

## **Empiricism, Facticity, and the Immanence of Life in Dilthey<sup>1</sup>**

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Fundamentally, all our actions are altogether incomparably personal, unique, and infinitely individual; there is no doubt of that. But as soon as we translate them into consciousness they no longer seem to be.

—Friedrich Nietzsche,  
*The Gay Science* (299-300)

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, Dilthey references are to the pagination of the *Gesammelte Schriften* (GS) and, when available, the translations of the *Selected Works* (SW): Groethuysen, B. (ed.) (1959), GS 1: *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften: Versuch einer Grundlegung für das Studium der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte*, Fourth Edition, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht; Misch, G. (ed.) (1957), GS 5: *Die Geistige Welt: Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens. Erste Hälfte: Abhandlungen zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften*, Second Edition, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht; Groethuysen, B. (ed.) (1956), GS 7: *Der Aufbau der Geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, Second Edition, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht; Groethuysen, B. (ed.) (1960), GS 8: *Weltanschauungslehre: Abhandlungen zur Philosophie der Philosophie*, Second Edition, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht; Johach, H. and Rodi, F. (ed.) (1977), GS 18: *Die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte: Vorarbeiten zur Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften (1865-1880)*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht; Johach, H. and Rodi, F. (ed.) (1997), GS 19: *Grundlegung der Wissenschaften vom Menschen, der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte*, Second Edition, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht; Makkreel, R. and Rodi, F. (ed.) (1989), SW I: *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, Princeton, Princeton University Press; Makkreel, R. and Rodi, F. (ed.) (2002), SW III: *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, Princeton, Princeton University Press; Makkreel, R. and Rodi, F. (ed.) (1996), SW IV: *Hermeneutics and the Study of History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press; Makkreel, R. and Rodi, F. (ed.) (1985), SW V: *Poetry and Experience*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; (trans. Zaner, R. M. and Heiges, K. I.) (1977) DP: *Descriptive Psychology and Historical Understanding*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff.

## 1. Dilthey's Contexts: The Empirical without Empiricism

The “Epistemological Fragments,” written between 1874 and 1879, record Wilhelm Dilthey’s early attempts to reshape empiricism in ways that would be more adequate to the fecundity of experience. From the beginning of his philosophical endeavors, Dilthey was interested in approaching and articulating the empirical without subsuming experience under the abstract principles of association and atomistic sense-qualities of empiricism. Dilthey would later summarise this project with the expression “Empirie, nicht Empirismus” (GS 19: 17). Dilthey’s formulation of the primacy of the empirical, freed of empiricist doctrine so as to include its historical and linguistic context, confronted two conflicting ways of describing the empirical in the Nineteenth-century: whereas romanticism and historicism emphasised the irreducibly singular and holistic character of experience, such that each form of life and individual was intrinsically irreducible to any other, empiricism and positivism located truth in the epistemological construction of sense data and justified this “positive factual” strategy by appealing to the model of the empirical natural sciences. Dilthey raised the issue of the empirical in light of the historical and natural sciences, historicist facticity and positivist factuality.<sup>2</sup>

The question of the empirical can be pursued from the direction of what is experienced or from the direction of the one who experiences. Yet both are interconnected in an experiential context or nexus (*Zusammenhang*).<sup>3</sup> Dilthey, from his early to later works, was concerned

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2 Unlike Heidegger, Dilthey did not systematically distinguish *Tatsächlichkeit* and *Faktizität*. Yet different senses can be distinguished by how he used these words: whereas a positivistic fact can be underivable (GS 1: 222), it cannot be ungraspable (GS 1: 243) and still be factual in a positivist sense. *Tatsächlichkeit* as facticity indicates that which in being given resists being grasped (in this context, he wrote of the immeasurable and unfathomable). *Tatsächlichkeit* as factuality refers to the given as a graspable and apparently stable element of theoretical knowledge.

3 Dilthey described three senses of “whole” in Schleiermacher: (1) organising inner form, (2) system, and (3) relational context or *Zusammenhang* (SW IV: 679). Whereas organic inner form refers to an immanent teleology and the idea of a system points to the completeness of totality, *Zusammenhang* indicates the contextuality that is singularity in relation to infinity. Dilthey could thus even write of individuality as the form of the whole (SW IV: 709) such that knowing the whole means knowing it as a concrete multiplicity and singularity.

with how explanatory scientific thought, interpretive understanding of others, and self-reflection (*Selbstbesinnung*) can arise and depart from, be informed by and potentially transcend, the givenness and facticity of this experiential life-nexus. This issue motivated Dilthey to interpret the validity of logic and the sciences in relation to the historicity and linguisticity as well as the social and psychological contexts of lived experience.<sup>4</sup> According to his rationalist and transcendental critics, e.g., the Neo-Kantians and the Husserl of the *Logos* essay, Dilthey was advocating a merely psychological or sociological analysis of knowledge.<sup>5</sup> Dilthey's examination of the conditions of life, and their expression in individual and social life, was accused of undermining reason by asserting historicism, psychologism, relativism, and skepticism.<sup>6</sup> Although Dilthey challenged a dogmatic and unreflective rationalism that refuses to attend to the phenomena, the abstract reductions mentioned in these polemics contradict the skeptical and anti-systematic tendencies of his thought. This "moderate skepticism" and rejection of the possibility of systematic totality are constitutive of his radically anti-reductive approach to experience.<sup>7</sup>

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4 Dilthey's interest in the psychological is part of his relating phenomena back to their experiential context in the activities, events, and structures of human life — which are centered in the feeling, thought, and will of the individual and the relation of the body to its world in the bodily feeling of life (GS 18: 175). The significance of the body is richly developed in his essay on the external world (GS 5: 90-138).

5 This conflict concerned the legacy of Kant's philosophy, since both Neo-Kantianism and Dilthey shared a common debt. Whereas Neo-Kantians like Rickert took the First and Second Critiques as the primary point of departure, the *Critique of Judgment* orients Dilthey's thought. See Makkreel, R. (1992), *Dilthey: Philosopher of the Human Studies*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, p. 21-25.

6 Husserl and Rickert are not completely wrong to designate Dilthey a skeptic. The young Dilthey called his approach a "moderate skepticism," which had the suspension of explanation as a consequence (GS 18: 3). Yet Dilthey did not deny the validity and value of knowledge by investigating their experiential contexts. It is not such inquiries but the overreaching of reason that creates the conditions for radical skepticism (GS 7: 161). There is no unconditional doubt in Dilthey but something more akin to the skepticism of the ancients and Hume, which doubted knowledge and theory to affirm the value and dignity of practical social-historical life.

7 Accordingly, "[T]here is only harmony in ideal representations. Every presentation of the real contains oppositions which preserve singularity" (GS 7: 331).

In an almost Daoist like argument, Dilthey's rejection of system—as the illusion of a complete and final teleological ordering of things according to one principle or cause—does not entail a denial of contextual wholes, which like a horizon can never be fully fathomed.<sup>8</sup> Instead of constructing a metaphysical or speculative system that subordinates all phenomena and elements of experience according to a universal law, Dilthey traced the products of human thought and activity back to their formative contexts, which include their facticity as well as validity. He therefore described his method in the *Introduction to the Human Sciences* as relating: “every component of contemporary abstract scientific thought to the whole of human nature as it is revealed in experience, in the study of language and history . . .” (GS 1: xviii/SW I: 51). Yet this raises the very issue of the character or nature of the empirical, i.e., not only how experimental science but how experiential life is possible.

What is the empirical such that it is not exhausted by either the explanatory claims of scientific experience (*Erfahrung*) or the lived experience (*Erlebnis*) of ordinary life? Is experience primarily to be understood as combinations of atomistic psychological data, as conceived by Nineteenth-Century empiricism and positivism, or is it intrinsically historical and holistic, as described by the historical school? Is knowledge only a system of cognitive scientific propositions (*Erkenntnis*) or does it involve some kind of reflective and contextual understanding of self and other (*Wissen*)? Dilthey's first published systematic work, *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, needs to be interpreted in the context of this debate that he responds to by seeking to “combine a historical approach with a systematic one” (GS 1: xv) in order to correct the one-sidedness of empiricism and historicism.<sup>9</sup> Both properly stress experience and fail to

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8 According to the young Dilthey, the whole cannot be explained, whether as nature or history, and there is no philosophical need to constitute or construct such a whole, least of all as it has been done in the philosophy of history (GS 18: 15, 47). Dilthey differentiated the contextual whole from the abstract systematic whole, for example, in discussing the holism of early modern hermeneutics (GS 14: 603-605; SW IV: 40-42).

9 What Dilthey called the “historical school” was later labeled “historicism.” There is much confusion about what historicism means. Karl Popper (1961) misconstrues historicism as the ability “to predict the future course of history” in *The Poverty of Historicism*, London, Routledge, p. v, identifying it with “the possibility of a theoretical history” (ibid. vi). Popper confuses the historical school's emphasis on

adequately and appropriately envision what experience signifies. Whereas empiricism is lost in the abstract conception of experience as reducible to discrete units of sensation and formulaic rules of association, historicism is abandoned in the infinite variety of concrete multiplicity because of its lack of effort at conceptualisation and justification.

This conflict between empiricism and historicism has been employed to interpret Dilthey's reception of John Stuart Mill's "positivism" and Schleiermacher's "romanticism." For example, Gadamer suggests that Dilthey's historicism and scientism did not overcome but remained caught in the aporia of "Schleiermacher and Mill."<sup>10</sup> However, Gadamer ascribes these contradictory labels without clarifying the issue of experience. His contention underestimates Dilthey's productive thinking of this aporia and his rethinking of experience through its contextual-holistic character (*Zusammenhang*) and facticity (*Tatsächlichkeit*).

Such facticity evokes the conditions, the operational contexts, and the limits of experience. The givenness, materiality, and positivity of things not only potentially limits and disrupts our knowledge and mastery of the world, it makes it possible and is at the same time its affair. Knowledge is not somehow contrary to life, as asserted in irrationalism, but is part of its expression and self-articulation. Dilthey distinguished but did not radically separate facticity from factuality, or experiential self-

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the singularity and uniqueness of forms of historical life (what "historicism" usually means) and other Nineteenth century tendencies committed to an explanatory history that would provide a definite theoretical knowledge of history and predict its future course (i.e., Comte and Marx). Popper's critique of holism consequently conflates interpretive holism (oriented to context) and explanatory holism (oriented to system).

10 H.-G. Gadamer criticised Dilthey's captivity in the aporia of romanticism and positivism in "Wilhelm Dilthey nach 150 Jahren: Zwischen Romantik und Positivismus." Orth, E.W. (ed.) (1985), *Dilthey und Philosophie der Gegenwart*, Freiburg, Karl Alber, 157-182. Dilthey's "scientism" amounts to neglecting the ontological in affirming the relevance of the empirical and the sciences to philosophical reflection in Gadamer (1995), *Hermeneutik in Rückblick*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 9 and 186. Gadamer misses the moderate skepticism at work in Dilthey's account of worldviews, when he suggests that his "scientism" culminates in the "sociology of knowledge" through the philosophy of worldviews (ibid. 394). Dilthey continues the enlightenment project (self-knowledge of self-legislation) through the means of history and hermeneutics (ibid. 176-77).

interpretation from experimental inquiry—unlike Heidegger and Gadamer.<sup>11</sup> An advantage of Dilthey's approach is that it does not entail the bifurcation of the transcendental and empirical, the ontological and the ontic, which sets philosophical and scientific inquiry into opposition and mutual avoidance. While genuinely engaging the phenomena of language, history, and culture, Dilthey's thought offers an alternative to the linguistic, historical, and cultural idealism that continues to influence contemporary philosophy.

At least two senses of facticity are at work in Dilthey: (1) the singularity and multiplicity of historical facticity, which defy theoretical comprehension into a systematic totality and require the infinite work of description and interpretation; (2) the givenness of positive factuality, which is the basis, object, and potential limiting condition and other of rational and scientific inquiry.<sup>12</sup> According to Dilthey, experience and its sense are not self-created and imposed onto the world without remainder. The world is more than what I or we believe it to be. Experience is constituted in encounter and through resistance, through the givenness and materiality of a plurality, and to an extent by unmastered and uncontrollable resistance. The empirical is the condition, the field, and the limit of experience. Since it is a plurality of different provenances, the subject can be confronted with a resistance that is neither subsumed by cognition nor overcome by creation or the will, precisely because it is both singular and positive.

Facticity thus suggests the problematic character of assumptions about intelligibility, meaningfulness, and purposiveness. It is an infinitude of richness and texture, the "depth of the flesh of the world" that cannot be made thematic as figure, which withdraws from understanding and thereby exposes understanding to its own conditional context. It is the "brute facticity" or "givenness"—which in being given is not necessarily

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11 For a more detailed account of the development and import of Heidegger's notion of facticity, see my articles: "Questioning Practice: Heidegger, Historicity and the Hermeneutics of Facticity." *Philosophy Today* 44, 2001 (SPEP Supplement 2000), 150-159; "Heidegger and the Ethics of Facticity" in Raffoul, F. and Nelson, E. S. (eds.) (forthcoming), *Rethinking Facticity*, Albany, SUNY Press.

12 Compare F. Rodi's exploration of Dilthey's approach to facticity and its role in his critique of metaphysics in "Dilthey's Kritik der historischen Vernunft - Programm oder System?" *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* 3, 140-165, note especially pp. 153-155.

understood—that suggests the birth that engenders and the death that haunts life. As in Sartre’s description of facticity, it is ambiguous what is being “given” and what “taken.” Deleuze and Guattari formulated this as the dilemma of achieving consistency without losing the infinite.<sup>13</sup> Facticity is, on the one hand, the “facts” of articulation and appropriation, theory and scientific inquiry. On the other hand, it suggests that which resists and potentially undermines articulation, appropriation, and other modes of human comportment. Facticity is both the opportunity of knowledge and access to the world, but it can also limit, reverse, and throw into question such endeavors. The forces of life manifest themselves in the realisation of human purposes and in the counter-purposive (GS 7: 202).

Human activities are referred back to their context in life in which they inevitably partake—not in general or as a predetermined necessity but as receptivity and responsiveness, i.e., individuation. Dilthey presented his readers with the alternative of a historically informed and holistic empiricism that calls for the conceptual effort of being responsive to the phenomena or things themselves. By not denying life or refusing knowledge, this modified empiricism challenges traditional metaphysics as well as its modern rationalist and irrationalist incarnations.

## 2. Reading Dilthey after Deleuze

In the preface to the *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, Dilthey affirmed the principle that “All science is experiential” and that experience has to be understood in relation to the mind and sensibility of the one who experiences: “all experience must be related back to and derives its validity from the conditions and context of consciousness in which it arises, i.e., the totality of our nature” (GS 1: xvii). Yet Dilthey departed from empiricist and Kantian epistemology by arguing for the historical character of these conditions and contexts. This totality—note that Dilthey uses this word in the sense of a contextual whole rather than in the contemporary sense of a closed system—indicates the multiplicity

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<sup>13</sup> Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1994), *What is Philosophy?*, Tomlinson, H. and Burchell (trans.), G. New York, Columbia University Press, p. 42.

of historical life (GS 7: 157), which consists of the plural yet intersecting structures and processes of the life-nexus (*Lebenszusammenhang*).

As with Deleuze, plurality entails resisting the monism of the philosophers and the need to have recourse to empirical inquiry. As Dilthey demonstrated in the *Ideas*, multiplicity implies dynamic interrelations without implying an ultimate identity or unity.<sup>14</sup> Although it would be anachronistic and incorrect to conclude that Dilthey is a philosopher of difference in the contemporary sense, it should be noted that Dilthey does not use the word “totality” in a Hegelian sense of an absolute meditation or unification. Dilthey diagnosed the destructive potential of the pursuit for unity, when absolutised or pushed beyond its legitimate role in abstraction and conceptualisation, yet he also recognised the legitimacy of pursuing coherence, consistency, and unity in scientific knowledge. Dilthey thus distinguished totality as the multiplicity of immeasurable things from unconditional unity systematised according to one ultimate principle. This is clear, for example, from his objection to the repression of the “totality of human nature” in the metaphysical conceptualisation of all as one (GS 18: 142). Dilthey’s relational context is consequently a heterogeneous and manifold space. Instead of suggesting the hierarchy of mediation and integration, which persisted in romanticism and historicism despite its stressing of the unique and the fragmentary, *Zusammenhang* evokes the differentiated spatiality and immanence of Deleuze’s milieu, plane, and field.

Since it inappropriately narrows and levels lived experience (GS 18: 143), Dilthey also questioned the idea of a final unity that could unify human nature into one basic capacity or force (GS 18: 146). Although Deleuze explains the repetition involved in Bergsonian creativity and Nietzschean will as inherently differentiating and self-overturning, Dilthey’s analysis suggests that difference can be thought only from differences and not derived from even the most self-deconstructing of principles or forces. Dilthey’s response to this issue is at odds with efforts to provide a basic identity or privileged locus to difference instead of acknowledging its myriad provenances.<sup>15</sup>

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14 See Dilthey’s discussions of multiplicity as opposed to unity in the *Ideas* (GS 5: 175, 196, 213, 235/DP: 58, 77-78, 93, 114-115).

15 This reverses Heidegger’s argument from Dilthey’s ontic multiplicity to ontological difference, or the formal indication of difference, in GA 27: *Einleitung*

Dilthey's thinking of the empirical and scientific inquiry can be reoriented in light of its proximity to Deleuze's anti-canonical and anti-metaphysical confrontation with the tradition, according to which the empirical is multiplicity and empiricism is pluralism. This pluralism means: "the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained; and the aim is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (creativity)." Thus empiricism is not about unities and identities but multiplicities.<sup>16</sup> Dilthey's empiricism—i.e., the empirical without doctrinal empiricism<sup>17</sup>—is likewise concerned with (1) the plural provenance of things; (2) explaining the abstract and universal from experiential givenness rather than eliminating the singular plural of experience, and, finally, (3) the conditions of formation (*Wirkungszusammenhang*) in which the new and original occurs in the context of the old.

However, (1) and (3) already imply a divergence between Dilthey and Deleuze's sources, especially concerning the possibilities of life-philosophy. Deleuze's analysis of life-philosophy relies on the understanding of experience as the emergence of difference through repetition and the self-overturning creation of life. Its sources are primarily found in Bergson and Nietzsche and secondarily James and Whitehead. Although we can use this analysis to reconsider the import of Dilthey's works, it does not fully apply.<sup>18</sup> Dilthey does not conceive becoming, change, and process as bio-cosmological principles but rather articulates them as historical-cultural and interpretive phenomena. In his

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*in die Philosophie*, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1996, 347-348.

16 Deleuze, G. and Parnet, C. (1987), *Dialogues*, Tomlinson, H. and Habberjam, B. (trans.), New York, Columbia University Press, p. vii.

17 Despite Dilthey's demand for "the empirical, not empiricism," many critiques of Dilthey are based on the claim that he is an empiricist, ignoring the issue that not all empiricisms are equal. See, for example, Mohanty, J. N. (1985), *The Possibility of Transcendental Philosophy*, The Hague, Nijhoff, p. 108; Mohanty, J. N. (1997), *Phenomenology: Between Essentialism and Transcendental Philosophy*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, p. 69.

18 Heidegger distinguished Dilthey's historical life-philosophy from the biologically oriented life-philosophy of Bergson and James and opts (at this point) for the former, whereas it is the latter that inspired Deleuze. See Heidegger M. (1993), GA 59: *Phänomenologie der Anschauung und des Ausdrucks*, Frankfurt, Klostermann, p. 15.

confrontation with Nineteenth-Century thought from Idealism and Romanticism to Bergson and Nietzsche, Dilthey rejected the possibility of a self-revealing force or pure intuitive life.

The immanence of life does not imply the transparency of a bare life, the positivity of pure facts, or the possibility of a direct grasping of the self in self-knowledge. We do not know the self—whether as substance, process, or fact—and the phenomenality of experience neither depends on nor directly reveals one underlying principle or force of life. In the givenness of life and history, there is not only significance and positivity but also the facticity of dispersion, interruption, and separation (*Abstand*). The work and play of understanding, inference, and interpretation are called for by the confrontation with the complexity, precariousness, and otherness involved in historical life, such that the certainty of intuition, tradition, science, religion, and reason shows itself to be uncertain.

For Dilthey, hermeneutics is the consequence of moderate skepticism, which does not doubt the phenomenality of the world, as we shift from the oneness and identity of the metaphysics of creation and self-creation to the intersecting multiplicity of formation. Human life as lived is never simply biological life—regardless of whether the biological is thought to be vitalistic or mechanistic, teleological or anti-teleological, divinely ordained or naturally ordered. Historical and symbolic conditions are the context and milieu for the activities, expressions, and structures that allow the interpretation and explanation of individual and society.<sup>19</sup> Life is understood and interpreted via the expressions, signs, and symbols that make it a singular life. Human reality is historical, that is, singular in a plural context, and thus a question of individuation in the face of historically mediated physical, biological, and social conditions and contexts.<sup>20</sup>

19 K. A. Pearson (1999) argues that the “inventive Bergsonism” of Deleuze also connects life and history, specifically biophilosophy and late capitalist modernity, in *Germinal Life*, London, Routledge, pp. 4 and 22. In an early study of Bergson, published in 1956, Deleuze wrote: “If difference itself is biological, consciousness of difference is historical” (Cited in *Germinal Life*, p. 22). Deleuze later rejects “history,” because of its associations with identity and systematic totality.

20 Also compare the discussions of Dilthey and Bergson in Ermarth, M. (1978), *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, pp. 86-87 and Makkreel, R., (1992), pp. 110-115. Dilthey criticised

The interpretive or hermeneutical dimension refers to phenomena that are constituted in relation to evaluations, intentions, norms, prescriptions, purposes, rules and values. However, this dimension is seen in the context of the enactment and facticity of these phenomena rather than from a perspective that detaches them from their worldly social-historical embodiment, such as occurs in the subordination of the objects of the “cultural sciences” to questions of norms and values—understood as “goods” independent of desire, facticity and particularity (Rickert, 1986, 39)—in Neo-Kantianism.<sup>21</sup> It is a primary illusion of the substantialism of metaphysics—as well as the representationalism of disenchanted epistemology—to believe that the transcendent, transcendental, and ontological are knowable outside of and without reference to the immanence and phenomenality of the experiential and empirical. The moment of transcendence and the transcendental conditions of life occur within immanence and should be receptively articulated from immanence itself.<sup>22</sup>

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Bergson’s focus on intuition and pure expression, instead advocating an indirect approach through the interpretation of historically and symbolically mediated expressions. How the self is articulated, and can thus begin to be understood, is through its structures, signs and manifestations since the self is structured by its world and networks of signification. Dilthey thus rejected an intuitive method in which the self directly grasped itself in uninterrupted self-presence. D. Wood (2001) notes of Derrida’s reading of Husserl: “Even the purest self-presence is permeated by signs, by language, by imagination.” *The Deconstruction of Time*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, xxvii. The originary cannot be saved from representation (*ibid.* p. xxvi). Dilthey’s moderately skeptical hermeneutics involves an infinite deferral through *history, language, and materiality* such that the self-evidence of intuition and introspection are problematised.

21 In his *Kulturwissenschaften und Naturwissenschaften*, Stuttgart, Reclam, 1986, Heinrich Rickert asserts that the cultural sciences include all of the human sciences “except for psychology” (*ibid.* p. 42). Psychology is excluded as it concerns facts that can be generalised rather than the individuating values that define the cultural sciences (*ibid.* pp. 44-45, 74). For Rickert, the difference between the cultural and natural sciences consists in the fact that the former are individuating and the latter generalising (*ibid.* p. 8). By including psychology in the natural sciences, Rickert rejected Dilthey’s argument that psychology is (1) interpretive rather than only explanatory and (2) fundamentally about individuation (*ibid.* pp. 86-87).

22 Although Levinas critiques Heidegger as a philosopher of immanence, Heidegger himself—especially during the second-half of the 1920’s—identified the ontological and transcendental. Not only does he argue that this is an interruption and stepping out from beings but also that fallenness is from the height of transcendence (GA 27: 207-208).

Dilthey's emphasis on the plural and singular is informed by and always referred to his understanding of *Zusammenhang*; that is, context, nexus, and relatedness. The historicity of human life implies the perspectival, interpretive, and conditional character of that life. Human understanding is consequently caught in the movement between the singular and its context, without being able to reduce one to the other and thus fully conceptualise either, which he called the hermeneutical circle.<sup>23</sup>

Deleuze, following Bergson, would like to think becoming without history.<sup>24</sup> For Deleuze, history remains an essentially Hegelian category. History is to be confronted and rejected as a kind of identity, unity, and systematic totality. Like Deleuze, Dilthey also sought to undermine the teleologies, systems, and identities of the philosophy of history. However, Dilthey does not do so in order to reject history as such but rather to develop a different notion of history that does not ignore and subsume the singularity and complexity of historicity. That is, Dilthey opened and set free the singular-plural happening of history.<sup>25</sup> History is not the realisation of a subject or a project, nor is it simply an object of inquiry, but is an event that structures human life. The question of history is accordingly both an issue of the upsurge and event that can, for example, define a generation and an epoch. It is also a question of the "who" that attempts to interpretively understand itself, others, and its world in the context of its situation.

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23 The hermeneutical circle occurs between the whole and the singular as a relation of meaning and facticity rather than universal law and particular fact or cause and effect. As such, the whole and the singular evade reduction through teleological, functional, or efficient causal explanations. The hermeneutical circle is seen in the "as" character of understanding, differentiating it from the speculative circle that subsumes the determined "part" under a determinate system. The "whole" as nexus is defaced by the reduction of multiplicity to systematic totality, since such efforts fail to master the unfathomable richness and excess of differences (*Unterschiede*; GS 5: 235).

24 G. Deleuze and C. Parnet, *Dialogues*, viii.

25 The phrase "singular plural" is borrowed from J.-L. Nancy's analysis of Heidegger's "each time" (*Jeweiligkeit*) and "each time my own" (*Jemeinigkeit*) in R. Richardson and A. O'Byrne (trans.) (2000), *Being Singular Plural*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Like Deleuze, Dilthey insists on the primacy of the experiential, but experience is not only informed by “life” but also by historicity of that life. Against the notions of pure becoming and production found on other 19<sup>th</sup>-century thinkers, Dilthey considered formation as that which is not simply produced by a subject or agent (whereas creation and production imply a subject or agent creating its world).

Although Carnap and others later utilised the word *Aufbau* in the sense of epistemic “construction,” Makkreel and Rodi have shown how Dilthey used it in the sense of “formation.” The formation of the historical world refers to its articulation in the human sciences which themselves theoretically reflect this historical world (SW III: 1). Makkreel and Rodi consequently argue that Dilthey’s theory of the human sciences is not merely an epistemology (*Erkenntnistheorie*), but a theory of knowledge (*Theorie des Wissens*) that relates knowing to its context. Whereas epistemology seeks to establish the foundations of conceptual cognition (*Erkenntnis*), Dilthey located the epistemology of the human sciences within a larger context of knowledge (*Wissen*).<sup>26</sup> This knowledge is unfolded in relation to embodiment and the life of the body<sup>27</sup> as well as social practices and historical forms of life. Knowledge encompasses not only the conceptual cognition of reality, but also the values and purposes established about it. Not only does human life fall under knowledge, knowledge of the human world falls within that world. As a worldly bodily being, it is never only cognitive (GS 1: xvii/SW I: 50).

Dilthey accordingly situated the human sciences, which are determined by their respective object and how the object is given (SW III: 38), in relation to a pretheoretical life-nexus and its forms of elementary

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26 R. Makkreel explores this distinction in “The Cognition-Knowledge Distinction in Kant and Dilthey and the Implications for Psychology and Self-Understanding.” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, vol. 34, pt. A, no. 1, pp. 149-164.

27 Human embodiment is part of Dilthey’s strategy of relating phenomena to their inter-phenomenal context. Dilthey’s critique of historical reason proceeds from the life-context in its complexity and concreteness to the conceptual cognition of the sciences and reflective awareness (*Besinnung*). Such reflection, made possible by prereflective reflexivity (*Innesein* or *Innewerden*) with its double meaning of “sense” (*Sinn*) as meaning and bodily awareness, forms the basic movement of Dilthey’s thought.

or ordinary (prereflective) understanding.<sup>28</sup> These are tied up with the temporality, historicity, and structures of social life; with an epochal “objective spirit.” Objective spirit indicates the ways in which the past has been objectified and continues to shape contemporary practices and it is analysed in the human sciences as cultural systems and the external organisation of society. A significant characteristic of the *Formation* is the development of the notion of “productive system or nexus.” This translation of *Wirkungszusammenhang* suggests a historical efficacy or productivity prior to any analysis of it as either causal or teleological.<sup>29</sup>

The human sciences include the study of dynamic interconnected systems that articulate the intersection of meaning, value, purpose, and force. Dilthey interpreted these temporally, such that meaning primarily concerns how humans are determined by their past, value is based on their present feeling of life, and purpose is projective striving into the future in the face of productive forces (*Kräfte*) which cannot always be predicted or controlled.

Through the analysis of action, Dilthey presents life as a realm of multiplicity and possibility (and the virtuality crucial to Bergson and Deleuze<sup>30</sup>) that individuates itself through its activity. Actions can be considered in their situation and life-context, figure and background, and are the enactment of life in relation to a purpose or goal such that in the act the multiplicity and fullness of life (understood as possibility)

<sup>28</sup> For Dilthey, understanding provides access to scientific objects but is first and foremost world opening (SW III: 226). All—even prereflective and elementary—understanding is interpretive, since we lack transparency and cognise others and ourselves indirectly (SW III: 108). Consciousness is intrinsically impure because related to the facticity of bodies, languages, and histories. Since (1) we know ourselves and others through actions, life-expressions, and effects—instead of introspection or intuition—and (2) understanding faces breakdowns and is confronted by the distant and strange, elementary and intuitive forms of understanding are compelled to higher and more complex forms of understanding and interpretation; i.e., hermeneutics.

<sup>29</sup> SW III: 4. In addition to his introduction of SW III, see R. Makkreel, “The Productive Force of History and Dilthey's Formation of the Historical World.” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, vol. 57, no. 226, pp. 495-508.

<sup>30</sup> Dilthey's correspondent York von Wartenburg is the source of Heidegger's use of virtuality. Unlike York and Heidegger, Negri argues that virtuality is only one strategy among others for Dilthey in his “On Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus.” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1995.

becomes something particular (GS 7: 206). Here too validity claims can be made about the rightness and wrongness, correctness and incorrectness, appropriateness and inappropriateness of actions. These actions are evaluated according to purposes, norms and values which themselves can potentially become matters of communication. But as Makkreel notes in his introduction to SW III, the force of life does not only manifest itself as purposes but can also manifest itself “in dreams of future happiness, in the play of imagination with possibilities, in indecision and fear” (GS 7: 202).

As discussed above, facticity is both the opportunity of knowledge and access to the world, but it also limits, reverses and throws into question human purposes including knowledge. Dilthey’s thought therefore indicates the inherently experimental character of knowing. The temporality of human experience is not eternity and thus knowing is never at an end. The empirical confronts us with a temporality without closure and a future without finality. We do not know the future: (1) The study of history informs how we approach and are oriented toward the future but it cannot guarantee prediction and control given the unexpectedness of the future and (2) new truths are not only progressively accumulated but are contradictory with each other and those of the past (GS 18: 25-27). The world, through what Dilthey describes as its facticity, materiality, and tendency towards resistance, interrupts and disturbs every discourse claiming truth. The unexpected, the new, and the future enter into the present as the “still not” and the “always not yet.” Dilthey describes such moments of anarchy occurring in relation to art, when the situation occurs in which the “artist is forsaken by rules” and “a new way of feeling reality has shattered the existing forms and rules, and when new forms of art are striving to unfold” (GS 6: 104/SW V: 31). Anarchistic disturbances and the shock of the new cannot last as these impulses are normalised through their reproduction and new dominant paradigms are established, and necessarily so according to Dilthey (ibid). Although reflection (*Besinnung*) can establish a new equilibrium and new self-understanding in response to the conditions of the times, which defines a generation and epoch, it cannot avoid thereby the facticity of such an interruption and the specter of its return.

### 3. The Question of *Lebensphilosophie*

Dilthey opposed the social-historical mediation of life against the claim that life can be intuited in its purity. Dilthey rejected “life-philosophy,” in a critique that resonates with Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche, because it remained metaphysical in its desire to find the unconditional and undifferentiated, as well as in not recognising the historical, geographical, and personal conditionality of the human condition (GS 8: 198). Dilthey interprets, oddly enough given Deleuze’s interpretation of the will to power as constant disruption, Nietzsche as a philosopher of totalisation in undermining all limits and in transforming one form of life into an unconditional and unlimited absolute (GS 8: 198-199). The individual is separated from its historical conditions in a celebration of subjectivity that isolates it in the “cult of genius and great men” and separates it from all content in reducing the variety of individual life to will and desire (GS 8: 201).<sup>31</sup>

Dilthey’s critique of metaphysics prevents him from endorsing speculative materialism or a scientifically informed metaphysics. Against any attempt to conflate metaphysics and science, Dilthey argued for the independence, necessity, and worth of scientific inquiry. But for Dilthey, considerations of science cannot escape questions of reflection and the self-reflection of inquirers. Such reflection includes the need to investigate the differences between the sciences—for example, the tasks and understandings necessary to the theory and practice of the human sciences as independent sciences. This preservation of the individual sciences against the dreams of metaphysics and the unity of science constitutes the superiority of idealism and historicism over positivism: They “make better use of the legacy of the empirical human sciences” (GS 1: 24). Dilthey defends the empirical by insisting on the singular-plural character of experience. He understands experience as a relation between plural singulars and plural contexts. This means that the individual needs to be approached as an intersection of a multiplicity of relations and systems (GS 1: 51) and yet, infinitely pursued and deferred, the individual remains ultimately ineffable (GS 5: 330/SW IV: 249).

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31 Also see Ermarth’s and Makkreel’s discussions of Dilthey and Nietzsche (Ermarth, 1978, 319-320; Makkreel, 1992, 158-159).

Although Dilthey presented the *Introduction to the Human Sciences* as a philosophical elaboration of the insights of the historical school, this elaboration needed to clarify the confusion and one-sidedness of historicism. The emphasis of the historical school on pure empiricism, on a pure description of the singular and individual, leads to its failure in abstraction and generalisation, i.e., in articulating contexts, structures, and uniformities. The historical school, according to Dilthey, lacked any insight into epistemology, whether Kantian or empiricist, and the epistemic, logical, and psychological conditions and processes necessary for the sciences, including the human sciences that are the primary concern of historicism (GS 1: xvi). Dilthey argued that historicism must be transformed through an analysis of consciousness in its context as the primary concern in considering the character of experience. Yet this transformation cannot simply subsume the insights of the historical school under traditional metaphysics and epistemology. The cognitivism of the Cartesian heritage of rationalism, empiricism, and Kant needs to be reevaluated from the perspective of the plurality of the intersecting forces and structures of human “nature.” The transcendental is not collapsed into the factuality of ordinary empiricism but reconfigured in relation to the experiential and interpretive character of historically and worldly embodied life. Dilthey’s articulation of the immanent “categories of life,” which deeply influenced the young Heidegger, and the “acquired nexus of psychic life” challenge traditional empiricist accounts of knowledge and the self. Dilthey’s hermeneutical strategy is also equally a critique, correction, and transformation of the empiricist and historicist projects.

Knowledge is the experimental self-interpretation of life and that life is more than cognition and representation.<sup>32</sup> Dilthey suggested the conditional character of both representation and intuition by arguing that we are aware of what is given in experience without the given being thereby known. The given is not simply self-evident but can remain in its givenness resistant, non-transparent, and even impenetrable (GS 8: 40). Thought is only complete in itself when it is isolated from feeling and will. This completeness is unreal, since the possibility of its disruption haunts it. For Dilthey “[T]here is only harmony in ideal representations.

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32 Makkreel notes in the introduction to SW III that conceptual cognition (*Erkenntnis*) is representational for Dilthey but knowing (*Wissen*) need not be.

Every presentation of the real contains oppositions which preserve singularity” (GS 7: 331).

Representational thinking remains within the intentionality and phenomenality of consciousness and cannot reach the materiality of the world that is experienced in the resistance to will and feeling through the body (GS 5: 102-103). For Dilthey, it is the tension of the lived body and its enviroing world that allows for the differentiation of self and world in their cogiveness and difference (compare GS 5: 105-108). Thought, which strives to transcend its basis in life and the world through claims to universal validity, is a function of life (GS 19: 318-320/SW I: 474-476). Thought occurs within life and so cannot step outside of life by finding a certain external standard (GS 19: 347). Self-consciousness is accordingly already a consciousness of the world, and human life occurs and acts in relation to an environment or milieu, an epoch or age (GS 5: 200-201/DP: 82). The world and self are given only insofar as they are cogiven in the tension of mutual dependence and a difference that cannot be sublimated (GS 5: 124). That is, the self and the world are cogiven as *there (da)*.<sup>33</sup> This thereness is the basis of and limit to a theoretical knowledge of the world and the self (GS 8: 16, 18, 39, 54). The modes of human life are to be articulated from out of their worldly comportment, their “being-there-within life” (*Darinnensein im Leben*; GS 8: 99).

This does not mean that the turn to historicity implies an immersion in a pure brute singularity, which could only be passively received as a fate, without categories and thought or without the struggle and conflict (*Widerstreit*) which means that there is no escape from the violence of the multiplicity and difference of experience itself. It therefore cannot be appropriately described as an immanence and immediacy without transcendence, remainder, and interruption. Dilthey and Deleuze both distinguish immanence as multiplicity from the immanence as totality and transparency critically discussed by Levinas.<sup>34</sup> Dilthey’s work thus does

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33 Dilthey unfolded the import of this *da* throughout the manuscripts collected in GS 19: 70, 86, 152-153, 178.

34 T. Chanter (2001) clarifies Levinas’s identification of immanence and totality in *Time, Death and the Feminine*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, p. 46. Yet it is clear from Dilthey and Deleuze that these need not coincide and can conflict. Whereas Deleuze shows the alterity and multiplicity of immanence in Bergson and Nietzsche, Dilthey advanced a philosophy of reflective and interpretive immanence

not simply contrast the universal and the particular, the whole and the singular, but places these into the question of their multiple intersections. Therefore, this work does not simply set representation and explanation into opposition with narrative and description, nor does it preclude one in the name of the other.

#### 4. Conclusion

Dilthey's experiential pluralism calls for persistently taking up the contextuality and immanence of life from which we can receptively and reflectively interpret life from out of itself. This does not ignore the incommensurability and multiplicity of life but brings attention to it and intensifies it. The immanence of life is excessive and therefore is not necessarily the closure of totality critiqued by Levinas and others. It is an immanence that interrupts being reduced to a conceptual system and yet is not immune from understanding, reflection, and doubt.<sup>35</sup> Life is not only irreducible to rationality but to the irrationality of creation, power, or will in *Lebensphilosophie*. Life is always more than what can be created, willed, and produced. For Dilthey, "life remains will, facticity, history, i.e., living originary reality" (GS 1: 141). Life is not relative. It is immanent, as Deleuze says, in not being immanent to anything other than itself. It is "a life."<sup>36</sup> When Dilthey analyses individuality to its vanishing point, its ineffability, it is precisely as a life that is immanent to itself and irreducible to a general order. To be responsive to an individual life, qua its individuality, it is necessarily to turn to the testimony and witnessing of autobiography, biography, and fiction and poetry. Such responsiveness is not a mere reaction to things since it calls for narrative and reflection.

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that defies totalisation. The young Dilthey echoes Levinas's critique of the loss of transcendence in the metaphysical participation typical of Greek and German thought: "The thought that the *logos* is present in humans is diametrically opposed to my approach. This *parousia* has become through . . . Plato and Christianity the middle point of German philosophy" (GS 18: 200-201).

35 Heidegger praised such antisystematic tendencies early on, although he criticised them during much of the 1920's. The young Heidegger remarked, foreshadowing later self-descriptions of his own thought, Dilthey "verzichtet auf Abschluß und Fertigwerden" and his work remained "vorläufig, unvollendet und unterwegs." See M. Heidegger, "Wilhelm Diltheys Forschungsarbeit und der gegenwärtige Kampf um eine historische Weltanschauung. 10 Vorträge," F. Rodi (ed.), *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* 8 (1992): 143-180, citations are respectively from pages 149 and 150.

36 Deleuze, G. (2001), *Pure Immanence*, New York, Zone Books, p.27.

Dilthey engages the symbolic, the imaginary, and the virtual in order to address and interpret the individual both contextually, as an intersection of multiple orders, and individually via her own self-understandings and interpretations.

Against the reification of either transcendence or immanence, or their dialectical synthesis in speculative thought, Dilthey unfolded the immanence of life as fundamentally open and plural. This immanence is fractured, and it is a whole of relations without constituting an unchanging identity or closed totality. As Deleuze writes of Bergson, the whole is never given and always virtual.<sup>37</sup> This virtuality does not refer, of course, to being unreal but to the process of actualisation of the immanent itself.<sup>38</sup> For Dilthey, such actualisation occurs as the self-expression and articulation of immanent life. Immanence is non-transparent in the sense that it is by its very meaning irreducible to a systematic foundation or unity outside of itself. Life, in articulating itself from out of itself, cannot step outside of itself and go behind itself to unlock its secret essence. Life accordingly cannot be formulated in a system of concepts that would leave no remainder or excess, no antinomies or aporias,<sup>39</sup> which are necessary to the articulation of that life *as* life and any kind of responsiveness to that life.

Knowledge can preserve the singular only by realising its own finite and conditional character. If knowing is empirical and interpretive, then we need to intensify rather than restrict our relation to the empirical through experimentation—not only scientific but also artistic and religious. Since concepts are at most fragmentary totalities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, 23), and thus always referred back to their own contingency, “We are never finished with what is called accident” (GS 7: 74). Human finitude signifies the need to go out into the world and to engage in empirical inquiry. It also entails that empiricism, whether inferior or superior, cannot escape the question of interpretation. Such an interpretive or hermeneutically-oriented empiricism, suitably rethought for our own context, might begin to provide a salutary alternative to both scientific positivism as well as the interpretive and linguistic idealism

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37 Deleuze, G. (1991), *Bergsonism*, New York, Zone Books, p. 104-105.

38 Deleuze, G. (1983), *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, New York, Columbia University Press, p. 31.

39 See GS 5, in particular 143, 156, 196.

that continues—albeit in weaker forms—to dominate much of philosophy. Analogously to Deleuze’s reactivation of philosophers such as Bergson and Whitehead for contemporary reflection, I hope this essay will contribute to bringing attention to forgotten alternatives and possibilities in the works of Dilthey. Yet a repetition of Deleuze in relation to Dilthey cannot help but be disparate and perhaps a monstrous variation.

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