for which Kant (and others before and after him) had claimed such completeness, are not so transparent after all. This analysis takes place as Dilthey shows that at least some of the formal categories, namely substance and causality, are not, as Kant supposed, grounded in the intellect, but rather in the real categories of life. Were they grounded in the intellect, "no component of these forms of thought could be given up and exchanged for others." But in fact, as in the case of causality, "elements originally represented as intrinsic to causes have gradually dropped away and been replaced by others as the process of adapting the original notion to the external world has continued."[126]

What Dilthey is explaining here is that at least these particular formal categories, which Kant had supposed were "given with the intellect," are not fully transparent, nor are they immutable. Rather, we find that our understanding of what these concepts entail has indeed changed throughout the centuries, and a

[126] *SW1*, 233

consensus as to what they mean is far from reach. Thus, Dilthey accounts for this feature of these formal categories by explaining that they are derivative of the real categories, which are themselves in constant development. This being so, the formal categories are never "fixed" either.

So here we see another instance of how Dilthey's theory of the categories differs from Kant's; namely in the recognition that not all of the formal categories are in fact grounded in the intellect, or are fixed "a priori forms of the understanding" as Kant had supposed. Along with relocating their grounds, then, Dilthey essentially rewrites the list of the so-called formal categories which are in fact the sole products of the intellect. But in his practical wisdom, he understands that the categories of substance, causality and (as we will see) temporality, now seen as rooted in the nexus of life, are nevertheless treated by the natural sciences as if they are static and fixed. In other words, he sees that the *use* of these formal categories in the natural sciences requires that we act "as if" these categories are fully transparent and unequivocal. As he states, "[g]enuine natural science will therefore treat these concepts as mere signs for an x as a necessary element in its calculus."[127] But when it comes to their origin, we must now recognize that they, like the real categories, are products of the nexus of life which is simply incapable of full disclosure.

Makkreel explains Dilthey's analysis of these formal categories in terms of their having been misappropriated by metaphysics:

> Dilthey interprets the history of metaphysics as the attempt to explain both nature and man by means of these two abstract or ideal

[127] *SW1*, 234.

> categories of substance and causality. But the very attempt to derive man's psychic processes from a spiritual substance and his social movements from causal principles reverses the real order of things.[128]

Thus, Dilthey claims that it is the fault of metaphysics that we have actually construed (at least) substance and causality as having been the original products of the intellect and thus fodder for the natural sciences, and only subsequently applied to the human sciences by various augmentations of their meanings. This is to reverse the order of their origin. In fact, substance and causality are first and foremost categories of the nexus of life, and only via abstraction are they applicable to the natural sciences. Therefore he states that because of this metaphysical assumption, "the nature and the origin of every category was turned on its head and must now be put back on its feet."[129] With this, we are left to conclude that at the end of the analysis, Dilthey ultimately intends that all formal categories are derived from real categories. And this is clear since the nexus of life, from which the real categories spring, is the ultimate datum of experience. We cannot go beyond it, and as such, it serves as the ground not only for our willings and feelings, but for our thought processes as well.

So what are the categories, both formal and real, according to Dilthey? And how are the formal ones grounded in the real? Rather than going through all the categories, a brief explanation of how Dilthey grounds the formal categories of causality and substance will shed light on how all the formal categories *not* rooted in the intellect come to be. Certainly, though, Dilthey does allow that certain

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[128] Makkreel, Rudolf, Introduction to *SW1*, 21.
[129] *GSXVIII*, 164f.

categories, namely identity, sameness and difference, are "grounded in reason as such."[130] And as purely formal categories, they are "completely transparent and unequivocal."[131] But other formal categories that were previously thought to be grounded in the intellect are not. Dilthey offers an alternative account of the grounds of these categories in suggesting that an explanation of their origins "must be sought in inner experience, or possibly the cooperation of inner and outer experience."[132]

Regarding the category of causality, Dilthey explains, in a Humean fashion, how the causal relation can never be experienced in outer sense: "[T]he representation of an inner link whereby a power or function of the cause is transferred to the effect cannot be derived in this way."[133] Thus, as Makkreel puts it, "it is through the experience of our own will and the reciprocal relations of acting and suffering (*Wirken und Leiden*) that we can represent a causal sequence as a more integrally related set of states. The category of causality is understood when we transfer the vitality of the self, i.e., the efficacy (*Wirken*) of the will, to outer experience."[134] Thus, causality is not something that we abstract first from outer experience and only later apply to inner experience. It is the other way around. We first "feel" both the resistance and efficacy of our willings, and subsequently apply this same kind of causality to objects of outer experience.

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[130] *SW2*, 361.
[131] Ibid.
[132] *SW1*, 415.
[133] *SW1*, 417.
[134] Makkreel, Rudolf. *Dilthey: Philosopher of the Human Studies*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1975), 438.

With respect to the category of substance, Dilthey explains that it cannot be a formal category as identity, sameness and difference, since it is "totally opaque for the intellect." Thus, this category, once thought to be an "a priori contribution of the intellect a la Kant,"[135] must originate elsewhere. As he states,

> The intellect cannot make intelligible how a substance can begin to hold together in itself a manifold as a unity without thereby losing its unity in this manifold. And how this unity as constancy or identity with itself begins to possess the changes and to assert its unity in the midst of them is likewise incomprehensible. Indeed it involves a trick or a conceit. After one has reduced and splintered the *living selfsameness* which has done its work, an artificial intellectual machine is expected to complete these functions.[136]

Dilthey explains in the above passage that it is from the "living selfsameness" (*Selbigkeit*) felt in inner experience that the formal category of substance is derived. In other words, the feeling that we have in inner experience is that which, when transferred to outer experience, becomes "substance." The real category of self-sameness is, for Dilthey, is "the most intimate experience that human beings have of themselves. That we feel ourselves to be a person, to possess character, and that we can think and act consistently is rooted in this selfsameness."[137] It is, to be sure, a *real* category. And it is important to note that in describing selfsameness, Dilthey calls our awareness of it a "feeling." This holds true to the fact that the real categories are, as previously stated, "unfathomable for thought." Dilthey expounds on this feature of real categories by explaining that the category of selfsameness is that by which "a unity can only be experienced, not expressed through a concept," and it is experienced as holding together "everything that is differentiable and

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[135] Ibid., 437.
[136] *SW2*, 363-4 (emphasis mine).
[137] Ibid, 362.

changeable in a life-unit."[138] In fact, Dilthey claims that concepts disrupt the flow of life. Indeed, the concept "separates out what is linked in the flow of life and re-presents something that is universally and eternally valid apart from the person who formulates it. But the stream of life is unique throughout; each wave in it rises and disappears."[139] Thus, the real categories are neither transparent as the formal ones are, nor do they provide us with conceptual cognition of our experience. Their work is done before such concepts come into play, and they are hence, prediscursive.

But because of their unfathomability, the real categories are incapable of the clarity inherent in the formal categories of the intellect, namely sameness, identity and difference. In comparing the ineffable but experienceable category of selfsameness to the formal category of identity, which is rooted in reason, we find identity to be much more clear. In identity, "thought can find no difference between two facts or two temporal phases of the same fact."[140] Thus there is no room for question regarding the meaning of identity. But for all its abstractness and clarity, it has none of the richness associated with selfsameness. In fact, Dilthey claims the formal categories of identity, sameness and difference which operate as "identification and distinction, connecting and separating, and relating…destroy the living facts as such."[141] In other words, we sacrifice the depth and meaningfulness of real categories that serve to articulate life in order to have complete intellectual transparency in the formal categories.

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[138] Ibid, 362.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid, 366.

This lack of completeness regarding the definitions of the real categories is coupled with the impossibility of determining their precise number or order. As Dilthey explains, the real categories cannot be selected "definitively and purely," nor can their number be established nor their order determined.[142] After all, as categories of life, they are in constant development. He does, however, name some of them and despite what he claims about the impossibility of determining their order, he also can be found placing a certain importance on various ones at given times. For example, he states that temporality is the "first categorial determination" and fundamental to all other categories.[143] Elsewhere, it is meaning that takes precedence as the most important category for historical thought.[144] But, ironically, we find truth in what Dilthey expresses about the fact that the categories cannot be definitively ordered or numbered in his various seemingly contradictory attempts to order and number them. That he is never able to come to terms with an exact ordering of the categories proves their elusiveness, a result of their being grounded in the unfathomable nexus of life. And that he nevertheless attempts to do so attests to what he would consider to be our natural tendency to locate the fixed, immutable, certain features of life.[145]

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[142] Ibid.
[143] *SW3*, 214.
[144] Ibid, 223.
[145] For example, regarding metaphysics, Dilthey claims that "Only he who clarifies for himself the whole force of this standpoint—i.e. he who has attained a historical understanding of the demand for a viewpoint which is rooted in the unchanging nature of man, who has recognized the reason for its long-lasting power and has worked out its consequences—only he can entirely free his own thought from this metaphysical bias…"(SW1, 176) Thus, similarly, we can say here that in working his way through the categories and wavering on their importance and place within the articulation of experience, Dilthey is striving towards that point at which he'll be able to free himself from the need to do so.

But as for the real categories that Dilthey does mention, he includes the following: temporality, meaning, development, taking shape, value, purpose, selfsameness, doing and under-going, and essentiality. These categories, as mentioned, are rooted in life, and they provide the tools, as it were, for us to understand our experience. "Life is understood in its own essence through categories that are alien to the cognition of the natural world. Here again it is decisive that these categories are not applied to life a priori from the outside, but that they lie in the very nature of life."[146]

Here we see Dilthey once again at odds with Kant. In claiming that the real categories "lie in the very nature of life," we can understand him to be offering an alternative to the schematization of the formal categories. In other words, the real categories, as grounds for the formal categories, could be likened to what Allison had called the "schema judgments."[147] We remember that for Kant, the schemata provide the conditions for applying the categories to appearances, and thus enable objects of experience to have "objective" and not merely "logical" significance. But with Dilthey, the formal, logical categories of thought are grounded in the real categories. These real categories are themselves grounded in the nexus of life, and thus precede any subject-object distinction. Therefore, one way to understand the divergence between Dilthey's account of the categories and Kant's, is that Dilthey has eradicated the need for schemata altogether. The very being of the logical, formal categories is dependent on what is *already* experienced on a pre-cognitive level. Thus, the application of these categories to appearances is just an abstraction

[146] *SW3*,
[147] See Chapter 1 above.

from a more primordial relationship between real categories and perceptions. Logical categories are no longer solely responsible for shaping experience since experience precedes them, and is understood without them. They are relegated to a sort of second-order experience, whereas the real categories preside over our immediate experience, helping to order it and make sense of it. And finally, we don't need schemata for the real categories since they are, so to speak, 'homogenous' with experience in a way that Kant's intellectually based formal categories are not. Real categories are rooted in life, and do not go behind it. Indeed, there is *nothing* behind life.

As Makkreel mentions, "one could object that Dilthey, in making this claim [that these categories are derived from life and lived experience] is merely introducing another basic metaphysical category, namely, life."148 But as Makkreel reminds us, life for Dilthey is a "fact of experience, as the reciprocal relation between self and milieu that is available to all…It is the ultimate level of experienced reality, which we can apprehend only by a process of description and articulation. Life cannot be derived from a more fundamental principle."149 Thus, whereas in Kant it was necessary to locate a "third thing" to bring together concepts and appearances, for Dilthey, there is nothing beyond life, and thus no need to locate the grounds of our experience anywhere but in life. Indeed, the common root that Kant sought to unify sensibility and understanding is, for Dilthey, unnecessary. As de Mul

[148] Makkreel, Rudolf. Introduction to *SW1*, 21.
[149] Ibid.

states, "the common root is identified with the primordial nexus of life."[150] Even Heidegger went beyond life to identify the common root with time. And here he seems vulnerable to the charge discussed by Makkreel of having introduced a new metaphysical category. For now he has to explain how Dasein's experience develops out of time, rather than accept with Dilthey that life itself simply is temporal, and there is nothing beyond or behind it in need of explanation. A generous interpretation of Heidegger here may wish to claim that he simply equates life with time, but this hardly solves the problem. After all, Dilthey's nexus of life, albeit unfathomable, is the basic datum of experience. But time appears to be in need of an experiencer in order for it to find expression in life. Heidegger, in locating time as the common root of sensibility and understanding, implicitly gives credence to the idea that sensibility and understanding must be reconciled or brought together if experience is to occur. But for Dilthey, the life nexus already includes experience, experiencer, and time. Sensibility and understanding are originally one—a unification is not necessary. In other words, for Heidegger, time must work through something, whereas for Dilthey, the nexus of life is itself a "working-through-in-time."

5. Space and Time: Real Conditions of Experience

Before ending this chapter, a few comments are necessary about the notions of space and time in Dilthey's account of experience. Whereas Dilthey agrees with

[150] de Mul, 155.

Kant regarding space, his divergence from Kant on the notion of time requires explication. Therefore, I will begin by giving a brief account of some criticisms of Kant's notion of space, and then I will address time and its new status as a "real" condition of experience.

With respect to the condition of space, Dilthey agrees in large part with Kant's account.[151] However, he is quick to point out that space, although ideal, is also derivative of lived experience. In this, he seems to be proceeding along the same lines as he did in his critique of the formal categories, claiming that they too are derivative of, rather than fundamental to, lived experience. Now, regarding space, Dilthey claims that,

> [g]eometry is the analysis of this space that is, as it were, given within us independently of particular objects. It is [thus] not the analysis of particular spatial objects. The axioms of geometry state the general properties of this space. The function of continuous coexistence is also an irreducible given of space, but its further properties are derived from the experience of objects.[152]

Thus, we see how Dilthey conceives of space as both an *ideal* or transcendental form of intuition, in which case geometry is able to ascertain its "general features," but he also allows that other, *real* properties of space can be, and are in fact explicated by empirical analysis through experience of objects. But even given its ideal nature, Dilthey disagreed with Kant's attempt to prove space is transcendental by showing how certain geometrical proofs are universally valid and necessary. According to

[151] Makkreel, Rudolf. Introduction to *SW1*, 27.
[152] *SW1*, 365.

Dilthey, this only serves to show that "space is a priori for our conscious analysis of it."[153] But he is quick to point out that our "original formation of the representation of space is not affected by these proofs."[154] Rather, here we must return to lived experience and recognize that space is indeed necessary and universal, but *not* due to the proofs of geometry. It is universal and necessary on the basis of a more fundamental relationship we have with objects of experience, namely the perception of co-existence. Dilthey concludes, then, "we distinguish two colors only when we possess them as co-existing. This form of co-existence is thus not a product, but a condition, of our experience…"[155] Thus in summary, we might say that Dilthey did indeed agree that space is the condition for the possibility of outer experience, but that certain properties of space (and relations in space) are signs of something actual—not merely ideal.

Now, let us turn to Dilthey's critique of Kant's notion of time to see how this formerly purely subjective form of inner sense is made into a real condition of both inner and outer experience. With this, we will be pushing the Leibniz-Kant trajectory to its furthest point so far. Once time is shown to be a condition for all experience, then the historicization of the real categories which orient our lived experiences is complete.

As previously mentioned, Dilthey largely agrees with Kant's notion of space as an ideal form of outer experience, but argues that its corollary, time, should not have been assigned as the ideal form of inner experience. After all, inner experience

[153] Ibid, 366.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.

is not phenomenal in the way that outer experience is. For Dilthey, inner experience is real; it consists of facts of consciousness which are, as we have seen, certain or indubitable. Indeed, to reflexive awareness (*Innewerden*) experience is immediate and unquestionable.

Insofar as Dilthey believes time to be a real form of experience per se, he is also critical of Kant's treatment of time as abstract, and relegated to representational consciousness. In line with Dilthey's overall attempt to bring life into the "intellectualized subject," he claims that "[t]ime is given in the totality of our self-consciousness, it is not a mere fact of intelligence."[156] And here we see a move similar to that made in re-locating the categories from their intellectual loft to their more appropriate ground in lived experience. As Makkreel explains, "temporality also manifests itself in feeling and willing."[157] Thus, as actually experienced, time is "available to our most basic mode of consciousness: *Innewerden*."[158] In contrast to our purely representational consciousness (*Vorstellen*) the experience of time is much richer than Kant had assumed.

Moreover, all the "parts" of time are homogenous in Kant's account. But for Dilthey, the notion of time as real indicates that each moment has a unique quality all its own. Dilthey explains that according to Kant, "[i]f we think of time in abstraction from what fills it, then its parts are equivalent to one another. In this

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[156] Ibid, 384.
[157] Makkreel, Rudolf. "The Overcoming of Linear Time in Kant, Dilthey and Heidegger," in Dilthey and Phenomenology, eds. Rudolf Makkreel and John Scanlon (Lanham MD, Center for Advance Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America: 1987),142.
[158] Ibid, 144.

continuity, even the smallest part is linear; it is a sequence that elapses. There is never an *is* in the smallest part."[159] Here, there are two points to make. First, Dilthey is sympathetic to Kant's idea of time as a "continuity" where a "sequence elapses." Thus he states that "[c]oncrete time…consists in the restless advance of the present, in which what is present continually becomes past and the future becomes present."[160] But at the same time, Kant saw this continuity against the background of his representational theory of consciousness, wherein "each representation disappears into the obscurity of the past unless the imagination can reclaim it."[161] Thus as Makkreel explains, the imagination assumes a central role in preserving our representations for as long as possible before they fade from memory. Dilthey, by contrast, sees the continuous movement of time in a more active sense. It is not as if time runs along, while we stand passively by waiting to piece it back together from memory. Rather, time is a "restless advance of the present" whereby we direct our attention to it in an active way. Thus the reflexive awareness that replaces Kant's representational consciousness becomes instructive: it does not place a content over against the subject in order to represent an object. Rather, reflexive awareness is pre-representational. It experiences time in its uniqueness every moment. It is not a mode of knowledge in the way representational consciousness is because it precedes any subject-object distinction. Simply put, the content of the experience and the act of experiencing are one. Only later can we go back, if we choose, and

[159] Ibid, 143, (This translation is taken from *SW3*, 93.)
[160] *SW3*, 93.
[161] Makkreel, Rudolf. "The Overcoming of Linear Time in Kant, Dilthey and Heidegger," 143.

separate out what was experienced from the experience. Ermarth refers to this phenomenon as a "valence relation" in which there is a structural unity in the occurrence, but which is also capable of being analytically differentiated in reflection.[162]

Having made time real, and not merely ideal, Dilthey is able to defend his notion of historicity against the static, lifeless Kantian subject. Not only is the human being a thinking thing, but it is also a willing and feeling being as well. And this complete human being navigates her way through life not just by "knowing" and representing, but predominantly by understanding. Moreover, this original understanding is what underlies or grounds our subsequent claims. As Dilthey explains, "[t]he basis of epistemology lies in a self-reflection which encompasses the entire unmutilated content of psychic life. Universal validity, truth, and reality are determined in their meaning first and foremost from this basic content."[163] Thus, understanding and reflexive awareness, not judgment and representational consciousness, are the building blocks of what Dilthey conceives as a general epistemology that can ground the human sciences, thereby providing the possibility of universal objective validity. Having broken free from the Kantian subject, and its static categories and ideal notion of time, it is now time to turn to Dilthey's hermeneutics to see how the functions that will replace these play out in more detail.

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[162] Ermarth, Michael. "Objectivity and Relativity in Dilthey's Theory of Understanding" from *Dilthey and Phenomenology*, 76.
[163] *GSV*, 151-2.

Chapter III

Dilthey's Project: The Critique of Historical Reason

Now that we have traced the origins of Dilthey's project along the lines of the distinction between real and logical grounds or categories, it is time to outline and evaluate his contribution to the philosophical problem of the universal objective validity in understanding. This would take of the form, following in the footsteps of Kant, of a critique; a critique of *historical* reason. Because of the fundamental historicity of human beings, Kant's critique which resulted in fixed, a priori structures could not satisfy the demands of the human sciences which are embedded in a historical, and therefore constantly fluctuating, nexus. Dilthey aimed to provide the missing foundation for the human sciences which would, via an epistemology, enable them to make judgments capable of universal objective validity. But from the outset, this task was wrought with conflict. In this chapter, I hope to illuminate these conflicts, and show how ultimately, they are irresolvable. This irresolvability, however, I claim is a necessary feature of the human sciences and their subject matter. Thus, instead of being a hindrance, these conflicts shed light on the very nature of the human being's historicity, and allow us to penetrate even more deeply into this fundamental feature of our existence.

1. The Guiding Question of the Critique of Historical Reason

Dilthey formulates his main question in many ways and in many texts. Perhaps the most oft-cited instance in the secondary literature is the following:

> How are we to overcome the difficulty which everywhere weighs upon the human sciences—that of deriving universally valid propositions from inner experiences which are so personally limited, so indeterminate, so compacted and resistant to analysis?[164]

What this question brings to the fore is precisely the difficulty found in the historicist-positivist debate of the 19th century, namely, how to reconcile the fact of human historicity with the search for universal objectivity. In other words, how is it possible to make universally valid judgments in sciences whose subject matter elude such permanence at every turn? Bambach states the problem as such:

> How can we, Dilthey asked, secure scientific knowledge of the human world which is as truly scientific or *wissenschaftlich, as* the knowledge of nature obtained by the natural sciences? And even if we should succeed in fulfilling this imperative toward scientific knowledge, can we still preserve the truth of the human spirit?[165]

But a more careful look of what this problem actually requires in the way of a solution is now necessary. We need to ascertain what exactly Dilthey was looking for. Was he looking for a way to secure universal objectivity for the knowledge claims in the human sciences in a way that parallels the cognitive claims of the natural sciences? If so, given the principle of historicity, his project seems impossible. But what if it turns out that Dilthey was actually striving for something

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[164] *SW1*, 340.
[165] Bambach, Charles. *Heidegger, Dilthey and the Crisis of Historicism*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press: 1995), 128-9

less paradoxical, and therefore possible, in asking his question? What if his project was less "hopeless" than it is often made out to be? Bulhof, for example, explains Dilthey's predicament in the following way:

> In the natural sciences, [Dilthey] felt, objective knowledge mirrors reality; it is "pure," untainted by distorting subjective factors, the fruit of "pure," or scientific abstract reason. Kant had studied the limitations of this scientific reason, drawing its boundaries around the domain of natural science. But what kind of objective reason was to be employed in the human sciences? The problem here was that knowledge of the nature of the human world coincides with the knower's consciousness of himself as a human being, and cannot be abstracted from the life of the knower.[166]

I will claim, against many of his critics, that Dilthey's question was indeed a solvable one. What Dilthey was hoping to establish was a foundation that would assure that our propositions about human experience could be *articulated* and *understood*. He was not, as some have claimed, seeking to assure that these propositions would enjoy the same kind of universal objectivity as the knowledge claims of the natural sciences, i.e. timeless and pure. Therefore, throughout the rest of this work, I argue that Dilthey's line of questioning did not lead him to an impasse. He did not seek the same kind of objectivity for the human sciences as that had in the natural sciences. Rather, he sought a way for the human sciences to enjoy a kind of objectivity appropriate to them.

In order to support my claim, I will first give an account of Dilthey's position in the "age of crisis"—an age that gave urgency to his project of grounding the human sciences. This will entail addressing Dilthey's criticisms of both the

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[166] Bulhof, Ilse. *Wilhelm Dilthey: A Hermeneutic Approach to the Study of History and Culture*. (Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague: 1980), 30-31.

Historical School and the positivists of the time. It will also entail that we become clear as to how Dilthey conceived of the relation between the human and the natural sciences. Next, I will pay close attention to Dilthey's critique of Kant which I explicated in the previous chapter in order to show how his understanding of Kant's project kept him from making the mistake it is often claimed that he made, namely, seeking the kind of objectivity had in the natural sciences for his own project. Thirdly, I will expound on certain of his key concepts and their role in defining what, according to Dilthey, amounts to knowledge in the human sciences. Finally, I will address his hermeneutical theory, since it is with this that the solution to the problem of objectivity in the human sciences is first articulated.

2. The Age of Crisis: Historicism vs. Positivism

The purpose of this section is to explain Dilthey's project by situating it against the background of the "age of crisis", a time of overwhelming success in the natural sciences and of increasing insecurity in the human sciences. While the natural sciences were progressing at an incredible rate, many were losing hope that the human sciences, philosophy included, could provide them with any sort of meaning in their lives—meaning that was now even harder to obtain given certain scientific conclusions about the world. As de Mul puts it,

> The success of the natural sciences had changed German intellectual life from an idealistic to a positivistic worldview. The rapid development of the natural sciences had deprived speculative, idealistic philosophy of almost all its prestige. In the middle of the nineteenth century academic philosophy found itself in an 'identity crisis' and became increasingly oriented toward the natural sciences.

> Under the slogan 'back to Kant,' philosophy was reduced to a positivistic epistemology and became increasingly distant from its earlier normative presumptions.[167]

At bottom was a "fundamental discordance between thought and life." The ideas of academia offered little solace to an increasingly skeptical society. As Ermarth puts it, "[d]ogmatism prevailed in the lecture hall, while skepticism held sway in the streets. Formal thought and inquiry were out of touch with practical life and the conditions of a changing world."[168] Theory had been severed from practice, life from thought. Dilthey expressed the situation as such:

> If the present age asks wherein lies the ultimate goal of action for the individual and the human race, then the deep contradiction running through our age becomes apparent. The present is no wiser concerning the great mystery of the origin of things, of the value of existence, or of the final value of our action than was a Greek of the Ionian or Italian colonies or an Arab at the time of Ibn Rushd. At this moment, surrounded by the rapid progress of the sciences, we find ourselves more helpless in these questions than in any previous time. [169]

This conflict manifested itself in the two dissident schools of thought dominant in Dilthey's age, historicism and positivism. Dilthey situated himself (somewhat) between these two movements regarding the status of the human sciences, and tried to reconcile their opposing principles while remaining conscious of the positive aspects of each. With his overall goal of securing universal validity for the claims of the human sciences, he thought both schools had something positive to

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[167] de Mul, Jos. *The Tragedy of Finitude*,. 23. It must be noted that this description of the general climate of 19th century philosophy does not apply to the Neo-Kantians, specifically Rickert. He was very much concerned with the association of objectively valid values to history, and differed from Dilthey in his claim that said values existed "outside" of history, but would gradually come to be agreed upon by all historians. See Makkreel's *Dilthey: Philosopher of the Human Studies* for more on Dilthey's relationship to the Neo-Kantians Rickert and Windelband.

[168] Ermarth, Michael. *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason*, 16.

[169] *GSVIII*: 193 trans. in English by Michael Ermarth in *Wilhelm Dilthey: Critique of Historical Reason*, 17.

offer despite their respective shortcomings. Historicism, which was largely criticized in Dilthey's day for leading to relativism and/or nihilism, was responsible for the remarkable and useful discovery of the principle of historicity. Simply stated, the principle of human historicity entails that as human beings, we are always situated in a cultural and historical context from which there is no escape to achieve some sort of "god's eye view." Thus, our judgments, evaluations, and actions are always necessarily context dependent. For Dilthey, the principle of historicity was one of the major breakthroughs in philosophical thought since Kant. No longer could we accept a static view of human nature, one of pure, timeless a priori structures of understanding. Historicity entails that we give up the ideal of fixed transcendental conditions that are supposed to hold for all rational beings at all times and places.

But along with this positive aspect of historicity came its downside. If in fact we are always historically and culturally situated, and if there is no god's eye view against which we can test our judgments, evaluations and actions for validity, then, as mentioned above, it seems we are given over to relativism; i.e. there simply are no universally valid truths. But far from seeing the situation as hopeless, Dilthey sought to provide a foundation for the claims of the historical school. In other words, he thought the problem of epistemological (and moral) relativism could be resolved by a proper grounding of the principle of historicity:

> [The Historical School] considered spiritual life as historical through and through and approached social theory historically, seeking the explanations and rules of contemporary life in the study of the past. New ideas flowed from it through countless channels into all the particular disciplines. However, even today the Historical School has not yet succeeded in breaking through the inner limits which have

> necessarily inhibited its theoretical development and its influence on life. Its study and evaluation of historical phenomena remain unconnected with the analysis of facts of consciousness; consequently, it has no grounding in the only knowledge which is ultimately secure; it has, in short, no philosophical foundation. Lacking a healthy relationship to epistemology and psychology, this school has not attained an explanatory method.[170]

Dilthey would devote his energies to establishing a relationship between the historical sciences and epistemology. He would secure the validity of historical claims by providing their philosophical foundation, thereby assuring their scientific status. He would also seek to secure the relevance of these historical claims to actual experience by analyzing the way in which historical judgments result from the totality of experience. In this way, historical claims would not become aloof, abstract, or disconnected from the lived-experiences of the human beings in which they have their origin. In short, they would not become like the results of the natural sciences whose abstractions, although necessary, are disconnected from human experience. Rather, they would remain intact in their relevance and meaning. On the other hand, however, Dilthey would have to ensure that his epistemology would not limit the claims of the human sciences by allowing them to have only a local significance, one that would be too concrete and irrelevant to other events. In other words, historical claims would have to retain their connection to life, while also being universally applicable. Only in this way could the claims of the human historical sciences remain faithful to the fundamental feature of human existence, i.e. historicity.

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[170] *SWI*, p. 48

At this point, I will discuss in a bit more detail the two different strands of historicism as represented by their most notable members, Ranke and Droysen. Each thinker had a different vision for the historical school and Dilthey's criticisms of them would be instrumental in shaping his own project.

To begin with, let us take a look at Ranke's ideas. Along with the principle of historicity, Ranke offered another principle that would become central to his strand of historicism. It stated that the historian must attempt to understand the past "*wie es eigentlich gewesen*", or, "as it actually was".[171] "In this he expresses very beautifully and powerfully the deep longing of the true historian for objective reality."[172] Thus, in attempting to understand, say, an event in history, the interpreter must, according to this principle, try to purge herself of her current context or tradition. Only then, Ranke held, could the event be judged appropriately and seen for what it *really* was. This was, for him, the ideal of objective knowledge in history.

Furthermore, this principle entailed that every epoch must be evaluated on its own terms since, according to Ranke, "every epoch is immediate for God."[173] In other words, we cannot use the standards and measures of our age to evaluate an age gone by. Here, de Mul points out that an age "cannot be understood from the standpoint of the prevailing standards and values of another epoch. This meant that Ranke adhered to the feasibility of *epistemological* objectivity but accepted a

[171] Ibid, 143.
[172] Ibid.
[173] De Mul, 122.

fundamental normative relativism."[174] In other words, while he held open the possibility for objectivity with respect to theoretical judgments about history, he also deemed any use or reference to one's own current tradition in making judgments about an earlier or other tradition as unacceptable and unfair. If "every epoch is immediate for God," then it can only be judged according to its own standards. Thus, even though he still held out for objectivity with regard to theoretical judgments, he also recognized the inherent relativity in all normative judgments about history. If this were so, then one may legitimately ask, why study history at all? There would certainly be nothing instructive or practical to be gotten from looking at the past in the way Ranke suggests. After all, our own epoch would be considered just as independent as the one under inspection, and so aside from trivial curiosity, a Rankean approach to history would be unhelpful in guiding our own actions. But more importantly, Ranke's position is therefore fundamentally inconsistent, and Dilthey recognized this and criticized it as such.

Against Ranke, Dilthey maintained that this principle of *Selbstauslösung,* or self-extinguishment, which necessitates that the historian become an impartial observer to the past, does violence to how the past was (and can be presently) experienced. As Bambach puts it,

> The contemplative bearing of a Rankean researcher fostered a kind of aesthetic ocularism—a vision of the past which defined history as a spectacle or an assemblage of museum pieces. Yet by pressing to an extreme the detached ideal of objective contemplation, Dilthey believed that the Rankean approach undermined the vital force of human historicity.[175]

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[174] Ibid. (italics mine)
[175] Bambach, 141-2.

According to Dilthey, when we look at history this way, we don't *understand* history. We are confronted only with facts—facts that are meaningless in themselves. Knowledge of such facts cannot constitute historical knowledge, since historical knowledge is fundamentally knowledge of *relations*, relations that exist among and between human beings and their creations. Indeed, the very method by which we approach the subject matter of the human sciences, that of understanding (*Verstehen*), is itself concerned with connections or relations. Without referring to its context, the Rankean approach to history shares more in common with the methods of the natural sciences for whom the object of knowledge is, in fact, detached and abstracted from life. Thus, whereas Ranke sought objectivity in historical knowledge via detachment and abstraction, such objectivity lacked any meaning or significance.

A further point that Dilthey makes regarding the nature of historical understanding and objectivity follows:

> All science is experiential; but all experience must be related back to and derives its validity from the conditions and context of consciousness in which it arises, i.e. the totality of our nature. We designate as "epistemological" this standpoint which consistently recognizes the impossibility of going behind these conditions. To attempt this would be like seeing without eyes or directing the gaze of knowledge behind one's own eye.[176]

This emphasizes the futility of trying to lose oneself in the interpretive moment. It is not so much that it would result in insignificant findings, but rather that such an endeavor would be, in fact, impossible. Dilthey was committed to the principle of historicity which entailed not only that we are thoroughly historical, necessarily

[176] *SW1*, 50.

bound to time and place, but also that there was no way of getting around this fact about us. It is a fundamental feature of our existence. Therefore, any investigation that attempted to ignore this fact was both dishonest and unattainable. There is no "god's eye view" from which objectivity in the strict, or natural scientific, sense can be had.

Dilthey was not the only one to criticize Ranke. Droysen too was critical of Ranke's "sterile ideal of objectivity" which he also recognized as inherently inconsistent. This brings us to the second strand of the Historical School. Droysen thought that the pretense to understand the past as it actually was, was in conflict with the recognition of historicity. Droysen rightly pointed out that "the recognition that all norms and values are bound by time and place means that the view of the historian is also bound by time and place."[177] With this, Droysen was fully aware of the principle of historicity. The historian cannot approach history with the same detached stance of the natural scientist to her subject matter. Doing so results in nothing more than a collection of meaningless facts stripped of their significance.

In fact, for Droysen, it is the job of the historian to give form to the "meaningless facts" chronicled in historical sources. Without this form, no meaning can be discerned. As Droysen states,

> The narrative picture description does not desire to give a picture, be a photograph, of what once was, still less to be a magazine of all particulars and notions handed down to us, but our view, from this standpoint, of meaningful events.[178]

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[177] De Mul, 123.

[178] Droysen, J.G. *Historik*, *Vorlesungen ueber di Enzyklopaedie und Methodologie der Geschichte*, ed. R. Huebner (Darmstadt: 1977), 285. This passage was quoted by de Mul in *The Tragedy of Finitude*, 123-4.

Thus, the job of the historian is not to mirror the events, nor to report them in a sterile, "natural-scientific" way. Rather, the historian must give life to the events of history by evaluating them in relation to her particular horizon. Therefore, history, according to Droysen, is more an art than a science. De Mul claims that "[a]ccording to [Droysen], subjective construction, by means of which the historian gives form to the historical material, is comparable to the work of the creative artist…In his view, historiography is impossible without this aesthetic component."

Droysen's acceptance of the principle of historicity put him at odds not only with Ranke, but also with the positivists. Along with his philosophical pursuits, Droysen was very much concerned with politics; in fact, his politics informed his philosophy to a large extent. Regarding the positivists, Droysen thought that their methods obscured "the genuine normative significance of historical study and thereby [threatened] the moderate liberal practice which is its proper political expression."[179] In fact, as a progressive liberal, Droysen contended that the positivist world-view based on a "refined intellectualism" led to disastrous consequences such as the dictatorship of the first and third Napoleons of France.[180] This kind of dispassionate study led Droysen to advocate a strict separation of the historical and natural sciences. The point of the historical sciences is to make man not only intelligent, but also "better." Thus both Ranke and the positivists represented for him a sterile, meaningless study, whether of history or nature, that did not aim to contribute to what he saw as man's ultimate goal, that of freedom.

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[179] Maclean, Michael J. "Johann Gustav Droysen and the Development of Historical Hermeneutics." History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History. O 82. 21 347-365, p. 349

[180] Ibid, 349-350.

Dilthey's disagreement with Ranke was similar to that of Droysen's complaint. In short, Ranke had failed to recognize and appreciate the historicity of humankind, and the necessary way in which that historicity binds the historian to her time and place. To attempt to escape this fact is futile. But regarding Droysen, even while sharing and later developing many of his ideas, Dilthey was critical of him as well.[181] His most important departure from Droysen consisted in the Hegelian undertones of his work:

> Both Droysen and Hegel subjected the raw historical data to a process of interpretation whose operation was not strictly justifiable solely with reference to the data itself. In general terms, both methodologically utilized the supra-empirical level of spirit reflecting on itself, through objectified expression, to counter the scholarly hubris of a narrowly empirical approach to historical knowledge. And both shared the conviction that history's cumulative dialectical movement from natural determinism to the freedom of ethical choice consists of a necessary logic, comprehension of which is essential in the definition of both scholarly truth and political legitimacy.[182]

Thus Dilthey could not condone the idea that historical events ought to be interpreted in light of a quasi-Hegelian "Absolute Spirit," and thus would have to separate himself from this otherwise true historicist. By rejecting such an account of the progress of history and of mankind, Dilthey would have to accept the threat of relativism that accompanied the principle of historicity without appealing to a "progression towards freedom" as a lifeboat. Dilthey would, therefore, have to devote much of his energy to the problem of relativism that threatened to bring an

[181] Two of the most important influences that Droysen had on Dilthey was his development of a method, and the differentiation between explanation (Erklaren) and understanding (Verstehen). See Maclean's essay.
[182] Maclean, 364.

end to historiography as a scientific pursuit. Indeed, this problem, which would come to be called the "crisis of historicism", was central to his entire project:

> In so far as historians, economists, teachers of law and students of religion are involved in life, they want to influence it. They subject historical personages, mass movements and tendencies to their judgment which is influenced by their individuality, the nation to which they belong and the age in which they live. Even when they think they are proceeding without any presuppositions, they are determined by their horizon. Every analysis of the concepts of a past generation reveals constituents in them which derive from the presuppositions of that generation. Yet every science contains the demand for universal validity. If there are to be strictly scientific human sciences, they must aim ever more consciously and critically at this goal of universal validity.[183]

Now that Dilthey's position with respect to the Historical School has been addressed, it is time to see how he responds to the positivists. It may seem that given his goal of securing a foundation and method for the human sciences, Dilthey would align himself more closely with the positivists who, in their appeal to method, thought the human sciences ought to be addressed in the same manner as the natural sciences. As will now be shown, this is not the case. On the contrary, Dilthey defended the Historical School, or more specifically, the principle of historicity, from the encroachments of the positivists:

> In my own work I was troubled by questions which face every thoughtful historian, student of law, or political theorist. Thus there arose in me both a need and a plan for the foundation of the human sciences. What is the system of principles which provides a basis for the judgments of the historian, the conclusions of the political economist, and the concepts of the jurist, and which at the same time assures their certainty?...The answers given to these questions by Comte and the positivists and by J.S. Mill and the empiricists seemed to me to truncate and mutilate historical reality in order to assimilate it to the concepts and methods of the natural sciences.[184]

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[183] *SW3*, 224
[184] *SWI*, 49

Dilthey's adherence to the principle of historicity would not allow him to accept the position of the positivists. The human sciences, insofar as they have the entire socio-historical world as their object, cannot approach their objects in the same way as the natural sciences approach theirs.[185] They must have their own method, as well as their own founding principles. As Dilthey explains, "[i]f the mind sets itself over its creations as something merely objectively empirical and analyzes them according to the external method of natural science, then there occurs a self-alienation of mind in regard to its own creations."[186] And furthermore, regarding the connection between the human sciences and life as it is lived everyday, the human sciences show themselves to be necessarily distinct from the natural sciences. Dilthey puts the point this way:

> Here we notice a decisive difference between the natural sciences and the human sciences. In the former, scientific thinking stands apart from our ordinary contact with the external world, rendering its productive achievements esoteric. But in the human sciences a connection between life and science is retained, so that the thought-provoking work of everyday life remains the foundation of scientific creativity.[187]

But Dilthey did share some commonalities with the positivists. For one, Dilthey wished to restructure the system of the human sciences according to a commitment to empirical research in the place of abstract systematizing.[188] This was a result of his anti-metaphysical stance, also something he shared with the

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[185] Ermarth claims that Dilthey insisted on a fundamental distinction between the natural and human sciences, but also thought both should be empirical, objective, factual and valid. Of course, the manner in which these sciences attained these goals was relative to that science. The distinction between them rested on a difference in standpoint, "attitude of mind", "orientation of consciousness", "standpoints toward experience", or "realms of experience", but not on different kinds of being. (96) This thought will be explored later in this chapter.

[186] *GSVI*, 126, This passage was quoted by Bambach, 149.

[187] *SW3*, 222

[188] See Bambach, 137.

positivists. Given his adherence to the idea that "thought cannot go behind life", and that modern science must recognize the "epistemological" viewpoint which, as has already been shown, dismisses the possibility of Rankean self-extinguishment, Dilthey referred to his Critique of Historical Reason as an "empirical science of the mind" which also shows a similarity with positivism.[189] Furthermore, de Mul has pointed out that on a broader level, rather than attributing the demise of spiritual life and meaning in the 19th century to the progress of the natural sciences, Dilthey sought a transformation of the human sciences in order to address these questions more competently.[190]

Thus, as is often the case with Dilthey, his position with regard to the historical school and the positivists was a subtle one. Without completely defending or rejecting either side of the controversy, Dilthey occupied a space between the two that does not allow for simple pigeonholing. Of course, this is precisely what makes Dilthey's thought so interesting! His project would ultimately be shaped by the position he forges in the age of crisis. Against the historical school, he would not settle for a pervasive relativism. Against the positivists, he would not allow violence to be done to the fundamental historicity of human life by subjecting the human sciences to the cold theorizing characteristic of the natural sciences. Rather, Dilthey would provide the human sciences with their own foundation, based on the principle of historicity in order to secure the objectivity of their judgments. This project, which purposely bears both an affinity and a dissimilarity to Kant's work,

[189] See de Mul, 20. Dilthey referred to the critique this way in the 1860's and 70's. What set him apart from the positivists in this regard, however, was his commitment to understanding the normative character of the sciences—not just the epistemological.
[190] de Mul, 20.

would save the human sciences from an untimely and unnecessary death. In so doing, Dilthey sought to secure a legitimate place for the human sciences alongside the natural sciences without sacrificing either objectivity or historicity.

That Dilthey never finished this proposed Critique is well-known, but what he left unfinished in the way of a strictly coherent volume was indeed addressed throughout his various writings. In fact, I will argue that Dilthey did sufficiently address the major points of his critique thereby revealing the possibility for universal objective validity of knowledge claims in the human sciences. But before I get too far ahead of myself, I wish now to more fully address this quest for objectivity.

3. The Natural vs. Human Sciences and the Nature of Objectivity

Having briefly outlined his position in the historicist-positivist controversy, we are now in a position to understand why Dilthey believed it necessary to uphold certain principles at all costs, namely historicity and objectivity, even to the detriment of his being able to finish his project. While the historical school found these two principles fundamentally at odds, the positivists ignored the former for the sake of the latter. Dilthey found both schools' solutions to be inadequate, and therefore embarked on the critical project of establishing to what extent objectivity was possible in the human sciences. But a clearer idea of what objectivity means is now needed. What exactly is Dilthey looking for when he seeks "universal objective validity" for knowledge claims in the human sciences? To answer this, we must first

understand how Dilthey construed the relation between the natural and human sciences, in what ways he found them similar and in what ways distinct. Also, how did Dilthey account for the formation of their judgments? This will enable us to know if, and to what extent they shared a similar idea of objectivity.

In his most complete and latest work on the relation between the natural and human sciences, Dilthey makes some crucial points that form the core of his hermeneutical theory. I will mention them briefly here, and discuss them in more detail in the next section. First, it must be noted that Dilthey does *not* distinguish the human sciences from the natural sciences on any sort of ontological basis. In other words, there is no distinction in the kind of beings that these groups of sciences look to when choosing their objects. Rather, their objects are first formed according to the purposes and goals that these sciences set for themselves. Before such goals are in mind, we might say that both sciences enjoy the entire life-world as a potential source of inquiry. Dilthey uses the example of a drama to show how this happens in the human sciences. "The nexus of a drama consists in a distinctive relation of material, poetic mood, motif, plot, and means of presentation. Each of these moments performs a function in the structure of the work. And these functions are interconnected by an inner law of poetry."[191] He goes on to say that the object, in this case the drama, is completely distinct from the psychic processes of the author. It is only when we decide to make these processes our object that they first emerge for us in a "spiritual nexus." As for the natural sciences, Dilthey explains that "these too have their object, not in the impressions as they appear in

[191] *SW3*, 107.

lived experiences but in the objects created by conceptual cognition in order to make those impressions intelligible."[192] In other words, before an object is determined in the natural sciences, it must first be abstracted from the immediate experience we have of it in everyday life. Therefore, in both the natural and human sciences, "the object is created on the basis of a law imposed by the facts themselves. The two groups of sciences agree in that respect. Their difference derives from the tendency or direction by which their object is formed…In the [human sciences], a spiritual object emerges in the act of understanding; in the [natural sciences], a physical object in the act of cognition."[193]

Ermarth expresses the above point by saying that the differences between the two kinds of sciences was, for Dilthey, a difference in "attitude of mind," "standpoint toward experience," or "orientation of consciousness."[194] This reiterates that the difference was not ontological, but rather epistemological. As Ermarth explains,

> At the basis of the distinction lay two different modes of experiencing reality: "inner lived experience" (das Erleben, Erlebnis, or occasionally erlebende Erfahrung) and "outer sensory experience" (aüssere Erfahrung)…Dilthey held that the human sciences have as their object an empirical reality given directly and "originally" (originaliter) to the mind as a coherent texture of relations and meanings. The natural sciences on the other hand have as their object the regular and uniform order of facts given from outside as phenomena related by the causal laws of coexistence and succession.[195]

[192] Ibid.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ermarth, *Critique of Historical Reason*, 96.
[195] Ibid, 97.

In a passage that eloquently expresses the various reasons he has for maintaining this distinction between the human sciences and the natural sciences with regard to the stance taken toward the object, Dilthey states,

> one could say that two great tendencies come to play in all scientific endeavors. Man finds himself determined by nature…We gain control of this physical world by the study of its laws. These laws can only be discovered insofar as the lived character of our impressions of nature, the connection we have with nature to the extent that we are ourselves a part of it, and the lively feeling in which we enjoy it, recede ever more behind the abstract comprehension of it according to the relations of time, space, mass, and motion. All these moments work together to ensure that man effaces himself in order to construct—on the basis of his impressions—this great object, nature, as an order governed by laws. It then becomes the center of reality for man.
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> But the same human being then turns his back from it to life, to himself. This return of man to the lived experience by means of which nature is there for him, to life in which alone meaning, value and purpose appear, is the other great tendency that determines scientific work. A second center emerges…This second tendency expresses itself in the reference of the sensorily external course of human events back to something that never appears to the senses—in reflection upon what manifests itself in that external process.[196]

This brings us to another distinction to be made between the two types of sciences, namely, their purpose or telos. The purpose shared by those disciplines belonging to the human sciences, and which serves to distinguish them from the natural sciences, is "their endeavor to relate human life, and objective spirit realized by it, back to a creative, evaluative and active force, something that expresses and objectifies itself."[197] What this means is that the human sciences take the expressions of human life, whether they be works of art, legal systems, traditions or written works, as their subject matter in an effort to understand the connection between these expressions and the human beings responsible for having produced

[196] *SW3*, 83.
[197] *SW3*, 160.

them. And by "human beings responsible" we need not think only of the sole author or artist whose hand did the writing or painting, but rather the entire socio-historical context in which these individuals produced their works. This nexus is manifested in various ways in the works as well, and as such is also very much a part of what we are trying to understand. Therefore, it is appropriate to say that in understanding a particular expression, we not only try to grasp the connection between it and its creator, but also the connection it has with its history; that is, the structure in which it was produced. In this way, individual expressions can give us insight into the whole of humanity.[198] And such insight is the ultimate goal of those disciplines belonging to the human sciences. Furthermore, when trying to understand humanity, we are engaged in an attempt to understand ourselves. Thus Dilthey states, "[h]istory shows how the sciences that refer to human life are engaged in a constant approximation to the more remote goal of human self-reflection."[199]

But what is important to note is the very reason Dilthey finds it necessary to delimit the natural from the human sciences in the first place. His goal in doing so is to make evident the need for an epistemology, a philosophical foundation, for the human sciences. As he states,

> the full significance of our subject matter becomes apparent only when one undertakes a clarification of [the relation between the formation of the historical world in the human sciences and the critique of our cognitive capacity.] Like logic, the critique of conceptual cognition is an analysis of the present system of sciences. In epistemology, analysis proceeds from this system back to the conditions that render science possible. But here we confront a

[198]Neglecting this structural relationship would dishonor the historical nature of the object and its creator, thereby treating it much like an object of the natural sciences
[199] *SW3*, 105

> relationship that is decisive for the development of epistemology and its present situation. Epistemological analysis was first undertaken in relation to the natural sciences. For in the progress of the sciences, it happened that the conceptual cognition of nature developed first. Only in the nineteenth century did the human sciences enter a stage that made it possible to utilize them for epistemology. For the time being, the study of the formation of these two classes of sciences must precede their foundation in an overall epistemology.[200]

Thus, Dilthey expressed the need for a more comprehensive epistemology which would take not only the natural sciences into account (as had already been done), but would extend to the human sciences as well. But in order to do so correctly, a fuller understanding of the human sciences and the conditions that make them possible would be necessary. This was what motivated the delimitation of the natural and human sciences. After all, if there were no differences between the two classes of sciences, then no additional or more comprehensive epistemology would be necessary. But since there are, in fact, differences, a full account of them would provide the necessary background for an adequate epistemology to ground them. Therefore, Dilthey contends that

> the central problem for an epistemology solely concerned with the natural sciences consists in grounding abstract truths, in establishing the character of the necessity of such truths and causal laws, and in relating the reliability of inductive inferences to their abstract foundations…By contrast, our survey of the formation of the human sciences has already demonstrated a very different cognitive stance toward objects in this region. For now, the future of a general epistemology appears to depend on its taking account of the human sciences.[201]

It is precisely this cognitive stance, this "attitude of mind," "standpoint toward experience," or "orientation of consciousness," to borrow again from

[200] *SW3*, 110.
[201] Ibid. 142.

Ermarth, that necessitates our attention to the epistemological problem. The human sciences distinguish themselves from the natural sciences in such a way that they require an entirely different account of the conditions by which they are made possible. They require, in short, the critique of *historical* reason. They require that we take into account the fact that in the study of humanity, the object made possible by the conditions under which these sciences exist, becomes an object totally different from an object of the natural sciences.

> The difference between the human and natural sciences is not just about the stance of the subject toward the object; it is not merely about a kind of attitude, a method. Rather, the procedure of understanding is grounded in the realization that the external reality that constitutes its objects is totally different from the objects of the natural sciences. Spirit has objectified itself in the former, purposes have been embodied in them, values have been actualized in them, and understanding grasps this spiritual content that has been formed in them.[202]

But it is important to note that one and the same object may be approached by both the natural and human sciences for investigation. De Mul illustrates this point with the following example:

> A Rodin sculpture can be both the object of research in the natural sciences for example, to determine the mass or chemical composition of the material used, and approached from the perspective of the human sciences, for example, when we conceive it as a human artifact representing or expressing a mental state.[203]

The difference, then, is in the *purpose* with which the scientist, human or natural, approaches the object. Of course, the purpose could be said to alter the object. The sculpture, to the human scientist, is an expression of life. To the natural scientist, it is a piece of marble. Thus, in a sense, the object itself is effected by the purpose of

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[202] *SW3*, 141.
[203] de Mul, 192

the investigation. When it retains its connection to the socio-historical world, it is properly an object of the human sciences. When these connections are stripped, it is an object of the natural sciences. But it is precisely for this reason that the differences between the objects of the natural and human sciences does not warrant the charge that Dilthey differentiated these sciences on ontological grounds. Rather, the object is only first constructed with regard to the purposes of the inquirer and the type of inquiry in which she is engaged. In the historical sciences, Dilthey claims that it is precisely the relationship that I, as the historical interpreter of life, have toward this external reality that makes its objective validity possible. This relationship consists in the fact that I am only able to understand the kinds of purposes, values, and actions that have taken place in history because I myself have the ability to set purposes, to establish values, and to perform and respond to action. In other words, "[a] life relationship exists between me and them…I live in this representational world, and its objective validity is guaranteed to me through a constant interchange with the lived experience and understanding of others."[204]

Thus we are now in a position to understand what Dilthey means when he claims that "the first significant result for solving the problem of the conceptual cognition of history emerges here: the primary condition for the possibility of historical science is contained in the fact that I am myself a historical being and that the one who investigates history is the same as the one who makes history."[205] In other words, the intimate relationship between subject and object in the human

[204] Ibid.
[205] *SW3*, 278

sciences is the condition for the possibility of understanding the expressions of life which comprise these sciences. It is fundamentally different than the relationship between subject and object in the natural sciences. There, the subject and object are distinct. "The thinking subject and the sensory objects standing before it are separated from each other; the sensory objects have a phenomenal character…"[206] This results in the fact that "as long as epistemology remains in the region of the knowledge of nature, it can never overcome this phenomenality of the reality that stands over against it."[207] Thus, again, Dilthey shows the necessity of an epistemology for the human sciences which will take into account the fullness of the experience of life and its manifestations.

In approaching the epistemological problem from the standpoint of the human sciences, we find both advantages and disadvantages. Since in the human sciences, the purpose is to understand the connection a creation has with its history, the advantage that the human sciences have over the natural sciences here is that their objects are intimately experienced and understood. But there are disadvantages as well, and perhaps the most stubborn one regards the nature of objectivity.

> The human sciences have the advantage over the cognition of nature that their object is not mere appearance given in external sensation as the mere phenomenal reflex of something real but an immediate reality itself. And this reality, moreover, is given in the form of a coherence experienced from within. Yet the very manner in which reality is given in inner experience gives rise to great difficulties in apprehending it objectively.[208]

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[206] Ibid, 113.
[207] Ibid.
[208] *GSV*, 317-8.

Our task now is to understand exactly what kind of objectivity Dilthey sought in the human sciences. As he has stated throughout his work, "[t]he epistemological problem is everywhere the same, namely to derive universally valid knowledge from experience…"[209] The difference is that the kind of experiencing that occurs in the human sciences differs from that of the natural sciences, and so only a notion of objectivity appropriate to this unique way of experiencing will be acceptable. Here, we turn to Dilthey's hermeneutical theory for insight into both the kind of objectivity appropriate for the human sciences, and the means by which it is possible. As he states in *The Rise of Hermeneutics,*

> Because hermeneutics determines the possibility of universally valid interpretation on the basis of an analysis of understanding, it ultimately arrives at a solution to the quite general problem with which the present essay began. The analysis of understanding takes its place beside that of inner experience, and both together demonstrate the possibility and the limits of universally valid knowledge in the human sciences…[210]

Thus, a careful look at the analysis of understanding found in his hermeneutics will bring us closer to understanding how objectivity is possible in the human sciences.

4. Dilthey's Hermeneutics and the Possibility of Objectivity

In what is considered to be one of his most straightforward accounts of hermeneutics and its importance for the human sciences, Dilthey's *The Rise of*

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[209] *GSVI*, 107.
[210] Dilthey, Wilhelm. *Selected Works Volume 4*, eds. Rudolf Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1996), 238. (Hereafter this source will be referred to as SW4.

Hermeneutics essay written in 1900 helps shed light on some key features that enable a rule-guided approach to understanding in the human sciences to achieve the objective validity of its knowledge claims that he sought. The hermeneutical method is to provide the human sciences with the "methodological certainty" by which universal validity can be secured in the understanding of historical instances.

The first part of the essay briefly sketches some of the greater achievements of past hermeneutics. Dilthey points out how certain new considerations were added to older ones, expanding the field of hermeneutics not only by increasing its functions, but also be extending the range of its subject matter. He shows how, "out of the need for insightful and universally valid understanding," a series of rules were set forth and ordered in accordance with their varying subject matter, determined by the particular historical situation, until finally, "an adequate foundation of the formation of rules was discovered in the analysis of understanding itself."[211] Dilthey sees the culmination and promise of hermeneutics in the discovery of the source of the rules, i.e. the understanding, which guide interpretation. In analyzing the understanding, one finds the inner coherence of the rules of hermeneutics, how these rules develop out of ordinary understanding, and how they can be legitimately raised to the level of a system which would be able to secure the possibility of universally valid judgments in the human sciences. And it is Schleiermacher whom Dilthey credits with having made this realization that it was the source of the rules, rather than merely the rules themselves, whose elaboration and analysis would bring us to this goal. Thus,

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[211] *SW4*, 238

> …above and beyond its practical merit for the business of interpretation, there seems to me to be a further purpose behind [hermeneutics], indeed its main purpose: to preserve the universal validity of historical interpretation against the inroads of romantic caprice and skeptical subjectivity, and to give a theoretical justification for such validity, upon which all the certainty of historical knowledge is founded.[212]

It was Schleiermacher's "transcendental" approach to the problem of understanding that, by looking into the conditions for the possibility of rule-guided understanding, Dilthey believed held the key to foundation of the human sciences. Schleiermacher maintained that "there must be a creative capacity underlying what is given in consciousness—a capacity that is unconscious of itself but functions in a unified fashion to produce the overall form of the world in us."[213] This creative capacity is responsible for shaping the contents of consciousness, and it functions in every rational human being. It is not only a formative feature, but a common one shared by all, and this commonality results from the shared historical contexts in which individuals live. Of course, the problem that presents itself at this point is how to move from this commonality of shared historical contexts to the universality required of a truly scientific endeavor. In fact, this will be Dilthey's main focus when developing his hermeneutical method.

Along with his acceptance of the idea of the unconscious creative capacity at work in all "mental creation[s] consisting of linguistic signs," i.e. literary works, Dilthey lists further virtues of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. The first is the recognition that only the "relation between understanding and literary production can ground the nexus of rules that determines the means and limits of

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[212] *SW4*, 250.
[213] Ibid., 246.

interpretation."[214] The advantage that the literary work has over other modes of human creative production is that it is the highest form of the expression of the individuality of its author, an individuality that by way of hermeneutics can be raised to the level of universal validity. According to Dilthey, "individuality manifests itself here in every detail and in each single word."[215] Thus the literary work provides us with the most access to the individuality of the author in that every word expresses something not only about the historical context in which she produced the work, but also something about the creative capacity within her that made her an individual. Thus, the author is at once both receptive to her historical context in being shaped by its language, history, traditions, etc. and autonomous in "appropriating the first impulses toward a work and as shaping them."[216] Along with this, the fact that the literary work stands fixed and available for ever new interpretations makes it a rich source for hermeneutics. It can be revisited as often as desired, and by as many people who wish to understand it. The various interpretations from the various interpreters of the work all have something to add to its meaning and the individuality expressed in it. It is the manifestation of the fact that "*Individuum est ineffabile*" which entails that "understanding always remains partial and can never be completed."[217]

The second insight of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics has to do again with the idea of the commonality between the text's author and its interpreter. This

[214] Ibid., 248.
[215] Ibid., 247.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid., 249.

commonality exists in the very nature of understanding itself in which individuality is always formed upon the "substratum of a general human nature…which makes possible the commonality of people with each other for speech and understanding."[218] In elaborating this point in psychological terms, Dilthey claims that given the general nature of human understanding which we all share, the differences in and among our cognitive processes are only differences of degree, not of kind. In other words, the author of a text may have been a particularly proud person, whose pride was bound to his position in the society in which he lived as a noble man of taste and luxury. This pride may have manifested itself in the text as the protagonist's greatest asset. Such pride may not be the strongest trait of the interpreter for whom pride is perhaps considered arrogant, but by virtue of the general nature of human understanding, it may be brought to the fore at least momentarily as the interpreter engages with the work. As Dilthey states,

> Now inasmuch as the interpreter tentatively projects his own sense of life into another historical milieu, he is able within that perspective to momentarily strengthen and emphasize certain psychic processes and to minimize others, thus making possible within himself a re-creation of an alien form of life.[219]

Of course this kind of projection requires not only effort on the part of the interpreter, but also some sort of shared context. Had the interpreter never felt or experienced any sort of pride, he would be unable to re-create this feeling within himself. Thus Dilthey also stresses the importance of a wide range of past

[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.

experiences which interpreters can call upon when trying to understand the expressions of others. As he states, our interpretation of an objectification of life "is possible only on the basis of the subjective depth of lived experience."[220] And further, "in no alien individual objectification can anything appear that is not also contained in the mental life of the one who apprehends it."[221] Therefore, the more we experience and undergo as historical beings, the more we are able to understand. And on the other side of the same coin, we can only make manifest in our own expressions and objectifications the thoughts, feelings, and willings that we have in some way experienced.

But the requirement of a shared nexus between the interpreter and the one whose expression is being interpreted does not rule out the possibility that the actual feeling or thought expressed by the creator is not the one assumed by the interpreter. In other words, error in interpretation is always possible. What is to prevent the interpreter from wrongly claiming that the feeling is of a certain sort, when in reality the creator had intended something different? Perhaps the creator had intended to convey a feeling that the interpreter had no experience with. What is to prevent a misinterpretation in this case? In other words, what accounts for the legitimacy or the "raising to universal validity" of one's understanding of another? These questions deal with the all too familiar controversy in hermeneutics, and Dilthey's way of addressing it is to claim that much more than what the author or creator intended can be expressed in a given work. In other words, nothing rules

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[220] *SW3*, 243.
[221] *SW4*, 253.

out the possibility that the author was herself not fully aware of all that she was "putting into words." Thus, the author is not the sole authority when it comes to determining the meaning of the work. Only because of the shared context in which author and interpreter coexist, and which is necessarily expressed in the work, albeit through the individuality of the author, is an interpretation of the work even possible. The shared context, or the objective spirit as Dilthey refers to it, is a condition for the possibility of understanding in the human sciences.

The next important insight that Dilthey gleans from Schleiermacher is the notion of the circularity of understanding. This circularity is a necessary feature of the movement of understanding, but it also presents us with a bit of a paradox. The circularity is expressed by the fact that one can only understand an entire work, or "the whole" by understanding its parts, while at the same time, one can only understand the parts in relation to the whole. How, or where does one begin? Where does one enter the circle? And perhaps even more importantly, how does one ever get out? Dilthey claims that Schleiermacher practically resolved this difficulty in his preface to Plato's *Republic*:

> He would begin with a survey of the various divisions, which may be compared to a first rapid reading; then he would tentatively comprehend the whole, and illuminate the various difficulties, pausing reflectively at all those spots that afforded special insight into the composition. Only then did the actual interpretation begin.[222]

De Mul characterizes this circularity as being more of an "upward spiral" in that we move from a provisional understanding of a word based on what it has generally

[222] *SW4*, 249.

meant in the past toward a specific interpretation of what it means in its present context. "The meaning obtained in this way again enlarges the general meaning. And so in the process of understanding the meaning of the term to be interpreted is continually enriched, without the process ever being regarded as completed."[223] It is also important to note that this circularity repeats itself in other contexts, namely in the relationship between the text and its author, and between text and genre. In each case, the individual (person or text) is to be understood against the backdrop of the whole. And again, the whole is only understood when one understands the parts that comprise it.

The final point that Dilthey emphasizes in Schleiermacher's hermeneutical theory is that he rejected all but two of the elements that were up to that point commonly accepted as belonging to hermeneutics, namely the grammatical and the psychological. These two he considered fundamental in that they dealt most adequately with the circularity involved in the process of understanding. The grammatical mode of interpretation "proceeds through the text from connection to connection up to the highest relations that dominate the whole" in order to understand the whole of the text in relation to its parts and vice versa. Psychological interpretation "starts by projecting into the creative inner process, and proceeds onward to the outer and inner form of the work, and beyond that to grasp the unity of an author's works in relation to his development and spiritual

[223] de Mul, 119.

tendencies."[224] Thus, both the grammatical and the psychological modes of interpretation seek to penetrate the circular relation both within the work itself and between the work and the author.

Now that I have explicated the crucial aspects of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics that Dilthey thought were valuable for his own project, it remains to be seen how Dilthey elaborated on these points in developing his own theory. In the essay entitled *The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Manifestations of Life,* a more full expression of Dilthey's own hermeneutics is given. This essay was part of the *Aufbau* and came a decade after *The Rise of Hermeneutics*, thus it also allows us to see which ideas remained important for him at that point, and which faded into the background. The task he sets for himself in this essay is to determine how the historical world is formed by the human sciences. In other words, he sought to outline the conditions for the possibility of the human sciences based on their historical nature. Here, we see that the method of *Verstehen,* or understanding, is central to the establishment of the human sciences as a group of sciences (mostly independent from and) along side the natural sciences. The central problem posed by this task is that of overcoming "the difficulty that everywhere weighs upon the *Geisteswissenschaften* of deriving universally valid propositions from inner experiences that are so personally limited, so indeterminate, so compacted and resistant to analysis."[225] Therefore, what Dilthey says here is crucial for understanding the possibility of universal validity in the human sciences.

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[224] Ibid., 250.
[225] *GSVI*, 107.

5. *Verstehen* and Objectivity in the Human Sciences

To begin, in understanding other persons, we must rely on what they have expressed, created, or done. The understanding of other persons must be based on such expressions since according to Dilthey, "[l]ife is not revealed to us directly but illuminated by the objectifications of mind."[226] And further, "…man does not understand himself through some kind of introspective brooding…It is only by understanding the historical reality which he has produced that man becomes conscious of his power for good and evil."[227] In understanding other persons, our goal is to understand history, and if we are ultimately concerned with the possibility of historical knowledge, then the expressions of individuals, can be of great use to us. After all, these expressions are what reveal not only the individuality of their creators, but also the objective spirit in which they exist. This relationship between objective spirit and individuality was one of the insights highlighted in *The Rise of Hermeneutics* mentioned earlier. But it is important to note that other forms of life manifestations are useful and indeed necessary for understanding history. Such expressions transcend the individual and her immediate context, and therefore offer another perspective in understanding the historical world.

Dilthey distinguishes between three different classes of expressions, or "life manifestations," and claims that "understanding will differ in kind and scope in

[226] *GSV*, lx.
[227] *GSIII*, 210.

relation to different classes of manifestations of life."[228] The first class of manifestations is that of concepts, judgments and other forms of thought that comprise science. As such, these concepts are "detached from the lived experience in which they arose" and thereby acquire a "self-sameness independent of their position in the context of thought."[229] This self-sameness allows these expressions to carry the same meaning independent of who understands them—their meaning is unchanged regardless of their historical circumstance. Dilthey claims that "here understanding is directed at the mere logical content, which remains identical in every context, and is more complete than in relation to any other manifestation of life."[230] Thus, with these expressions, the problem raised earlier, that of being able to exit the circular structure of understanding with the confidence of having "gotten it right" does not so much exist here. It is not completely absent, though, as this circularity is present in all understanding. Indeed, it is the very nature of understanding. But Dilthey states that, "[a]s constituents of science, they have been detached from the lived experience in which they arose, and they possess the common basic trait of having been adapted to logical norms. This gives them a selfsameness (*Selbigkeit)* independent of their position in the context of thought."[231] Therefore, with these logical expressions, "such understanding does not disclose how the logical content that has been thought is related to the dark background and the fullness of psychic life. There is no indication of the peculiarities of the life from

[228] *SW3*, 226.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.

which it arose, and it follows from its specific character that it does not set up any expectation to go back to any psychic nexus."[232] Thus, in exchange for the concreteness of these expressions, we sacrifice depth in the way of meaning or significance. We will find this trend reverses as we proceed to the next classes of expressions.

The second class of manifestations that Dilthey specifies is that of actions. Actions are not expressions that come about because of a need to communicate something to others, but since they reflect the desire to attain a goal or realize a purpose, they do in fact have meaning. But for Dilthey, "it is always necessary to distinguish the situationally-conditioned state of mind which produced the action and whose expression it is from the life-nexus itself in which the state of mind is grounded."[233] This is because, for Dilthey, the motive of the individual in carrying out the action renders the action less relevant to the "fullness" of life. It tells us more about the individuality of the actor than it does about the life-nexus. Once we have decided on a particular action, all other possibilities of the moment are canceled. While this tells us more than the first class of expressions, it is still limited in what it reveals to us. As he states further,

> However much we may have deliberated before acting, the deed expresses only a part of our being. Possibilities that resided in this being are annihilated by the deed. So action, too, detaches itself from the background of the life-nexus. Apart from the elucidation of how a situation, a purpose, means and a life-nexus intersect in an action, it allows no inclusive determination of the inner life from which it arose.[234]

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[232] Ibid., 227.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid.

Of course, this is not to say that actions tell us nothing about the historical world. Recalling that the aim of the essay is to determine to what extent the understanding of other persons can contribute to historical knowledge, actions, insofar as they tell us "how a particular situation, a purpose, means and a life-nexus intersect" can tell us at least something about a particular context. For example, the particular tools used to accomplish a goal of an action can reveal to us the status of the technology of a certain age. The purpose of the action can tell us about the beliefs and traditions that were part of that age, and the goal of the action can illuminate what sorts of values were at stake, and thus give us insight into the actor's situation in the life-nexus. Therefore, since "[t]here is a regular relation of concern between an action and what it expresses of the human spirit that allows us to make probable assumptions about it," we are indeed able to understand something of the life-nexus and the individual.[235] But given the limited nature of what it reveals, as de Mul puts it, "a price is demanded for intelligibility." In other words, because the purposiveness inherent in the action reveals a rather "one-sided" account of the lived experience of the actor, a full account of the life-nexus is simply not possible here.[236]

This leads us to the third class of manifestations which are those of lived-experience. According to Dilthey, with expressions of lived experience, "an important distinction begins to emerge here and on its basis we can assert the highest significance for [these expressions] in the human sciences."[237] The distinction that Dilthey has in mind is that which differentiates these expressions

[235] Ibid.
[236] de Mul, 244.

from the previous two. Expressions of lived experience are unique in that they can be "liberated" from their creator, unlike actions, and yet still remain objects for understanding, or *Verstehen*, unlike concepts and judgments. Expressions of lived experience differ from concepts and judgments which, even though they too can be liberated from their creator, really do not require *Verstehen* since their meanings are always identical.

As I explicated earlier,[238] the difference between these two types of understanding has to do with the kinds of judgments they involve. *Verstand* is the kind of understanding that incorporates determinant judgments, that is, judgments in which a concept is imposed on sense contents. Therefore, these judgments are in the purview of a more natural-scientific stance taken toward an object. By contrast, *Verstehen* relies on reflective judgments which do not impose concepts on sense contents, but rather allow the contents of experience to suggest their own concepts.[239] Thus, with respect to manifestations of life, the difference between these two kinds of judgment could be expressed as such:

> [T]he search for special laws or principles can be seen as an attempt to provide the basis for making determinant judgments about history, while the description of typical structures implicit in the phenomena of history involves the exercise of reflective, historical judgment. The distinction makes possible a shift from the notion of history as a science which establishes explanative laws to that of an interpretive discipline which articulates meaning.[240]

This entails that in the understanding of other persons and their manifestations of life, particularly expressions of lived experience, we are primarily concerned with

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[237] *SW3*, 227.
[238] See Chapter 2 above.
[239] See Makkreel, Rudolf. *Dilthey: Philosopher of the Human Studies*, 23.
[240] Ibid.

judgments of the reflective variety, since our goal is to understand what these manifestations *mean* for us and for history. Determinant judgments would not do justice to the abundance of meaning-rich material they offer for the understanding of the spiritual nexus.

Furthermore, as regards expressions of lived experience, Dilthey explains that they have a permanence which allows them to be revisited, reinterpreted, and reconsidered as often as desired. A text, for example, can be read by many persons many times, each time revealing a bit more of the spiritual content that it expresses and gave rise to it. Thus Dilthey says about an expression of lived experience that "truthful in itself it stands—fixed, visible and abiding—and it is this which makes possible a methodically certain understanding of such works."[241] And moreover,

> [a] special relation exists between [an expression of lived experience], the life from which it stems, and the understanding that brings it about. An expression of lived experience can contain more of the nexus of psychic life than any introspection can catch sight of. It draws from the depths not illuminated by consciousness. But at the same time, it is characteristic of the expression of lived experience that its relation to the spiritual or human content expressed in it can only be made available to understanding within limits. Such expressions are not to be judged as true or false but as truthful or untruthful.[242]

Here Dilthey makes another crucial point regarding the difference between the kind of understanding operative here: in *Verstehen*, the goal is not to ascertain truth or falsity, but rather truthfulness or untruthfulness. In this way, *Verstehen* differs from *Verstand* which is in the service of objects capable of/appropriate for determinant judgments. *Verstehen* does not seek to explain or determine through this kind of

[241] *SW3*, 228.
[242] *SW3*, 227. (italics mine)

judging, but rather to understand, and thus it relies on reflective rather than determinant judgment.

After laying out the three classes of life-manifestations, Dilthey provides an analysis of the particular modes of understanding peculiar to each. What Dilthey says about the different levels of understanding and their relation to one another is crucial for his goal of securing universal validity for knowledge claims in the human sciences. By basing higher levels of understanding, those responsible for interpretation and exegesis, on lower elementary ones that express our way of existing in the world, Dilthey is able to ground the higher levels, thereby securing the validity of their claims. As he states,

> Understanding comes about, first of all, through the interests of practical life where persons rely on interchange and communication. They must make themselves understandable to each other. One person must know what the other wants. This is how the elementary forms of understanding originate. They are like letters of the alphabet that combine to make higher forms of understanding possible.[243]

A brief analysis of this portion of the essay is now in order to make clear how this foundational account of understanding operates.

6. *Verstehen* and its Foundations

In the elementary forms of understanding, the understanding that takes place is based on the relationship of "an expression to what is expressed in it."[244]

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[243] *SW3*, 228.
[244] Ibid.

Elementary, or basic understanding, takes place via the mostly unconscious process of making an analogy. And this most basic form of understanding aims only at the interpretation of a "single manifestation of life." For example, in understanding the meaning of someone's smile, I simply relate this occurrence of a smile to other times when I have seen people smiling in order to conclude that the person smiling before me is expressing pleasure. As Dilthey puts it, "such an inference is mediated by a regular relation between a manifestation of life and what is expressed in it. Logically it can be explicated as an inference by analogy."[245] Of course, the only way that such manifestations can be understood to express such regularity, allowing us to make such analogies, is due to the objective spirit that forms the background against which all understanding is possible. Objective spirit is our historical context, our tradition, our world. As such, it provides us with the frame of reference needed to make such analogies possible. Only because I have seen other people smiling and have come to understand that smiling is an expression of pleasure, can I now, in this instance, make the almost automatic, unconscious determination that the person smiling here and now is also expressing pleasure. The smiles of people in the past are part of the objective spirit, and the one smiling now will also become part of it. Dilthey explains this in the following way:

> In this objective spirit, the past is a continuously enduring present for us. Its scope extends from the lifestyles and forms of social intercourse to the system of purposes which society has created for itself. It also encompasses custom, law, state, religion, art, the sciences and philosophy.[246]

[245] Ibid.
[246] Ibid., 229.

Thus, objective spirit enables us to navigate our way through expressions and manifestations via our understanding (*Verstehen)* of the commonality which binds us. "The commonality sets up a relation between manifestations of life and spirit such that as soon as we locate the manifestation in a common context, a spiritual meaning attaches to it."[247]

It is also important to note that in elementary understanding, we do not distinguish between the expression and that which is expressed in it. As de Mul states, "[a] fright and the expression of fright in the face, for example, should not be conceived as two separate matters related to each other in a causal relationship but as a unity."[248] In other words, we do not have to make an inference "from an effect to a cause."[249] The fright is *immediately* understood in the facial expression.

But what is it that happens when the case before me, say the smile on the person's face, is *not* an expression of pleasure? How do I detect this? What makes my reconsideration of the smile possible? Perhaps the smile seems nervous or forced; what allows me to notice this and rethink my interpretation? Here, the transition to higher forms of understanding occurs. When such doubts arise for me in light of my initial understanding, I must attempt to resolve these doubts by further reflection. Thus, as Dilthey states, I may "recall other cases in which the normal relation between the manifestation of life and its inner content does not exist."[250] Perhaps the person is smiling in an effort to hide the fact that she is upset with me, or that she is anxious about an upcoming exam. I can only understand the

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[247] Ibid., 230.
[248] de Mul, 252.
[249] *SW3*, 228-9
[250] Ibid., 231.

divergence present between this smile and its meaning and the normal or usual meaning accorded to smiling by going back to the objective spirit to find other instances where a smile has meant something other than pleasure. Thus, objective spirit is not only the background for my being able to pick out regularities in manifestations and their meanings, but it is also the context upon which I can rely in attempting to understand *irregularities* in expressions. At this point, Dilthey indicates that we must go beyond objective spirit to the "overall nexus of life" or from local commonality to universal structures of life in general.[251]

So far, we have been discussing the understanding of expressions and what they express, but often we are impelled to understand the relationship between a product and productivity. When this happens, we focus not so much on the actual event in front of us, but on the underlying reasons for its occurrence. As Dilthey explains, often we must make judgments about the people around us, their character, their values, etc. "Trade and commerce, social life, occupation, and family point to the need to gain insight into the inner nature of the people around us so that we can make sure how far we can count on them."[252] When we do this, we try to ascertain from past actions and behaviors how the person will act in the future. In doing so, we make an inductive inference "from particular manifestations of life to the overall nexus of life."[253] Once we believe we have made a correct judgment as to the particular character of the person based on past actions, we then make a deductive inference that she will behave a certain way in the future. But we cannot,

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[251] *SW3*, 231
[252] Ibid., 231-2.
[253] Ibid., 232.

however, expect that our interpretation is certain or irrefutable in these cases. (Nor can/should I expect this in the case of any interpretation!) I can only expect that I am probably correct. In fact, as Dilthey states, "[b]ecause the series of available manifestations of life are limited and because the underlying nexus is indeterminate, only probable results can be expected…As we shall soon see, the presupposed knowledge of psychic life is always capable of further development; but it will also turn out that it can never attain certainty."[254]

But the higher forms of understanding also seek to understand the relationship between expression and what is expressed—much like the elementary forms do. Here, for example, we may try to understand the plot of the play we are watching unfold in front of us. In these cases, we deal only with the expression of the creator and not with this individual herself. As Dilthey states, "if understanding is to generate the greatest possible yield for our knowledge of the world of human spirit, it is most important that this form of understanding should be appreciated in its own right."[255] In these events of understanding, the spectator "loses herself" in the plot. Here the understanding is one of re-experiencing (*Nacherleben)* what the plot has to say to us. Indeed, this is what the creator has intended for her audience. But it is also possible, for various reasons, that we are drawn back out of the plot—brought back to real life—and able to see the play *as* a manifestation of the creator's life. Here we begin to understand it in this capacity as well, and now the

[254] Ibid., 232.
[255] Ibid.

understanding is "dominated by the relation from creation to creator."[256] Thus a third relationship within understanding is now unveiled.

The higher forms of understanding, particularly that of re-experiencing, now warrant further attention. Dilthey claims that this highest form is based on the ability of one to transfer or "transpose" oneself in the act of understanding. Transposition occurs when the one trying to understand an expression of life or a human being is able to draw upon "the connectedness that exists in one's own lived experience and has been experienced in innumerable cases" and allow that connectedness to inform her interpretation. The object of interpretation must be malleable to that connectedness, thereby opening up the possibilities of meaning in it. At this point, "every line of a poem is transformed back into life through the inner nexus of the lived experience from which the poem arose."[257] In other words, I must allow the work to draw me in, to captivate me and to facilitate my re-living of that which brought it about, i.e. the objective spirit and the individuality of the creator working with it. And when the work calls upon me, as may happen, to bring into play the experience of my own psychic nexus, I then "transfer" myself into the expression of life that I am in the process of understanding. Here, for example, I may identify with a character or situation given in the expression, and in order to achieve a more complete understanding of it, I bring my own experiences to bear in my understanding.

At this point, Dilthey tells us that "[o]n the basis of this transfer or transposition there arises the highest form of understanding in which the totality of

[256] Ibid., 233.
[257] Ibid., 234.

psychic life is active—re-creating or re-experiencing."[258] The importance of re-experiencing cannot be overestimated, especially for my purposes here. This is because in re-experiencing, we fully recognize, or perhaps more appropriately *realize*, our finitude, and thereby manifest our most fundamental way of existing in the act of understanding. In so doing, ironically, we are in a sense liberated from that very finitude. The forward movement of re-experiencing runs parallels to the forward movement of our experience of time—indeed, of the only way in which time can be experienced and have meaning for us. Having been appropriated by Dilthey as a real category, stripped of its Kantian ideality, the nature of time is now experienced in the understanding of the work, while it is also the very feature that makes such understanding possible. Thus time is now "doubly" experienced; that is, experienced in one and the same event as both a condition for the possibility of experience, and experienced through the understanding of an expression of life. As Dilthey states, "[u]nderstanding as such is an operation running inverse to the course of production. But a fully sympathetic reliving [i.e. re-experiencing] requires that understanding go forward with the line of the events themselves. It must advance continually with the course of life itself."[259] This forward movement is the same as that of our fundamental temporality:

> Temporality is contained in life as its first categorical determination and the one that is fundamental for all the others. The expression "passage of life" already points to this temporality…Here time is experienced as the restless advance of the present, in which what is present constantly becomes past and the future present. The present is the fullness of a moment of time being filled with reality.[260]

[258] Ibid., 235.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid., 215.

Just as in the experience of time as a real category of our existence, so as in the experience of an expression of life, time reveals the simultaneous impossibility of grasping the present in cognition and the opening up possibilities for future understanding. Because of the flow of time, we cannot grasp the present. Thus, we cannot have knowledge of it. But in re-experiencing an expression of lived experience, we come across something that has been fixed in time—it has been made permanent. Thus through re-experiencing, we come as close as we could ever come to grasping a moment of time while at the same time being propelled along the temporal flow. This is what makes the lived expression such an invaluable part of the understanding of history since it remains fixed and allows us to revisit it as often as we like. In conjunction with the movement of understanding made possible by our fundamental historicity, the re-experiencing of a lived experience manifested in an expression of life gives us access to our fundamental human nature, while simultaneously tempting us with the notion that we can overcome it, as nothing else can. Not only does it reveal our fundamental finitude, but it allows us to experience possibilities that we would otherwise not have access to.

> In short, each person, whether he considers the fixed limits of his situation or the form of his acquired life-nexus, finds that the range of new perspectives on life and of inner transformation of personal existence is restricted. But understanding opens up a wide realm of possibilities that are not available within the limitations of a person's real life.[261]

In the process of re-experiencing, we come up against our finitude and historicity in an obvious way, while at the same time seeking to overcome it through the lives and works of others. Our historicity, which necessarily closes off possibilities for us at

[261] Ibid., 236.

every moment, is also what makes possible this kind of understanding which opens up worlds for us through the understanding of others and their expressions of life.

Thus, understanding in its highest form, re-experiencing, provides us with the ability to transcend our finitude—if only vicariously through our understanding. Dilthey explains,

> Thus the process of transposing oneself or transposition expands to make re-experiencing a creation along the line of events. This allows us to move forward with contemporary history, with an occurrence in a distant land, or with something going on in the psyche of someone close to us. Re-experiencing attains its fulfillment when an event has been processed by the consciousness of a poet, artist, or historian and lies before us in a fixed and permanent work.[262]

Thus again we see the importance of having expressions of life in a fixed form. It is only this kind of permanence that we can ever experience, since our experience of time, or lived experience, does not afford us this opportunity. We cannot grasp the present and still remain in it. As Dilthey tells us:

> Because of this characteristic of real time, temporal succession cannot, strictly speaking, be experienced. The presence of the past replaces immediate experience for us. When we want to observe time, the act of observation destroys it because it fixes things by means of attentiveness; it halts the flow and rigidifies what is in the process of becoming…Permanence is experienced when we return to what we have just seen or heard and find it still there.[263]

And again, were it not for Dilthey's recognition of time as a real category, something experienced directly and immediately rather than some abstract entity which directs our lives from behind some inaccessible curtain, the importance of understanding and its fundamental role in our lives would have no basis. Moreover, the priority of understanding (*Verstehen)* to cognition *(Erkennen)*, both temporally

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[262] Ibid., 235.
[263] Ibid., 217.

in the order of occurrence, and productively in the way of its results, would have no support.

Now we are in a position to delve further into the meaning of objectivity for the human sciences. In the next chapter, I will explore the problem of universal objective validity and show to what extent Dilthey has provided a solution to it.

Chapter IV

The Possibility of Universal Objective Validity in the Human Sciences

Now that I have outlined Dilthey's critique of Kant and his departure from the Kantian intellectualized subject, as well as his hermeneutical project including the structural nexus of lived experience, expressions of life, and understanding, I am in a position to face the question this project set out to answer. This question, once again, is whether or not we can attain universal objective validity for the claims of the human sciences. And if we can, to what degree is it possible? What, in other words, does this notion entail in the historical realm? It is often claimed in the secondary literature that Dilthey was unsuccessful in his attempt to solve the problem of objectivity given our historicity, and many commentators simply choose to focus on what he *did* accomplish as a way of making this "failure" less important or noticeable. Others simply contend that objectivity in the human sciences is impossible, and therefore the problem with which Dilthey grappled was never really a legitimate problem in the first place.[264] Still others aim to show that perhaps Dilthey was too ambitious, and that a careful reconstruction of his work will reveal that he must settle for less than he sought in the way of objectively valid knowledge.

De Mul has taken this latter approach in his most recent work, *The Tragedy of Finitude.* Here, he argues that given his interpretation of Dilthey's project, which aims to show the ontological nature of his hermeneutics, the goal of universal

[264] For example, the works of Heidegger and Gadamer, by taking a strictly ontological approach to understanding are not concerned with the epistemological questions that shaped Dilthey's work.

objective validity in the human sciences must be reconsidered. He claims that if we hold Dilthey to his original pursuit of such objectivity despite evidence that he was coming to realize the futility of such an endeavor in his later works, we will neglect the more important strides he makes toward an ontology which places understanding, life, and its expressions at the heart of human experience, prior to (both in terms of order and importance) the epistemological question of knowing. Thus, de Mul claims that despite Dilthey's indebtedness to Kant, an indebtedness that impelled him to see his project as epistemological in nature with the aim of securing universally valid and logically necessary judgments in the human sciences, he became increasingly aware of its untenability. De Mul's reconstruction shows that despite its Kantian heritage of transcendental conditions, Dilthey's hermeneutics is more properly appreciated for its ontological insights into the fundamental features of life. He claims that Dilthey "repeatedly emphasized that there is a reason why the nature of statements in the human sciences differs fundamentally from the nature of those in the natural sciences. In particular, his analysis of the structural nexus of lived experience, expression, and understanding makes it clear that the natural scientific ideal of universal validity cannot be transferred to the human sciences."[265] He then proceeds to quote one of the later writings where Dilthey explicitly states that, "[t]he objectivity of knowledge that is sought here has a different sense; the methods for approaching the ideal of

[265] de Mul, 260.

objectivity of knowledge here display essential differences from those by which we approach the conceptual cognition of nature."[266]

With this, de Mul offers a *partial* solution to Dilthey's "crisis of historicism" which addresses the problem of securing universally valid objective knowledge in the human, historical sciences. But this solution amounts to the separation of the concept of universal validity from that of objectivity. More specifically, de Mul argues that while objectivity in the human sciences is possible, universal (or general) validity is not. He therefore argues that while we may indeed hold on to the ideal of objectivity, universal validity must be discarded.

In what follows, I will provide an account of de Mul's solution, or rather, *dis*solution of the problem of universal objective validity in the human sciences. I will then argue that such a solution does not do justice to Dilthey's life-long pursuit of securing the possibility of such universal validity, and that it makes short shrift of the problem around which Dilthey's entire life work was centered. While de Mul is most interested in highlighting the ontological nature of Dilthey's philosophy, he need not do so in a way that usurps the fundamental importance placed on the ability to *justify* the claims of the human sciences which Dilthey sought to ground via this ontology. And this need for justification is, of course, an epistemological pursuit. Thus, I argue that to deal most appropriately with the problem of universal objective validity we must look again at some of Dilthey's critical insights into the notion of finitude, understanding and the life-nexus in order to meet him on his own terms and offer an interpretation more in line with his stated aims. In the end, this

[266] Ibid., 260. See also *SW3*, 92.

will entail leaving objectivity and universal validity in tact, although both will assume new and different meanings than they enjoy in the natural sciences. I will argue that these new meanings were precisely what Dilthey was in the process of working out. I will show that ultimately, Dilthey was leaning towards a conception of universal objective validity in the human sciences that was inherently pragmatic. And this pragmatic meaning would allow Dilthey to see his way out of the "crisis."

1. De Mul's Solution to the Problem of Universal Objective Validity

De Mul begins his interpretation of Dilthey's solution to the crisis by referring to the different senses of objectivity that pertain to the natural and human sciences. He then claims that "[w]hen Dilthey distinguishes the objectivity of the human sciences from that of the natural sciences, he is already presupposing a distinction between objectivity and general validity."[267] To account for this, de Mul states that objectivity, in its ordinary everyday usage, means that a certain statement corresponds with its object, and is free of subjective circumstances. I take this to mean that an objective statement is one which aims to describe the object or matter at hand and refrains from "editorializing" so to speak. He claims that when used in this sense, objectivity is synonymous with general or universal validity.[268] Next, de Mul reminds us that, in the wake of Kantian transcendental philosophy, it has been made clear that "the a priori structures of the subject constitute

[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid. He also refers to Bollnow here: 1982, 22.

phenomenological reality."[269] Furthermore, this implies that "objective statements in the above mentioned sense are impossible. Only when we take Kant's point that these a priori structures are shared by all, are objectivity and general validity with regard to the phenomenological world interchangeable (though not reaching beyond experiential reality and relating to the things themselves)."[270] Thus, de Mul appears to equate "subjective circumstances" to "Kantian a priori structures." In the pre-Kantian world, *subjective circumstances* are not allowed to factor in objective statements. If this criterion is met, objective statements are also universally valid. In the post-Kantian world, *a priori structures that are shared by all* are responsible for keeping objectivity and universal validity together and in tact. But is this a legitimate understanding of the nature of objectivity and/or universal validity? Are the particular subjective circumstances which could potentially color my objective statements (and so are not allowed) the same as the a priori structures, shared by all, that enable experience? This doesn't seem right. If it were, then objectivity takes on a radically new meaning, since every one of my statements is inherently *subjective,* either by virtue of being colored by subjective circumstances, or by virtue of being uttered by a Kantian rational being. Any distinction between what we, in everyday usage, refer to as subjective is also objective, and thus there really is no distinction at all.

But this cannot be what de Mul means to say, since he next explains that if we, as does Dilthey, "subscribe to the notion that the transcendental structure of experience is sociohistorically determined, then the identification of objectivity and

[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid.

general validity is no longer possible. When we consider Dilthey's statements concerning the inevitability of a subjective component in the human sciences, it seems that neither can the term *objectivity* be applied to the statements of these sciences."[271] In this passage, de Mul seems to equate subjective circumstances, as accounted for above, with the "sociohistorically determined transcendental structure of experience." While this seems a much more plausible comparison to make, it works against what de Mul is trying to accomplish. He is trying to show that the historicity of the individual results in an inherently subjective stance in the human sciences in that it is sociohistorically determined. But what he has in fact done, is to show that whether historical or fixed, the transcendental structures of experience serve to blur any distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. Furthermore, the separation between objectivity and general validity, regardless of which transcendental structures claim our allegiance, is no longer a threat.

In other words, de Mul has effectively blurred any distinction he intended to keep between Kant and Dilthey regarding the transcendental structures of experience. But if we follow his intentions, ignoring the mistakes in his reasoning, we see that what he is ultimately after is a reshaping of the notion of objectivity for the human sciences. Moreover, he will claim that general, or universal, validity is no longer possible with respect to the claims of these sciences. After all, as he tried to make clear, general validity requires that we all share the same conditions or transcendental structures, and this is not so given the recognition of the fundamental historicity of human beings and the human world. For in the human

[271] Ibid.

sciences, Dilthey not only introduces real categories as distinct from and prior to the merely logical or formal categories offered by Kant, but he includes time as one of these real categories.

This move was necessitated by the recognition of the fundamental historicity of human beings. After all, time is not an abstract entity that lies outside of our experience, only to make that experience possible. Rather, time is something we live through and in, and it attests to the richness of life as it is understood in the human sciences. Thus, Dilthey does away with the notion of a timeless, fixed subject that stands apart from its object:

> …the doctrine that time is merely ideal makes no sense in the human sciences. It would mean that behind life itself, with all its temporal fretting about the past, all its longings and free, active claims on the future, all its despair about the necessities stemming therefrom, all the striving, work, and purposes that stretch into the future, all the formation and development encompassed by the temporal course of life, there lies as its condition a shadowy realm of timelessness that is not lived. But it is in this life of ours that the reality known in the human sciences lies.[272]

Thus time, for Dilthey, is a real category of experience. It is not merely a condition for the possibility of experience, but it is experienced as we live through it. As Makkreel puts it, "time is not just a formal condition of experience, but an experienced content as well."[273]

But the way time is experienced is also peculiar. We can never grasp a fixed moment in thought; time does not "stand still." Rather, we experience time as a continuous flow. Dilthey explains that,

> Concrete time, however, consists in the restless advance of the present, in which what is present continually becomes past and the

[272] *SW3*, 216.
[273] Ibid., 9.

> future becomes present. The present is a filling of a moment of time with reality. It is a lived experience in contrast to the memory of one and in contrast to wishing, hoping, expecting, or fearing something experienceable in the future.[274]

Thus, the living through and in time is just one of the ways in which the subject matter of the human sciences distinguishes itself from the natural sciences. Not only does the unique experience of time influence both the subject and object of investigation in the human sciences, but it also dictates what kind of cognition is possible. For the natural sciences, the object, which is itself abstracted from its relation to the human world, stands fixed and available for a determinant judgment. And a determinant judgment is one in which, as we have seen, a concept or universal is applied to a particular. For Kant, a schema is required for the pure concept (universal) to be applied to the sensible object (particular). By appealing to the work done by the transcendental synthesis of the imagination, Kant attempted to account for the nature and possibility of these kinds of judgments.

But in the human sciences, determinant judgments are not the goal; rather, we aim at understanding. And in understanding, we are more concerned with the meaning of the object, and this meaning can only be adequately interpreted by taking into account the entire nexus in which the object is embedded. As Dilthey states,

> I find the principle for the resolution of the conflict within the human sciences in the understanding of the historical world as a productive nexus centered in itself, at the same time containing other productive systems within it, which by positing values and realizing purposes also have their center within themselves. All are to be understood as structurally linked into a whole in which the sense of

[274] Ibid., 93.

> the nexus of the socio-historical world arises from the significance of the individual parts.[275]

This passage reveals the importance of understanding the temporal nature of the human sciences and the human beings that comprise them, since the past, present and future all come to bear in understanding. The meaning of an object in the human sciences, whether an artwork, play, novel, etc. is comprised of the relations that the object has in the course of its history. It represents a past in having been created by an artist who is herself historical. It is available to us now in the present to understand, and by remaining fixed, it can effect the future insofar as we take it to mean something and allow it, for example, to suggest purposes or goals. Thus, by "realizing" time through the recognition of the fundamental historicity of the human being, Dilthey makes a clear distinction between the stance taken toward the objects of the natural sciences and that taken toward the objects of the human sciences. And as we will see, historicity will also distinguish the way in which universal objective validity is possible with respect to the knowledge claims of the human sciences.

Returning now to de Mul's argument, we remember that he attempts to (dis)solve the problem of universal objective validity by separating the two concepts at work, namely general (or universal) validity and objectivity. Due to the fact that the a priori structures of the historical human being are "living" rather than

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[275] *SW3*, 160.

"dead,"[276] de Mul claims that while general validity is impossible, Dilthey can still secure objectivity for historical understanding, albeit of a different sort.

What kind of objectivity does he have in mind? The following passage helps to elucidate just what he means:

> Dilthey's statements concerning the "massive objectivity" of the sociohistorical world form the starting point for our stipulative definition. Although this world is produced by human beings, in its complex nexus it stands opposite the individual as a nexus that precedes him and affects him continuously and deeply. The interpreted statement and the interpreter are generally part of a common productive nexus, or tradition. This productive nexus means that the *subjective* moment in the experience and in the interpretation of the life statements is not subjective *arbitrariness*.[277]

The "massive objectivity" he refers to in this passage is the historical situation of the individual as constantly embedded in a larger tradition or nexus, one which both helps to shape her and one which she helps to shape. Thus he claims that an objective judgment in the human sciences is one where the interpreter takes account of the "productive nexus in which both the interpreter and interpreted are embedded."[278] In other words, only when an interpretation takes into account the productive nexus that includes the work to be interpreted, the interpreter and the shared sociohistorical context in which they reside, can it be considered objective. "An objective interpretation in this sense is one that ties in with this *intersubjectively*

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[276] "No real blood flows in the veins of the knowing subject constructed by Locke, Hume, and Kant, but rather the diluted extract of reason as a mere activity of thought. A historical as well as psychological approach to whole human beings led me to explain even knowledge and its concepts (such as the external world, time, substance and cause) in terms of the manifold powers of a being that wills, feels, and thinks…" *SW1*, 50.
[277] de Mul, 261.
[278] Ibid.

accessible nexus. Only of such an interpretation can it be said that it 'opens up a world.'"[279]

At this point, de Mul reminds us that Dilthey placed great importance on the "fixed" presence of historical expressions. Any historical expression that is fixed, whether on canvas, in print, etc., allows us to revisit it as often as we like in our attempts interpret it. Such permanence is also required if these expressions are to be "intersubjectively accessible." We must be able to have it before us in order to refer to it in our claims, and to allow it to challenge our interpretations by standing fixed and visible, all the while encompassing the productive nexus from which it came. "This nexus, of which the interpreter is also a part, restricts the freedom of interpretation. As opposed to introspective statements, an interpretation of, for example, Duerer's painting of the four apostles can be compared with the work itself, and in this confrontation it must hold its ground."[280] Furthermore, de Mul points out that our assessment of the interpretation offered is dependent upon the permanence of the piece, as well as the ability to refer to other Duerer paintings and their interpretations. "Thus the more 'world' an interpretation reveals, that is, the more aspects it exposes of the nexus in which the statement is embedded, *the more objective it is*."[281]

Dilthey would agree with this assessment in that he often spoke of the need for expressions, fixed and available, as opposed to introspection in order to understand our world and ourselves. Thus he claims, " [w]e do not grasp human

[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid. (emphasis mine)

nature through introspection, "[282] and "[h]uman beings recognize themselves only in history, not through introspection,"[283] and finally, "…expression wells up directly from the psyche without reflection, and its stability allows it to stand the test of understanding. Thus expression contains more of lived experience than introspection can."[284] This point is quite interesting in that it makes clear the difference between the kind of objectivity possible in the human sciences and that of the natural sciences. In the human sciences, de Mul argues that it is precisely the *subjective* component of the interpretation that makes objectivity possible. In fact, the more that is brought into the interpretation from the productive nexus in which the work and interpreter are embedded, the more objective the interpretation. And we find this to be true when Dilthey stresses the importance of a broad experiential basis on the part of the interpreter in order to facilitate understanding. The more experiences that the interpreter has, the more there is for her to draw from in interpreting and understanding expressions of life.

De Mul agrees with this when he states that "[t]his notion of objectivity by no means rules out the subjective component of the human-scientific interpretation…A fruitful interpretation reveals new nexuses not previously noticed in the object of interpretation, as well as the presuppositions of the interpreting subject…"[285] What is interesting here is that de Mul, in recognizing the necessity of the subjective component of understanding, seems to equate "fruitful" with "objective" interpretations. In other words, an objective interpretation will contribute to the

[282] *SW3*, 269.
[283] Ibid, 298.
[284] Ibid, 349.
[285] Ibid.

project of understanding by bringing more to light than was there before. It is not to say that an objective interpretation is the final say on the matter, but rather a useful contribution to the understanding of its meaning.

In discussing the assignment of value to an object, Dilthey expresses this same pragmatic bent as such: "When we ascribe an objective value to something, this means merely that various values can be experienced in relation to it."[286] Thus in this case, with respect to value, objectivity simply means that the object contains the possibility of value. In other words, objectivism in this sense does not equal absolutism. If we apply this notion of objectivity to other claims besides value judgments we realize that an objective interpretation is not final or absolute, but rather an interpretation that recognizes a possible understanding of the object. This pragmatic understanding of the nature of objectivity, as I will soon argue, is precisely the direction towards which Dilthey is headed in seeking universal objective validity in the human sciences.

Before proceeding further though, it is interesting to point out that in reshaping the notion of objectivity according to Dilthey's conception of the historical world, de Mul is actually contradicting what he had argued earlier; namely that given the "sociohistorically determined transcendental structures of experience," objectivity and general validity would have to be separated. We remember that they could only coexist if either the "subjective circumstances" or, equally speaking, the "Kantian a priori conditions" were shared by all. But with Dilthey, these subjective circumstances/a priori conditions, most importantly the condition of finitude, *is*

[286] *SW3*, 223.

shared by all. Therefore, by a defect in his own argument, de Mul fails to show why we would need to get rid of universal validity, "settling" instead for mere objectivity.

It should be clear by now that, for Dilthey, our interpretations of expressions are necessarily limited at every point. Complete understanding and objectivity would only be possible under the following conditions: First, the nexus encompassing the interpreter and expression would have to come to some kind of definitive end such that it no longer developed or expanded, and second, the interpreter would have to be freed from her limited perspective in order to interpret the expression with a full understanding of its nexus as well as her own. But as we know from Dilthey and his recognition of the fundamental historicity of human beings, "[e]very interpretation departs from an inevitably limited horizon of experience."[287] This is a necessary result of the hermeneutic circle involved in all understanding, and in this circle we find both a formal and an ontological component. As de Mul explains, the formal character of the circle accounts for the first restriction on interpretation. Here, the part-whole relation of the expression is only intelligible as far as the whole (nexus) is understood, and that whole is only intelligible when its various parts are understood. In Dilthey's words, "[h]ere we come upon what seems to be an insoluble riddle. We must form the whole from the parts, and yet it is the whole that imparts meaning and that accordingly assigns the part its place."[288] The second restriction is an instance of the ontological aspect of the hermeneutic circle, which reveals that "the interpreter never stands opposite his

[287] Ibid.
[288] *SW3*, 281.

object as a pure knowing subject, but is always part of a particular nexus of life."[289] De Mul ends his reconstructive account of the nature of objectivity in the human sciences with the following excerpt from one of Dilthey's most important hermeneutical works: "The task of comprehending lived experience is infinite; not just in the sense that it demands ever more scientific accomplishments but in the sense that it is insoluble by its very nature."[290] Objectivity, according to de Mul's reconstruction, is therefore quite different from the sort found in the natural sciences. It is never complete, and it is made possible by the subjective nature of understanding. Finally, the more world that the interpretation exposes, that is, the more fruitful the interpretation, the more objectivity it contains.

2. The Possibility of Universal Validity in the Human Sciences

I will now question de Mul's interpretation of Dilthey's project as having necessitated, in the end, the abandonment of universally valid knowledge in the human sciences, settling instead for a revised account of objectivity. As I have just shown, Dilthey's account of the kind of objectivity possible in the human sciences has a pragmatic bent, and in this, de Mul and I agree. But as I hope to show, Dilthey never gave up on universal validity. His pursuit of it was also very much a part of his later works, especially those that contributed to his larger *Critique*. Furthermore, I will show that the kind of objectivity that de Mul claims is at work in Dilthey's hermeneutics fits nicely with the concept of universal validity—as long as we are

[289] Ibid., 263.
[290] Ibid. (From the essay, *The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Manifestations of Life*.)

clear as to what universal validity means in the human sciences. Thus, in what follows, I provide evidence that Dilthey was still very much concerned not only with objectivity but also with universal validity, and furthermore, that the two concepts can indeed coexist in the human sciences. But just as the concept of objectivity needed reframing, so will the concept of universal validity. And it will not come as a surprise that validity, too, will take on a pragmatic meaning, one that is better suited to the purposes of the human sciences. Thus, I hope to show that Dilthey was closer to having fulfilled his goal than he himself may have realized—and that his hermeneutics was progressing towards an essentially pragmatic theory of interpretation.

To begin, one can find many instances where Dilthey, especially in his later works, refers to the need to establish universal objective validity for the claims of the human sciences.[291] For example, in *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* from 1910, Dilthey explains that

> the human sciences rely on lived experience, understanding, and life-experience. This direct relationship between life and the human sciences leads to a conflict in the human sciences between the aims of life and those of science…Yet every science contains the demand for universal validity. If there are to be strictly scientific human sciences, they must aim ever more consciously and critically at this goal of universal validity.[292]

With this, Dilthey expresses the difficulty inherent in securing universal objective validity for the claims of the human sciences since the study of history and historical individuals is done *in* history and *by* historical individuals. This creates a conflict

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[291] De Mul also realizes this, and lists several instances where Dilthey speaks of his pursuit of universal validity. (See De Mul, 259-260) However, he proceeds to dismiss these instances as misguided in that it "meant a return to a position he himself had already abandoned in his *Critique*…"(de Mul, 260).
[292] *SW3*, 159.

since we study history from a necessarily limited horizon, and we do so largely in an effort to understand and to effect the course of our own lives.[293] This limited horizon seems to work against our endeavor to secure universally valid knowledge. But nevertheless, Dilthey is committed to the goal of securing universal validity, and he sees the task of hermeneutics as one of providing the means to do so:

> Now hermeneutics must define its task relative to the epistemological task of demonstrating that it is possible to know the nexus of the historical world and to find the means for bringing it about. The fundamental meaning of understanding has been clarified, and now we must determine the attainable degree of universal validity in understanding from its logical forms upwards.[294]

One further instance helps to show that Dilthey was still very much concerned not only with objectivity, but also with universal validity. In stating the three tasks which the foundation of the human sciences must fulfill, he tells us that the first task is to "define the general character of the system in which universally valid knowledge emerges on the basis of the givens in this domain."[295] This will be facilitated by an understanding of the "general logical structure of the human sciences." Thus, by now it should be clear that he spoke not only of objectivity, but of *universal objective validity*, and he did so throughout the *Formation*, which is considered his most mature work dealing with the foundation of the human sciences. Therefore, we can assume, contrary to de Mul, that he did not intend to settle for mere objectivity. But as the notion of objectivity changes in the human sciences, so must the notion of universal validity. While de Mul's explication of the

[293] "History shows how the sciences that refer to human life are engaged in a constant approximation to the more remote goal of human self-reflection." SW3, 105
[294] Ibid., 238.
[295] *SW3*, 142-3.

nature of objectivity provides a nice account of how this concept figures in the human sciences, it is now necessary to ascertain what Dilthey meant by universal validity in this arena. In what follows, I hope to do just this.

As I previously discussed in the first section of this chapter, de Mul claims that objectivity and universal validity are correlative concepts in the natural sciences, since in our everyday usage, an objective statement "corresponds with its object and is not colored by subjective circumstances."[296] Of course, in the post-Kantian world, the caveats are twofold: the object must be an object of possible experience, and the subjective conditions that make experience possible are shared by all and are interchangeable. But as I showed earlier, de Mul seems to be equating subjective circumstances with the subject's a priori conditions. And this seems questionable. It is one thing to say that I experience the world through the a priori conditions of space and time and the categories, and quite another to say that I experience them, for example, through the eyes of a philosopher, wife, or mother. In other words, all rational beings, according to Kant, share the subjective conditions of experience, but not all share the same subjective circumstances. But de Mul then goes on to claim that

> [i]f, however, like Dilthey, we subscribe to the notion that the transcendental structure of experience is sociohistorically determined, then the identification of objectivity and universal validity is no longer possible. When we consider Dilthey's statements concerning the inevitability of a subjective component in the human sciences, it seems that neither can the term objectivity be applied to the statements of these sciences.[297]

[296] de Mul, 260.
[297] Ibid.

I have already shown, though, how de Mul accounts for objectivity despite the seeming impossibility of its appropriateness given Dilthey's conception of historicity and the human sciences. De Mul's solution was to reframe this concept in a pragmatic light. The question before us now is, why cannot the same be done for the concept of universal validity? If subjective circumstances are found to be no different than Kantian priori conditions, then it is hard to see why they would be different from the a priori conditions of Dilthey's historical subject, i.e. the transcendental structure of experience.

In Chapter 2, I mentioned the distinction that de Mul makes between transcendental presuppositions and transcendental experiential structures. The former basically serve as the conditions for the possibility of experience in Dilthey's ontology—his theory about the nature of finite human beings. They are Dilthey's a priori conditions of experience. The latter are the structures that occur at various points in history, those that encompass a particular time and place within the overall ontology. They are "conceptual frameworks that disclose reality in a particular way…These conceptual frameworks also function as (historically determined) grounds for justification that make it possible to distinguish between true and false, good and evil, pleasure and pain, and so forth."[298]

By making this distinction, de Mul was trying to highlight the problem of claiming validity; specifically, he tells us that "strictly speaking, talking in terms of validity is always only possible within a conceptual framework."[299] Thus, within a transcendental structure, validity can be claimed. That is, within a specific historical

[298] Ibid., 153
[299] Ibid.

context, one could, according to de Mul, make claims that are universally valid within that context. Not only that, but objectivity and universal validity are once again correlative. Thus de Mul makes this very point with respect to Kant's transcendental structures: "Only when we take Kant's point that these a priori structures are shared by all, are objectivity and general validity with regard to the phenomenological world interchangeable…"[300] But regarding the transcendental presuppositions, the underlying ontology, no validity (in the strictly scientific sense) is possible. And this is because it is impossible to make a valid claim about an underlying structure from within that structure. And since there is no way to stand outside of it, the validity of ontological theories is never a possibility.[301]

But if de Mul claims that within the Kantian structure objectivity and universal validity are interchangeable, why isn't this so in Dilthey's case? In other words, the structures that exist in specific times and places are those that encompass the entire life nexus of its individuals, traditions and histories. Within this nexus, both objectivity and universal validity could, it seems to me, coexist. The difference between Kant and Dilthey is that for Kant, the a priori conditions are fixed, ahistorical. For Dilthey, of course, they are not; they are in constant development. But even this constant development is a constant—something that is shared by all human beings that exist. In fact, were we to cease being historical, finite creatures, we would cease to the kinds of beings Dilthey is concerned with. At

[300] Ibid, 260.

[301] Of course, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, Dilthey does indeed claim validity for his transcendental presuppositions when he posits that human nature is unchanging: "Human nature is always the same."[301] Thus, for Dilthey, the finitude of human beings is a condition that we must presume to be universally valid, for if human beings became infinite, they would cease to be human beings.

that point, the question of universal objective validity would be moot anyway. Therefore, within the specific experiential structures that manifest themselves in history, it doesn't seem problematic for claims to be both objective and universally valid. Of course, we must understand that this designation has a new meaning; it is not the same as that of the natural sciences.

What de Mul seems to be doing when he claims that universal validity is not possible for the claims of Dilthey's historical human sciences, is to separate universal validity from relative validity. In other words, by claiming that we cannot make universally valid statements about a transcendental presupposition because to do so would require that we stand outside of it, de Mul seems to claim that universal validity is impossible. But he does seem to allow us to make relatively valid claims from within a particular experiential structure; they are valid within the structure. If this is what he means, then I think my disagreement with him is one of semantics. As I will argue, given Dilthey's account of historicity, we must rethink the notion of universal validity just as we did the notion of objectivity. But I do not agree with de Mul that we do so in a way that appears to be a "settling for something less" than what we could have had. While I agree with de Mul when he arrives at a new understanding of objectivity, I do not see why he sees it necessary to separate it from the notion of universal validity.

Thus, it is possible that my main disagreement of his account of objectivity lies in the way in which he arrived at a new understanding of it, i.e. through the equation of Kantian a priori conditions with subjective circumstances. Instead, I maintain that we can arrive at the same pragmatic interpretation of objectivity by

focusing on how Dilthey grounds the formal categories of thought in the real categories of life, and the importance of the hermeneutical method in securing the transition from lived experience to the higher forms of understanding. The task of moving from the certainty (*Gewissheit*) of lived experiences to the reliability (*Sicherheit*) of higher understanding is certainly a difficult one, but possible nonetheless. Moreover, by approaching the question of universal objective validity this way, I claim that we can keep it intact. It will have a new, more appropriate meaning though, in order to be more in line with Dilthey's historical world.

3. Objectivity *and* Universal Validity in the Human Sciences

At this point, I will begin to outline what I take to be the direction toward which Dilthey is headed in his account of universal objective validity. I will handle the notions of objectivity and universal validity separately. As for the former, Dilthey often speaks of an "objective" interpretation as one which is tied to a fixed manifestation of life. As de Mul reminds us,

> because fixed statements are intersubjectively accessible, their interpretation can be tested against the productive nexus in which they are contained. This nexus…restricts the freedom of interpretation. As opposed to introspective statements, an interpretation of, for example Duerer's painting of the four apostles can be compared with the work itself, and in this confrontation it must hold its ground. Our judgment of the interpretation, moreover, will be partly determined by the effect of other Duerer paintings and of other interpretations of his work. Thus the more 'world' and interpretation reveals, that is, the more aspects it exposes of the nexus in which the statement is embedded, the more objective it is.[302]

[302] Ibid., 261.

With this, we see how the objectivity of the human sciences must be different from that of the natural sciences. In this case, the uniqueness of the individual and her experiences actually adds to an interpretation's objectivity. The point is to "open up a world," and we do so by adding ever more and ever new interpretations to the stock. These, in turn, will be judged by subsequent interpretations that also have more to add. The process, as a function of the understanding, is unending and always incomplete. The human sciences, therefore, stand apart from the natural sciences in their notion of objectivity precisely because they are part of a nexus comprised of understanding, lived experience, and manifestations of life:

> The objectivity of knowledge that is sought here has a different sense; the methods for approaching the ideal of objectivity of knowledge here display essential differences from those by which we approach the conceptual cognition of nature. Thus this group of sciences forms its own domain, which stands under its own laws grounded in the nature of what can be experienced, expressed, and understood.[303]

Whereas the natural sciences abstract from much of the content of experience in order to isolate certain variables whose relations they are interested in explaining, the human sciences proceed much differently. Moreover, this is not their goal. Keeping the object in tact, they aim at completeness in understanding by attempting to exhaust the relationships and meanings which it contains. But while aiming for completeness, it is understood that a final interpretation is never possible. Indeed, it is precisely the ongoing discussions and interpretations that keep the human sciences alive. Were a complete understanding possible, the object would no longer

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[303] *SW3*, 92.

be an object for the human sciences. It would have somehow escaped the finitude of its interpreters, and would have nothing left to say regarding life and meaning.

At this point, we must now understand how "universal validity" in the realm of the human sciences may be possible. To begin, it must be reiterated that Dilthey did not, despite de Mul's claim, give up on this ideal for the human sciences. But he does recognize the difficulty in achieving it. It is also apparent that he realized that it would take on a different meaning than it has in the natural sciences. For both kinds of sciences, though, universal validity refers to *concepts*. With regard to the human sciences, concepts for which we seek universal validity will not have the "timeless validity" characteristic of those specific to the natural sciences. This is because the concepts of the human sciences are not strictly formal or logical—they are real. Their origin is not to be found in some a priori intellect, but in life itself. Thus, as I discussed in Chapter 3, the real categories are the grounds for the formal ones.

To understand the difference between the validity of the concepts of the human and natural sciences, Dilthey refers to "force":

> In the natural sciences, force is a hypothetical concept. If its validity is assumed there, it is determined by the principle of causality. In the human sciences, productive force is the categorial expression of something that can be experienced. It arises when we turn toward the future and does so in different ways; in dreams of future happiness, in the play of the imagination with possibilities, in indecision, and in fear.[304]

He then proceeds to describe how the category of productive force in the human sciences works to motivate us to "actualize something" that was not already a

[304] *SW3*, 224.

reality. We determine what it will take to guarantee that happiness, to overcome the indecision and fear. Thus this category is "critical for the human sciences" since one of the goals of these sciences is to "understand and express change." To do this, historians must use concepts "that express energy, directions of movement, and shifts of historical forces."[305] Here we understand the need to rid ourselves of the natural scientific desire of fixing concepts with a permanence in favor of the more appropriate goal to "form concepts that express the freedom of life and history." [306]

Furthermore, as mentioned above, the categories and concepts of the human sciences are derived from lived experience; they spring from life itself. They are not products of a sterile, ahistorical intellect. Their universal validity, then, is not guaranteed by their stability in an atemporal logical system of thought. As Dilthey tells us, "the *real categories*…are nowhere the same in the human and in the natural sciences."[307] We can no more legitimately transfer real categories to the natural sciences, in a sense "spiritualizing" them, than we can transfer the categories of the natural sciences to life, in a sense "sterilizing" it. Therefore, the real categories and concepts of the human sciences will have a universal validity appropriate to them.

So what kind of universal validity can the concepts of the human sciences enjoy? One clue is that, as Dilthey explains, "the certainty attributable to personal life-experience differs from the universal validity of science, for these generalizations are not arrived at methodically and cannot be reduced to fixed

[305] Ibid.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Ibid., 219.

formulas."[308] In other words, the certainty (Gewissheit) that accompanies the reflexive awareness we have in our experiences is a certainty that, as I have previously discussed, is self-evident. We need not (and cannot) go behind life to determine the legitimacy of its contents since the very fact that I am having the experience that I am having is not up for debate. If I am experiencing joy, then I am experiencing joy. If I were to try to justify this, it would take me out of the moment of experiencing that joy, and thus would be like trying to "feel my feelings." Therefore, the first step in understanding the possibility of universal validity in the human sciences is recognizing that our starting point is life and lived experience—things which we simply cannot go behind.

Next, though, we must push further since we need to understand how the articulations of these lived experiences, the concepts we use to describe them, can attain universal validity. We now know that "the basis of the human sciences is not conceptualization but the reflexive awareness of a psychic fact in its wholeness and its rediscovery in re-experiencing. Here life grasps life."[309] But now we must understand how the grasping of life through concepts can be universally valid, i.e. can be brought to the level of cognition (Erkenntnis). In other words, the certainty (Gewissheit) of personal experience needs to be raised to the level of reliability (Sicherheit). As Dilthey explains, in the natural sciences, "scientific thinking stands apart from our ordinary contact with the world, rendering its productive achievements esoteric."[310] Thus, what we gain by way of certainty with regard to

[308] Ibid, 154.
[309] Ibid, 157.
[310] Ibid, 157.

judgments of the natural sciences, we lose in its connectedness to our lives. "But in the human sciences, a connection between life and science is retained…"[311] Furthermore, "the first basic trait that defines the structure of the human sciences is the fact that life is their starting point and abiding context. The human sciences rely on lived experience, understanding, and life-experience."[312] Therefore, what we might lose in the way of (natural) scientific certainty, we gain in the way of meaningfulness. This meaningfulness, however, must come to expression, and the problem that ensues is how to ensure the universal validity of that expression despite the horizonal, finite nature of every human being, and accordingly every experience.

If we look at what Dilthey has to say about the possibility of universal validity, it becomes possible to see a solution to the "crisis" which de Mul refers to here, and which is often mentioned by other commentators of Dilthey's work. In fact, it is often mentioned by Dilthey himself. In what follows, Dilthey not only refers to the problem of universal validity, but he also points us towards its resolution:

> The difference between the human and natural sciences is not just about the stance of the subject toward the object; it is not merely about a kind of attitude, a method. Rather, the procedure of understanding is grounded in the realization that the external reality that constitutes its objects is totally different from the objects of the natural sciences. Spirit has objectified itself in the former, purposes have been embodied in them, values have been actualized in them, and understanding grasps this spiritual content that has been formed in them…Furthermore, these realities are not reducible to my lived experience and understanding: they form the nexus of a representational world in which the externally given is connected with the course of my life. I live in this representational world, and

[311] Ibid, 158.
[312] Ibid, 158-9.

> its *objective validity is guaranteed to me through a constant interchange with the lived experience and understanding of others*. Finally, the concepts, the universal judgments, the general theories [of the human sciences]…derive from lived experience and understanding.[313]

In this excerpt from the *Formation*, Dilthey gives us all the clues needed in order to untangle the problem of universal objective validity in the human sciences. A close interpretation of this passage will reveal the solution. To begin, he notes that understanding is rooted in the realization that the objects of the human sciences are not constituted by static or fixed transcendental structures, but by "spirit." The spiritual content of the objects of the human sciences makes possible the values and purposes that they embody. And this spiritual content, or objective spirit, is the product of human beings and their historical circumstances. Thus, as distinct from the natural sciences whose objects are abstracted from their context in order for us to make determinant judgments about them, the human sciences are comprised of objects whose historical context must be taken into account if they are to be understood at all. Without objective spirit, there simply would not be objects of the human sciences.

Next, it is crucial to emphasize that the process of understanding (*Verstehen*) is at work in the human sciences as opposed to the kind of intellectual cognition (*Verstand*) that operates in the natural sciences. As mentioned above, understanding, despite aiming for inclusiveness and completeness, is always only partial. In its efforts to encompass more of the life nexus in an interpretation, it is less successful in proving is reliability or universal validity. Furthermore, the

[313] *SW3*, 141 (emphasis mine).

categories by which it functions are themselves in constant development. But these categories function differently than the concepts at work in the natural sciences. As Dilthey tells us, "the natural sciences supplement phenomena by adding thought."[314] But the human sciences, by contrast, "classify phenomena by primarily and mainly *translating* the immeasurable external reality of the sociohistorical, human world back into the spiritual life from which it arose."[315] And if we remember, the translation of the reality of life is done by virtue of categories that spring from life itself. In other words, we essentially add nothing to the reality, we merely describe it in an effort to understand. With this procedure, we need not worry that the validity of our categories is in question, since the categories themselves are, in a sense, formed by the experience.

Thus, Dilthey's de-intellectualization of Kant's subject by virtue of the realization of the categories as well as that of time and space has also served to allow a sense of universal objective validity for the claims of the human sciences. By recognizing that our formal categories, those that rule over all of reality, actually derive from the most basic categories rooted in life and lived experience, Dilthey has opened up the possibility of a universal objective validity that is accomplished by the *articulation* of our experiences rather than the assignment of them to abstract, removed realms of static phenomena. Of course the difficulty lies in the ability to cultivate the thought that arises out of experience in order to attain the higher understanding of the human sciences. We don't add thought to experience in the human sciences in the same way that we do in the natural sciences. Thought comes

[314] Ibid.,142.
[315] Ibid. (emphasis mine).

out of experience, and experience dictates for itself how it will be objectively and validly articulated via the categories that arise out of it. Thus, as Dilthey explains, understanding "achieves its highest perfection both in exhausting the content to be understood and in reaching universal validity in knowing it through exegesis or interpretation."[316] Seeing that interpretation is the "technical understanding of lasting fixed manifestations of life," and realizing that concepts, too, are such fixed manifestations, the interpretation of concepts is a "universally valid knowledge of what is intended by the concept and by the linguistic expression corresponding to it."[317] In other words, by understanding the concepts used to articulate experience, universal validity is already implicit. For every concept used to articulate an experience, there is an interpretation that must be interchangeable with it. "Interpretation only attains its goal when in each context in which a concept appears, its interpretation corresponds to that context."[318] And the possibility of this interpretation is assured by the fact that it is an ongoing process. It allows for ever new contributions in order to "open up more of a world." Thus as a final note, it is crucial to understand that

> the individual perspective involved in personal life-experience is corrected and broadened by general life-experience. By this I mean the beliefs generated amidst a sphere of persons living together and that are shared by them. These are assertions about the course of life, value judgments, rules of the conduct of life, determinations about purposes and goods…The reliability of this general life-experience increasingly exceeds that of personal life-experience the more that individual points of view cancel each other out and the more that the number of cases accumulate on which its inductions rely.[319]

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[316] Ibid., 329.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid., 154-5.

The point to underscore here is not a new one. The more experience that one has to rely on in interpreting new experiences and new expressions of others' experiences, the more "valid" the interpretation becomes. This is what Dilthey meant when he said earlier that the objective validity of the representational world in which we live depends upon the "constant interchange with the lived experience and understanding of others."[320] Only by the back and forth dialogue between those trying to understand and articulate our living world is that world opened up. Moreover, only then is the universal objective validity of its articulations guaranteed.

Of course, the kind of universal objective validity that I have just argued is possible in Dilthey's conception of the human sciences, does indeed differ from that enjoyed by the natural sciences. But two points must be made in relation to this fact. First, the reason that the validity of the human sciences is of a different sort is due to the very nature of the subject matter of these sciences, as well as the way in which the subject matter is approached. Indeed, it is not so much approached as *experienced*. As a result of this, we are not trying to match a particular phenomena with a particular formal concept as in the case of the natural sciences. Rather, we are trying to exhaust (at least to the extent which the finite human being is capable of exhausting) the content of the experience by the use of concepts that spring from life and that serve to make the experience meaningful to us in some way. This allows for the door to always be open to new interpretations, and to be subject to a critical dialogue with previous interpretations. This leads to the second point: the kind of

[320] Ibid., 141.

universal objective validity possible in the human sciences carries with it a purpose that may be missing in the objectivity of the natural sciences. After all, we must ask ourselves why we wish to understand ourselves and others in the first place. Why are we concerned to interpret expressions of life, whether our own or those of others*?* The answer to this is pragmatic, and it is what leads Dilthey toward not only a more realistic, but also an extremely fruitful conception of the goals of understanding.[321]

In the conclusion of this work, I will briefly outline what I take to be the new meaning of universal objective validity given the pragmatic leanings of Dilthey's hermeneutics. I hope to show why his careful studies regarding the human sciences are still important today—perhaps even more than they were during his lifetime. I will show how he shares an affinity with John Dewey's work in recognizing the need to give up the representational consciousness model and its notion of "*T*ruth" in favor of the descriptor "truth*ful*." And I hope to show that Dilthey's understanding of interpretations as important for opening up our horizons parallels Dewey's conception of what it means for a theory to be useful. In the end, I will claim that it is the willingness to surrender the safety of the fixed for the mystery of the *possible* in order to come closer to understanding the human being and her world.

[321] The fact that the human sciences have a pragmatic use does not preclude the natural sciences from having one as well. However, the pragmatism inherent in the natural sciences derives from their technical uses. See Jurgen Habermas' *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston, Beacon Press: 1971).

Chapter V

A Pragmatic Approach to Universal Objective Validity

In the previous chapter, I showed how universal objective validity in the human sciences could be possible given Dilthey's account of the real categories of life that ground the formal categories of thought, and his hermeneutical method whose task it is to bring the certainty of lived experiences to the reliability of articulated expressions of life. Of course, as I emphasized there, the notion of universal objective validity must be reconceived for use in the human sciences. It no longer shares the same meaning that it has for the claims of the natural sciences. After all, in the human world, we are now dealing with historical beings and their relationships with one another and their world. The recognition of finitude and the realization that the human being is always situated within a particular context has made the possibility of a static, fixed notion of universal objective validity obsolete.

As I accounted for, in agreement with de Mul, objectivity no longer means the correspondence between a proposition and its object which is unaffected by subjective circumstances. In the human sciences, subjective circumstances cannot be ignored; indeed, they are what enable understanding in the first place. Thus, de Mul points out that the "massive objectivity" of the sociohistorical world is responsible for the interpretations we formulate in the human sciences. "The interpreted statement and the interpreter are generally part of a common

productive nexus, or tradition. This productive nexus means that the *subjective* moment in the experience and in the interpretation of the life statements is not subjective *arbitrariness*."[322] Thus, when we take this into account, rather than ignoring or denying this crucial feature of our existence, objective interpretations are possible:

> On these grounds it is understandable that in his later texts Dilthey generally employs the concept "objective" to indicate interpretations that tie in with a fixed statement…Because fixed statements are intersubjectively accessible, their interpretation can be tested against the productive nexus in which they are contained. This nexus, of which the interpreter is also a part, restricts the freedom of interpretation…Thus the more "world" an interpretation reveals, that is, the more aspects it exposes of the nexus in which the statement is embedded, the more objective it is.[323]

Thus, in the human sciences, in order to offer an objective interpretation, one must incorporate the nexus which encompasses the object to be interpreted. And moreover, the more that the interpretation reveals about this nexus, the more objective it becomes. Here we can see the beginnings of a pragmatic interpretation of objectivity in that, "a *fruitful* interpretation reveals new nexuses not previously noticed in the object of interpretation, as well as the presuppositions of the interpreting subject…"[324] In other words, objectivity no longer means that our statements "correspond" to their objects, but that they open up the world in which the object resides. We aim not at *knowing* an object by matching it with our statements, but with *understanding* it through our articulations about it. The end result of an objective interpretation is its usefulness in helping to uncover the depths of its meanings.

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[322] de Mul, 261.
[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid. (emphasis mine).

We have now to deal with the concept of universal validity, and to figure out in what sense the claims of the human sciences can achieve this status. De Mul, as noted in the previous chapter, thought that universal validity was impossible in the human sciences given Dilthey's recognition of finitude. He claimed that Dilthey himself realized the futility of seeking universal validity, and abandoned this goal in the *Critique*: "In particular, his analysis of the structural nexus of lived experience, expression, and understanding makes it clear that the natural-scientific ideal of universal validity cannot be transferred to the human sciences."[325] He contends that given the historical nature of the human world (and the human being) interpretations cannot possibly carry *universal* validity. After all, with history, we deal with the individual, the particular. Dilthey himself asks the question, how can we make universally valid statements about expressions that are "so personally limited, so indeterminate, so compacted and resistant to analysis?"[326]

But at this point, I want to suggest that, just as in the case of objectivity, a new meaning of universal validity can be offered that is appropriate to the human sciences. And, just as in the case of objectivity, this meaning will be essentially pragmatic. One may question why it is necessary to hold onto the notion of universal objective validity at all if, in fact, it must be redefined. The answer to this is that Dilthey himself saw it necessary to do so. While he never reached a fully elaborated account of what universal objective validity means for the human sciences, I will claim that a careful reading of his texts indicates that he was leaning in a pragmatic direction. Moreover, to accept the notion of validity that I believe

[325] Ibid., 260.
[326] *GSVI*, 107.

Dilthey was in the process of working out, we must be ready to relinquish the idea that this new human science-specific understanding of validity is a watered down version of its more robust, respectable natural-scientific meaning. Pragmatism, specifically the kind offered by John Dewey, teaches us that this natural scientific ideal is based on a faulty conception of the nature of objects, the nature of experience, and a misguided attempt to achieve certainty. When we begin to see objects in a pragmatic light, we realize that they are not these fixed, privileged entities to which our statements aim to correspond. Rather, they are much more akin to the objects of the human sciences as found in Dilthey's work. They acquire their meaning through the results of our inquiries about them.

For this reason, I will conclude this work by suggesting an understanding of universal objective validity that not only pertains to the human sciences, but also helps these sciences reach their ultimate goal; namely, the goal of self-knowledge and the progress of society as a result. To do this, I will first explicate the various ways in which Dilthey can be understood as growing closer and closer to a pragmatic interpretation of objects, and subsequently universal objective validity. I will then fill in his preliminary efforts here by looking briefly at the pragmatism of John Dewey in order to supplement Dilthey's account. What I hope to achieve is a conception of universal objective validity that leaves the historical nature of the human sciences intact, while also allowing them to stand *alongside* the natural sciences rather than in their shadow.

1. Dilthey's Pragmatic Leanings

In this section, I wish to point out some passages that attest to Dilthey's increasingly pragmatic approach to the concept of universal objective validity. Despite what other commentators have claimed, he did not give up on this ideal. Rather, I claim he was realizing that the notion itself was in need of reconstruction for use in the human sciences. In one of his latest works, Dilthey claims that

> The human sciences aim at objective conceptual cognition of their object. All human scientists are joined together in this effort, and their labors converge in this direction...Whether they endeavor to fathom the singular or to cognize the universal; whether they investigate connectedness in psychic life, in history, or in society, or want to recognize a lawlike order…it is always the case that the impetus of their efforts is directed at objective conceptual cognition just as in the natural sciences.[327]

Along with this emphatic declaration, he claims that the endeavors to understand the human world made within the various human sciences *presuppose* the possibility of such objective conceptual cognition (*Erkenntnis*).[328] At the same time, however, he reminds us that the kind of objective validity that we must seek will differ from that of the natural sciences: "The objectivity of knowledge that is sought here has a different sense; the methods for approaching the ideal of objectivity of knowledge here display essential differences from those by which we approach the conceptual cognition of nature."[329] In line with this, he also reminds us that the method by which we approach the "ideal of objectivity of knowledge", that of hermeneutics, has "always defended the reliability of understanding against

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[327] *SW3*, 333.
[328] Ibid., 334.
[329] Ibid., 92.

historical skepticism and subjective arbitrariness." Hermeneutics must now, however, help to determine the "attainable degree of universal validity in understanding…"[330] Thus, Dilthey remained committed to the goal of universally valid, objective conceptual cognition throughout his efforts in explicating the nature and goals of the human sciences.

But the above passage where he refers to the "attainable degree of universal validity" is an unfortunate one. It lends credence to the idea that the human sciences must settle for a less than "complete" universal validity. It seems to indicate that while Dilthey sought a kind of universal objective validity appropriate to the human sciences, he was not able to fully break free of the idea that the natural scientific conception of universal validity was that toward which *all* sciences should aim. I intend to help him shed this conception, and to do so, I will point to other places where he *does* in fact seem more ready to embrace a universal validity specific to the human sciences, without sacrificing their scientific standing.

One example of Dilthey's break from the natural scientific ideal is found in his conception of objects, specifically objects of the human sciences. Here, we see a pragmatic understanding of objects in that they are no longer conceived as things merely to be "known" or cognized, but rather as things to be understood:

> The difference between the human and natural sciences is not just about the stance of the subject toward the object; it is not merely about a kind of attitude, a method. Rather, the procedure of understanding is grounded in the realization that the external reality that constitutes its objects is totally different from the objects of the natural sciences. Spirit has objectified itself in the former, purposes have been embodied in them, values have been actualized in them, and understanding grasps this spiritual content that has been

[330] Ibid., 238.

> formed in them. A life-relationship exists between me and them. Their purposiveness is grounded in my capacity to set purposes, their beauty and goodness in my capacity to establish value, their intelligibility in my intellect.[331]

Here we see that there are no objects for the human sciences apart from those created by the human capacity to set purposes and goals, to establish value, and to understand. In the human sciences, for example, we are not concerned with a painting's molecular makeup. Rather, we attempt to understand what the painting means given its context. We may try to understand what it meant for its author, how it figured into his or her life and work. If the molecular makeup ever does come to the fore, it does so not in order for us to arrive at a formula, but perhaps to better situate it in a timeline, or a particular genre. In this way, the molecular formula speaks to the *meaning* of the painting, not simply to its chemical makeup.

A further instance of the pragmatic understanding that Dilthey takes in understanding the nature of objects in the human sciences is when he speaks of them as "data":

> The human sciences have the objectification of life as their comprehensive data…[T]his objectification is always related in understanding to lived experience through which a life-unit becomes aware of its own meaning-content and capable of interpreting that of others. If this relation holds for the givens of the human sciences, then we see right away that the fixity and estrangement peculiar to the images of the physical world must be removed from our concept of givenness here.[332]

Here, Dilthey's view of objects as data is pragmatic in nature. Not only does viewing objects as data lead to a conception of objects as things, events, etc. to be used for

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[331] Ibid., 141.

[332] Ibid., 170. We see here again that Dilthey sees the objects of the human sciences differently than the objects of the natural sciences, when it might have been more helpful for working out the problem of universal objective validity to see that the difference between these objects was not inherent in the objects, but a result of the inquiries undertaken on their behalf.

further inquiry, but it also entails that they are not fixed or abstract. In other words, the data of the human sciences are not foreign to us, removed from our experience of the world. They are intimately related to us, and they are pliable and adaptable to ever new circumstances and situations in which we can use them to guide our investigations in the human sciences. They need not have one fixed meaning; in fact, a full or fixed understanding of what they contribute to the human world is, by nature, impossible. As long as the temporal flow continues, there will be new contexts into which they may figure in order to help elucidate some aspect(s) of the human spirit that is represented. Data are reusable, renewable, and recyclable as needed. Their meaning is developed in relation to the inquiry into which they figure—not in some antecedent reality that fixes them once and for all.

In accord with this understanding of objects, Dilthey reminds us that with respect to the concepts that we use in our claims of the human sciences, we must be conscious that they do not become rigid and fixed: "Whatever it is in a concept that serves to fix an object and give it a timeless validity belongs merely to its logical form. This is why it is important to form concepts that express the freedom of life and history."[333] Again, we see the need to stay clear of the kinds of concepts used in the natural sciences in an effort to allow for the objects (or data) which we are trying to understand to remain malleable. To fix them would be to turn them into objects of the natural sciences, whose properties we aim to *know* by abstracting them from their context and isolating certain variables that concern us. In the

[333] Ibid., 224.

human sciences, by contrast, a fluidity of concepts is necessary in order to keep the object situated in its context and yet available for more future interpretations.

As previously mentioned[334], even though understanding aims at completeness in trying to exhaust the relations of the object and its history, we recognize that in the human sciences, a complete understanding of the object is impossible. This is why Dilthey also insists that understanding never achieves certainty. What we aim for, however, using the hermeneutical method, is a certain reliability of our interpretations. In discussing the higher forms of understanding, he explains that we are often called upon, through our dealings with others in everyday life, to "gain insight into the inner nature of people around us so that we can make sure how far we can count on them."[335] Here, we are concerned with the relationship between what someone expresses and what we can gather about their past expressions and the underlying inner nexus. In other words, if someone promises me that they will help me with a certain task, I might reflect on past circumstances in which this person has made promises. Has she kept them and fulfilled her obligations? If so, can I assume she will also make good on her current promise to me? Dilthey explains further:

> Because the series of available manifestations of life are limited and because the underlying nexus is indeterminate, only probably results can be expected. If we infer how a life-unit that we have understood will act in new circumstances, the deductive inference from an inductively arrived at insight into a psychic nexus can only produce expectations and possibilities. When we proceed from a psychic nexus that is itself merely probable and add new circumstances to consider how it would react to them, we can only generate an expectation, not a certainty.[336]

[334] See chapter four, section three.
[335] *SW3*, 231-2.
[336] Ibid., 232.

Here the connection with a pragmatic understanding of the nature of objects, or in this case, events, is clear. Certainty is never possible with respect to interpretations of the human sciences. We aim for reliability in our understanding, but this is always only probable. The goal of such understanding is to be better able to predict future happenings, but as is always the case with anything in the future, certainty cannot be attained.

This is no deficiency upon the part of the human sciences or the human world which they aim to understand; it is a fundamental feature of its very existence. Only when we compare it to the natural sciences' ability to attain certainty do we feel we have settled for something less. But we must remember that the certainty attained by the natural sciences is either a backward looking, or atemporal certainty; it is a certainty only by virtue of refraining from looking into the future. When the natural sciences do look ahead, they too must "settle" for mere probability and expectation. But again, this is no shortfall, but simply a feature of human finite existence. And it is crucial to remember that this very finitude is an enabling condition for the possibility of experience. Without it, our world and our experience would be completely unrecognizable, and the question of universal objective validity would be moot. Thus, Dilthey maintains that both the natural and human sciences ultimately aim not for certainty (*Gewissheit*) but for reliability (*Sicherheit*) which can be measured objectively. Of course, the reliability of the natural sciences has been attained to a greater degree, but this only provides the motivation behind Dilthey's goal of developing a foundation for the human sciences so that they, too, can begin to reap similar results.

One last instance in which Dilthey's conception of the universal validity possible in the human sciences can be seen to bear a strong resemblance to pragmatism is in his explication of the possibility of truth in expressions of life. We remember from the chapter four that Dilthey speaks of the various kinds of manifestations (or expressions) of life. Among these he includes different classes. The first class consists of "concepts, judgments and larger thought formations."[337] These kinds of expressions have been "detached from the lived experience in which they arose," which gives them "a selfsameness independent of their position in the context of thought."[338] Thus, these kinds of expressions are candidates for truth in the traditional, or ahistorical, sense in that with these expressions, "understanding is directed at the mere logical content, which remains identical in every context, and is more complete than in relation to any other manifestation of life."[339] So, for example, the proposition "Abraham Lincoln was assassinated" can be measured regarding its truth or falsity in a very "matter of fact" way.

But in the case of other manifestations of life, specifically the class of lived experiences, validity and truth are not as simple to assess. But for that, they also have much more to say about the "dark background and the fullness of psychic life"[340] from which they spring. In other words, what they sacrifice in precision, they make up for in significance. Dilthey tells us that an expression of lived experience can "only be made available to the understanding within limits. Such expressions

[337] Ibid., 227.
[338] Ibid.
[339] Ibid., 227-8.
[340] Ibid., 228.

are not to be judged as true or false but as truthful or untruthful."[341] Here, we see again that in understanding expressions of life, which are the most interminable objects of the human sciences, we do not so much aim to ascertain truth or falsehood, but rather truthfulness or untruthfulness. While there are certainly facts about the human world that can either be true or false, e.g. the proposition given above, "Abraham Lincoln was assassinated," these "facts" contribute little in the way of our understanding (*Verstehen*) of the human world. With expressions of life, our goal is not to match them to some antecedent reality; we are not trying to label, explain or define them, but to understand them. And since they are expressions of a life-unit, neither do they aim primarily to be true or false. For what would this mean? If I were to write my autobiography, my goal is not to get it "right", but to reveal the various aspects and experiences of my life that contribute to what I take to be its overall meaning thus far. In this way, it can be "truthful", but not "true." There is not some previously existing "life of Courtney" to which I aim my life to correspond.

At this point, I have shown how Dilthey is leaning towards a pragmatic understanding of universal objective validity in the way he views the nature of objects as things to be understood rather than cognized. Along with this, we only recognize as objects for the human sciences those things that suggest purposes, goals, values, and meanings. Our ability to recognize these objects is a direct result of our ability to create them. Furthermore, Dilthey's pragmatism is manifested in the way in which concepts of the human sciences must be free and fluid rather than

[341] Ibid.

timeless and fixed in order to do justice to the objects they purport to articulate. This leads to an understanding of judgments and interpretations in the human sciences as predictions in that they can never achieve certainty but only probability. Finally, the recognition that expressions of life are not to be viewed as candidates for truth or falsity, but rather for truthfulness or untruthfulness, implies that the interpretations of the human sciences are not aiming at correspondence with antecedent reality, but with "opening up a world."

In order to develop a bit more fully this pragmatic understanding, I will now show how these instances resemble the pragmatism in the work of John Dewey. With this I hope to show that the kind of universal objective validity that Dewey advocates in his critique of the history of philosophy is precisely the kind of universal objective validity possible for Dilthey's human sciences. We have already seen how Dilthey paved the way for its possibility, so, with Dewey's help, our last step is to understand its new meaning in the human sciences.

2. Dewey's Pragmatism and Universal Objective Validity

To begin, regarding the value of philosophy, Dewey suggests that we ask ourselves the following questions:

> Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful? Or does it terminate in rendering the things of ordinary experience more opaque than they were before, and in depriving them of having in "reality" even the significance they had previously seemed to have?[342]

[342] Dewey, John. *The Later Works of John Dewey*. (Carbondale, IL, Southern Illinois University Press: 1981-1990), 1:18.

In this passage, the affinity between Dilthey and Dewey is clear. Here, Dewey asserts that a philosophy is only valuable if, in its analysis and inquiry, it is able to enrich our everyday experience. In contrast to past philosophies for which the conclusions of inquiry were so esoteric, so foreign to ordinary experience that hardly any contact remained with it, Dewey's pragmatism would strive to make the things and events of ordinary experience more meaningful through philosophical inquiry. Thus, from the outset, we see that Dewey and Dilthey share the same goal in that Dilthey, as far as the human sciences are concerned, thinks that the only kind of objectivity possible is one that enriches and enhances the significance of the object in its relation to the human world. Dewey's vision is broader in that his philosophy will encompass the work of the natural sciences as well, but both thinkers share the idea that the only kind of philosophy, indeed the only kind of objectivity that is worthwhile, is one that contributes meaning to life. Philosophies that have made cognition or "knowing" the primary focus, rather than the understanding of meaning, have failed to prove themselves relevant to these men. We are no longer in need of a "spectator theory of knowledge,"[343] which sees the business of philosophy as the uncovering of what is antecedently real. Rather, we need a philosophy that can instruct us and help us to answer the problems of our age.

But how does Dewey's pragmatism work? What are its objects, and what is its method? The answer to these questions will help elucidate the commonalities between Dewey and Dilthey, and will point toward the kind of universal objective validity that is possible for both thinkers. In what follows, I will first address

[343] Ibid., 4:19.

Dewey's conception of experience, and show its affinity with the lived experience that Dilthey has explicated. Next, I will outline Dewey's conception of the "objects" of experience, again, showing the affinities with the objects of the human sciences as discussed in Dilthey. The nature of the objects will have much to say about the kind of universal objective validity possible for both thinkers. At this point, a discussion of Dewey's experimental method will help fill in just what this objectivity entails. I will compare his method to the hermeneutics of Dilthey, further linking the two thinkers as regards their similar ideas as to the true purpose of understanding and the real value of the results of philosophical inquiry. Finally, through the above explications, a new understanding of universal objective validity for the human sciences will emerge.

3. Dewey's Conception of Experience

To begin, Dewey's defines experience as " the complex of all which is distinctively human."[344] This notion makes clear that, for Dewey, experience takes on a much broader meaning than it has had in previous philosophies. He agrees with James' account of experience as being a "double-barreled" word, one which includes not only *what* human beings do, but also *how* they do it.[345] With this understanding, Dewey also notes that the cognitive aspect of experience is not primary, but rather only one several modes. The affinity with Dilthey here is obvious; in understanding, we aim not as much to "know" the object, but rather to ascertain its meaning and

[344] Ibid., 1:331.
[345] See James, William. *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, (New York, Longmans, Green and Co: 1912)

significance. Furthermore, for Dilthey, we do so not simply as a knowing subject, but as a whole human being who not only thinks, but also wills and feels. Dewey's account is similar, and claims that in understanding an experience, success entails that a certain meaning is had, a certain end is brought further into our grasp. Experience is purposive in this way—it leads us towards new goals. It is "characterized by projection, by reaching forward into the unknown; connexion with a future is its salient trait."[346] With this notion of connectedness, we see again the similarity with Dilthey's account of experience. For Dilthey, "life realizes a highest good; it should be determined by ideals, and it exhibits a process of shaping."[347] To understand experience, we use categories such as meaning, value, purpose, and development. "The categories that apprehend life under the perspective of the future presuppose the categories of value; they differentiate into the various possibilities of forging ahead into the future."[348] Finally, "the connectedness implicit in life obtains its explication only in the relation of the meaning of events of life to the understanding and the sense of the whole of life…The connectedness of lived experience in its concrete reality lies in the category of meaning."[349]

Thus, whereas Dewey speaks of experience and its connectedness, Dilthey uses the terms "life" and "lived experience," but what they describe is the same. For both Dilthey and Dewey, experience, life or lived experience is about connectedness

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[346] Dewey, John. *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, (Carbondale IL, Southern Illinois University Press: 1976-1983), 10:6.
[347] *SW3*, 256.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Ibid.

and relations of events. It is not enough for something to simply happen, rather a connection must be made. In describing *an* experience, Dewey gives the example of a child burning himself. Here, the mere burning is not enough to constitute an experience. "Being burned is a mere physical change, like the burning of a stick of wood, if it is not perceived as a consequence of some other action."[350] The experience arises when "the movement [into the flame] is *connected* with the pain which he undergoes in consequence."[351] In other words, something must be learned, a connection must be made, a meaning must be understood. And for Dilthey, such is also the case. The connectedness of lived experiences is, for Dilthey, a condition of the possibility of experience. As he states, "this connectedness is, consequently, the peculiar mode of relation or category inherent in the nature of everything that can be experienced."[352] Furthermore, he states that

> we apprehend the connectedness of a nexus through the unity of consciousness, which is the condition of all apprehension. But it is clear that the existence of a nexus or connectedness is not merely the product of the manifold of experiences being presented to a unitary consciousness. It is only because life itself is a structural nexus in which lived experiences stand in experienceable relations that the connectedness of life is given to us.[353]

With this, Dilthey goes further and claims that were life not already a structural nexus within which we could understand the relations that exist amongst our various experiences, that such connectedness among these experiences would be impossible. In other words, the structure of life is what makes connectedness of our experiences possible.

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[350] Dewey, *The Middle Works* 9:146.
[351] Ibid (emphasis mine).
[352] *SW3*, 257.
[353] Ibid., 217.

Thus, with both thinkers, we have moved away from a notion of experience that was found in previous philosophies. Experience is no longer some random encounter or passive activity. Neither is it simply the "reception and association of sensory impressions"[354] as espoused by classical empiricism. It is an active, intentional activity in which the human being undergoes some sort of transformation, whether conspicuous or not, via an understanding of the connectedness to life of the objects or events at hand, that the experience has brought about. As Dewey states, "experience is full of inference. There is, apparently, no conscious experience without inference; reflection is native and constant."[355] Experience, in other words, does not simply happen to us; it is something which we undergo. For Dewey, "when we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences."[356] Dilthey also emphasizes that in understanding our experiences, we call upon the real categories of doing and undergoing, or agency and suffering. In fact, as explicated in chapter three, these categories are responsible for the formal, logical category of causality. Moreover, these real categories are derived from life itself; they are not superimposed upon it. Together with agency and suffering, we also find the category of productive force, and it is this category that grounds the connectedness of experience:

> In the human sciences, productive force is the categorial expression of something that can be experienced. It arises when we turn toward the future and does so in different ways: in dreams of future happiness, in the play of the imagination with possibilities, in indecision, and in fear. But then we bring such leisurely expansion of

[354] Dewey, *The Middle Works*, 9:276.
[355] Ibid., 10:6.
[356] Ibid., 9:146.

> our existence to a distinct focal point, and amidst such possibilities we decide to actualize one of them. The representation of a purpose that then emerges contains something new that did not yet exist in the sphere of reality and now must enter it…Insofar as the life-nexus generates such sequences, we call it a productive force. This category of productive force is critical for the human sciences. Wherever these sciences reach, they deal with the connectedness of some whole.[357]

In addressing Dewey's conception of experience, one last point is necessary. Here, Dewey makes a distinction between what he calls primary experience and secondary experience. This distinction further points to the need for experience to be instructional at some level, that is, to lead to an increased awareness of connections and their meaning. The difference between primary and secondary experience is the difference between "what is experienced as the result of a minimum of incidental reflection and what is experienced in consequence of continued and regulated reflective inquiry."[358] In other words, primary experience is that which comprises our ordinary, everyday experiencing. Secondary experience occurs when we take the objects first given to us by primary experience, and reflect on them systematically, purposively, in order to solve a problem, answer a question, or understand a relationship further. As Dewey states, the objects that we develop in secondary experience "explain the primary objects, they enable us to grasp them with *understanding*, instead of just having sense-contact with them."[359] Furthermore, the objects of secondary experience help us to arrive at "the meaning,

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[357] *SW3*, 224.
[358] Dewey, *The Later Works*, 1:15.
[359] Ibid., 1:16

the significant content, of what is experienced."[360] Given this explanation of primary and secondary experience, it is clear that the crucial difference lies in the objects these modes of experience create. At this point, then, an understanding of Dewey's conception of objects is necessary.

4. The Objects of Experience

In distinguishing between primary and secondary experience, Dewey makes clear that he does not intend to bifurcate experience. He does not intend to claim that there are two different ways to experience. Rather, he means that experience per se has two levels; the primary level, that of ordinary everyday experience, and the secondary level comprised of more systematic and reflective thought about the objects of primary experience. Most important for Dewey, however, is that the objects of secondary experience be referred back to the objects of primary experience for test. Whereas natural scientists tend to do this automatically, philosophers have not been so diligent. In fact, Dewey claims that philosophers have often tended to consider a return to primary experience as a base, unnecessary endeavor. The move from primary to secondary experience in philosophy has actually been the goal. Reverting back to ordinary experience after an object has been analyzed, dissected, its properties circumscribed, would be a step backwards, or so it had seemed.

[360] Ibid.

But for Dewey, this is precisely the problem with past philosophies, and it is what his pragmatism aims to remedy. Secondary experience serves to clarify, and enhance the meaning of the objects of primary experience. Thus, by making abstractions and generalizations, we are able to understand more about the objects of primary experience, and "return from abstractive thought to experience of them with added meaning and with increased power to regulate our relations to them."[361] As James Campbell helps to explain, "in the process of inquiry, we attempt to resolve felt problems that are present in experience. The tentative knowledge gained in this process of inquiry is then tested through a return to the problematic situation. When inquiry is carried on to fruition, primary and secondary experience become integrated, and we understand by means of this knowledge the meanings of the various aspects of the situation."[362] This is one instance of the reunification of theory and practice that Dewey's pragmatism aims to achieve. We no longer wish to abstract from primary experience in order to gain a purely theoretical understanding; rather, all understanding aims at some practical end which is facilitated by a return to the object in order to test the theory that is suggested.

Whereas Dewey speaks of primary and secondary experience, Dilthey speaks of the different modes of understanding. We remember from chapter three, which dealt with his hermeneutics, that understanding moves from elementary forms to the higher modes depending upon the object or expression at hand. The elementary form of understanding takes place mostly according to the unconscious or pre-

[361] Ibid., 4:174-5.
[362] Campbell, James. *Understanding John Dewey*. (Peru, IL, Open Court Publishing: 1995), 74-5

reflective process of making an analogy. We make an inference based on a regular relation that exists in the world. The expression which we understand via this process is not separated from that which is expressed in it. They are a unity, and our understanding aims at figuring out what the expression has to say. When irregularities are present and we find our analogy fails, we make the transition to the higher modes of understanding where we now try to understand the relationship of the expression to the overall nexus of which it is a part. Here, the goals of understanding are varied; for example, we may wish to understand what the expression has to say about its author, or its tradition, or even what it may mean to me personally. The specific aspect we wish to understand here will shape not only our inquiry, but also determine its result. Thus, Dilthey's modes of understanding have much in common with Dewey's notion of primary and secondary experience.

But, for Dewey, what are the objects of primary and secondary experience? His conception of objects is what enables his subsequent understanding of objectivity and validity. Dilthey shares some of these same ideas about the nature of objects, and so in this way, I claim that Dewey can be used to help Dilthey formulate his own idea of universal objective validity. In the first instance, objects of primary experience include the ordinary things of everyday experience, i.e. "sticks and stones, meat and potatoes, houses and trees…constant features of the environment of which we have to take account in order to live."[363] Objects of secondary experience include scientific and philosophical theories, equations, formulas, etc.

[363] Dewey, *The Later Works*, 8:294 This passage was quoted in Campbell, 75.

Thus, the objects of secondary experience come to be according to the kind of inquiry we wish to perform on the objects of primary experience. For example, a problem is located in primary experience, and in order to solve this problem, the object is studied in secondary experience and a theory is derived. This theory, which is the object of secondary experience, is then put back into primary experience in order to see if it helps to solve the problem or clarify the meaning of the original object. As Dewey states,

> Directly in immediate contact [the object of primary experience] may be just what it was before—hard colored, odorous, etc. But when the secondary objects, the refined objects, are employed as a method or road for coming at them, these qualities cease to be isolated details; they get the meaning contained in a whole system of related objects; they are rendered continuous with the rest of nature and take on the import of the things are they are now seen to be continuous with.[364]

This passage explains not only the relationship of primary and secondary objects, but also the role of method in bringing meaning to the primary objects and in situating them within the entire nexus (to use Dilthey's terminology) of nature. The role of method is quite crucial for Dewey's pragmatism, as it is for Dilthey's hermeneutics, and so I will now turn to a discussion of its importance for my purpose here, namely to ascertain the nature of universal objective validity.

5. The Experimental Method

To begin, Dewey underscores the importance of method in the following passage:

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[364] Dewey, *The Later Works*, 1:16 This passage was quoted in Campbell, 73.

> Without the introduction of operational thinking, we oscillate between a theory that, in order to save the objectivity of judgments of values, isolates them from experience and nature, and a theory that, in order to save their concrete and human significance, reduces them to mere statements about our own feelings.[365]

In this passage, we see a very similar description of the crisis that plagued Dilthey; namely the crisis of historicism. As Dewey explains, if we don't employ correct method, which he here calls operational thinking, and elsewhere "experimental method," we face an unhappy choice. Either we have picture of the world in which values are not included among the real objects of existence, but rather are set above or beyond real objects in a realm to which we have only theoretical access, or else we have a world in which our values express nothing but our personal feelings, thus having no objectivity at all. With Dilthey, we saw that the crisis of his age entailed having to choose between a picture of the human world that mirrored the natural world, thus leaving relatively little room for what was human, or a human world in which all judgments were no more than expressions of opinion, pertaining only to individual persons or events, thus carrying no objectivity. But for both thinkers, the way to escape between the horns of this dilemma is by the use of method, hermeneutical for Dilthey, experimental for Dewey. Thus, as Dewey states, "if the validity of beliefs and judgments about values is dependent upon *the consequences of action undertaken in their behalf*, if the assumed association of values with knowledge capable of being demonstrated apart from activity is abandoned, then the problem of the intrinsic relation of science to value is wholly artificial."[366] Here, the emphasis on practical activity in the securing of values cannot be overstated,

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[365] Dewey, *The Later Works*, 4:210
[366] Ibid., 34 (emphasis mine)

and Dewey's experimental method outlines just how this practical activity effects their objectivity and validity.

As Dewey states regarding the validity of objects of experience, "the standards and tests of validity are formed in the consequences of overt activity, not in what is fixed prior to it and independently of it."[367] Again, it is practical activity that secures objectivity and validity, not the correspondence of some antecedently real object with our idea of it. In a concrete example, he explains that Einstein has effectively done away with the conceptions of space, time and motion as inherent properties of objects, and replaced them with the notion that they are relations of events. Such relations of events find "their validity is a matter of their efficacy in performance of this function; it is tested by results and not by correspondence with antecedent properties of existence."[368] Here, experimental method not only works to secure the validity of what were previously considered "inherent properties of objects," but also shows how such objects are better seen as "relations of events." By viewing "objects" this way, we no longer see them as final, fixed, and immutable. Rather, we see them as things which we can manipulate, control, understand and use. Dewey explains that the experimental method substitutes data for objects: "by data is signified subject matter for further interpretation; something to be thought about. Objects are finalities; they are complete, finished. They call for thought only in the way of definition."[369] But to view objects as data is to see the world as something that we can both understand and influence:

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[367] Ibid., 59.
[368] Ibid., 117.
[369] Ibid., 80

> When the things which exist around us, which we touch, see, hear and taste are regarded as interrogations for which an answer must be sought (and must be sought by means of deliberate introduction of changes till they are reshaped into something different), nature as it already exists ceases to be something which must be accepted and submitted to, endured or enjoyed, just as it is. It is now something to be modified, to be intentionally controlled. It is material to act upon so as to transform it into new objects which better answer our needs.[370]

To view objects as data helps us in securing the kind of world we want—in realizing the values that we have in concrete existence. The experimental method, which seeks to utilize the objects of experience to do just this, is therefore paramount. "We should regard practice as the only means (other than by accident) by which whatever is judged to be honorable, admirable, approvable can be kept in concrete experienceable existence."[371] And here, Dilthey is seen to echo this notion of objects as data when he states that we must give up the idea of fixity and estrangement when we speak of the givens of the human sciences. "The human sciences have the objectification of life as their comprehensive data."[372] The objects of the human sciences cannot be viewed as standing apart from us—as fixed and immutable. For Dilthey, the objects of the human sciences are data in the same way that all objects of experience are data for Dewey. Thus, the importance of an adequate method in dealing with data takes the fore. For Dilthey, this means that hermeneutics, the science and method of understanding, must secure in the human sciences the same kinds of values that Dewey seeks to secure throughout all experience. As Dilthey

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[370] Ibid.
[371] Ibid., 26.
[372] *SW3*, 169.

states, "the scope of the human sciences is identical with that of understanding, and understanding now has its unified material in the objectification of life."[373]

One crucial difference between Dilthey and Dewey becomes clear in this discussion of method. The difference is between Dewey's account of experience that does not divide the human from the natural sciences, and Dilthey's account that does. It is not in the purview of this work to discuss this difference in detail, but it is helpful to understand why Dewey does not make this distinction. In fact, I would argue that his reasoning could have persuaded Dilthey to adopt a similar stance since it is in line with other sentiments we have seen Dilthey express. For example, Dewey states that "there is no kind of inquiry which has a monopoly on the honorable title of knowledge. The engineer, the artist, the historian, the man of affairs attain knowledge in the degree they employ the methods that enable them to solve the problems which develop in the subject-matter they are concerned with."[374] Here Dewey does not see a difference between the various sciences with respect to what they all ultimately aim to do, that is, secure valuable objects in existence. Dilthey, perhaps due to historical circumstances, did not see the problem this way, and thus thought of the human sciences as attempting something different from the natural sciences. As he states regarding the natural sciences and their objects, "nature, the subject-matter of the natural sciences, encompasses reality insofar as it has arisen independently of the efficacy of human spirit."[375] In contrast to the human sciences, where "everything on which human beings have impressed their

[373] Ibid., 170.
[374] Dewey, *The Later Works*, 4:176.
[375] *SW3*, 170.

productive stamp" forms the subject matter, Dilthey sees the natural sciences in the traditional way that Dewey criticizes—that is, as attending to objects that are fixed, immutable, and for which knowledge is achieved by correspondence of our ideas with them.

For Dewey, though, all endeavors to understand our world and help conform it so that the values we esteem and prize find secure existence count as equally scientific. Furthermore, all endeavors which proceed via competent method to do this have a much better chance at realizing such values. Regarding human sciences, Dewey claims that "the more complex the conditions [i.e. human affairs] with which operations are concerned, the fuller and richer are their consequences. Consequently, the more significant, although not the truer, is the resulting knowledge."[376] So, in this respect, he seems to share Dilthey's sentiment that objects of human affairs are actually more meaningful or significant than other more "natural" objects. But Dewey is careful to point out that this significance does not result in any different kind of validity or truth. Rather, validity and truth are found to be the same no matter what the object, or into which kind of scientific realm it falls. Again, it is method that makes the difference, and if the "natural sciences" have come further in their goals of understanding world, then it is not because more truth is to be found there, but rather that the methods used in these sciences have progressed in a way than the human sciences have not. In essence, then, Dewey could be seen to support Dilthey's hermeneutical method as precisely what the

[376] Dewey, *The Later Works*, 4:158.

human sciences need in order to start enjoying the same kinds of success as the natural sciences:

> When knowledge is defined from the standpoint of a reality to which the conclusions of thought must accommodate themselves, as a photograph must be faithful to its original, there will always be disputes as to whether this or that subject can possibly be treated scientifically. But if the measure of knowledge is the quality of intelligence manifested in dealing with problems presented by any experienced subject-matter, the issue takes on a different aspect. The question always at issue is the possibility of developing a method adequate to cope with problems. The conclusions of physical knowledge do indeed set a standard for knowing. But it is because of the elaboration of competent method that this statement is true, not because of any superior claim to reality on the part of physical subject-matter. All materials of experience are equally real…[377]

6. Universal Objective Validity

It is now possible to understand just what kind of universal objective validity could occur in the human sciences. Given Dewey's account experience, including the nature of its objects, and his emphasis on method, we can now see to what extent Dilthey was heading in a very similar direction regarding validity as well. Both thinkers have either moved away from, or in Dilthey's case are in the process of moving away from, a notion of the validity of knowledge that sees it as the correct interpretation of what is antecedently the case without our influence, understanding, or involvement. Dewey urges us to consider that judgments, specifically judgments about values, ought to be thought of as predictions, rather than ideas that are mere reproductions that exist independently of us:

[377] Ibid., 172.

> The business of thought is not to conform to or reproduce the characters already possessed by objects, but to judge them as potentialities of what they become through an indicated operation…To judge that this object is sweet, that is to refer the idea or meaning 'sweet' to it without actually experiencing sweetness, is to predict that, when it is tasted—that is, subjected to a specified operation—a certain consequence will ensue.[378]

When we begin to think this way, the validity of our judgments rests on the ability to test what was claimed (hence the importance of adequate method for the sciences). But what is the point of being able to accurately predict a future event? In the case above, the prediction of sweetness has perhaps little consequence if it is found to be invalid. But in other cases, those involving more serious matters, the ability to predict might effect our very survival. And with respect to values, it could mean the difference between a world in which we thrive, and one in which we merely live. Thus for Dewey, our questions about the world should be, "how shall we employ what we know to direct the formation of our beliefs about value and how shall we direct our practical behavior so as to test these beliefs and make possible better ones?.. What shall we do to make objects having value more secure in existence?"[379] The validity of our judgments about just which values we wish to secure depends, then, on our willingness to act so as to bring them about. Practical, intelligent, methodically guided activity is the key, whereas pure, isolated theoretical knowledge does little to effect such conditions.[380] We are concerned with consequences and how to achieve them:

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[378] Ibid., 110.
[379] Ibid., 34-5.
[380] Dewey states regarding pure theoretical knowing that "…it is a strict truism that no one would care about *any* exclusively theoretical certainty or uncertainty. For by definition in being *exclusively* theoretical it is one which makes no difference anywhere." (*The Later Works*, 4:31) Here, the point is furthered that theoretical knowledge is only worth the practical activity it makes possible.

> A judgment about what is *to be* desired and enjoyed is…a claim on future action; it possesses *de jure* and not merely *de facto* quality…By way of self-justification and "rationalization," an enjoyment creates a tendency to assert that the thing enjoyed is a value. This assertion of validity adds authority to the fact. It is a decision that the object has a right to exist and hence a claim upon action to further its existence.[381]

To what extent, then, can Dilthey be seen as sharing this same notion of validity as the result of rule-guided inquiry, and the result of practical activity in the securing of value in existence? In addressing values, he states that

> …one thing at least is clear: I find those aspects of the present meaningful that can bear fruit for the future, or for my action in relations to it, and for the progress of society toward it. And from a practical standpoint, I see most clearly that I must begin from universally valid judgments about what is to be realized, if I expect to regulate the future. The present does not contain states, but processes and productive systems that go over into the future of something capable of being produced.[382]

Thus, universal objective validity in the judgments of what we wish to realize in the way of value and meaning in the world is crucial if we are to actually bring them about. We must "know" what we wish to realize, and the only way to "know" this is to test to see if we act so as to secure its existence. For Dilthey, the hermeneutical method of understanding helps us to ascertain the meaning of expressions of lived experience. In ascertaining these meanings, we are judging what we find *meaningful* in them. To judge something meaningful is to say that it belongs in this world—that we want it here. Such a judgment has universal objective validity to the extent that it opens up a world in understanding, and contributes to the kind of world we aim to realize.

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[381] Ibid., 210.
[382] *SW3*, 309.

Thus, with the help of Dewey's pragmatism, elements of Dilthey's hermeneutics have been brought to the fore in order to open up the possibility of universal objective validity, and provide a glimpse of what that validity entails. While he never felt satisfied that is project had been completed, I argue that Dilthey's endeavors to secure universal objective validity came closer than even he realized. His essentially pragmatic theory of hermeneutics allows him to see universal objective validity in a way that helps to shape our future, rather than simply mirror our past.

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