Hermeneutics

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Abstract

The methodology of interpretation has traditionally been called 'hermeneutics.' This article begins with elucidation of the central concept of hermeneutics and distinguishes it from other usages of the term. The subsequent sections clarify the relevant notion of methodology and the leading concepts of hermeneutics, *understanding* and *interpretation*. A glance at the history of hermeneutics focuses on turning points in the historical development of methodologies of interpretation. The concluding section seeks to bring out the main issues in the methods controversies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and to suggest strategies to resolve these controversies.

Hermeneutics: Concepts and Tasks

Hermeneutics is a discipline that sets itself upon the task of specifying and justifying *a methodology of interpretation*, originally of texts, but by extension of many other interpretanda. It has also been called the science or art of interpretation.

The Latin half-neologism 'hermeneutica' was introduced into scientific terminology shortly before 1630 by the German philosopher and theologian Johann Conrad Dannhauer (1603–66) as an equivalent of the old Greek term 'hermēneutike [techné]' (=hermeneutic [art]) that in turn derives from the verb 'hermeneúein,' meaning originally 'to express' or 'to translate,' but since the days of Plato also 'to interpret' (cf Jaeger, 1974). Dannhauer's *Idea boni interpretis et malitiosi calumniatoris* was the first textbook of the new discipline called 'hermeneutica generalis' (Dannhauer, 1630).

It has been a common practice to distinguish between (1) a *general* hermeneutics covering all interpreting disciplines and (2) several *domain- or discipline-specific* subspecies of hermeneutics including, particularly, *hermeneutica sacra*, that is, bible hermeneutics (cf von Reventlow, 1990–2001), and *hermeneutica iuris*, that is, legal hermeneutics (cf Schröder, 2001), and also archaeological (Robert, 1919), historical (Bernheim, 1908: Chapter 5), literary (cf Szondi, 1975; Weimar, 1975), art-historical (Bätschmann, 1984), and musical hermeneutics (Dahlhaus, 1975). While general hermeneutics has traditionally been conceived as a philosophical discipline, commonly as part of logic in a wide sense (including methodology and parts of what is nowadays called epistemology), the different kinds of special hermeneutics have usually been assigned to their respective disciplines (bible hermeneutics to theology, literary hermeneutics to literary studies, and so on), although some philosophers preferred to regard the domain-specific arts of interpretation as mere applications of general hermeneutics to a special object.

Since interpretation is a means to understanding, *general hermeneutics* has two leading concepts, understanding and interpretation, and should, accordingly, consist of two main parts: (1) a theory, or at least a conception, of understanding and (2) a methodology of interpretation. As long as the objects of understanding were restricted to texts, theories of understanding accordingly amounted to conceptions of textual meaning. When the scope is broadened to include other objects of understanding (e.g., persons, actions, and artifacts), more comprehensive theories of understanding are needed. A methodology of interpretation should contain (1) a conception of the aims of interpretation (cf Bühler, 2003; Tepe, 2007) and (2) a system of principles of interpretation, including rules for the critical testing of interpretational hypotheses (cf Bühler, 2003; Scholz, 1999, 2014).

In more recent times, the technical term 'philosophical hermeneutics' has been applied to a philosophical program associated with the names of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) that differs considerably from traditional hermeneutics. Early Heidegger had in mind a phenomenology or existential analytic of *Dasein* (i.e., human existence) that should replace traditional ontology (Heidegger, 1962). Gadamer's project was the more modest one of a phenomenology of hermeneutic experience, with special emphasis on the acquisition of the classical tradition (Gadamer, 1960). While Heidegger boldly appropriated the venerable term 'hermeneutics' for the peculiar brand of proto-anthropology he outlined in *Sein und Zeit*, Gadamer, much more cautiously, tried to use some of Heidegger's ideas to the benefit of philosophical esthetics and the humane studies. In his later years, Gadamer preferred to call his overall project 'hermeneutic philosophy' to avoid confusion with classical hermeneutics. Whatever merits Heidegger's and Gadamer's contributions might have, they should not be praised for 'deepening' the traditional project of hermeneutics; rather, they should be taken to have addressed, by and large, different questions and pursued different goals. Most importantly, they showed no interest in epistemological and methodological questions concerning interpretation. (The very title of Gadamer's *opus magnum* – *Truth and Method* – is meant to hint at its central thesis that truth in art and in the humanities lies outside the control of scientific methods.)

Today, 'hermeneutics' is frequently used to allude to a loose family of antinaturalist approaches in humanities and social sciences. Besides 'hermeneutics,' many social scientists employ terms like 'interpretive social science,' 'interpretive anthropology,' and 'interpretive theory of culture' (Geertz, 1973) or refer, more generally, to an 'interpretive turn' or 'interpretivism' in social sciences (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1987). In American sociology, it has been common practice to use *Verstehen* (Abel, 1929, 1948) or derivative terms such as 'the doctrine of

Verstehen' (Martin, 1969, 1970: Chapter 8) to refer to a technical use of 'understanding' in the work of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), namely 'empathic understanding,' and especially to the conception of a 'verstehende Soziologie'; that is, interpretive sociology, that was inaugurated by Max Weber (1864–1920) and soon became influential in German and American sociology (cf the critical discussions in Truzzi, 1974 and Martin, 2000). In addition, well-known German scholars following Dilthey – inter alia Eduard Spranger (1882–1963) and Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) – called for a 'verstehende' (interpretive) or 'geisteswissenschaftliche' (humanistic) psychology to counterbalance the dominant research program of an explanatory psychology (cf the critical discussion in Störring, 1928).

The present article focuses on general hermeneutics in the traditional methodological sense and its impact on the humanities and the social sciences. Other so-called 'hermeneutical' or 'interpretive' approaches are taken into account only insofar as they promise to be relevant for the methodological issues.

Methods and Methodology

A *methodology* for a field of activities is a specification of the basic methods that are recommended to be followed in this field. A *method* in turn is a teachable step-by-step procedure that is suited to solve specific practical or theoretical problems. It is useful to distinguish between *special scientific methods* that are specific for particular sciences or a well-defined subgroup of sciences and *general scientific methods* that are applied in all empirical sciences (cf Kraft, 1925). To be sure, a reasonable method need not and in most cases will not provide an algorithm for solving problems in a specified domain; but, insofar as hermeneutics claims scientific status, it should employ accepted scientific methods.

Hermeneutics may be conceived as either a descriptive or a normative discipline. In a *descriptive* vein, it aims at a rational reconstruction of an already existing practice of interpretation that presumably is less than perfect. In a *normative* vein, the goal is to direct, control, and, hopefully, to optimize this imperfect practice. Both projects, the descriptive and the normative, do seem not only legitimate, but also worthwhile.

Understanding and Interpretation

As noted above, the two leading concepts of hermeneutics are interpretation and understanding. Interpretation is a rational activity directed toward the cognitive aim of correct or adequate understanding. (The product of this activity is also called 'an interpretation.')

'To interpret' and 'to understand' are transitive verbs; understanding, like interpretation, has an object. One understands something (x), or one fails to understand it. Sometimes we understand something without effort, simply because we have acquired the requisite ability, and nothing more is needed. Thus, for example, we understand the linguistic utterance 'Piss off!,' since we have learned the English language. But, often, understanding requires work; this is revealed in phrases like 'trying to understand' or 'struggling to understand' (Vendler, 1994). When we cannot understand something immediately, we may nevertheless make an effort to understand it. Interpretation of x is necessary whenever there are special difficulties in understanding x. Such difficulties may be of different sorts (cf Rosenberg, 1981): (1) Thus, difficulty of understanding x is sometimes due to the intrinsic complexity of x; what is needed in such cases is some sort of analysis or decomposition (Ziff, 1972; Moravcsik, 1979). (2) In other cases, x may be difficult to understand because it does not fit coherently in a larger context; here what is required is rather some kind of synthesis or of embedding x in a network of connections. (3) In still other cases, difficulty of understanding x may be a question of the indistinctness of x, so that a careful tracing of boundaries or a better articulation might help.

What kinds of items are possible objects of understanding and interpretation? Traditional hermeneutics concentrated on the interpretation of texts plus, occasionally, things that were supposed to be sufficiently text-like. Reading in a book had been the great paradigm of understanding and interpretation the two most eminent cases being: reading in the book of nature (*liber naturae*) and reading in the Holy Bible, the *liber supernaturalis* (cf Danneberg, 2003).

For centuries, interpreters aimed at understanding and teaching others to understand canonical texts, inter alia Homer's and Hesiod's epics and myths, the works of Plato and Aristotle, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the Holy Bible and the Corpus Iuris. Some of them maintained that in order to understand texts, we should also try to understand their authors. From a more systematic point of view, the objects of understanding may be divided into the following classes (cf Föllesdal, 1981; Scholz, 2010): (1) *persons* and collectives of persons; (2) intentional *attitudes* of persons, especially their cognitive and conative attitudes; (3) individual and collective *actions*; (4) certain *products of actions*; (5) *situations*; and (6) *rules* and rule-constituted social entities, for example, institutions (Wittgenstein, 1958; Nemirow, 1995). With regard to subclass (4), that is, products of actions, it should be emphasized that it encompasses a great variety of items: signs, signals, symbols, words, sentences, texts, arguments, proofs, paintings, maps, diagrams, sculptures, works of architecture, instruments, machines, and other artifacts. The understanding of languages and, more generally, symbol systems (cf Goodman, 1968) has sometimes been treated as a special case of (4) and sometimes as a special case of (6).

Common usage and common sense would certainly add one more item to the list, namely: (7) *natural phenomena*. At any rate, scientists and other curious people have always talked about understanding the universe and its many properties, structures, and mechanisms (cf Cooper, 1994); thus, we want to understand, for example, what osmosis is and how it works, or why there are black holes, and what their typical causes and effects are. But, although many representatives of classical semiotics and hermeneutics (e.g., Meier, 1757) had included natural signs in their domain, in more recent times, class (7) has been contested as a proper object of a theory of understanding (see below).

In addition to the direct object constructions, we use other grammatical structures, for example, 'understanding that,' and, more importantly, indirect question constructions such as 'understanding why' or 'understanding how' (cf Bromberger,

1962, 1992; von Kutschera, 1981: Chapter 2; Vendler, 1984, 1994). Attempts to understand *x*, say an action, may still aim at answering various different questions about *x*, for example, what was done, why it was done, and for what purpose. Thus, attending to the indirect questions that may follow the verb 'to understand' provides us with a more fine-grained classification of types of understanding (e.g., 'understanding what was done' and 'understanding why *x* was done') than the focus on the direct object constructions (e.g., 'understanding action *x*').

Is there something that all objects of understanding have in common? A plausible although still rather vague suggestion is that they all have *structure* (cf Ziff, 1972; Moravcsik, 1979). A bit more precisely, understanding in all cases involves cognition of internal or external relations and interconnections (cf Martin, 1970; Franklin, 1995), especially causal nexuses and nexuses of reference and meaning (cf Mantzavinos, 2005), and also logical relations (as in understanding a proof or an argument), means–end relations (as in understanding actions and artifacts), nomological relations (as in understanding events) and convention-based relations (as in understanding institutions) etc. (Scholz, 2014).

A Glance at the History of Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics has a long and rich history (cf Scholz, 1999: Pt. I; Schönert and Vollhardt, 2005; Detel, 2011; Böhl et al., 2013). The historiography of hermeneutics has been deeply influenced by the insufficient historical studies of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) and Joachim Wach (1898–1955), and as a result of that has been highly selective and often biased (cf Dilthey, 1900, 1966; Wach, 1926–33). Especially, the elaborate systems of general hermeneutics that emerged long before Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834), Dilthey's great hero, have been unduly neglected. Another source of error is the temptation to invent whiggish narratives of a history that leads in an inexorable march of progress from alleged primitive beginnings to the alleged masters of present-day hermeneutics.

Prehistory

While the history of hermeneutics, strictly speaking, begins in the early modern period, its prehistory dates back to Greek antiquity where there is already a highly developed practice and experience of interpreting, inter alia, oracles, dreams, and other signs, myths and epics, philosophical and poetical works, the deeds and works of famous human beings as well as laws, contracts, and testaments. First attempts at explicitly formulating and systematizing rules of interpretation can be found in ancient grammar and rhetoric (cf Pfeiffer, 1968; Eden, 1997), in Galenus and the Hellenistic commentators of Plato and Aristotle (Jaeger, 1974) as well as in Rabbinic and Early Christian exegesis (von Reventlow, 1990–2001).

The most salient and important tendency of ancient exegesis was *allegoresis*, a method of nonliteral interpretation of authoritative texts that contained statements that prima facie seemed either (1) morally or theologically inappropriate, or (2) false. In order to 'rescue' or defend these texts, interpreters were urged to find a deeper sense (*hypónoia*; 'underlying meaning') or allegorical meaning (*allegoría*, from *alla agoreuein*, 'saying something different') and to ascribe it to the offensive passages such that the wording can be maintained, but the alleged imperfections of the text disappear. Allegoresis was practiced widely from the sixth century BC to the Stoic and the Neoplatonistic schools and beyond. It was, however, rejected by others, most notably by Plato, by the Epicureans (with the exception of Lucretius), and by the Alexandrian scholars (Eratosthenes, Aristarchus).

In late antiquity and the Middle Ages, the ancient techniques of allegorical interpretation developed into complex systems of threefold or fourfold written meaning that were applied mainly to the Bible, and also to natural things (cf von Dobschütz, 1921; de Lubac, 1959–64; Ohly, 1977; Brinkmann, 1980).

In the tradition of the eminent commentators, the preliminary questions of interpretation were summarized in the so-called *accessus ad auctores* that preceded commentaries, translations, and editions of Aristotle, Porphyry, Virgil, and other classical authors. Three major traditions, literary, rhetorical, and philosophical, lead to overlapping, but somewhat different typologies of the hermeneutical tasks. The literary tradition (Servius) emphasized questions about the biography of the poet (*vita poetae*), the title of the work (*titulus operis*), the quality of the poem (*qualitas carminis*), the author's intention (*intentio scribentis*), and the division of the text (*numerus librorum*, *ordo librorum*). In the rhetorical tradition (from Cicero to Erasmus), the tasks were derived from an analysis of the *circumstantiae orationis*, in modern terminology from features of the context of a speech or written text (especially place, time, and author) which were usually indicated by the corresponding questions (*quis*, *quid*, *cur*, *quomodo*, *quando*, *ubi*, *quibus facultatibus*). In the philosophical tradition (Alexander Aphrodisias, Ammonius, Simplicius et al.), the commentators also asked questions about the title and the author of the work; a good interpreter, however, should not only concentrate on the purpose or intention of the work (*skopós*; *intentio operis*), its theme, structure, and internal connections, but also take into consideration its utility and ask himself to which part of philosophy it belongs. The philosophical *accessus ad auctores* could be systematized in the Middle ages in terms of Aristotle's doctrine of four causes identifying the author as efficient cause, the themes, and sources of the text as material cause, the proceeding of the author and the form of the text as the formal cause, and the purpose of the work as final cause.

Early History

In the early modern period, the 'rationes' and 'media interpretationis' known from antiquity were assembled and integrated into a new conception of education and methodology (Piccart, 1605a,b; cf Jaeger, 1974; Kessler, 2002). Several Aristotelian and eclectic philosophers, among them Clemens Timpler (1567–1624), Bartholomaeus Keckermann (1571–1609), and Michael Piccart (1574–1620), called for a new discipline that would teach us to be good interpreters and to avoid intentional and unintentional misinterpretations (cf Jaeger, 1974; Sdzuj, 1997). Such a discipline was badly needed for several reasons: (1) Without it, a rich potential source of knowledge, namely all oral and written testimony, was in danger of being spoiled and ruined. (2) It promised to provide a neutral ground from which many theological and confessional controversies could be settled. This new

self-consciousness culminated in the *Idea boni interpretis et malitiosi calumniatoris* (1630) by Johann Conrad Dannhauer (Jaeger, 1974; Sdzuj, 1997). Shortly before he presented the first systematic textbook on general hermeneutics, he had introduced the Latin half-neologism *hermeneutica* as the title of a new *modus sciendi* intended to supplement the Aristotelian *Organon*. It is general in that it is common to all sciences ('omniis scientiis communis') and useful for scholars of all faculties ('omnium facultatum studiosis perquam utilis').

After Dannhauer had established the systematic *locus* of hermeneutics within logic (Dannhauer, 1630, 1634), eminent philosophers such as Johann Clauberg (1622–65), Christian Thomasius (1655–1728), and Christian Wolff (1679–1754) devoted integral parts of their logical writings to general hermeneutics (cf Bühler, 1994; Schönert and Vollhardt, 2005). Thus, from Dannhauer to Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848), it became a regular component of logic textbooks or logic-based treatises, either as an integral part of Aristotelian logic or as a separate practical logic (Scholz, 1999).

The idea of a general hermeneutics evoked the widest interest in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and there emerged a number of alternative outlines in the different philosophical schools (Alexander, 1993; Bühler, 1994; Sdzuj, 1997). I can mention only two conceptions which seem to me both of historical and of intrinsic interest: (1) On the one hand, there is the Rationalist project of a systematic general hermeneutics as envisaged in the Cartesian and Wolffian schools with their methodological ideal of an axiomatic–deductive system. Thus Clauberg, in his sophisticated hermeneutics, made distinctions between the rules of interpretation with regard to their generality, from the most general principles (Clauberg, 1654: §§. 86–89) to the special rules of interpretation (Clauberg, 1654: §§ 90–104). Among the most general principles are what may be called principles of benevolent interpretation (cf Künne, 1990), for example, 'in dubiis benigniora eligere,' that is, in cases of doubt to choose the more benign interpretations, or 'dubium in meliorem partem esse accipiendum,' that is, the doubtful is to be understood for the better (Clauberg, 1654). Or to take an extreme example, Wolffians Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1717–62) and Georg Friedrich Meier (1718–77) emphasized the principle of hermeneutic equity (*aequitas hermeneutica*) – according to which the interpreter should interpret any sign in such a way that his interpretation tallies with the presumption of the perfection of the sign and its author (until the opposite has been proven) – as *the* first principle of general hermeneutics (Meier, 1757; cf Scholz, 1999). (2) On the other hand, there is the empiricist idea of a general hermeneutics as a theory of hermeneutic probability that was elaborated by the school of Christian Thomasius (1655–1728) and Andreas Rüdiger (1673–1731). Thus, Christian August Crusius (1715–75), in his excellent hermeneutics, enumerated the most general presumptions of hermeneutic probability, among them, defeasible presumptions of logical consistency and means–ends rationality (Crusius, 1747; cf Scholz, 1999).

It should be clear by now that when the theologian Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834) propagated, with great emphasis, a 'general hermeneutics' at the beginning of the nineteenth century, he was (albeit in his own distinctive way) reinventing the wheel. While his conception of general hermeneutics may be interesting in its own right, his claim that such a discipline did not already exist was simply false. Moreover, most of the rules he recommended were taken over from contemporary textbooks on bible hermeneutics. Any text or speech is to be understood, on the one hand, as part of a language and, on the other hand, as part of an individual life (Schleiermacher, 1977). Schleiermacher's conception of psychological interpretation and his emphasis on the individuality and originality of the author had a great influence on August Boeckh (1785–1867), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), and other modern theoreticians of hermeneutics.

Dilthey took an interest in the history of hermeneutics for two reasons: in the first place, because he was working on a comprehensive biography of Schleiermacher (cf Dilthey, 1966) and, secondly, because he thought hermeneutics developed his own project: a laying of the foundations of the new *Geisteswissenschaften* (history, national economy, jurisprudence, political science, religious studies, literary studies, art history, musicology, and psychology (!)) which he tried to demarcate strictly from the natural sciences (Dilthey, 1927). The common object of these human sciences is mankind and its history, the 'human–social–historical reality' or, in Hegelian terms, the world of objective spirit. The objects of the humanities are 'constituted' in a way that differs fundamentally from the way the objects of the natural sciences are 'constituted.' To reconstruct the constitution of the historical world is the central task of a 'logic' of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. According to Dilthey, the leading concepts of the human sciences are life or lived experience ('Erlebnis'), expression, and understanding. While we are only able to explain the connections of the physical world with the help of abstract concepts and theoretical extrapolations, our access to the mental and spiritual world is immediate: we are able to understand manifestations of life because we know the connection between the outward expression and something inner that is thereby expressed from our own case. In the elementary forms of understanding, we infer (by some kind of analogical reasoning) from a single manifestation of life that it is the expression of a certain inner content; in the higher forms of understanding, we try to reconstruct the totality of an individual life, for example, the life of Martin Luther, via a special form of induction that is, unfortunately, not analyzed in detail by Dilthey. It is in this context that he underlined the importance of reproduction ('Nachbildung') and re-living ('Nacherleben') for understanding other minds and their works. While the higher forms of understanding are initially based on the personal genius of the interpreter, for the purposes of historical sciences they have to be developed into a technique, the art of interpretation. According to Dilthey, the science of this art is hermeneutics (Dilthey, 1927).

Recent Developments

The Methods Controversies

One consequence of the emergence of the 'Geisteswissenschaften' (moral sciences; humanities) or 'Kulturwissenschaften' (cultural studies) was a long series of methods controversies ('Methodenstreite') that continue till today. Time and again, self-styled antipositivists and antinaturalists reacted to so-called positivists

and naturalists. (Since 'positivism' and 'naturalism' are mainly used in a pejorative sense, I prefer the more neutral terms 'Methodological Monism' and 'Methodological Dualism' to designate the main issue between the two camps: whether there is a methodological unity or a strict methodological separation.)

In the early stages of the controversy, Auguste Comte (1798–1857), John Stuart Mill (1806–73), and the historian Henry Thomas Buckle (1821–62) counted as the arch-positivists. In Germany, there was, in addition, the Leipzig Circle that included the experimental psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) and the historian Karl Gotthard Lamprecht (1856–1915). Comte, Mill, and their followers pleaded for applying the general 'logic' of scientific research to the humanities and social sciences. Mill expressed the hope that the desideratum of a 'Logic of the Moral Sciences' could be met by generalizing and adjusting the methodology that was developed for the natural sciences (Mill, 1843: Book VI, Chapter I, p. 1). In other words, the 'positivists' pleaded for the methodological unity of the sciences.

Their opponents insisted on a special methodological status of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, and in particular on a high degree of methodological autonomy of, say, history. Despite this fundamental consensus, they offered rather different suggestions for demarcating the two groups of sciences (cf Becher, 1921). Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–84) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) famously opposed the method of 'Erklären' (explanation) as against the method of 'Verstehen' (understanding) (Droysen, 1977; Dilthey, 1924). The neo-Kantian philosophers Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1915) and Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936) focused on the respective aims of each group of sciences and especially on the methods of concept formation and judgment; according to them, the logic of history and, more generally, the logic of the *Kulturwissenschaften* is characterized by an idiographic interest in singular judgments about the past (Windelband, 1894) or in an individualizing form of concept formation (Rickert, 1929). In addition, they underlined that the objects of cultural studies are essentially related to shared cultural values ('wertbezogen').

While Dilthey and Rickert in their most exaggerated statements pleaded for a strict separation of the *Geistes-* or *Kulturwissenschaften* from the natural sciences, some contemporaries argued for more subtly differentiated positions. Thus, Max Weber (1864–1920) emphasized, on the one hand, that the sociologist must first try to understand human action in terms of the categories of the actors, their goals, and beliefs. On the other hand, he stressed that understanding of this kind has to be controlled by the usual methods of causal attribution (Weber, 1922). Thus, he avoided claiming an opposition between understanding and explanation. On the contrary, his 'verstehende Soziologie' (interpretive sociology) leads from interpretive understanding to a causal analysis of the actual processes (Ringer, 1997). His causalist methodology makes it possible to explain the conduct of actors that are quite unlike us. Against an overestimation of Diltheyan understanding qua congenial reliving, Weber, echoing Georg Simmel (1858–1918), reminded us that one need not be Caesar to understand Caesar (Weber, 1922; cf Simmel, 1905). Nevertheless, since Weber limits the subject matter of sociology to subjectively meaningful action, his intermediate position in the methods controversies is still too restrictive for the whole spectrum of social scientific understanding. Social scientists should try to explain behavior, for example, traditional behavior, that may no longer be subjectively meaningful; and they should be allowed to draw on regularities discovered by scientists from other disciplines in order to explain individual and collective behavior (Martin, 2000).

To the already mentioned alleged dichotomies (explanation versus understanding; nomothetic versus idiographic sciences), more recent methods that dualists have added: construing human actions as mere events from outside versus reenacting the thoughts of the agent in the historian's mind (Collingwood, 1946); covering law explanations versus rationalizing explanations (Dray, 1957), causes versus reasons (various ordinary language philosophers); causal explanations versus teleological explanations (von Wright, 1971); and so on.

Against Separation

One strategy to avoid the separation of disciplines implied by Methodological Dualism is to question the alleged dichotomies and their theoretical presuppositions. Thus, it has been argued that understanding is not a method in itself that can be contrasted with other methods, but the end at which all methods aim (Lundberg, 1939), or that the reasons for acting can at the same time be the causes of the action (Davidson, 1963). In addition, it has been argued that special mental operations aiming at understanding, for example, operations of reliving, reenacting, or empathic understanding, may be useful heuristic techniques, but cannot replace reliable methods for validating hypotheses (Hempel, 1942, 1965; Abel, 1948; Rudner, 1966). The most important objection to the idea that human action has to be understood 'from inside' or 'from the perspective of the agent' is that it would unduly restrict historical and social scientific understanding (Martin, 2000).

Another strategy to defend a fundamental methodological unity of the sciences is to focus on the most general scientific methods (cf Kraft, 1925), especially the methods for the critical testing and validating of hypotheses. At least since the nineteenth century most philosophers of science have favored some version of the Hypothetico-Deductive Method: Begin by forming hypotheses (including hypotheses about unobservable entities, processes, and forces), then deduce consequences about observable phenomena from these hypotheses, and finally examine whether these consequences fit in with the experiential data. In view of the generality and wide applicability of this method, it is not surprising that it has been suggested as the method of hermeneutics (cf Hirsch, 1967; Göttner, 1973; Föllesdal, 1979; Mantzavinos, 2005). And, it can hardly be denied that many interpreters have made use of this general kind of reasoning in their interpretive efforts. In my view, the Method of Inference to the Best Explanation is even more widely applicable: Ask yourself what would explain the available evidence and take the ability of a hypothesis to explain the relevant data as an indicator that the hypothesis is probably correct (cf Lipton, 2004). Applications of this general method are ubiquitous in all forms of inquiry. Moreover, it promises to be free from the serious logical and epistemological

problems that emerge when we try to make the Hypothetico-Deductive Method precise (Scholz, 2014).

A third strategy to overcome the method's controversies is to opt for an eclectic methodological pluralism that encourages all methodologies and theoretical approaches that seem to be relevant to the questions being asked and the aims pursued (cf Little, 1991; Martin, 2000). This strategy accepts the diversity of methods without separating the disciplines by an unbridgeable gulf.

See also: Dilthey, Wilhelm (1833–1911); Hermeneutics, History of; Interpretation in Anthropology.

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