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8 From History towards Dialectic

Our point today is to give the problems that we were solving yesterday in a concrete form, namely, as they occur to historians, especially at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century – the ideas that were going around.

Normally historians are content to write history without raising questions about the nature of historical knowledge. Nor is this surprising. For historical knowledge is reached by an adaptation of the everyday procedures of human understanding and, while the adaptation itself has to be learnt, the underlying procedures are too intimate, too spontaneous, too elusive to be objectified and described without a protracted and, indeed, highly specialized effort. So even a great innovator such as Leopold von Ranke explained that his practice arose by a sort of necessity, in its own way, and not from an attempt to imitate the practice of his pioneering predecessor, Barthold Niebuhr. Niebuhr was an extraordinarily gifted linguist, also acquainted with government, and he went behind Livy to tell you what really happened in ancient Rome. His work was extremely brilliant but it did not last. Ranke was the first man to do that sort of thing, and his work was a permanent achievement.

At times, however, historians are impelled to do more than just write history. They may be teaching it. They may feel obliged to defend their practice against encroaching error. They may be led to state in part or in whole just what they are doing when doing history. Then, whether they wish it or not, they are using some more or less adequate or inadequate cognitional theory, and easily they become involved in some philosophic undertow that they cannot quite master. So there are ambiguities in the data we are going to be studying.

[1] 23 June 1970, part 1; audio may be found at 60400A0E070.

This dialectic can be highly instructive provided, of course, that one is not a mere logician testing the clarity of terms, the coherence of statements, the rigor of inferences. For what the historian has to offer is not a coherent cognitional theory but an awareness of the nature of his craft and an ability to describe it in the concrete and lively fashion that only a practitioner can manage.

1 Three Handbooks

First we are going to consider three handbooks: one by J.G. Droysen; one by Ernst Bernheim, an enormous thing of over seven-hundred pages, in several editions; and one by Langlois and Seignobos.

Handbooks on the method of history have gone out of fashion. But in the latter part of the nineteenth century they were common and influential. I shall select three that represent different tendencies, and I shall compare them on a single, but I believe, significant issue, namely, the relationship between historical facts and their intelligible interconnections, their *Zusammenhang*.

For twenty-five years Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884) constantly revised his lectures on the encyclopedia and methodology of history. As well, he composed a *Grundriss der Historik* which appeared as *Manuskriptdruck* in 1858 and 1862 and in full-fledged editions in 1868, 1875, and 1882. Interest in his work continues, for an edition combining both the 1882 version of the lectures and the *Grundriss* with all its variants reached a fourth printing in 1960. The first critical edition was 1937, I think.

Droysen divided the historian's task into four parts: Heuristic, Criticism, Interpretation, Presentation. *Heuristic* uncovered the relevant remains, monuments, accounts. *Criticism* evaluated their reliability. *Interpretation* brought to light the realities of history in the fulness of their conditions and the process of their emergence.

Presentation, finally, made an account of the past a real influence in the present on the future.

Now in one important respect Droysen's division differed from that of his predecessors and his contemporaries. He limited criticism to ascertaining the reliability of sources. They extended it to determining the occurrence of the facts of history. Are the sources reliable? Do they tell us what really happened? Two different questions, and Droysen limited criticism to the reliability of the sources. Their position, Droysen felt, was due to mere inertia. Their model for historical criticism had been the textual criticism of the philologists. But textual criticism is one thing and historical criticism is another. The textual critic ascertains objective facts, namely, the original state of the text, something you can take a look at and see in an act of perception. But the facts of history resemble, not a text, but the meaning of a text. They are like battles, councils, rebellions, ongoing processes that you don't see in one look; you have to put several things together. They are complex unities that result from manifold actions and interactions of individuals. They extend over space and over time. They cannot be singled out and observed in some single act of perception. They have to be put together by assembling a manifold of particular events into a single interpretative unity.

My source on Droysen is not Droysen; it is Hünermann, *Der Durchbruch geschichtlichen Denkens im 19. Jahrhundert*. It came out in the last couple of years, just where I don't remember. I haven't got my bibliography with me, just indications.

For Droysen, then, the historian does not first determine the facts and then discover their interconnections. On the contrary, facts and interconnections form a single piece, a garment without seam. Together they constitute historical reality in the fullness of its conditions and the process of its emergence. They are discovered in an interpretative process guided by the watchword, *forschend verstehen*, advance through research to understanding. The research was directed to four areas: first, to the course of events, say, in a military campaign; secondly, to the conditions forming the context of the

events; thirdly, to the character of the participants; and fourthly, to the purposes and ideas that were being realized. So historical interpretation moves towards historical reality, grasping the series of events, first in their interconnections, next in their dependence on the situation, thirdly in the light of the character or psychology of the agents, and finally, as a realization of purposes and ideas. Only through this fourfold grasp of meaning and significance do the events stand revealed in their proper reality.

So for Droysen, you haven't got first the facts and then putting them together. The historical facts involve interpretation, an interpretative unity in which events stand, and you arrive at that *Zusammenhang* and your facts simultaneously.

Droysen did not prevail. In Ernst Bernheim's monumental *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie*, there may be discerned a similar fourfold division of the historian's task. But now criticism is divided into outer and inner. Outer criticism determines whether *single* sources are reliable historical witnesses. Inner criticism has to settle the factuality of the events witnessed by *several* sources taken together. So it would seem that the historical facts are settled before there begins the work of interpretation, which Bernheim names the *Auffassung* and defines as the determination of the interconnections (*Zusammenhang*) of the events.

It remains, however, that if Bernheim assigned to inner criticism the determination of events – and there is good argument for it because if you are going to do it from comparing different sources and getting more than one witness to an event you are going to pull the facts, settle the facts, before you are doing interconnections in some sense – still he did not consider this determination to be independent of the way in which historians apprehended interconnections. On the contrary, he taught explicitly that the determination of events and the apprehension of their interconnections are interdependent and inseparable. He even added that, without an objective apprehension of interconnections, one cannot even ascertain in proper fashion the sources relevant to one's inquiry.

Still further removed from Droysen's position is the *Introduction aux études historiques* composed by C. Langlois and C. Seignobos and published in Paris in 1898. There is an English translation, there was one published in the United States about 1925, I think, by Holt and I think it was preceded by one in England but I haven't got the data on it. This manual is divided into three parts or books. Book 1 deals with preliminary studies. Book 2 deals with analytical operations. Book 3 deals with synthetic operations. The analytical operations divide into external and internal criticism, as in Bernheim. External criticism yields critical editions of texts, ascertains their authors, and classifies historical sources. Internal criticism proceeds by the analogies of general psychology to reproduce the successive mental states of the document's author. It determines (1) what he meant, (2) whether he believed what he said, and (3) whether his belief was justified.

This last step was considered to bring the document to the point where it resembled the data of the 'objective' sciences, that is, the natural sciences. Thereby it became the equivalent of an observation, and it was to be utilized in the same manner as were the observations of natural scientists. But in the natural sciences facts are asserted, not as the result of single observations, but only when corroborated by several independent observations. So far from being exempt from this principle, history with its imperfect sources of information must be subjected to it all the more rigorously. There followed the necessity of independent and mutually supporting testimonies for the determination of historical facts.

The implications of such analysis were not overlooked. It removed the facts from their original context, isolated them from one another, reduced them, as it were, to a powder. The metaphor is from Langlois. Accordingly the analytical operations of Book 2 had to be complemented by the synthetic operations of Book 3. These were described under such rubrics as classifying, question and answer, analogy, grouping, inference, working out general formulae. But all of these risked numerous aberrations, against which warnings were sounded continuously. Indeed, so many were the pitfalls that M.

Langlois himself in later life, instead of writing history, was content to reproduce selected documents.

With Langlois and Seignobos, then, there emerges a clear-cut distinction and separation between the determination of historical facts and the determination of their interconnections. This distinction and separation has its ground, it would seem, in the notions of natural science current in nineteenth-century positivist and empiricist circles. But in those very circles there were bound to arise a further question. Why add to the facts? Must not any addition that is not obvious to everyone be merely subjective? Why not let the facts speak for themselves? And so we have a first problem or element in the problem.

2 Data and Facts

At this point it may be well to insert a clarification, for data are one thing, and facts are another. More on data, *Insight* 73 f., on facts, 331, 347, 366, and 411 f.

There are the data of sense and the data of consciousness. Common to both is that they are or may be given. They may or may not be attended to, investigated, understood, conceived, invoked as evidence in judgment. But if they are not, then they are merely given. But insofar as they are investigated then they are not merely given but also are entering into combination with other components in human cognitional activity.

In contrast, historical facts are known events. The events that are known pertain to the historian's past. The knowledge of the events is in the historian's present. Moreover, this knowledge is human knowledge. It is not some single activity but a compound of activities that occur on three different levels. So a historical fact will have the concreteness of an object of external or internal experience. It will have the precision of an object of understanding and conception. It will have the stubbornness of what has been grasped as virtually unconditioned and so as something independent of the knowing

subject, or as approximating the virtually unconditioned and so as something probably independent of the knowing subject.

Now as an investigation proceeds, insights accumulate and oversights diminish. This ongoing process, while it does not affect data inasmuch as they are or may be given, does affect enormously data inasmuch as they are sought out, attended to, combined now this way and now that in ever larger and more complex structures. On the other hand, it is only as the structures take definite shape, as the process of asking further questions begins to dry up, that there commence to emerge the facts. For the facts emerge, not before the data are understood, but only after they have been understood satisfactorily and thoroughly.

There is a further complication in critical history, for there, there occur two distinct, though interdependent, processes from data to facts. In a first process, the data are here and now perceptible monuments, remains, accounts; from them one endeavors to ascertain the genesis and evaluate the reliability of the information they convey; the facts at which this first process terminates are a series of statements obtained from the sources and marked with an index of greater or less reliability. Insofar as they are reliable, they yield information about the past. But the information they yield is, as a general rule, not historical knowledge but historical experience. There we have the key to what was going on.

When Droysen was content to stop at the reliability and then use a second process, interpretation was there. Droysen's historical facts are facts at the second level. The facts in Langlois and Seignobos are historical experience, not historical knowledge. So once you have the double process, you have that confusion that exists.

Again, it is not historical knowledge but historical experience. It regards the fragments, the bits and pieces, that have caught the attention of diarists, letter-writers, chroniclers, newsmen, commentators. It is not the rounded view of what was going forward at a given time and place for, in general, contemporaries have not at their

disposal the means necessary for forming such a rounded view. It follows that the facts ascertained in the critical process are, not historical facts, but just data for the discovery of historical facts. They are data of historical experience. The critical process has to be followed by an interpretative process, in which the historian pieces together the fragments of information that he has gathered and critically evaluated. Only when this interpretative process of reconstruction is terminated do there emerge what may properly be called the historical facts.

That is a clarification of the problem in terms of our notion of critical history. Now let us go back to the historians.

3 Three Historians

Three historians: Becker, Collingwood, Marrou.

In a celebrated address, read twice before learned societies in 1926 but published only posthumously, Carl Becker recalled that he had been told by an eminent and honored historian, who had accompanied him to the convention, that the historian had nothing to do but ‘present all the facts and let them speak for themselves.’ What we originally came to at the end of the first section. He then proceeded to repeat what he had been teaching for twenty years ‘that this notion is preposterous; first, because it is impossible to present all the facts; and second, because even if you could present all the facts the miserable things wouldn’t say anything, would just say nothing at all.’ They would be historical experience, not historical knowledge, in our terminology.

Becker was not content to attack what he considered one of the fondest illusions of nineteenth-century historians. Sixteen years previously, in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* for October, 1910, he had described with considerable skill the process that has to occur if the card cases, containing the results of historical criticism, are to lead the historian to an apprehension of the historical course of events. The historian at the result

of his critical work has card cases: so-and-so says this, probably wrong, and so on, endless supply of them, these are the card cases. There is a whole process from the card cases that result from the first stage, the critical stage, to the second stage where you arrive at historical knowledge. On Becker, Charlotte Smith has a sympathetic and very keen account, *Carl Becker: On History and the Climate of Opinion*., Cornell University Press, 1956. We will be coming back to that point later. B.I. Wilkins, *Carl Becker*, Cambridge: M.I.T. and Harvard, 1961, it is the approach of an analyst, Becker hasn't got a satisfactory theory is the sum of what he is saying. Here I will quote from Becker:

> As he goes over his cards, some aspects of the reality recorded there interest him more, others less; some are retained, others forgotten; some have power to start a new train of thought; some appear to be causally connected; some logically connected; some are without perceptible connection of any sort. And the reason is simple; some facts strike the mind as interesting or suggestive, have a meaning of some sort, lead to some desirable end, because they associate themselves with ideas already in mind; they fit in somehow to the ordered experience of the historian. [And the ordered experience of the historian is his horizon.] This original synthesis – not to be confused with the making of a book for the printer, a very different matter – is only half deliberate. It is accomplished almost automatically. The mind *will* select and discriminate from the very beginning. It is the whole 'apperceiving mass' that does the business, seizing upon this or that new impression and building it up into its own growing content. As new facts are taken in, the old ideas and concepts, it is true, are modified, distinguished, destroyed even; but the modified ideas become new centers of attraction. And so the process is continued, for years it may be. The final synthesis is doubtless composed of facts unique, causally connected, revealing unique change; but the unique fact, selected because of its importance, was in every case selected because of its importance for some idea already in possession of the

field. [And you can keep changing that idea but this idea will have the lead, the changing idea will have the lead.]

I have quoted this rather long passage because in it a historian reveals the activities that occur subsequently to the tasks of historical criticism and prior to the work of historical composition. It cannot be claimed that Becker was a successful cognitional theorist – there cannot be assembled from his writings an exact and coherent theory of the genesis of historical knowledge. Nonetheless, he was not a man to be taken in by current cliches, and he was sufficiently alert and articulate to have written a happy description of what I would call the gradual accumulation of insights, each complementing or qualifying or correcting those that went before, until, perhaps years later, the stream of further questions has dried up and the historian's information on past historical experience has been promoted to historical knowledge.

So Becker on the level of experience was familiar with developing understanding, could give a good description of it, and he knew that a process of understanding was needed to proceed from the card cases which result from critical labors to the history.

The issues that concerned Carl Becker in the United States also concerned R.G. Collingwood in England. Both insisted on the constructive activities of the historian. Both attacked what above I named the principle of the empty head. But the epitome of the position Becker attacked was the view that the historian had merely to present all the facts and then let them speak for themselves. Collingwood attacks the same position under the name of 'scissors-and-paste' history. It is a naive view of history in terms of memory, testimony, credibility. It gathers statements from sources, decides whether they are to regarded as true or false, pastes true statements in a scrapbook later to be worked up into a narrative, while it consigns false statements to the wastebasket. It was the type of history alone known in the ancient world and in the Middle Ages. It has been on the wane since the days of Vico. While Collingwood would not venture to say that it has

totally disappeared, he does assert in 1940 (about), that any history written today on such principles is at least a century out of date.

There has been, then, according to Collingwood, a Copernican revolution in the study of history inasmuch as history has become both critical and constructive. This process is ascribed to the historical imagination and, again, to a logic in which questions are more fundamental than answers. The two ascriptions are far from incompatible. The historian starts out from statements he finds in his sources. The attempt to represent imaginatively their meaning gives rise to questions that lead on to further statements in the sources.

Collingwood made discoveries about the Roman Wall. What was the Roman Wall for? You go to the *Sitz im Leben*, why did these people go to all this trouble to build this wall stretching right across the country? Well, was it a fortification that they stood behind and defended from the tribes from the north? Collingwood had the idea: it couldn't possibly be a fortification. Well, what was it for then? A sentry walk: they would go along and see where the tribes were assembling to make an attack; and he started working out all the implications of the sentry walk. Well, if it was a sentry walk you wouldn't need a wall along the beach; it's sufficient to have posts here and there. He found the posts, the remains here and there. You start from a fact or a statement and you go to the *Sitz im Leben*, the concrete situation: what were people thinking about and doing? That is the historical imagination. Insofar as your bright ideas are fitting in with more and more data you are on the happy trail, and when they are not you are out of luck.

Eventually he will have stretched a web of imaginative construction linking together the fixed points supplied by the statements in the sources. However, these so-called fixed points are fixed not absolutely but relatively. In his present inquiry the historian has decided to assume them as fixed. But, in fact, their being fixed is just the fruit of earlier historical inquiry. If the statements from which the historian proceeds are to be found in Thucydides, still it is historical knowledge that enables the historian to go

beyond mere odd marks on paper to a recognition of the Greek alphabet, to meanings in the Attic dialect, to the authenticity of the passages, to the judgment that on these occasions Thucydides knew what he was talking about and was trying to tell the truth.

It follows that, if history is considered not in this or that work but as a totality, then it is an autonomous discipline. It depends upon data, on the remains of the past perceptible in the present. But it is not a matter of believing authorities, and it is not a matter of inferring from authorities. An illustration of the point in *The Idea of History*: Collingwood has a detective story in which practically all the clues are planted and all the witnesses are lying. But the detective discovers the truth. That is what he means by the autonomy of the historian. Critical procedures decide in what manner and measure sources will be used. Constructive procedures arrive at results that may not have been known by the authors of the sources. That is a further point: historical knowledge is beyond historical experience. Hence, '... so far from relying on an authority other than himself, to whose statements his thought must conform, the historian is his own authority and his thought autonomous, self-authorizing, possessed of a criterion to which his so-called authorities must conform and by reference to which they are criticized.'

Now, that needs a bit of qualification but it is a point worth making and then qualifying instead of just passing over.

Such is the Copernican revolution Collingwood recognized in modern history. It is a view that cannot be assimilated on naive realist or empiricist premises. As presented by Collingwood, unfortunately, it is contained in an idealist context, it seems. But by introducing a satisfactory theory of objectivity and of judgment, the idealism can be removed without dropping the substance of what Collingwood taught about the historical imagination, historical evidence, and the logic of question and answer. This is in the final part of his *The Idea of History*.

Issues raised in the United States and in England also were raised in France. In 1938 Raymond Aron portrayed the historical thought of Dilthey, Rickert, Simmel, and

Max Weber and, as well, in another volume set forth his own developments of German *Verstehen* that in French was named *compréhension*. My present concern, however, is not with theorists of history but with professional historians, and so I turn to Henri-Irenée Marrou, who was invited to occupy the Chaire Cardinal Mercier at Louvain in 1953, and used this opportunity to discuss the nature of historical knowledge.

The following year, 1954, there appeared his *De la connaissance historique*. The title is misleadingly translated in English, *The Meaning of History*, Baltimore and Dublin: Helicon, 1966. The English translation contains an article later written by Marrou, in which he qualifies statements in his book. It is concerned, not with theoretical issues, but rather with making a systematic inventory, a reasonable and balanced synopsis, of conclusions that historians had reached on the nature of their task. The nature of that task, he felt, was as well established as had been the theory of experiment in the days of John Stuart Mill and Claude Bernard. As a matter of fact, the historians weren't going to agree with Marrou quite as much as he expected; they hadn't made all the steps he had. So it is that M. Marrou treated all the general issues of historical investigation and did so both with a grasp of theoretical opinions and with all the sensitivity of a Pieter Geyl to the endless complexity of historical reality.

Out of this abundance, for the moment, we are concerned only with the relationship between fact and theory, analysis and synthesis, criticism and construction. M. Marrou treats the two in successive chapters. His views on criticism, he feels, would make his old positivist teachers turn over in their graves. Where they urged a relentlessly critical spirit, he calls for sympathy and understanding. The negative critical approach, concerned with the honesty, competence, and accuracy of authors, was well adapted to specialist work on the political and ecclesiastical history of western Europe in the Middle Ages, where there was a rash of second-hand chronicles, forged charters and decretals, and antedated lives of saints. But the historian's task is not limited to eliminating errors and deceptions. Documents can be used in a great variety of manners, and the historian's

proper task is to understand his documents thoroughly, grasp exactly what they reveal directly or indirectly, and so use them intelligently. It is not a matter of saying yes or no to a document. It is finding out what you can use it for, where it could be relevant. Even though the man is intentionally lying he may give things away that really are true, and so on. That is the intelligent use of documents, which is the purpose of contemporary criticism.

As M. Marrou calls for a shift from mere criticism of documents to their comprehension, so too he stresses the continuity and interdependence of coming to understand the relevant documents and coming to understand the course of events. The historian begins by determining a topic, assembling a file of relevant documents, annotating each on its credibility. Still, this is a merely abstract scheme. One advances in knowledge along a spiral. As knowledge of events increases, new light is thrown on the character of the documents. The original question is recast. Documents that seemed irrelevant now acquire relevance. New facts come to light. So the historian gradually comes to master the area under investigation, to acquire confidence in his grasp of the meaning, scope, worth of his documents, and to apprehend the course of events that the documents once concealed and now reveal.

Now we have been presupposing understanding all along. But the traditional philosophy was very strong on concepts and the nexus between concepts and propositions. Where does this understanding come from? Well, it starts really with Schleiermacher, at least to a great extent. We have now a section on *Verstehen*.

4 *Verstehen*

Already I have mentioned Droysen's notion of historical investigation as *forschend verstehen*, advance through research to understanding, and Raymond Aron's introduction of German historical reflection into the French milieu. On this *Verstehen* there is a

three-volume work by Joachim Wach, who later was professor at Chicago Divinity School, sociology of religion. It came out at the same time that Heidegger was doing big stuff on *Verstehen* and so it tended to be overlooked. Also very recently E. Coreth, *Grundfragen der Hermeneutik*, has about 150 pages on *Verstehen*, and he takes it in the German context simply, which we will have to distinguish from the context of *Insight*.

To that reflection we have now to revert, for it was empirical without being empiricist. It was empirical, for it was closely associated with the work of the German historical school, and that school's charter was its protest against Hegel's a priori construction of the meaning of history. It was not empiricist, for it was fully aware that historical knowledge was not just a matter of taking a good look, that, on the contrary, it involved some mysterious, divinatory process in which the historian came to understand.

This need for understanding appeared in two manners. First, there was the hermeneutic circle. For instance, one grasps the meaning of a sentence by understanding the words, but one understands the words properly only in the light of the sentence as a whole. Sentences stand in a similar relationship to paragraphs, paragraphs to chapters, chapters to books, books to an author's situation and intentions. Now this cumulative network of reciprocal dependence is not to be mastered by any conceptual set of procedures. What is needed is the self-correcting process of learning, in which preconceptual insights accumulate to complement, qualify, correct one another.

Secondly, the need for understanding appeared again in the irrelevance of the universal or general. The more creative the artist, the more original the thinker, the greater the genius, the less can his achievement be subsumed under universal principles or general rules. If anything, he is the source of new rules and, while the new rules will be followed by others, still they are not followed in exactly the manner of the master. Even lesser lights have their originality, while servile imitation is the work not of mind but of the machine.

Now this high degree of individuality found in artists, thinkers, writers, statesmen, though beyond the reach of general rules or universal principles, is within easy reach of understanding. For what in the first instance is understood is what is given to sense or consciousness or, again, what is represented in images, words, symbols, signs. What is so given or represented is individual. What is grasped by understanding is the intelligibility of the individual. Apart from failures to control properly one's use of language, generalization is a later step and, in works of interpretation, usually a superfluous step. There is only one *Divina commedia*, only one *Hamlet* by Shakespeare, only one two-part *Faust* by Goethe.

The scope of understanding, the range of its significance, was gradually extended. To the grammatical interpretation of texts, Schleiermacher (1768-1834) added a psychological interpretation that aimed at understanding persons, and especially at divining the basic moment in a creative writer's inspiration. Get hold of that basic moment in a creative writer's inspiration, and you will understand his whole process of writing in a way that he didn't do, he couldn't do it. August Boeckh (1785-1867), a pupil of Friedrich Wolf's as well as of Friedrich Schleiermacher's, extended the scope of understanding to the whole range of the philological sciences. In his *Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften*, the idea of philology is conceived as the interpretative reconstruction of the constructions of the human spirit. What does philology do? It reconstructs the constructions of the human spirit; the cultural creations and the social forms created in the past are reconstructed by the philologist.

What Boeckh did for philology, Droysen would do for history. He moved the notion of understanding from a context of aesthetics and psychology to the broader context of history by (1) assigning expression as the object of understanding. What do you understand? You understand an expression. And (2) noting that not only individuals but also such groups as families, peoples, states, religions express themselves.

With Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) there is a further broadening of the horizon. He discovered that the German historical school, while it appealed to historical fact against a priori idealist construction, nonetheless in its actual procedures was far closer to idealist than to empiricist ideas and norms. As a matter of fact, there are statements in the historians, in Ranke, and so on, like *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, that gave a handle to positivists to interpret the historical school as being empiricist. As they weren't particularly philosophic – they were against Hegel and so on – they didn't know that they were being carried off by an undertow. But Dilthey was the theorist on the historical school. With remarkable astuteness he recognized that the success of the historical school, of Ranke, the Grimm brothers, von Savigny, and so on, constituted a new datum for cognitional theory. On that new datum he proposed to build. Just as Kant had asked how a priori universal principles were possible, how Newton's mechanics was possible, Dilthey set himself the question of the possibility of historical knowledge and, more generally, of the human sciences conceived as *Geisteswissenschaften*.

Dilthey's basic step may be conceived as a transposition of Hegelian thought from the idealist *Geist* to human *Leben*. Hegel's objective spirit returns, but now it is just the integral of the objectifications effected in concrete human living. Living expresses itself. In the expression there is present the expressed. So the data of human studies are not just given; by themselves, prior to any interpretation, they are expressions, manifestations, objectifications of human living. Further, when they are understood by an interpreter, also there is understood the living that is expressed, manifested, objectified. Finally, just as an interpretation expresses and communicates an interpreter's understanding, so too the objectifications of living are living's own interpretation of itself. *Das Leben selbst legt sich aus*. *Auslegen* is to interpret.

In the concrete physical, chemical, vital reality of human living, then, there also is meaning. It is at once inward and outward, inward as expressing, outward as expressed. It manifests need and satisfaction. It responds to values. It intends goals. It orders means to

ends. It constitutes social systems and endows them with cultural significance. It transforms environing nature.

The many expressions of individual living are linked together by an intelligible web. To reach that intelligible connectedness is not just a matter of assembling all the expressions of a lifetime. Rather, there is a developing whole that is present in the parts, articulating under each new set of circumstances the values it prizes and the goals it pursues, and thereby achieving its own individuality and distinctiveness. Human living as a process of individuation. Just as human consciousness is not confined to the moment but rises on cumulative memories and proceeds in accord with preference schedules towards its hierarchy of goals, so too its expressions not only together but even singly have the capacity to reveal the direction and momentum of a life.

As there is intelligibility in the life of the individual, so too there is intelligibility in the common meanings, common values, common purposes, common and complementary activities of groups. As these can be common or complementary, so too they can differ, be opposed, conflict. Therewith, in principle, the possibility of historical understanding is reached. For if we can understand singly our own lives and the lives of others, so too we can understand them in their interconnections and interdependences.

Moreover, just as the historian can narrate an intelligible course of events, so too human scientists can proceed to the analysis of recurring or developing structures and processes in individual and group living. So far from being opposed, history and the human sciences will be interdependent. The human scientist will have to view his data within their appropriate historical context; and the historian can fully master his materials only if he also masters the relevant human sciences. So Dilthey wanted to lay the foundations for the human sciences as well as history and interpretation.

It can be said, I think, that Dilthey did much to meet his specific problem. Decisively he drew the distinction between natural science and human science. The data of the human sciences have to be given a commonsense meaning before they are data for

a human science. Clearly he conceived the possibility of historical knowledge that conformed neither to the a priori constructions of idealism nor to the procedures of natural science. However, he did not resolve the more basic problem of getting beyond both empiricist and idealist suppositions. His *Lebensphilosophie* has empiricist leanings. His history and human science based on *Verstehen* cannot be assimilated by an empiricist.

Two advances on Dilthey's position have since developed and may be treated briefly. First, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) by his painstaking analysis of intentionality made it evident that human thinking and judging are not just psychological events but always and intrinsically intend, refer to, mean objects. Secondly, where Dilthey conceived expression as manifestation of life, Martin Heidegger (1889-) conceives all human projects to be products of understanding; in this fashion *Verstehen* is *Dasein* insofar as *Dasein* is man's ability to be. *Verstehen* is the source of the project, and the project is what your living is. There follows the universality of hermeneutic structure: just as interpretation proceeds from the understanding of an expression, so this expression itself proceeds from an understanding of what it can be to be a man.

A few comments are now in order. First, our use of the terms 'insight,' 'understanding,' both is more precise and has a broader range than the connotation and denotation of *Verstehen*, which is confined to this development in the human sciences, pretty well. Insight occurs in all human knowledge, in mathematics, natural science, common sense, philosophy, human science, history, theology. It occurs (1) in response to inquiry, (2) with respect to sensible presentations or representations including words and symbols of all kinds. It consists in a grasp of intelligible unity or relation in the data or image or symbol. It is the active ground whence proceed conception, definition, hypothesis, theory, system. This proceeding, which is not merely intelligible but intelligent, provided the human model for Thomist and Augustinian trinitarian theory, as I have argued in my *Verbum*. Finally, the simple and clear-cut proof of the preconceptual

character of insight is had from the modern reformulation of Euclidean geometry. For example, by H.G. Forder, *The Foundations of Euclidean Geometry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927. It is Euclid's *Elements*, Euclidean geometry, in a way that you won't recognize just from knowing Euclid. Euclid's *Elements* depends on insights that were not acknowledged in his definitions, axioms, and postulates, that easily occur, that ground the validity of his conclusions, but that cannot be expressed in their proper generality in a strictly Euclidean vocabulary. So there is understanding without conception, without proportionate conception. The proof is Euclid where there is a lot of understanding that isn't expressed; that's the simplest proof.

Secondly, experience and understanding taken together yield not knowledge but only thought. To advance from thinking to knowing there must be added a reflective grasp of the virtually unconditioned and its rational consequent, judgment. There is an insufficient awareness of this third level of cognitional activity in the authors we have been mentioning and a resultant failure to break away cleanly and coherently from both empiricism and idealism. The whole Kantian tradition: What is *Verstand*? It is the faculty of judging. That is collapsing into one thing the development of understanding on the second level and reflection, weighing the evidence, and judging on the third. You have it again in *Glauben und Verstehen*, Bultmann's title for his occasional papers, *Believing and Understanding*. Is there such a thing as judgments of fact?

Thirdly, over and above a clear-headed grasp of cognitional fact, the break from both empiricism and idealism involves the elimination of cognitional myth. There are notions of knowledge and of reality that are formed in childhood, that are in terms of seeing and of what's there to be seen, that down the centuries have provided the unshakable foundations of materialism, empiricism, positivism, sensism, phenomenalism, behaviorism, pragmatism, and that at the same time constitute the notions of knowledge and reality that idealists know to be nonsense and yet implicitly accept.