

# CONSTITUTIVE AND METHODOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILHELM DILTHEY

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## 1. INTRODUCTORY REMARK: THE CONSTITUTIVE CONCEPT OF UNDERSTANDING

The concept of understanding as a method proper to a group of sciences has been widely discussed. Within that context, its logical structure can and must be examined, its formal characteristics enumerated and made explicit and its specificity in front of other methods established. Finally, its adequacy to its object, but also its limits within that adequacy, must be determined. Thus considered, the task of clarifying understanding would be the counterpart of the task of clarifying other modes of explanation, e.g. causal explanation, as the method of another group of sciences. Together with the latter, the clarification of understanding would bring nearer to completion the general task of scientific methodology in the philosophical sense.

This task has already a long history, even with reference to its second half, namely the methodological discussion of the group of sciences called the human sciences.

But Dilthey was able to see that if it is true that methodological questions can and must be raised with respect to a science or group of sciences, it is also true that such a task is philosophically secondary, for every methodological question refers to some aspect of the relation between the mind and a field of objects within a given discipline. Now while raising questions with respect to that relation, the *terms* of the relation themselves are taken for granted, i.e. unphilosophically dealt with. *That there are objects* of a certain sort to be investigated by means of such and such methods is taken for granted, and only questions as to the how of the investigation and explanation are raised.

However, this primary fact, the being there of a field of objects, is itself a philosophical problem. Transcendental questions can and

must be raised regarding that primary fact. One must ask for the conditions for the possibility of having an experiential field of objects as a precondition for any descriptive and explanatory endeavor.

Dilthey's contribution was to raise this kind of question with respect to the cultural sciences. These have fields of objects. What are the conditions for the possibility of experiencing cultural objects as such? What subjective operations are required in order for a cultural object to be representable to a subject? What effectuations of consciousness are indispensable in order for a cultural object to "announce" itself as such?

Dealing with these questions, Dilthey was led to the concept of Understanding in a sense other than the methodological or explanatory sense, namely, to the *constitutive* concept of understanding. Understanding, we submit, is the title for the specific subjective operations in virtue of which cultural objects can and are experienced as such. Consequently, it is foundationally prior to understanding in the explanatory sense. The latter attempts at explaining pre-given phenomena; the former makes it possible for such phenomena to be pre-given. Dilthey's analysis thus proves to be philosophically *radical* clarification, for it does not take for granted the givenness of the object. This, rather, is gone through in order to arrive at its transcendental genesis.

"Every science is a science about experience, but all experience finds its original nexus, and the validity determined through it, in the conditions of our consciousness, within which it presents itself...<sup>1</sup>

Section 3 of this article will contain a description of the cultural object and a contrast between it and the natural things. For this contrast, we shall avail ourselves of some descriptions as they appear in Husserl's *Phaenomenologische Psychologie*,<sup>2</sup> where he passes judgment on some Dilthey's theories, not recognizing, unfortunately, the constitutive significance, and hence the phenomenological validity, of some of Dilthey's analyses.

If the cultural object proves to be essentially different from the natural, then, correlatively, the effectuations of consciousness leading to its "experienceability" must also be different. Hence, an account must be given of the specificity of such effectuations both with respect to cultural objects in general and with respect to the

different classes of cultural objects. In the present article we shall confine ourselves to the former.

A word must be said concerning an appearance of hermeneutical arbitrariness in our thesis. It appears as if we were attributing to Dilthey a point of view which might be proper to constitutive phenomenology of the husserlian brand but not certainly to Dilthey, "the father of historicism".

However, we hold that our interpretation corresponds to Dilthey's intentions and even to his written words. In his *Aufbau* of 1910, trying to determine the essence of the objects of the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) in order to distinguish these from the natural sciences, Dilthey states that

their difference lies in the tendency in which their object is formed (*gebildet*). It lies in the process that constitutes (*konstituiert*) those groups. There, a spiritual object appears (*entsteht*) in understanding; here a physical object appears in knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. CULTURAL OBJECTS AND PERCEPTION

Perceptual experience is a *conditio sine qua non* for the apprehension of cultural objects. This necessary conditionality of perception with regard to cultural objects originates in the nature of the latter, i.e. in the material nature of cultural objects. For every cultural object is a physical object and, as such, it must be constituted and thus presented to consciousness by means of perceptual experience, which is both the necessary and sufficient condition for the experience of natural objects.

As a matter of fact, when confronted with a cultural object materially embodied, we are free to abide by its perceptual aspects.

We can namely limit ourselves to "run through it" kinesiologically and thereby obtain a number of figurations among which, if certain conditions are satisfied, synthesis takes place yielding a unified multiplicity.<sup>4</sup> We can take notice of its material qualities and properties and of its relations with other material objects. We can, finally, interpret it as a set of appearances behind which the true thing, indeed heterogeneous with respect to its sensible presentations, is to be found with the help of realistically interpreted non-observational terms and theories.

The materiality of cultural objects is suggested by their characterization as "objectivations of the mind". A phrase, spoken or written, a musical composition, a sculpture, a tool, originate in some kind of subjective activity. But that subjective factor or factors do not give rise to cultural objects save by their becoming incorporated into a physical medium.

The individual, the communities and the works, in which life and the mind have as it were introduced themselves, constitute the external realm of the mind. These manifestations of life, in the form in which they present themselves to understanding in the external world, are like embedded in the context of nature. We are always surrounded by this external reality of the mind.<sup>5</sup>

Abiding by perceptual experience, however, cultural objects are not experienced as such. For the apprehension of the cultural sense or meaning, perceptual apprehension is necessary but insufficient. The reason for this must be that perceptual experience, being the constitutive medium of access to natural objects, is unable to grasp the cultural sense, which is not a natural object.

### 3. THE CULTURAL SENSE

That the cultural sense (e.g. the value, the goal, the thought incorporated into a work of art, an action, a sequence of words) is not a natural thing and thus not perceptually apprehensible, can be made clear perhaps by the following reflection, which will also show that the sense-carrying materiality of a cultural object is itself also different from the materiality of a natural thing.

It must be remembered that Dilthey's concept of natural things is ambiguous. A natural thing is, on the one hand, a system of presentations. But, on the other hand, it is that system of presentation as interpreted by knowledge. Now the cultural sense is one of this.

The cultural sense, in virtue of which a physical object becomes a cultural one, is not a physical thing because universal characteristic present in the latter are not found in cultural objects insofar as their cultural sense is concerned. Thus the properties of physical things are privately possessed by each individual material

thing. No material property, as the same identical property, can be present in more than one thing at the same time. Thus the whiteness of an ivory dice may resemble the whiteness of another one, but resemblance is not identity. They are different, though similar, chromatic properties displayed by both objects. Similarly, the shape of two objects may be similar, but similarity implies a relation of reciprocal otherness.<sup>6</sup> Both primary and secondary qualities, in the language of the modern tradition, are then privately possessed by each individual thing, whereby we can say that spatio-temporal uniqueness is essential to any natural property.

This is not the case with the cultural sense, for the same identical sense can be present in a multiplicity of individual cultural objects. One and the same drama subsists in a number of versions in different languages, in a number of different performances, in many books, etc. Or the same logical sense exists in a spoken, heard, written, read series of words, regardless of whether the physical signs belong to the same language or to different ones. When I say or write the sentence "the sea is blue" or "el mar es azul", the hearer or reader is confronted with two different cultural formations with separate corporalities. But these have one and the same sense. To be sure, the sense correlated with the physical signs is something encountered "within" the consciousness of the speaker or the hearer. But it is something "detachable" (*ablosbar*) from him. Hence the sense is neither a physical property (for it can exist as one and the same in different corporalities as no property can) nor an ingredient of consciousness (for it is detachable from an individual consciousness, it is not a temporal and thus perishable ingredient of his stream of *cogitationes*).

Moreover, a natural thing can be analysed. By analysing it, one encounters further properties which were perhaps hidden for a *prima facie* inspection. But they are thing-like properties as well. A cultural object, on the other hand, contains a necessary reference to a subject or to a community of subjects, out of whose teleological activity (something not thing-like) the cultural object has originated. This necessary reference is borne out by Dilthey's characterization of cultural objects as "objectivations of the mind" (*Objektivationen des Geistes*), as "manifestations of life" (*Lebensausserungen*) and as "expressions" (*Ausdruecke*). Natural objects cannot be thus characterized, for they contain no reference to a teleologically acting subjectivity. As to their mate-

riality, cultural objects, like natural ones, have a multiple corporeal articulation. In the case of natural objects, such articulation is merely factual. Natural objects happen to have such and such parts instead of others. Of course, the properties of objects, and their change, are causally determined. But causation "happens" to produce such qualities or to bring about such changes.<sup>7</sup>

Again, the parts making up the perception of the natural things are "firm" and "univocally determinable" parts. This means that the parts of a natural thing are qualitatively autonomous and independent in the sense that their contents are unaffected by their place within a whole. The coexistence of a part with other parts does not bring about any change in its content. Taken in an isolated form-if this were possible-the part would still be qualitatively the same from what it was when integrated into an ensemble. Thus the natural object is the system of such presented qualities understood as fixed and univocally determinable qualities, i.e. autonomous and independent qualities with respect to the wholes to which they belong. Similarly, a quality remains the same if the whole is somehow altered. Thus neither the addition nor the removal of qualities in a whole affect any individual qualitative part.

This, according to Dilthey, is true with respect to both the natural object as it presents itself in straight-forward sense-perception and also with respect to the natural object as it is reinterpreted by knowledge. Also the quantifiable counterparts of the perceptual qualities are "fixed" and "univocally determinable" parts.

Now this does not hold true with respect to cultural objects. Any part of a cultural object is not merely there, factually making up the qualitative plurality of a material thing. Rather, any singular part of a cultural object (a phrase in a piece of writing, a certain colored spot in a picture, a column in a cathedral, etc.) is meaningfully connected with the other members of the whole in such a way that the sense of the articulation is apprehensible. Nor are the parts making use of Gestalt concepts.

One must not, however, jump to the conclusion according to which that peculiar relationship belongs to cultural objects insofar as they are perceptible objects, for in the case of cultural objects that relationship whole-parts may be deliberately used by the culturally creative subjective activity for its cultural telos.

One must add, finally, another difference referred to in the quoted passage. The natural object, according to it, is what abides

over and against the inevitable changes. The states of the natural object last and change under causal rules, whereas the object itself remains the same.

Now the cultural sense does not have changing states, it is not, like a natural thing, a unity of change and hence there is no need to search for the causal dependencies under which the changing states stand.

The cultural sense and its material carrier are thus different from the natural thing. To this difference there must correspond a difference as to the modes of consciousness which are adequate to both types of things. Now if perceptual experience is adequate to natural objects and these are different from cultural objects, it follows that the mode of consciousness which is adequate for cultural objects is other than sense perception.

#### 4. THE FIRST CONSTITUTIVE EFFECTUATION: THE CONVERSION OF A THING INTO A REPRESENTATION

To say that sense perception is a mode of consciousness inadequate for making cultural objects as such experienceable does not imply that it has no role to play in such a process. Deprived of sense perception, not only the realm of nature, of causally interacting spatio-temporal entities would be inexperienceable, but the realm of culture as well. For natural and cultural objects have in common the fact that both kinds of objects present themselves as a structured materiality. Indeed, due to certain perceptual effectuations, we can have before ourselves things with the sense of materiality, i.e. of spatio-temporally unique and extended unities, differentiated from one another and conceived of as this or that object.

Now materiality, in the case of a natural thing, is the goal, as it were, of the rays of consciousness, whereas, in the case of the cultural object, it is the means whereby a sense or meaning is manifested or expressed. But for materiality to receive this referential character, this index-function, something other than perceptual acts is required, for perceptual acts either present or synthesize contents, but are incapable of interpreting them, and in order to experience materiality as referring to a sense or meaning, "firm" and "univocally determinable". Rather, the relationships between parts and wholes are characteristic, as can be seen, for instance, in the fact that a melody is altered if a note is suppressed and the note

itself, in isolation, is no longer what it was when integrated into the sound sequence. Also a picture without a certain line or color is not an altered picture, but a different one, while the line or the color are, abstracted from the whole, a new entity.

The peculiar character of understanding consists precisely of the fact that, through it, one does not operate, like in the case of natural knowledge, with univocally determinable elements... In natural knowledge the image is put as the basis of a firm magnitude that presents itself in intuition. On the basis of images the object is constructed as something abiding which makes changes explainable.<sup>8</sup>

Further,

the apprehension of these remains of the past is always the same: understanding. Only the mode changes. It is common to all the course which goes from the grasping of undetermined-determined parts to the attempt at grasping the meaning of the whole, alternating with the attempt at determining more concretely the parts departing from the sense of the whole.<sup>9</sup>

It would belong to another context to show that this relation between whole and parts is by no means characteristic of cultural objects, but rather of perceptual objects at large, as has been shown by Gestalt psychology and by philosophical theories of perception an interpretive function must intervene. Like any constitutive effectuation, the acts of interpretive understanding must establish a sense, but in this case the sense corresponds not merely to the apprehension of something as something in terms of thing-like determinations, or to its differentiation from other things, but also to its role as manifestation, expression or representation.<sup>10</sup> But how does a material thing acquire the sense of being the embodiment of an expression of a certain meaning?<sup>11</sup>

Understanding involves a number of effectuations (*Leistungen*). While asking for the effectuation leading to the conversion of a physical thing into the carrier of a sense, we are of course asking about the most basic and elementary effectuation.

Now a physical object is there as an embodiment of an expression because it is understood as not being what it is on its own. Rather, it is understood as intrinsically referring to the psychic activity of psychophysical subjects. Now as it is, such referential character which leads to the connection between the physical configuration and a subjective activity ascribed to a physical configuration might seem an arbitrary move on the part of the subject, if it is not shown in the object itself some trait on account of which such ascription is made.

## 5. REFERENTIAL CHARACTER AND TYPE

But there is a trait in the physical configuration itself, as constituted in perceptual experience, which allows its being understood as the embodiment of an expression and which renders the ascription a well-founded operation. Namely the given physical configuration is, indeed, unique, having only one spatio-temporal locus. In a word, it is a singular "real" thing. But though spatio-temporally unique, it starts a process of association. We associate it with other real, unique physical configurations on account of the relation of affinity. The physical configuration is thereby brought into a group, it is organized on account of its being placed within a set. Now already Plato saw that the relation of resemblance -or, for that matter, any relation-can be established between individuals- or between classes- provided that it is done in the light of a certain point of view. There must be a point of relevance in the light of which two or more things resemble each other. Hence the process of association requires that at least two things are brought together and compared from a certain point of view.

Confronted with a certain physical configuration like a painting, we proceed to associatively link this individual with other, previously perceived ones, on account of their resemblance. It goes without saying that, in doing so, not all the exhibited properties of the painting are taken into account. We can disregard, for instance, its chemical properties. Only certain properties enter into consideration -for instance color, texture and form-, and they are precisely those on the basis of which the relation of resemblance is established.

The properties in virtue of which the relation of resemblance is established, taken together, form a type or a typological structure.

The possession of an appropriate type, in the light of which the present individual configuration is brought together with other ones and thus grouped and organized in view of their mutual affinity, is the principle which makes possible the interpretation of a given physical configuration as an index pointing to a sense which is to be grasped. *And this is so because the type contains not only a reference to a certain general determinations, but also a correlation between the expression embodied in those determinations and a certain sense.*

The different singular manifestations of life encountered by the subject of understanding can be considered as belonging to a sphere of community, to a type... The manifestation of life grasped by the individual does not generally present itself to him as unique; rather, it simultaneously carries a knowledge of what is common and relation with something inner given in it... He learns to understand the manners and gestures, the movements and calls, only because they come across as identical and bearing<sup>12</sup> the same relation with what they mean and express.

## 6. THE UNITY BETWEEN EXPRESSION AND SENSE

In virtue of the possession of types, the subject of understanding is able to interpret a singular physical configuration as embodying an expression, i.e., as carrying a sense. Since the reference to a sense or expressive function belongs essentially to the type, it must also belong to the singular configuration in virtue of the fact that there is an affinity between the latter and the type and thus between the latter and the rest of the extension or scope of the type.

But now the nature of this reference should be determined. One must not think that the relation between the embodied expression and the sense<sup>13</sup> referred to is one of mere coexistence, as if the sense could exist apart from the expression. Rather, there is strict unity between both such that neither can exist independently. For instance, in the case of a gesture expressing fright, one cannot say that both phenomena merely coexist, for there is a fusion (*Verschmelzung*) between them.

Both members of the process of understanding are fused (*verschmolzen*) into a unity in virtue of the relation between the expression and the expressed.<sup>14</sup>

Corporeal objects are transformed into cultural objects by means of the meaning or sense bestowed upon them. But the relation expression-sense is not a relation of juxtaposition (*Nebeneinander*), for we are untrue to description if we believe that, confronted with a corporeal object endowed with sense, we perceive the corporeal configuration, with its exhibited corporeal properties, *and* the sense with its own determinations *and* their combination through juxtaposition.

But the thesis of juxtaposition is refuted, not only on descriptive, but also on rational grounds. For if it were the case that the sense is merely coexistent with the corporeal manifestation, then it would not be perceived *through* its expression but *together* with its expression. In a word, the expression would be no expression but something concomitant to the sense. And if this were so, the world of culture could be in principle experienceable without any reference to corporeal being, which is of course, absurd.

## 7. ARTICULATION OF TYPES IN THE OBJECTIVE MIND

When we associate by affinity several expressions because they share typical properties, their inclusion within the scope of a type entails not only the attribution of a referential character to them, but also a specification of what the expression means in each case, of its sense.

The type contains a "concentration" of facts. For instance the type "poetical work" contains, vaguely,<sup>15</sup> the determinations which are essential for the poetical work to be such. Thus the type provides a notion of the "what" of the corresponding class of expressions.

By means of subsumption under types, a given corporeal configuration is interpreted as an expression and as an expression belonging to a definite kind: poetical work, linguistic structure, scientific work, legal imperative, religious work, etc. Those types represent the articulation of the "objective mind". i.e., the various "forms in which the community which exists between individuals has objectified itself in the sensible world".

The individual, the communities and the works, in which the life and the mind have transferred themselves, build the external realm of the mind. These manifestations of life, in the form in which they present themselves to understanding in the external world, are like fitted together in the context of nature. We are always surrounded by this great external reality of the mind. It represents a realization of the mind in the sensible world, from the fleeting expression, up to the centuries-long ruling of constitution or a code.<sup>16</sup>

The objective mind<sup>17</sup> has a certain articulated order. It is articulated into different "homogeneous systems" such as law, religion, art, etc., each of which, in turn, has a "regular and firm structure". For instance, no matter how different the historically given systems of law may be, their difference lie in the peculiar modes in which the common structure "imperatives-procedural order -court- devices for the execution of decisions" is to be found, although differences -often dramatic ones- exists at each level. The difference themselves, however, usually lend themselves to typification.

The understanding subject approaches an expression within a medium of understanding, namely the objective mind, in which all the subjects are "submerged". The "submersion" in that medium makes understanding of expressions possible by providing a net of typifications which are, as it were, the a priori of understanding.

Since the understanding subject lives "submerged" (*eingetaucht*) in the objective mind, i.e. in the temporal accumulation of expressions, he is endowed with a background of multifarious acquaintances and intercourses with expressions. Previous acquaintances with expressions, however, are not inconsequential. On the contrary, they leave a sediment or, in Husserl's terminology, habitualities or abiding convictions. Hence the processes of understanding persists. The increasing sedimentation of previous acquaintances with expressions, and, correlatively, the increasing sedimentation of interpretative abilities, constitutes the aforementioned net of typicalities in whose light the understanding subject identifies the new expression. Due to the relation of similarity between the new expression and the

previously experienced ones, congruence is noticed, and subsumption ensues.

In the elementary forms of understanding, from a series of cases in which something spiritual (the sense) expressed itself in a number of similar manifestations of life, one concludes, when the existing affinity reveals itself, that the same relation is present in another similar case... As we say, the manifestations of life are for us like representations of something general; we conclude in as much as we subordinate them to a type of gestures, of actions, to a circle of verbal uses.<sup>18</sup>

Understanding, accordingly, involves an act of union by congruence between the contents of past and new experiences. We must now add, however, that thereby we notice in the new expression only those traits which resemble past expressions, in a word, we notice only the typical traits. We must remember, though, that the new expression, while resembling others of the same type, is a unique one unidentical to its type partners. Its individuality depends, obviously, on its possession of atypical properties which also belong to it. Due to this consciousness of atypicalities, the understanding subject is "incited to new and still deeper attempts at deciphering", a process which Dilthey calls "the march towards individuation."<sup>19</sup> The new deciphered atypicalities, can, of course, be transformed into relevance criteria and function as protentions or anticipated typicalities with respect to new experiences of expressions.

## 8. UNDERSTANDING AND "SAMENESS"

Now it seems that these operations are true constitutive steps of the experience of expressions as cultural objects. But is Dilthey not hereby lending himself to an objection by *petitio principii*? For how did the understanding subject originally understand the expressions as contained in the objective mind in whose light he then interprets the new cultural expressions?

In order to meet this objection, one must obviously distinguish between two moments in the process of understanding. One moment consists in pairing or associating two expressions on account of similarity, whereby I understand B through its resemblance with A,

which I already understand. A prior moment, however, consists in the grasping of the unity sign-sense. But how is the expressed sense originally grasped? Obviously if it is nothing strange to the understanding subject, if he is able to have an insight into the *what* of the sense. In a word, if it is a "community", a common thematic object for both the understanding and the self-expressing subjects. *In a word, only if the sense is an actuality or a possibility in the understanding subject himself.* Hence understanding presupposes a sameness (*Selbigkeit*) among the subjects in terms of the possible or real actualization of the sense of the expression, be it a logical entity, a value or an end.

Each word, each phrase, each gesture or courteous act, each work of art and each historical fact are intelligible because there is a community which unites what expresses itself therein with the understanding subject; the individual lives, thinks and acts always in a sphere of community and understands in such a sphere alone.<sup>20</sup>

In a word, the all important concept of sameness, as the condition of understanding, does not refer to the identity of human individuals, as some believe, for only concepts and judgments (and we may add, values and ends), i.e., ideal entities, are identical. *Rather it refers in the last analysis to the objectivity, to the non private character of the cultural senses, on account of which they can be experienced by the understanding subject in the form fo an encounter within his own realm of lived-experiences but in such a way that the sense encountered therein is the same as the one to which the self-expressing subject was directed in his own lived-experiences and which crystallized into an objectivation in the sensible world.*

For the understanding subject must experience in his own inner life whatever sense is signified by an objectivation, for authentically "given" to him is only the sensible embodiment of the sense. The latter itself is only appresented, like an unseen side of a corporeal object. And in the same way as in the case of the corporeal object, the unseen side which was at first merely appresented can be, as it were, redeemed by turning it into a presented aspect in direct sensible intuition, also the appresented sense of a cultural object must be redeemed, but in the form of an actual or possible objective

pole of the understanding subject's lived-experiences. And the only way in which the *result* of the understanding process can be the grasping of *the* expressed sense, is by recognizing the intersubjective character of the sense and thus a "sameness" in the access to it, actually or potentially. And this access is understanding in its first moment, on which its second moment, proceeding on the principle of analogy, depends for its genesis and validity.

## 9. UNDERSTANDING AS KNOWLEDGE

Now this view has an important implication referring to the methodological concept of understanding, i.e., understanding as the means whereby we come to *know* cultural expressions.

We take it to be a firm phenomenological result that "knowledge, as distinguished from mere thought, consists in an intuitive fulfillment of an intention accompanied by a consciousness of the identity of the fulfillment with the intention."<sup>21</sup> In this connection, one recalls Dilthey's own theory. According to Dilthey, the function of thought is to *represent* the state of affairs contained in the given. It does this through judgment. Judgment introduces a possibility of representing in a way which is in accord with knowledge insofar as it represents with clarity and distinction and in a firm union with verbal signs.

Moreover, "judgments fulfill the knowing intention by approaching, starting from what is conditioned, particular and variable, the fundamental relations in reality."<sup>22</sup>

However, the relation of "representation" between judgment and the given must be established with assurance and only then judgment becomes knowledge. Therefore, verificatory experience is required. Verification means, according to Dilthey, that "what is given and what is discursively thought are interchangeable."<sup>23</sup>

Verification involves that, "when we return to the object, it corroborates, verifies the judgment or the concept in all the fullness of its intuitive existence."<sup>24</sup> Noetically speaking, this means that I must be able to experience certain perceptual (in the broad sense) acts whose contents are identical with the content of the judicatory acts.

Now judging on linguistical or non-linguistical cultural objects, requires the same process of verification if it is to become



knowledge. To understand in the methodological sense means, though not exclusively, to know an expression (or some aspect of it) and this implies to be able to verify our judgments about its "inner aspect". This requires, in turn, the ability to experience acts whose contents are such inner aspects, i.e., the ideal objects embodied in the corporeal cultural expressions. But these experiencing acts are constitutive acts, acts of constitutive understanding, which we have tried to describe above.

The human sciences, therefore, consist of theoretical systems, i.e., systems of propositions bearing on expressions. If their scientific character is to be assured, they must, furthermore consist of *true* propositions, that is, of propositions or judgments corresponding to (cultural) reality. But this correspondence must be more than a *desideratum*, it must be a process of actual verification in the human sciences. The peculiarity of this group of sciences, however, lies in the fact that the objects of these sciences are not corporeal things but corporeal expressions and that, through them, "unreal" objectivities are apprehended not "there", but in the ability of the understanding subject to attain an apprehension of the "inner aspect" by means of this lived-experiencing the latter. Through the corporeal expression, the understanding subject lived-experiences the "detachable" sense meant by the expression. In virtue of that relatedness to the corresponding cultural sense by means of constitutive understanding, he is able both to form representing judgments on it and to corroborate the (possible) relation of correspondence (truth) between the judgment and the state of affairs referred to by the judgment, i.e., he is able to understand in the methodological sense.

It is specially important for the human sciences that all the freshness and power of the lived experience returns, either directly or in the direction from understanding to lived-experiencing.<sup>25</sup>

Constitutive understanding, therefore, brings about a field of objects with which judgments on them can be confronted and verified. Only thus such judgments, somehow interconnected, form a "science" in the sense of a system of propositions conveying knowledge about things. And in this manner constitutive understanding, by providing the required verificatory experience, is also

"the process that constitutes that group of sciences"<sup>26</sup> called the human sciences.

## NOTAS

<sup>1</sup> W. Dilthey, *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften, Gesammelte Schriften*, Band I, (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft 1959), Vorrede, p. XVII. Hereafter we will quote Dilthey through a reference to the volume number and page in the *Gesammelte Schriften*.

<sup>2</sup> E. Husserl, *Phaenomenologische Psychologie* (den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), p. 116ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Aufbau*, G.S. VII, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> "The direction, which is common to them (modes of consciousness), toward the same object, unifies them into a teleological nexus. Only those lived-experiences belong to it which somehow contributed to the apprehension of this determinate object. This teleological character of such nexus conditions the progress, within such nexus, from one member to the other. Insofar as the lived experience has not been exhausted or the full apprehension or expression of the object -which is given fragmentarily and unilaterally through the singular intuitions- has not been attained, and insufficiency remains which demands the continuation of the process. Perceptions which refer to the same object relate reciprocally one to another in the teleological nexus. Thus, an isolated sensible perception always claims further ones in order to complete the apprehension of the object". (*Aufbau*, G.S. VII, p. 128).

<sup>5</sup> *Aufbau*, G.S. VII, p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that, for Platonism, this externality is only phenomenal for, "noumenally", there is whiteness or squareness as one and the same Idea imperfectly "shared" by a plurality of individuals. Thus *real* properties seem to be deprived of their spatio-temporal uniqueness.

<sup>7</sup> Metaphysically, this had led to the Leibnizian notion of the contingency of this world with respect to its realization by God's will. Once realized, however, every thing and event is determined in a causal way. Intra-mundane things and events are

necessitated; the world itself is not. It was freely "admitted into existence".

<sup>8</sup> *Aufbau Fortsetzung*, G.S. VII, p. 227.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Dilthey's term are, respectively, "Manifestation", "Ausdruck" and "Representation".

<sup>11</sup> Note the triadic structure of a cultural object: the embodiment of the expression (e.g. *this* performance of the Ninth Symphony), the expression itself (e.g. *the* Ninth Symphony); the expressed sense (e.g. the aesthetic values).

<sup>12</sup> *Aufbau Forts.*, G.S. VII, 209.

<sup>13</sup> Dilthey uses the term "inner" (ein Inneres) to designate the sense of the expression. However, this must not be construed as implying that expressions in general mean psychological processes of any kind. The term "inner" is used in order to distinguish the physical object from the sense (not physical though not psychical either).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 209-210. Cf. Husserl's identical thesis of 1912 in *Ideen II* (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952), p. 238.

<sup>15</sup> It is the business of the human sciences to transform types into concepts with a clear determination of intention and extension.

<sup>16</sup> *Aufbau*, G.S. VII, p. 146.

<sup>17</sup> This is not the place to discuss the difference between Dilthey's concept of the objective mind and Hegel's. Let it suffice to say that, for Hegel, the objectivations are objectivations of a supra-individual rational power. For Dilthey, they are objectivations of the totality of the human mind, reason being only one of its aspects. It is thus seen that there are two main differences.

<sup>18</sup> *Aufbau Forts.*, G.S. VII, p. 219.

<sup>19</sup> *Aufbau Forts.*, G.S. VII, p. 213.

<sup>20</sup> *Aufbau Forts.*, G.S. VII, p. 146-147.

<sup>21</sup> J.N. Mohanty, *Edmund Husserl's Theory of Meaning* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 46.

<sup>22</sup> *Aufbau*, G.S. VII, p. 125.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *vid.* note 3.