

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME IV

Because Wilhelm Dilthey began to thematize the problem of hermeneutics rather late in his philosophical career, it may be surprising to some that he had already completed an extensive manuscript on the history of hermeneutics in 1860 when he was only twenty-seven. This three-part manuscript, entitled *Schleiermacher's Hermeneutical System in Relation to Earlier Protestant Hermeneutics*, constitutes Dilthey's so-called *Preisschrift* or prize-essay on hermeneutics and has been translated as the opening work of this volume.

Given this background and the fact that Dilthey today counts as one of the classical representatives of hermeneutics, it is paradoxical that in many of his main works the word "hermeneutics" does not occur at all or appears only rarely. In the *Introduction to the Human Sciences* the word is found in only two almost peripheral passages (see *SW* 1, pp. 431, 454). Also such important later works as the "Ideas for a Descriptive and Analytical Psychology" and "The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences," which are now considered part of the basic writings for a hermeneutical theory of the human sciences and which greatly influenced Martin Heidegger, hardly use the term. These works have much to say about the nature of understanding, but little about the art of interpretation.

Because Dilthey published only one small part of his *Preisschrift*, and that not until 1892 as part of a more general essay on "Das natürliche System der Geisteswissenschaften im 17. Jahrhundert" (*GS* II, 90–245), his first real publication on hermeneutics was the "Rise of Hermeneutics" (1900). His most systematic hermeneutical essay was one of his last: "The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Life-Expressions" (1910). This is part of the "Plan for the Continuation of the Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences" and therefore belongs in *SW* 3.

Dilthey's early *Preisschrift* on hermeneutics shows him to have an extraordinary familiarity with the history of hermeneutics, which was probably unmatched in his time. Then why his reticence in referring to it in his published writings? Part of the answer seems to be that at the end of the nineteenth century hermeneutics was considered a tool of theology, legal studies, and philology. Dilthey himself was still a student of theology when he wrote the *Preisschrift*, and the theological context of hermeneutical problems is

very much dominant in the first part of the *Preisschrift*. In the second part Dilthey does relate the genesis of Schleiermacher's more general hermeneutics to the philosophical background of German idealism and romanticism. In some cases, such as the dependence of Friedrich Ast's hermeneutics on Schelling's philosophy, he finds the relation a hindrance to an adequately sensitive hermeneutics. But the failure of specific philosophical links to produce an adequate hermeneutics does not deflect Dilthey from his conviction that only an understanding of history that has been penetrated by philosophical insight can provide the proper background for a general hermeneutics (see 140). Although Dilthey came to think that hermeneutics could become more than a special discipline, he held back from making such a claim for a long time. This is characteristic of the way in which he dealt with the results of his thought during his whole life. Whatever he published was always merely the tip of an iceberg whose full depth only he could estimate. This had always irritated his closest students, who could never survey the overall scope of Dilthey's views despite the fact that they worked most closely with him. Therefore they named him "the mysterious old man."

This reticence to reveal the full scope of his work even extends to Dilthey's lectures, as can be seen from his first lecture courses on logic and *Wissenschaftstheorie*. The *Preisschrift* and these lectures are only a few years apart, yet Dilthey hardly uses the results of the *Preisschrift* even though the problems discussed are intimately related. This is especially clear when one considers Dilthey's first documented lecture on hermeneutics, which has been translated in part for this volume with the title "On Understanding and Hermeneutics: Student Lecture Notes" (1867–68). Some of the basic concepts of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics are discussed, including the circular part-whole relation, the distinction between divination and comparison, and the distinction among dominant, subordinate, and expository ideas. But those who heard these lectures would not have suspected that only a few years earlier Dilthey had completed the most thorough investigation of the history of hermeneutics up to then and that he would never publish it during his lifetime.

The main reason for Dilthey's initial hesitance in using the word "hermeneutics" may be that the kind of philological hermeneutics he learned as a student from Boeckh was too narrow as a theory of understanding to provide an epistemological foundation for the human sciences. From the beginning, Dilthey was concerned to link hermeneutics as a *Kunstlehre* or theory of the rules of exegesis to the

broader tasks of philosophy and history. The first concern was to relate the problem of interpretation to the wider problem of understanding as examined in German philosophy, that is, to relate *Verstehen* to the problem of *Verstand*. In this context Dilthey came to appreciate the value for *Verstehen* of the aesthetic mode of intuition or insight (*geniale Anschauung*), which he considered to be the common basis for the classic-romantic movement in Germany beginning with Winckelmann, Herder, and Lessing, through Goethe and Wilhelm von Humboldt, to Friedrich Schlegel. The part of the *Preisschrift* that starts on page 104 gives the first indication of Dilthey's high estimation of the fruitfulness of their intuitive approach, which aims to capture the individuality of phenomena on the basis of idealistic conceptions of creativity. This discussion of the intuitive approach was expanded in the first published part of the Schleiermacher biography in a section called "German Literature as the Development of a New World-View" (GS XIII, 183–207). This section makes clear that the intuitive approach to understanding individuality informed the comparative approach of the Historical School. At the end of this section, Dilthey writes: "The method of intuition has been the domain of the human sciences: the Schlegels, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Bopp, the Grimms, Boeckh, and Welcker form a continuous line. At the same time, the great movement of German culture, which apprehends structure and the articulation and distinction of parts on the basis of a whole, contains within it the causes of the deep-seated errors of this epoch."

The deep-seated error of the intuitive approach to understanding is that it was content to rely on philosophical speculation. Speculative conceptions of creativity and individuality had to be replaced with empirically tested, descriptive, psychological accounts according to Dilthey (see his attempt to realize this in his *Poetics*, SW 5, pp. 29–173). Understanding for Dilthey is always methodologically mediated. *Verstehen* can therefore not be equated with *Anschauung* and *Einfühlung*, both of which are immediate. The positivistic rejection by Neurath, Abel, and Nagel of the process of understanding as simply intuitive or as a kind of empathy was itself a misunderstanding. As much as Dilthey found himself attracted to the idealistic project of relating intellect and intuition, they may not be fused. As much as feeling should be allowed to play a role in understanding, the idea of empathy involves a loss of self that would make understanding uncritical.

Dilthey's second broad concern was to relate traditional hermeneutics to methodological issues about the status of history as ex-

plored by Johann Gustav Droysen in his *Historik*. Like Droysen, Dilthey wanted to develop an empirical but antipositivistic theory of history on the basis of the methodological opposition between the explanative approach of the natural sciences and the understanding approach of the human sciences. This task was begun in the *Introduction to the Human Sciences* and taken up again in the *Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*. In the hermeneutical essay that completes the latter, Dilthey articulates this link between hermeneutics and historical understanding as an epistemological project. He writes: "Today hermeneutics must find a relation to the general epistemological task of demonstrating the possibility of knowing the nexus of the historical world and discovering the means to its realization. The fundamental importance of understanding has been clarified and it is necessary to determine the attainable degree of universality that is possible for each kind of understanding beginning with its logical forms" (GS VII, 217-18, see SW 3).

In summary, we can say that the comparatively scarce use of the term "hermeneutics" indicates that Dilthey started as a historian of Protestant thought, where hermeneutics was conceived narrowly as the art of providing rules of textual exegesis. At the same time, we see Dilthey constantly concerned with the general problems of understanding and explanation, which eventually led him to expand the meaning of hermeneutics by relating it to the epistemological and reflective task of founding the sciences. The primary aim of this volume is to show the genesis of this process, whereas SW 3 deals with the task of grounding the human sciences.

In the next two sections we will comment in more detail on the essays in the respective parts of this volume.

HERMENEUTICS AND ITS HISTORY

Dilthey's prize-essay *Schleiermacher's Hermeneutical System in Relation to Earlier Protestant Hermeneutics* provides an intricate account of the history of hermeneutics from Flacius to Schleiermacher. The basic tenet of the Reformation was that it is possible for the laity to have direct access to the meaning of the Bible. Allegorical interpretations that negate the literal meaning of a Scriptural passage for the sake of an institutionally decreed hidden doctrinal meaning are to be avoided as much as possible. Schleiermacher was a crucial figure in the history of hermeneutics because he was able to

incorporate tendencies of German romanticism that also militated against allegorical interpretation on independent grounds. Romanticism was based on an idealistic theory of creativity that favored symbolic over allegorical meaning, and universal over special hermeneutics. A symbol is a particular that itself embodies a universal, thus cancelling the opposition of the immanent and transcendent, the visible and the invisible. It is noteworthy that Dilthey was one of the first to stress the importance of Friedrich Schlegel as Schleiermacher's link to the classic-romantic literary movement of the time. Although Dilthey did not receive permission from Schleiermacher's family to publish his correspondence with Schlegel, who was in disrepute because of his scandalous *Lucinde*, Dilthey did make it very clear both in the *Preisschrift* and in the published Schleiermacher biography how productive their relationship had been.

The main division in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is that between grammatical and psychological interpretation, but it is clear that in his overall dialectical approach to hermeneutics these two kinds of interpretation are always interdependent. It should be noted that grammatical interpretation deals with all aspects of language (not merely those having to do with grammar) insofar as they affect the interpretation of human speech and/or texts. Just as grammatical interpretation is not reducible to grammar, so psychological interpretation has little to do with psychology as we would think of it today. It deals not only with the life-moments that generate the activities of speaking and writing, but also with how these uses of language contribute to the further development of human life. Schleiermacher could just as well have distinguished between the objective and subjective aspects of interpretation.

There has been much controversy about the relative importance that should be attached to grammatical and psychological interpretation. When Heinz Kimmerle published his 1959 edition of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics based solely on Schleiermacher's own notes, he called into question Dilthey's Schleiermacher interpretation based on the Lücke edition of the hermeneutics, which also used lecture notes by students. Dilthey is criticized for assuming that Schleiermacher favored the psychological aspects of interpretation over the grammatical or linguistic aspects. According to Kimmerle this is true only for the late notes. Manfred Frank has pointed out, however, that the respective number of notes by Schleiermacher on grammatical and psychological interpretation is not a measure of their relative importance. He argues that Schleiermacher needed fewer notes to lecture on the psychological aspects of interpretation

than on the grammatical aspects because he had a better command of the former material.¹ Dilthey's *Preisschrift*, not published until 1966, shows that he knew of Schleiermacher's early notes and paid adequate attention to what Schleiermacher said about grammatical interpretation.

Schleiermacher seems to make grammatical interpretation basic or elementary when he says that "only when one has obtained certainty about an author through language, can the other, psychological task [of interpretation] begin."² He denies, however, that grammatical or linguistic interpretation is a lower form of psychological interpretation. Both involve the infinite task of attempting to determine what is first given as indeterminate. Because each can only approximate its goal, it is also dependent on the other. No aspect of interpretation can be final. "Language is an infinite domain because each element is determinable by the others in a special way. The same is true for psychological interpretation, for each intuition of an individual is infinite."³

From the perspective of language the ideal speech or text is maximally effective or nonrepetitive; from the perspective of psychology the ideal speech or text is maximally distinctive. The first perspective seeks what is classical in a text, the second what is original. Only the convergence of these perspectives can do justice to Schleiermacher's romantic search for genius in a text.⁴ If interpretation is concerned with fully understanding the point of view of the other it must be psychological according to Schleiermacher, but to the extent that interpreted meaning is to remain applicable to the self it must be grammatical.

Far from endorsing Schleiermacher's conception of psychological interpretation, Dilthey attacks its assumption that in a perfect work everything can be derived from some seminal decision (*Keimentschluß*) by the author. Whereas Schleiermacher reserves external historical factors for criticism as distinct from hermeneutics, Dilthey regards psychological and historical factors as so interdependent that the idea of a seminal decision becomes untenable. In Schleiermacher's defense it should be said that the subjective aspect of interpretation is not exhausted by the psychological, but is balanced by what he calls technical interpretation. The latter has to do

¹ See Manfred Frank's introduction to Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), p. 60f.

² Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, p. 80.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

with the process through which the author presents or displays his thoughts in terms of a two-phase development from “meditation” to “composition.” Schleiermacher writes that “psychologically man is free, whereas on the technical side it is the power of form that is dominant and controls the author both in the moment of meditation and that of composition.”⁵ The technical side of interpretation must recognize that the way authors present their ideas is subject to the formal rules of the genre in which they work. Dilthey’s contribution to our understanding of this technical or rule-bound aspect of Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics is to trace its central idea of self-display or self-explication back to the idealistic theories of Fichte, Schlegel, and the like (see 100–118). In this context it can also be shown that Schleiermacher’s conception of the hermeneutical circle, where parts are understood on the basis of the whole to which they belong and vice versa, resembles Fichte’s conception of the oscillating (*schwebende*) movement of the productive imagination. Because Fichte’s imagination oscillates between two philosophical principles, that of the I and the not-I, its movement is not just any activity but one meant to reconcile general opposites. Similarly, the movement of Schleiermacher’s hermeneutical circle is a dialectical activity that explicates an original constructive act that instantaneously or intuitively grasps the unity of a whole. Interpretation is conceived idealistically as a process of reconstructing the original constructive grasp of reality attained by a creative mind. This interpretive process involves two phases: (1) a dialectical explication (*Darstellung*) of the original constructive intuition in terms of Schleiermacher’s dual material principle of identity and distinctiveness; and (2) its codification in terms of a plurality of rules of exegesis (see 149).

Another hermeneutical model had already been developed by Friedrich Ast on the basis of Schelling’s philosophy. According to Ast the hermeneutical process proceeds through three general stages: (1) a unity that is merely anticipated; (2) a plurality that relates particulars to each other; and (3) a totality in which unity and plurality are fused. Dilthey finds Ast’s theoretical philosophical model for interpretation too abstract and considers Schleiermacher’s philosophical hermeneutical principle an improvement in that it locates hermeneutics in practical philosophy. The understanding of human speech and communication finds its more proper horizon in the world of ethical action and praxis. It is interesting to note that one

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

of the kinds of action distinguished by Schleiermacher fits right into his hermeneutics of explication (*Darstellung*), namely, explicative action (*das darstellendes Handeln*). Just as hermeneutics presents or explicates the fundamental principles that constitute human individuality (identity and distinctiveness), so explicative action communicates the spiritual inner life of an individual.⁶ Explicative action could also be called “communicative action” to relate it to a more recent counterpart. What is communicated is nothing personal, but the extent of the sovereignty of spirit or reason over one’s flesh or body. Explicative action is thus not expressive of what is distinctive, because spirit like reason is the same in all of us.⁷ Just as Kant subsumes what is expressed in a symbol to what it presents or explicates about our rational ideas of transcendent moral ends,⁸ so we find in Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics an ideal of explicating the meaning of the ethical community in the most universal terms possible.

Because Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics is so steeped in his philosophical presuppositions—one could say that it is as philosophical as Heidegger and Gadamer claim their hermeneutics to be—any criticisms of it must, according to Dilthey, address its philosophical base. On this score Dilthey objects that Schleiermacher’s philosophy aims at the formation of concepts rather than at the formation of judgments (see 133). Schleiermacher’s philosophy constructs the world on the basis of a series of fundamental concepts that are static and timeless. Thus Dilthey writes: “All efforts to explain culture by appealing to the multifarious motives that appear in the course of history give way to a mode of explanation that is grounded in the Absolute and its antitheses” (133f.). Schleiermacher’s philosophical system is basically classificatory and tries to explain historical events and action by manipulating general concepts dialectically. What would have been more appropriate, according to Dilthey, is a hermeneutics based on a philosophy oriented to the formation of judgments. Such a philosophy relates concepts, not to each other, but to the actual particulars of historical life. Only such a judgment-oriented philosophy can really help explain historical change (see 133). Here we can speculate that if Dilthey had been interested

⁶ See Schleiermacher, *Die christliche Sitte* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1884), p. 510.

⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 510.

⁸ See Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of “The Critique of Judgment”* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 125.

in developing his own hermeneutics at this early stage of his thought, he would have replaced Schleiermacher's hermeneutics of conceptual explication with one that can better mediate between philosophical understanding and the historical explanation of facts.

What we have entitled "On Understanding and Hermeneutics: Student Lecture Notes" is taken from a larger lecture on intuition and understanding given in Basel as part of Dilthey's course *Logik und System der philosophischen Wissenschaften* in 1867–68. It shows Dilthey beginning to make an explanation–understanding distinction. In the Schleiermacher manuscript, Dilthey allowed for a continuity between explanation and understanding and spoke freely of historical explanation. Now seven years later, he seems to have appropriated Droysen's distinction between understanding history and explaining nature.⁹ Droysen insisted that explanation is inappropriate in history because it regards the present as necessitated by the past. Conceiving the historical world as an ethical domain, Droysen ruled out historical explanation because it is incompatible with human freedom.¹⁰ As we will see later, Dilthey's distinction between understanding and explanation is less categorical. Droysen's influence seems evident when Dilthey relates understanding to the knowledge of agency that we possess in moral affairs. But unlike Droysen, Dilthey does not simply equate the moral domain with the historical world and rule out explanation from the latter altogether. Dilthey speaks of understanding in his lecture as disclosing "the inner core" of human action. Explanations about physical force, by contrast, give us knowledge of its effects, but not of "the nature of its agency" (229).

Dilthey suggests initially that in the moral world I can "understand everything," yet he goes on to say that a "human being who understood everything, would not be human" (230). Because to understand something for Dilthey is to grasp its individuality, there will always be a limit to what can be understood. To understand everything would be to lose one's own individuality. Morality is in principle understandable because it deals with individual agency and responsibility. Here the universal can be embodied in specific choices. Everything about the moral world is understandable if this means being able to apply the moral law to myself, but

⁹ The evidence for the priority will be discussed in Part II.

¹⁰ See Johann Gustav Droysen, *Historik* 2nd ed., ed. Rudolf Hübner (Munich: Verlag von R. Oldenbourg, 1943), p. 151.

not if this means having access to the rationale of everyone else's choices.

Understanding is never just a matter of abstract thought. Instead, it requires the imagination to exhibit the universal in the particular, the whole in the part. We can discern the remnants of older intuition theories when Dilthey defines the hermeneutical task as understanding "the whole of a text . . . in a flashlike instant" (231). However, understanding is basically an inference from analogy that proceeds from particular to particular. This means that an initial reading cannot yet produce understanding: "It only gives us a general idea; we must then understand the particularity [of the work]" (231). The understanding of the work's particularity seems at first to be conceived in terms of Schleiermacher's idealistic reconstruction of its author's creative act. But the reconstruction is more "free" and involves a process of exclusion and generalization. To understand a text is not merely to grasp the general meanings of its words, nor to imaginatively reactivate the particular sense it had for its author, but to activate that concrete sense that it can have in relation to my present experience (see 233). Here understanding becomes a function of criticism and considers relevance as well as meaning.

One of the interesting features of this lecture is the way the discussion of hermeneutics leads into that of history. This relation between hermeneutics and historical consciousness is the very theme of this volume, and leads Dilthey to broaden hermeneutics from the science of interpreting texts to the science of interpreting all historical objectifications. But more than that, it allows us to conceive the relation between hermeneutics and history as moving from the mere philological art of interpreting meaning to the philosophical theory of judging truth. The theory of history (*Historik*) is a crucial link for through it "a sense for truth was first cultivated" (234).

It is also worth noting that Dilthey distinguishes three levels of historical understanding: (1) that of the chronicler, who has an "epic interest" in the narrative configuration of events; (2) that of the pragmatic historian, who has an interest in the political motivations behind the affairs of state; and (3) that of the universal historian, who "has the task of reconstructing the whole of inner life" (234). It is clear that the reconstruction of inner life here is not only a psychological activity, but also involves the grammatical and technical aspects of interpretation based on the language and genre employed as well as all the contextual features derived from the perspective of universal history. Friedrich Schlosser is claimed to be the

first to “have taken the full measure of the domain of universal history” (233), and a full essay in the second half of this volume is devoted to his work.

“The Rise of Hermeneutics,” having appeared in two prior English versions, is one of Dilthey’s best known essays. But this is the first time that the important addenda have also been translated. The essay and addenda provide much more than a summary of Dilthey’s early *Preisschrift*. For one thing, the essay goes back farther than the Protestant background used in the *Preisschrift*, to the exegetical and rhetorical views of the Greeks. The conflicts between the Alexandrian and Pergamene schools of philology set the stage for later interpretive controversies. When Alexandria was ruled by the Greeks and Romans, it became a depository of learning. The art of textual verification and criticism was developed based on linguistic and historical research. This made it possible to identify spurious works and exclude inauthentic passages. Pergamene philology appropriated the Stoic principle of allegorical interpretation, which became influential in the efforts to “resolve the contradictions between inherited religious texts and more abstract and purely [philosophical] world-views” (240). Dilthey sees the same kind of opposition between the so-called grammatico-historical and allegorical approaches recur in the later theological schools of Alexandria and Antioch. But now the Alexandrian School, represented by Origen, is the proponent of allegorical interpretation and the Antioch School, represented by Theodorus, champions the kind of literal interpretation arrived at through the grammatico-historical approach. Origen, who was strongly influenced by Platonic and Stoic thought, distinguished between literal and pneumatic senses in texts, but Theodorus often rejected a higher allegorical sense as in the case of the Song of Songs, which for him was nothing but a nuptial song. It is clear that Dilthey sees more continuity between his own approach to hermeneutics and the Antioch School than with the Neoplatonic tendencies of the Alexandrian theologians.

Combining what Dilthey says in both the *Preisschrift* and “The Rise of Hermeneutics” we could distinguish two general hermeneutical approaches, the first rooted in the linguistic considerations found in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, the other in the spiritual concerns of Platonic philosophy. Aristotle’s contribution to hermeneutics lies in his ability to organize our understanding of texts through considerations of plot structures and the analysis of linguistic means. The Aristotelian approach to the metaphorical use of language is to see it as a modification of a literal use by means of a kind

of transference. Although Dilthey himself adheres to the Vichian view that poetic meaning is more original than literal meaning, what is attractive about Aristotle's approach to metaphor is that it allows us to intuit "similarity in dissimilars."¹¹ Whereas Aristotle allows us to see a continuity between literal and figurative meaning, the Platonic and Stoic approach tends to separate them as the sensuous versus the spiritual. Allegorical interpretations can be ingenious in overcoming anomalies and contradictions in a text by appealing to higher spiritual senses, but they do not resolve these problems in ways that promote historical understanding. For Dilthey the grammatical approach provides the kind of interpretation that can be more readily allied with historical inquiry.

Peter Szondi's "Introduction to Literary Hermeneutics," which is in many ways a critical commentary on Dilthey's essay, gives a different reading of the distinction between grammatical and allegorical interpretation. He sees *both* as ways of coming to terms with the historical distance created by an aging text. He writes: "Grammatical interpretation aims at that which was once meant and wants to preserve this in that it replaces a verbal expression . . . which has become historically alien by a new one Allegorical interpretation, on the other hand, is kindled by the sign which has become alien, to which it gives a new meaning born not of the conceptual world [*Vorstellungswelt*] of the text, but rather belonging to that of its interpreter."¹² The new expression that Szondi attributes to grammatical interpretation is meant to dissolve the historical distance between us and an ancient text by supposedly allowing us to transport ourselves back into its original meaning. Whereas grammatical interpretation is assumed to be restorative and is said to require us to "efface"¹³ our own historical standpoint, allegorical interpretation is claimed to be forward-looking. Allegorical interpretation need not replace a literal sense with a spiritual sense located in the timeless realm of the Good, but can according to Szondi replace a faded literal sense with a new temporal sense deriving from the present historical horizon of the interpreter. From Dilthey's perspective, however, Szondi's accounts of grammatical and allegorical interpretation could be said to miss the mark. First, his account of grammatical interpretation seems to confuse it with psy-

¹¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1459a (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 2335.

¹² Peter Szondi, "Introduction to Literary Hermeneutics," *New Literary History* 1 (1978): 24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

chological interpretation. We already saw in the case of Schleiermacher that psychological interpretation aims at restoring the original intention of the author, whereas grammatical interpretation allows us to extend the meaning of a text to make it applicable to the present situation of the self. Even more important, no interpretation can efface the historical standpoint of the interpreter. In the *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (1883) Dilthey had already chided the historian Ranke for his wish “to efface himself in order to see things as they were” (*SW* 1, 143), because it places too much faith in intuition while dispensing with the necessary critical and analytical powers of the interpreter. Just as grammatical interpretation cannot be self-effacing, so allegorical interpretation cannot be self-absorbing. It is impossible to wholly absorb an old text into one’s present horizon. Both pictures drawn by Szondi of bridging historical distance require inexplicable leaps. The real task of hermeneutics is mediation.

One of the reasons why Dilthey was suspicious of allegorical interpretations is that they tend to become doctrinally rigid. Even when allegorical interpretation does perform a historical function of updating an old text, it fails to create a historical link between a no-longer acceptable literal meaning and the new meaning imposed on it. Only a link that can illuminate how a revised meaning has come about can allow for further revisions in meaning. Instead, allegorical interpretations have tended to become the fixed property of organized religions and other exclusive institutions. In this respect the layman-oriented hermeneutics of early Protestantism is seen by Dilthey as a continuation of the Aristotelian tradition of grammatical interpretation, of the critical and historical research of original Alexandrian philology, and of the antispeculative tendencies of the Antioch school of theological interpretation.

Dilthey notes in the addenda that the history of hermeneutics has been an episodic one. This is because hermeneutics “receives attention only when there is a great historical movement, which makes it urgent that singular historical phenomena be understood scientifically. But then the interest in hermeneutics wanes again” (252). Because hermeneutics had already accomplished its goal of codifying the philological rules necessary for historical understanding in the work of Boeckh and Droysen, Dilthey found the interest in hermeneutics to be declining. In order to revive hermeneutics, Dilthey broadened the scope of understanding to encompass what is distinctive of all the operations of the human sciences vis-à-vis the natural sciences. Hermeneutics no longer provides merely the material rules

for understanding human objectifications, but is also the formal theory of what makes understanding in the human sciences possible. "If understanding is basic for the human sciences," writes Dilthey, then "the epistemological, logical, and methodological analysis of understanding is one of the main tasks for the foundation of the human sciences. The importance of this task only becomes fully apparent when one makes explicit the difficulties contained in the nature of understanding with reference to the practice of a universally valid science" (252f.).

Because these difficulties constitute aporias or impasses, a long-term philosophical interest in hermeneutics now seems assured. The first aporia formulated by Dilthey states that each of us is "enclosed, as it were, within his own consciousness" (253). This should make it even more clear that Dilthey does not share the Rankean ideal of self-effacement when it comes to understanding others. The only ground for understanding others is the presupposition that the same basic psychic processes are to be found in all individuals, although they are possessed in varying degrees of intensity. Thus Dilthey's motto "transposition is transformation" (253) means that the possibility of identifying with what is other or alien through transposition lies in a process of self-transformation.

Dilthey's second aporia involves the familiar hermeneutical circle between parts and wholes. The third aporia points out that a psychic state is not understood from within, but on the basis of "the external stimuli that aroused it." As a consequence, "milieu is indispensable for understanding" (253). Because understanding involves all kinds of external factors, Dilthey admits that "when pushed to its limits, understanding is not different from explanation, insofar as the latter is possible in this domain" (253).

This projection of an ultimate convergence between understanding and explanation can be imagined in two different ways. The first or weaker version of convergence merely acknowledges that the full understanding of human life must also take into account the explanation of the external contextual factors involved. Here explanation can continue to mean what it normally means for Dilthey: the derivation of particular instances from the general causal laws found in the natural sciences. However, it is also possible that Dilthey is conceiving a mode of explanation *sui generis* to the human sciences. Then explanation would be the process of bringing what we know about the external contextual factors to bear on the inner processes to be understood. This is what is suggested when Dilthey

goes on to write: “There, where general insights are consciously and methodically applied in order to bring what is singular to comprehensive knowledge, the expression ‘explanation’ finds its proper place in the knowledge of the singular. It is only justified insofar as we remain aware that we can never allow what is singular to be fully submerged by what is universal” (257).

The first mode of explanation subordinates the particular to the universal, but remains an external supplement to the process of understanding the meaning of human activities and their objectifications. The second mode of explanation does not allow the particular to be submerged in the universal, but would seem to let what is contextual enter into our understanding. Part of the difference here would seem to lie in the nature of the universal involved. Explanations of the first type are causal explanations where the universal is a law or generalization. Explanations of the second type seem to refer to a universal or inclusive framework. Thus when Dilthey speaks of universal history, he means a study of all aspects of life during a certain time span. As we will see in the second part of this volume, universal history does not entail that there are universal laws of historical development.

INTERPRETATIONS OF HISTORY

As in Part I of this volume, we have arranged Dilthey’s writing on the theory of history in Part II chronologically. We again start with three early texts and end with texts from shortly after the turn of the century. Approximately the same periods are represented in each part, without them, however, adding up to a theory of the human sciences. Such a project—which is the topic of *SW 3*—can here only be indicated *in nuce*.

Even more than in his early work on the history of hermeneutics, Dilthey’s early writings on history and historians show him to be concerned with defining his own position. This proceeds especially by way of a demarcation over against the English and French positivists, which is then extensively worked out twenty years later in Book One of the *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (see *SW 1*). Dilthey is also concerned to set himself apart from other German-speaking historians. This is not a case of a confrontation between sharply opposed historical interpretations, but one of a more subtle critique as of Jacob Burckhardt. One major position that Dilthey

did not deem worthy of an explicit discussion is the speculative metaphysics of history of German idealism. Hegel is mentioned rarely and appears as the representative of a fully surpassed epoch whose extreme standpoint serves merely as a foil. As late as in 1903—shortly before his reassessment of Hegel—Dilthey writes: “There is no separate philosophy of history that could be of any value” (GS III, 229).

By reviewing Buckle’s *History of Civilization in England* for the *Berliner Allgemeine Zeitung* in 1862, the twenty-nine-year-old Dilthey found himself at the leading edge of methodological debates. A year after his review-essay, Droysen’s polemical attack on Buckle’s book also appeared. Both Droysen and Dilthey reject the claim that history can be made a science by adopting the methods of the exact natural sciences. This constitutes the beginning of the ever-escalating controversy concerning the methods of explanation and understanding. Dilthey does not yet use the explanation–understanding distinction in his review. Droysen clearly used it first. But precisely because Dilthey formulates his counterposition to Buckle without appealing to this conceptual opposition, it becomes possible to recognize his original intention independently of terminological definitions.

By contrast to Droysen’s sharp critique of Buckle, Dilthey’s seems moderate. This is partly due to the fact that this anonymous newspaper article was meant to fulfill a general informational service and could not expect its readers to follow an academic debate. But more important is the realization that Dilthey—who belongs to the generation that succeeds Droysen—is much more receptive to new ideas from other European nations. This is especially true for his response to the cardinal question raised by Buckle about laws in the historical world. Dilthey agrees in principle with the thesis that in nature as well as in history neither mere chance nor providence rules, but that in both domains each event stands within a lawful causal nexus. Like Comte, J. S. Mill, and Buckle, Dilthey searches for the laws that operate within the socio-historical world. Again like them, he rejects metaphysical questions and seeks an empirical basis for historical inquiry. He shares their belief in a scientific solution to the problems of society. And this is true not only for the young Dilthey. Still in 1886, in a memorial essay for Wilhelm Scherer, he writes that the social, religious, and pedagogical tasks of European society threatened by crisis can be solved only by causal scientific knowledge. He continues: “Only insofar as we know the laws according to which these causes produce effects, can we pur-

positively bring about the necessary results for improving society and heal the wounds of the social body in an insightful way" (GS XI, 237).

Dilthey opposes Buckle's positivism not because it is overly scientific, but because it fails to recognize the distinctiveness of the historical world over against nature. This lack of recognition is methodologically determined. Proceeding from a model of exact empirical inquiry, Buckle assumes that his subject matter must be of such a nature as to allow strict scientific knowledge in accordance with laws. According to Dilthey the result of this is that Buckle "advances the most paradoxical claim ever uttered by a historian. He excludes the actions of individuals, of the mighty ones of this world, from consideration, and he makes social conditions as they manifest themselves in the behavior of masses the only subject of historiography" (265). A further consequence is the reduction of history to a statistical survey of empirical data about social conditions and finally the formulation of inductively obtained laws, which are then again applied deductively to analogous states of affairs. This is in principle the research program of the empirical social sciences, which have become increasingly powerful in projecting consumer and voter responses on the basis of surveys and polls.

Dilthey's protest is not against the social sciences and their methods, but against the claim that they should replace more traditional historical inquiry. Indeed, Dilthey expresses the "hope that the realm of our knowledge will be enriched by a new field, the science of society" (269). But he also insists that statistical correlations and any laws to be derived from them will only be valid for "relatively indifferent" (267) human behavior. This is the argument of a historian who was not yet in a position to witness the power of economic forces in modern democracies with their market analyses and advertising strategies. That the issue of what is indifferent and what is important could be decided by economic, demographic, and electoral forces was not yet obvious in Germany in 1860. The fact that Dilthey still had a limited view of the potential significance of the social sciences does not diminish the validity of his claim that historical interpretation should also focus on other factors, such as the role of the individual in a social context. Dilthey's second objection is that regularities derived from statistical analysis cannot yet claim to be laws. He maintains that Buckle mistakenly identified "the concepts of regular recurrence and lawfulness" (267).

Dilthey's review of Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, which appeared in the same year, is critical in

a quite different way. While welcoming this work as “the first thorough-going working-out of a cultural-historical approach in Germany” (272f), he nevertheless warns that such an approach tends to dissolve “the temporal and causal fabric of a set of events” by concentrating on “general states or conditions” (273). Whereas he criticizes Buckle for making excessive and simplistic causal claims, he finds Burckhardt too hesitant in asserting causal relations. This leads Dilthey to a more general assertion that is worth noting. Speaking of history, he writes that “a causal nexus is its solid framework; without that, even if history is crammed with individual traits, it remains an amorphous mass” (273).

Although Burckhardt is acknowledged to have contributed to the method of cultural history in attempting “to describe the true and strict coherence of the many-sided life of this period” (274), his concern to show that all the individual traits of the Italian Renaissance add up to the rise of modern man leads Dilthey to the charge that he reduced the Renaissance to a schematic unity by means of a not fully plausible universal image. This is responsible for Dilthey’s harshest claim of the essay: “Hegel could hardly have devised a more arbitrary play with general concepts than Burckhardt has in some passages” (276).

The overall positive effect of Burckhardt’s work is nevertheless acknowledged to be that no one before him had so successfully articulated the distinctive Italian character of this great epoch. Dilthey then sketches the outlines of the kind of causality required of a true cultural history. It must not allow itself to disintegrate into special aspects “such as Court Life, Attire, Domestic Life” (273), but must derive such conditions from their causes. According to Dilthey, Burckhardt did attempt to do so when he placed the cultural aspects of the Renaissance in relation to the political and institutional life of the Italian states.

The kind of causal account demanded by Dilthey in these early years and which he sees at least partly realized in Burckhardt relates to contexts or systems whose structure he designated as “systems of reciprocal influence (*Wirkungszusammenhänge*)” in his last writings. It may seem surprising at first that in the next essay—in seeming contrast to what was claimed about Burckhardt—the historian Friedrich Christoph Schlosser is criticized for considering everything “solely in reference to its origin and effect, solely as historical causality” (321). Merely going backward and forward in time can detract from an understanding of the historical phenomena themselves. The task of historical narrative is not to merely describe a

continuum of historical efficacy, but to grasp how several genetic sequences coalesce to form a complex historical phenomenon. The historical causality that Dilthey finds inadequate simply connects a sequence of events; the kind he expects allows us to understand the genesis of complex states of affairs.

One could ask why an early essay by Dilthey about Schlosser, a historian, who today would be regarded as of secondary importance and as a forerunner of greater exemplars of German historiography, has been chosen for this volume. There are in fact two reasons for our choice. First, Dilthey's essay as well as Schlosser's own work constitute a significant contribution toward the understanding of German liberalism in the first half of the nineteenth century. A year after Schlosser's death in 1861, Dilthey showed not only the shortcomings of this stubborn patriarch of the South German School, but also his great contributions to the political education of the middle classes, especially in southern Germany. The great popularity of Schlosser's *World History for the German People*, which appeared in nineteen volumes from 1844 to 1857, is often forgotten today when more emphasis is placed on the influence of German historians on the political consciousness of the more cultured classes. Schlosser's hatred of the aristocracy and his harsh judgments about German court life, connected with his intention to arouse the political conscience of his nation instead of gaining political influence, manifest an interesting but little-known version of liberalism. In this sense, Dilthey's essay provides an important perspective on the history of political education in Germany and at the same time informs us about Dilthey's own political stance ten years before the beginning of the founding of the German Empire by Bismarck.

The second reason why we have chosen this essay is that it supplements Dilthey's contemporaneous essays on Buckle and Burckhardt by establishing another kind of methodological delineation. Dilthey distinguishes Schlosser's historical approach from certain teleological approaches to history and in doing so performs a kind of balancing act to define his own developing position. An important concept in this context is that of "immanent teleology" (309, 313), which would play a prominent role in Dilthey's later writings. Immanent teleology is that property of a whole which allows it to develop its structure and meaning out of itself and not from some externally given end or purpose. Applied to history, immanent teleology involves the rejection of a pure teleological philosophy of history that projects a purpose of history or searches for God's provi-

dential intent by which all historical epochs are to be judged. Ranke's famous phrase that each epoch stands "in immediate relation to God" embodies the rejection of such an external teleology in favor of immanent teleology.

The young Dilthey's own relation to immanent teleology is not uniformly positive. On the one hand, one can discern a certain critical distance to it when he compares Schlosser's "basic historical category of sober causality" positively with the "immanent teleology of phenomena and a dialectical process, by which in our century the effort was made to spiritualize the rigid mechanism of pragmatic history" (309). On the other hand, Dilthey criticizes Schlosser for ignoring immanent teleology, which is in turn described as a procedure for "concentrating a historical period into an ideal image and dialectically constructing the moments through which history passes" (313). Dilthey is very vague in these passages and mentions no direct representatives of immanent teleology, only Ranke and Droysen as those historians in whose work the influence of the immanent teleological perspective on history has been positive (see 313). It is also unclear what decisive difference is to be found between the acceptable procedure of "concentrating an age into an ideal image" of immanent teleology and the objectionable way "the teleological philosophers of history from Herder to Hegel" organized "particular data on the basis of a total idea of some historical period into a system" (313). To be sure, an ideal image is likely to be more aesthetic and concrete than a system based on an idea, but one might have expected a sharper delimitation. Perhaps the reason for this lack of precision derives from the fact that Dilthey is alluding to two aspects of Hegel's historical thinking: on the one hand, a teleological *philosophy of history* with its implausible explanative schemata; on the other hand, an immanent teleological *approach to history* that contributed greatly to the process of overcoming pragmatic history. Perhaps the twenty-nine-year-old Dilthey, surrounded in Berlin by all the great representatives of the Historical School, did not want to establish an explicit link between Hegel and Ranke.

The real theme of the Schlosser essay, however, is the special kind of universal history that Schlosser first developed into a proper cultural history. As in the Basel lecture on understanding and hermeneutics, universal history is distinguished from pragmatic history. In contrast with pragmatic history, which concentrates on individual agents as the only genuine historical causes and examines their

motives and practical goals, Schlosser's universal history attempts to derive "a practical world-view based on the totality of history" (307). From this larger perspective man is fundamentally historical; that is, "he fulfills his moral task only in the continuity of culture" (299). Dilthey points to two genuine contributions made by Schlosser. First, he searched for the same human nature in all epochs of world history and in that way made each epoch equally close to the reader. Thus Schlosser engendered the conviction "that no changes affect the moral law and the divine world-order, and that his own time and his own surroundings also are subject to this standard" (308). Second, Schlosser considered all historical events in relation to their own cultural context and at the same time measured them by the whole of human culture. When examining the cooperation of political and cultural life in any period, Schlosser made special use of literature as a historical resource. By also comparing individual phenomena to world history at large, he generates a conception of universal history in which the life and death of particular cultures is thematized.

In his later essay on the eighteenth century, Dilthey speaks of a "false ideal of cultural history" that severs the connections existing not only between general conditions and the actions of individuals, but also "between the power struggles of nations and the regular advances of civilization" (345). He stresses that the philosophical spirit of the eighteenth century as represented in the works of Hume, Gibbon, and Robertson, as well as of Voltaire and Frederick the Great, already grasped these cultural-historical connections. They provide a genuine philosophical interpretation of history as distinct from the philosophy of history that is to be rejected. This distinction is already found in the Schlosser essay, where Dilthey designates the philosophical task of the historian as that of "grasping the place of the individual phenomenon within cultural history" (293). A philosophical treatment of history should take into account "the causes that advance and hinder this culture, its branches and connections, its influence on the nation's education as embodied in the state" (303). Here again we could say that the idea of systems of reciprocal influence is anticipated in these earliest writings and that Dilthey considers their study as the proper philosophical task of history.

In his last great work on the theory of history, "The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences" (1910), Dilthey gives a short summary of his Schlosser essay according to which the

most important contribution of this historian is his aim to lead his people to a practical world-view. He once again emphasizes Schlosser's cultural-historical approach, but criticizes his rigid moralism, which detracts from his appreciation "for the splendor of historical life and the individual appeal of great personalities" (GS VII, 108f.). In a fragment for the "Continuation of the Formation," Dilthey expresses a much harsher judgment about Schlosser. He is now linked to pragmatic history, which traces the relation of motive, action, and effect, and which especially in France has had the tendency to suspect motives and be disparaging. Great historical results are derived from petty and egoistic motives. Thus we now read, "typical is the so-called moralism of Schlosser, who is a pragmatic historian with an extra dose of French reductionism, but on the basis of moral judgment." Such a perspective leads to historical skepticism and can only be overcome "when psychological *raffinement* is replaced by the understanding of the products of the human spirit" (GS VII, 260).

The essay "The Eighteenth Century and the Historical World" (1901) represents a new focus of interest on Dilthey's part. A decade earlier he had published a series of essays on the scientific and philosophical movements of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. And earlier in the *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, he had sympathetically described the rise of the Historical School in nineteenth-century Germany as a reaction against a certain aspect of eighteenth-century rationalism, namely, against the theory of natural rights and the revolutionary advancement of human rights. The present essay is part of a series of works that provides us an important supplement and modification of Dilthey's earlier attitude toward the century of Enlightenment. A related essay on "Frederick the Great and the German Enlightenment" (1900) introduces a more positive evaluation when it warns the German people that it should not forget that its particular place among cultured nations at the beginning of the twentieth century is in large part due to the "much maligned Enlightenment" (GS III, 134). One of the features of the German Enlightenment that distinguished it from its French counterpart was that figures such as Lessing and Kant were willing to allow religion a continued role in culture. This did not prevent them from being attacked by institutional religion. According to Dilthey the great contribution of the German Enlightenment was its ability to relate the dogmas of Christianity back to certain truths about moral responsibility and human

dignity. This was overlooked not only by the “hateful theological polemics” of organized religion, but also by the romantic critique “based on the proud perspective of genius” (GS III, 142). It seems that Dilthey now wants to soften some of his own earlier critiques of Enlightenment philosophy based on sympathy with the standpoints of romanticism and the Historical School. Perhaps he saw the need to distance himself from a newly rising irrationalism derived from Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Whatever his reason, the essay on the eighteenth century shows how unjust one would be to Dilthey’s thought to call it an irrational life-philosophy based exclusively on the German tradition.

The opening sentence of the essay already expresses his positive evaluation of the eighteenth century: “The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, which is reproached for being unhistorical, produced a new conception of history” (325). Among the historians then cited as examples of this new conception there is only one German: Frederick the Great. Two-thirds of the essay deals with French and British representatives of Enlightenment history. Only the last two chapters are devoted to the beginnings of a specifically German conception of history, which Dilthey locates in the “Patriarch of Osnabrück,” Justus Möser, in the Göttingen circle centered around Schlözer, and in the still oft-cited art historian Johann J. Winckelmann. They made it possible to overcome the limits of French and British Enlightenment history, which are to see in the past merely stages toward the exalted level of present civilization and thus to lack any appreciation of the intrinsic value of past epochs.

Without any reservation, Dilthey speaks of the “sovereignty of the new spirit represented by the name Voltaire” (325). Voltaire himself is called “this liveliest of men” whose historiography differs completely “from anything that had ever been written on history” (348). While listing the leading ideas of the Enlightenment, Dilthey adds a formal affirmation of the ideals of the Age of Reason: “I find no greater event in the history of the human race than the emergence of this system of ideas, which extends from the knowledge of natural laws to the control of reality through the power of thought, and from there to the highest ideas that determine us all” (340).

From these guiding ideas Dilthey places one above all in immediate relation to the historical world, namely, the idea of the solidarity concerning the progress of the human race. For this idea is directly involved in a universal history. As in the early essay on Schlosser, Dilthey stresses the link between universal history and cultural his-

tory. It is the main achievement of the “philosophical spirit” of eighteenth-century historians “to have moved into the foreground the universal historical perspective of the progressive culture of the human race” (346). It has already been indicated that cultural history for Dilthey is not limited to specific cultural domains such as the arts or court life, but must show how advances of civilization are connected with “the power struggles of nations” (345). The technique used by the English to do this is to establish at certain points in the course of historical development cross-sections of the various realms of culture, such as economics, art, science, and ethics. According to Dilthey, Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* represents the best application of this technique.

A theme that Dilthey already broached in the *Introduction to the Human Sciences* as part of his critique of philosophies of history (see *SW* 1, 156f.), is once again taken up: the three-stage law in its original formulation by Turgot and in its further development by Comte. In his essay on the eighteenth century, Dilthey fittingly refers more to Turgot. Whereas in the *Introduction* Dilthey’s critical destruction of Comte’s philosophy of history predominated, here we find a positive evaluation of the law that the human mind develops by moving through a sequence of theological, metaphysical, and scientific stages. Turgot was the first to exhibit “a regularity in the progress of history that is immanent in history itself” (355). He and Comte erred to be sure in matters of detail, but in essence their law is valid and needs only “a more exact formulation . . . which accords more closely with the facts” (355).

Many Enlightenment historians do, however, lack a “genetic understanding” (363). Even when the stages of human development have been intuitively delineated by them, Dilthey still misses a recognition of “the inherent value of each historical phenomenon” and a sense of participation in its life. Thus the English historians he praises so highly are also criticized because “only themselves, only their present did they fully understand. They valued in the past only what was akin to their own cultural ideals, and even this they viewed as a bit of civilization in the midst of barbarism” (363).

The transition to the final part of the essay where the genetic understanding of the Germans is introduced is reminiscent of Wilhelm von Humboldt’s characterization in his essay “Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert” (The Eighteenth Century). Humboldt also stresses the special capacity of the Germans to sense the peculiarities of each age and nation, and “to exhibit their distinctiveness by means of their

genesis.”¹⁴ Whereas Humboldt’s account of genetic understanding is still defined by a rejection of the predominance of French intellectual life, Dilthey was able to approach the great Enlightenment figures produced by France and Germany relatively free of bias. Even the discussion of German historians occurs without any false patriotic pathos. Dilthey acknowledges that compared with the sophistication of a Voltaire or Hume, the originality of a Möser is inseparable from the provincial narrowness of the German situation. It was intimate acquaintance with regional life in isolated villages and their gradual growth that made it possible for German historians to develop this genetic mode of understanding.

Justus Möser was a functionary in Osnabrück and much admired as a local historian by Herder and Goethe in their Storm and Stress phase. His writings on economic and legal history take special account of local traditions. Dilthey gives a fitting characterization of Möser’s conservative attitude by writing that he “recognized in the class divisions and patriarchal relations of his native Lower Saxony something generated by history, and thus something meaningful and necessary” (365). Not coincidentally does he use the word “indigenous” three times to characterize Möser’s work and personality (364ff.). He is for Dilthey the embodiment of a movement that in contrast to the abstractions of rationalism “brought to the fore the historical genesis of all political institutions and this, moreover, in organic connection with all other forms of life” (367). Dilthey sees here the beginning of the Historical School with all its merits, but also with all its deficiencies and limitations.

Dilthey repeatedly asserts that during the entire eighteenth century Germany never produced a comprehensive work of political history. The split between cosmopolitan universality and particularism produced a corresponding dualism of “universal historical surveys and . . . particular histories” (374). Although there is no German historical work that can match the greatness of what was produced in France and England during this period, nevertheless we see in Germany many initial formulations of “a new, genuinely historical world-view” (364), which became the basis for the great achievements of the nineteenth century. In all of Dilthey’s writings dealing with this connection, the achievement of Winckelmann, the founder of comparative art history, is emphasized. In the essay on the eighteenth century Dilthey gives a characterization of the appeal

¹⁴ Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Akademie Ausgabe*, II, p. 73.

to genial intuition made in Germany since Winckelmann and Herder. Here Dilthey is more positive about the use of intuition than he was in the early *Preisschrift*: “This intuitive approach grasps works of the human spirit through an inner movement of the soul. It makes a work intelligible in terms of its productive force, starting with the whole and moving down to the last technical stroke that expresses the work’s inner [form], down to every line of a drawing or every rhythm and sound of a verse” (375). The procedure of genial intuition is similar to Schleiermacher’s principle of divination as found in psychological-technical interpretation. Historiography and hermeneutics are related when Dilthey sees Schleiermacher further extending the line from Winckelmann and Herder in order to “understand religion as the spontaneous total expression of the human essence” (378). The essay closes with a prospect toward the great movement that begins with Winckelmann and Herder, and leads to the romantics and to Humboldt, Schleiermacher, and Hegel. The limits of the Enlightenment are overcome and the new historical consciousness of the nineteenth century can establish itself.

Dilthey’s speech on his seventieth birthday on November 19, 1903, is a look back at the time in Berlin when historical consciousness had also established itself academically. It is the time immediately prior to the early works of this volume. Although relatively brief in his characterizations of the greatest figures of the Historical School, some of whom were his professors (Bopp, Trendelenburg, Niebuhr, Boeckh, Jacob Grimm, Mommsen, Ritter, and Ranke), Dilthey repeatedly uses the same word *Anschaung*: Boeckh created a “comprehensive intuition of Greek life,” Jakob Grimm revived a “total intuition of early German life,” Ritter and Ranke attained a “universal intuition of our globe and of the history that runs its course there” (388f.), and about Ranke we also hear that he absorbed historical documents as well as the leading philosophical ideas of an age and transformed them into the historical “power of objective intuition.” It almost seems as if the genial intuition of Winckelmann and Herder has fully triumphed over the Enlightenment. But it should be recalled that Dilthey’s *Critique of Historical Reason* thematized not merely the limits of the Enlightenment but also the presuppositions of historical consciousness. In this sense the *Introduction to the Human Sciences* already undertook a critique of the principle of genial intuition (see *SW* I, pp. 47–49). That Dilthey was no one-sided champion of the Historical School, even though he had his roots there, is sufficiently documented in the texts

of this volume. How little he saw himself as being on the victorious side can be seen from the concluding sentences of the birthday speech: “when historical consciousness is followed to its last consequences” and relativizes all convictions, ideals, and philosophical systems, the question arises “where are the means to overcome the anarchy of opinions that then threatens to befall us?” (389). Dilthey considered his own lifework to be devoted to the solution of the problem raised by historical consciousness.

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