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KARL MARX AND WILHELM DILTHEY ON THE SOCIO–HISTORICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE MIND

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Contemporary psychologists study concepts such as memory, perception, consciousness, belief, intention, reasoning, language, and so on to understand the mind. They assume more or less implicitly that these functions or domains belong to an individual, that they change over the life span, and that they indicate certain central tendencies within or between populations that can be assessed in descriptive and inferential ways. Seldom do psychologists realize that they base their theories and research practices regarding the mind on an individualistic as well as on an individual concept of the mind.¹

The assumption of an individual mind is not surprising and has historical–philosophical roots. When René Descartes (1596–1650; see 1637, 1641/1996) used his widely known *cogito* (I think) argument on which to base knowledge, *cogitamus* (we think) never entered his foundational reflections. On the contrary, he was skeptical of the *cogitamus*, view-

¹The term *individualistic* connotes here a justification for the notion of the individual, while the term *individual* suggests a lack of reflection on the concept in daily research practices.

ing it as a source of bias and not seeing the dependence of the *cogito* on the *cogitamus*. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804; see 1781/1982) suggested the *cogito*, the “Ego” as thinking being, to be the subject matter of rational psychology (see Tolman, chap. 9, this volume). Although Kant (1781/1982) used concepts such as community in his epistemological writings, they were not essential in his knowledge–theoretical reflections.

Within the Western philosophical tradition it is not surprising that philosophy and psychology have accumulated a vast literature on the mind–body problem, yet there is only a marginal reflection on the mind–culture or mind–history question. Although philosophers have reflected on external influences on the individual’s thinking processes, as suggested, for example, in Francis Bacon’s (1561–1626; see 1965) concept of *idola*, this influence was often defined as negative and thus did not result in a cultural–historical or socio–historical conceptualization of the mind. Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) and Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) formulated ideas that are relevant to a social, historical, and cultural conceptualization of the mind, but the first Western philosopher who systematically elaborated a socio–historical understanding of the mind² was Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831).

Hegel (1830/1992) discriminated among the subjective, objective, and absolute mind.³ The *subjective mind* refers to an individual mind and encompasses sensation, habit, consciousness, perception, reason, desire, memory, imagination, and so on. The *objective mind* is the mind of a social community or era and is expressed in law, morality, and ethics. The *absolute mind*, an infinite entity, is expressed in art, religion, and philosophy (see Tolman, chap. 9, this volume). But Hegel also connected the subjective and objective mind by arguing that no individual “can leap beyond his time” as “the mind of the time is also his mind”⁴ (1817/1986b, p. 111).

Critics might argue that Hegel’s idealism, according to which the mind was understood as the self-becoming of the Absolute, and his lack of interest in the detailed mechanisms of the relationship between the subjective and objective mind, are not helpful to psychology. However, it must be understood that Hegel’s challenge of the empirical individual as the core of a philosophy of the mind has been the stimulus for the socio–historical conceptualization of the mind in 19th-century German philosophical psychology.

Out of the Hegelian challenge have emerged two historically significant, often considered opposing research programs, one founded by Karl

²The English term *mind* is imprecise as it refers to German *Geist*, *Seele*, *Gemüt* as well as to *Bewußtsein* (consciousness). The German term *Geist*, widely used by Hegel, is translated as *spirit* or as *mind*.

³Tolman (chap. 9, this volume) translates *Geist* as *spirit*.

⁴Mind of the time (spirit of the times) is a translation of *Geist der Zeit*, which means the same as *Zeitgeist*.

Marx (1818–1883) and the other by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911). Although both rejected the idea of an absolute mind, the concept of an objective mind has played an important role in both of their conceptualizations of the mind. Moreover, both were ambivalent toward Hegel. Marx (1867/1962a) admitted to being a pupil of Hegel, whose dialectics he argued stood on its head, and he considered it his goal to untie Hegel's dialectics "to discover the rational kernel in the mystical shell" (p. 27).⁵ Dilthey (1977), who wrote a biography of the young Hegel (see Dilthey, 1959a), used a similar argument in refuting the claim that the Idea provokes historical facts: "This is like assuming that the picture in a mirror is the source of the movement of a person one observes moving in the mirror" (p. 173).⁶

Marx's conceptualization of the mind has indeed influenced psychology in the 20th century. He inspired the Soviet philosophical psychologist Sergej Rubinstein (1889–1960), the cultural–historical school with its mastermind Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), the French psychologist Georges Politzer (1903–1942), the German psychologist Klaus Holzkamp (1927–1995), and various forms of critical psychology. Followers of the Frankfurt School merged his theories, albeit not his psychological writings, with psychoanalysis and developed a field of research—Freudian–Marxism.⁷

Dilthey's psychological writings have challenged attempts to capture psychological phenomena of the mind through natural–scientific experimentation. Dilthey (1957) called on Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) as a witness, who, too, realized that experimental psychology is limited to basic psychological processes and that the study of mental life requires more than causal explanations (see pp. 166–167). He had a significant influence on 20th-century psychology in the form of the *geisteswissenschaftliche Psychologie* of Eduard Spranger (1882–1963) as well as on Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), on Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and his phenomenological psychology, and on Hans-Georg Gadamer's (born 1900) hermeneutics. In North America his ideas influenced Gordon Allport (1897–1967), and his spirit lives on in various forms of humanistic psychology.⁸

Marx did not discuss Dilthey. However, Dilthey, who was 15 years

⁵Translations have been provided by the author of this chapter. In cases of ambiguity the author sought guidance in Kamenka (1983).

⁶Translations have been provided by the author of this chapter.

⁷Marx exercised perhaps his greatest influence in psychology via Vygotsky's developmental concepts (e.g., zone of proximal development). These concepts could be assimilated and accommodated into mainstream research because the cultural–historical school followed a natural scientific methodology in line with Marx's authority.

⁸Despite their real impact on psychology, Marx and Dilthey are hardly mentioned in North American history of psychology textbooks. One of the very few textbooks that recognizes Marx is Robinson (1976). He suggested that Marx failed to influence the course of psychological scholarship because of his Hegelianism and that his nonexperimental and sociological approach to the mind were detrimental to the emerging natural science of psychology. With a focus on intellectual history, however, I do not discuss why Marx and Dilthey were without impact on remodeling the psychology of their time.

younger than Marx, analyzed Marx's economic but not his philosophical or psychological writings.⁹ In a review of 1878, Dilthey (1974) argued that Marx's theory of value "stands in unsolvable contradiction to the real facts" (p. 186). According to Marx (1867/1962a, 1898/1962c), value is the crystallization of societal labor, the magnitude of which depends on the amount of labor necessary for the production of the product, while the amount of labor is measured by the time involved. Dilthey criticized Marx—from a psychological point of view—for not taking the needs of individuals into account when determining the value of a commodity. However, he commended Marx's reconstruction of the concentration of capital. This analysis, Dilthey (1974) claimed, was "executed in an extraordinarily brilliant way" (p. 187). Orthodox Marxist scholarship described Dilthey, who was politically a liberal, less favorably and denounced him as a member of late bourgeois philosophy, as irrational, as not understanding the nature of historical laws, and as denying objectivity (Buhr, 1988).

It is the intent of this chapter to demonstrate that both thinkers have more commonalities in their socio-historical understandings of the mind than previously thought. Both were more interested in the historically and socially mediated content of the mind than in its processes, and they both viewed the mind as embedded in human life activity. Notwithstanding these similarities, they differed in their notions of society, history, and action. This chapter outlines Marx's and Dilthey's conceptualization of the nature of the mind and methodologies for studying it—neglected in mainstream psychology but theoretically a historical alternative to German experimental psychology. Too, I hope that it becomes clear that their conceptualization of the mind, although similar in intention, is different from Wundt's and other forms of *Völkerpsychologie*, which Wundt promoted for the nature of higher thought processes, in opposition to experimental psychology that focuses on basic mental processes (see also Danziger, chap. 3, this volume; Teo, 1999).

THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN MIND

Karl Marx

There are difficulties in discussing Marx's ideas on the mind. First, as the object of intense academic research in former socialist countries, a vast literature has been accumulated. However, within Marxism as a state doctrine, socialist countries were seen as the logical and necessary outcome of his thoughts. Second, Marx never wrote a book or an essay on psychology

⁹This is understandable, as many of Marx's writings were published long after his death (see below).

in the narrow sense. He did not intend to develop a psychology, as he was primarily interested in philosophy, political economy, and politics. Philosophy's goal is—as Marx expressed in his last thesis on Feuerbach—not to “interpret the world . . . but to change it” (1888/1958, p. 7). He wanted to “overturn all circumstances in which the human is a degraded, a subjugated, a forsaken, a contemptible being” (1844/1956c, p. 385). Third, in his mature writings, Marx no longer participated in discussions on the mind, and psychologists are not mentioned in his writings.¹⁰

Marx used the term *psychology* in his earlier writings on several occasions. For example, in an article on censorship he suggested that in Prussian criminal suits, judge, prosecutor, and defense counsel are unified in one person. According to Marx (1843/1956a), this unification “contradicts all laws of psychology” (p. 24). Beyond using the word *psychology*, he also laid out a theoretical framework in which the socio-historical quality of the mind was identified as its basic feature. The mind, according to Marx and Engels (1932/1958), “is from the beginning a societal product and remains one” (p. 31). The mind of a single individual is not just the mind of a single person, as the mind is “in connection with the whole of society and part of the whole of society” (p. 167).

The connection of the mind with society finds its equivalent in behavior:

Even when I am active as a scientist, an activity that I seldom perform in immediate community with others, I am societal, because I am active as a human being. Not only the material of my activity is given to me as a societal product, as is the language in which the intellectual is active, but also my own existence is societal activity. (Marx, 1932/1968, p. 538)

Consequently, Marx urged philosophers to study concrete individuals who live in concrete historical societies and not to reflect on the abstract individual beyond history and society. He criticized Feuerbach for doing exactly that and for not realizing that the “religious mind is a societal product and that the abstract individual he analyzes belongs to a particular form of society” (1888/1958, p. 7).

Marx's socio-historical concept of the mind must be understood within the context of his view on human nature, which again was characterized by its societal dimension: “The essence of specific personalities is not their beards, their blood, their abstract physical features, but their

¹⁰Babbage's works (see Green, chap. 7, this volume) cited by the later Marx were nonpsychological. Althusser (1965/1996, p. 35) classified Marx's writings into the early works (1840–1844), the works of the break (1845), the transitional works (1845–1857), and the mature works (1857–1883). The mature writings are nonanthropological and nonpsychological. The celebrated *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Marx, 1932/1968), the *Theses on Feuerbach* of 1845 (Marx, 1888/1958), and *The German Ideology* of 1845–1846 (Marx & Engels, 1932/1958) all belong accordingly to the “pre-mature” works in which Marx's psychological thoughts can be found.

social quality" (Marx, 1844/1956c, p. 222). As Marx (1888/1958) pointed out in the sixth thesis on Feuerbach, "but the human essence is not an abstract idea inherent in each specific individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of societal relations" (p. 6). Although these theses were, according to Engels (1888/1958), "written down in a hurry, absolutely not intended for publication" (p. 547), and thus provide room for speculation and interpretation, this statement did not suggest that humans are solely societal relations.

Marx's term *societal relations* referred to the essence of human beings. Thus, the idea of the relevance of societal relations was not in contradiction to the notion that humans are also natural beings. In contrast to certain readings of Marx, the natural is not in contradiction to the societal in his theory. He repeatedly emphasized the natural dimension of humans in the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts* (Marx, 1932/1968). Already in 1860 Marx (1964) stated that Charles Darwin's book on natural selection was "the natural–historical foundation for our view" (p. 131). The difference between Marx and Engels, who highly regarded the evolutionary aspect of Darwin's theory that coheres well with dialectical materialism, and Darwin is that, as Engels (1966) pointed out, "humans produce" (p. 170), whereas animals may collect. Thus, "it is impossible to transfer laws of animal societies at once to human ones" (p. 170).

In the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts* (Marx, 1932/1968), which are famous for Marx's discussion of social–psychological topics such as alienation and exploitation, he pointed out that humans are societal and historical beings and thus "history is the true natural history of the human being" (p. 579).¹¹ He emphasized that "the formation of the five senses is the work of the whole preceding world history" (pp. 541–542). Consequently, the meaning of sensory objects changes according to sociohistorical contexts and according to one's own position in these contexts. Using the example of food, he pointed out that "for starving humans the human form of food does not exist, but only its abstract being as food" (p. 542).

Marx implicitly used the concept of the objective mind when he reflected on the human mind. He moved, however, according to his philosophy with its emphasis on productive activity (labor), from an objective mind understood by Hegel as law, morality, and ethics to viewing the objective mind as industry. Accordingly, one should be able—in the objectified products of human labor—to understand the nature of humans: "One sees how the history of industry and the developing objective existence of industry is the open book of human nature, of . . . human psychology" (1932/1968, p. 542). In the course of this argument, Marx expressed one of the first criticisms of the content of modern psychology: "A psychology, for which this book, the sensuously most tangible and accessible part of

¹¹Natural history (*Naturgeschichte*) has the meaning of natural science.

history, is closed, cannot become a real science with a genuine content” (p. 543). Not only Marx but also Dilthey desired a psychology with an authentic content.

The socio–historical dimension of the mind (consciousness; *Bewußtsein*) was discussed extensively in *The German Ideology* (Marx & Engels, 1932/1958).¹² According to Marx’s materialist position, he rejected the idea that the mind was ever pure. On the contrary,

the mind is a priori afflicted with the curse of being burdened with matter, which makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short of language. Language is as old as consciousness . . . and develops from the need, the necessity of interaction with other humans. (p. 30)

Even more radical than connecting the mind with matter is the idea that the mind changes and develops historically, with production (labor) being the carrier of this development. As suggested within the perspective of a materialist conception of history (see pp. 61–65), Marx (1859/1961) identified a progression of societal formations from an Asiatic, classical, feudal to a modern bourgeois mode of production (p. 9).

Modes of production are power laden as productive humans not only affect nature but also other human beings. They develop relations with other humans and production takes place under these societal relations. Forms of interaction (*Vekehrsformen*)¹³ appear differently at different historical times. However, since primitive communism these relations have appeared in the form of class struggles between exploiters and exploited people. Participants in production relations might be unaware of this structural power and how it is connected with the mind. Marx did not use the term *unconsciousness*, but the idea is clear: “The ideas of the ruling class are in each epoch the ruling ideas” and “the ruling ideas are nothing but the ideal expression of the ruling material relations” (Marx & Engels, 1932/1958, p. 46). Thus, “morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of the mind, thus no longer retain the appearance of independence” (pp. 26–27).¹⁴

Haug (1984) and other Marxist scholars have emphasized that Marx used the metaphor of a *camera obscura* to describe ideology or false consciousness.¹⁵ It is not plausible, however, to assume that Marx had a fully

¹²The *German Ideology* was written by Marx and Engels. However, Engels (1888/1962) himself argued that the “largest part of the leading central thoughts . . . belong to Marx” (pp. 291–292). The theory “carries therefore rightly his name” (p. 292). Consequently, I attribute the ideas to Marx.

¹³Marx later used the term *production relations* (1849/1959, p. 408).

¹⁴Marx originated the idea that socio–historical formation and class determine thoughts. This idea has been very influential and has been assimilated by contemporary radical theory and includes gender, “race,” and sexual preference (see Teo, 1997).

¹⁵Haug (1984) pointed out that the camera obscura was a common epistemological topic in the 19th century. Dilthey (1977) also compared the working of the eye with a camera obscura (p. 98).

developed concept of false consciousness and used a metaphor for describing it. Applying a critical analysis that begins with real presuppositions, it makes more sense to suggest that Marx knew about optical phenomena such as optical illusions, the invertive function of the eye, and quasi-technological applications such as the *camera obscura* and that he modeled the mind (consciousness) accordingly. These understandings led Marx to the conclusion that the human mind has distorted views of the world (as in optical illusions) and that the mind works upside down (as in the *camera obscura*).¹⁶ This argument is supported by the fact that optical issues formed a reoccurring topic in his writings.

In an article published in 1844 for the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, Marx (1844/1956b) criticized Bruno Bauer and radical democrats for the fact that political life appears in their writings as a means, whereas life in bourgeois society is proposed as an end. Marx thought it a puzzle “why in the mind of the political emancipators . . . the end appears as means, and the means as end. This optical illusion of their mind . . . is . . . a psychological, a theoretical puzzle” (p. 367). Marx and Engels (1932/1958) used the image of the *camera obscura* in *The German Ideology* to describe the workings of the mind. Moreover, they identified the causes for the invertive function of the mind:

If in all ideology humans and their relations appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from the historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from the immediate physical process. (p. 26, emphasis added)

A similar image reappeared in the first book of *Capital* (Marx, 1867/1962a) on the fetish-character of the commodity. For example, in religion products of the mind appear as independent objects with life: Angels, products of the mind according to Marx, seem to watch over us. A commodity seems to have a mystical character, too, when societal relations among human beings appear in capitalism as relations between commodities. Marx compared this phenomenon with the sensation of an object on the optical nerve, which is not represented as a “subjective stimulus of the optical nerve itself, but as an objective form of a thing outside of the eye” (p. 86).

As indicated above, it was important to Marx to connect the socio-historical mind with power, and in consequence, with the real-life processes, the material activities, the labor, and practice of humans. Such an idea seems trivial but an examination of the psychology of his time, when cognitive processes were disconnected from real-life activities, demonstrates its significance. Ideas and conceptions of the mind are interwoven with the material activity of human beings: “Imagination, thinking, the mental interaction of humans, appear here as the direct outcome of their

¹⁶The idea of confounding reality and appearance can already be found in Plato’s (1997) “allegory of the cave.”

material behavior. The same applies to mental productions as represented in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, and so on of a people" (Marx & Engels, 1932/1958, p. 26). It was evident for Marx and Engels (1932/1958) that human beings are the producers of their ideas, "but real active humans, as they are determined by a particular development of their productive forces" (p. 26). Thus, "the mind can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of humans is their real life-process" (p. 26).

This conceptualization of the mind led to the famous statement, "life is not determined by the mind, but the mind by life" (Marx & Engels, 1932/1958, p. 27). This central idea can also be found in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of 1848: Ideas of freedom, education, and rights "are results of bourgeois production and property relations" (1848/1959, p. 477), whereas the content of the law can be found in the life conditions of the ruling class; and probably most clearly in 1859,

the totality of these production relations forms the economic structure of society, the real basis on which is built a legal and political superstructure, and which corresponds with certain societal forms of the mind. . . . It is not the mind of humans that determines their being, but on the contrary it is the societal being of humans that determines their mind. (Marx, 1859/1961, pp. 8–9)

However, out of this expressed determinism arises an explicit problem: If objective relations of a given society determine the mind, then how is it possible to think further ahead? Although Marx had no doubts about the ideological and materialist quality of the mind, he also believed that the mind could be developed further than the *Zeitgeist*. With regard to certain issues "the mind sometimes appears to be further advanced than its concurrent empirical relations, so that in the struggles of a later epoch one can rely on the authority of theoreticians of a previous time" (Marx & Engels, 1932/1958, p. 73).

Wilhelm Dilthey

It may be arduous to discuss Marx, but it is even more challenging to review Dilthey. He provided a wealth of psychological ideas (see Dilthey, 1976; Harrington, 2000; Rickman, 1988) that can hardly be pressed into a single chapter. In addition, in his later writings, after assimilating some of Franz Brentano's thoughts on psychology, the role attributed to psychology as the core science of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (human sciences or mental sciences) changed. Thus, his earlier thoughts should be reinterpreted in the light of his later ones.¹⁷

¹⁷Given the space constraints, the discussion of Dilthey's thoughts will be more systematic than historical.

Marx understood the mind as societal, as historical, as part of the human life process, and as a topic that must be studied in connection with power, as expressed in production relations, classes, and economic formations. Whereas Dilthey shared with Marx the assumption about the social and historical character of the mind, he did not agree with a materialist view of socio-historical development. Dilthey (1883/1959b) was more than skeptical toward theories of historical progress: "The philosophy of history has never been able to derive directly with sufficient determination a general law of this progress from the historical-social reality" (p. 110). According to Dilthey (1957), we "cannot deduce" historical (or personal) development (see p. 224). Dilthey's (1883/1959b) important distinction between the metaphysical and the modern-scientific mind is not part of a developmental logic. Although he did not share the specifics of Marx's analysis of structural power, he included domination (and dependence) in addition to community as the central external factor that constitutes the external organization of society (1883/1959b, p. 68). However, he suggested a more descriptive understanding of classes, as the "similarity of economic property relations . . . connects individuals to a class that feels united and confronts its interests with those of other classes" (p. 69).

Dilthey (1957) argued that mental life is influenced by the objective mind, an important concept for him: "Language, myth, religious custom, ethos, law, and external organization are products of the whole mind [*Gesamtgeist*] in which human consciousness has become objective, to use a Hegelian term" (p. 180, emphasis added). He conceptualized the term more broadly than Marx's industry and products of labor and maintained that the objective mind can be found in all expressions and effects that humanity has left for the succeeding generations. However, as Marx suggested looking at the products of labor to understand the mind, Dilthey (1957) believed that one must look at the "creations" of humankind, "in order to gain a deeper and more complete understanding" (p. 180). In external objects that represent the uniform character of human creations "psychology has its strong, stable material, which allows a true analysis of human mental life" (p. 226). Whereas Marx provided clear statements on how the objective mind determines the subjective mind, Dilthey (1957) was more cautious in arguing that "the mental constitution of a whole epoch *can* be represented in a single individual" (p. 236, emphasis added). It is a blessing and the basis of hermeneutics, that "historical consciousness allows modern persons to represent in themselves the whole past of humanity" (p. 317).

Dilthey (1958) valued the significance of individual people as much as the objective mind: "The objective mind and the strength of the individual determine together the mental world" (p. 213). Consequently, it is not surprising that Dilthey (1957) included the concept of genius in his reflections: "In the works of geniuses we can study the energetic effects of

specific forms of mental activities” (p. 180). It was no contradiction for him to suggest that the individual is central in determining history and that the individual is, at the same time, determined by history. Dilthey (1883/1959b) pointed out that “the human as a history—and society—preceding fact is a fiction” (p. 31), a statement that is reminiscent of Marx’s sixth thesis on Feuerbach.

The socio–historical character of the psychological subject matter was expressed several times: “The human being as an object of a sound analytical science is the individual as part of society” (Dilthey, 1883/1959b, pp. 31–32). “The individual is a point of intersection of a multitude of systems that become more finely specialized in the course of the development of culture” (p. 51). Thus, studying historical change is significant for understanding mental life, and “the original tie between psychological forces is dissolved through the work of history” (p. 352). For example, emotions become more complex with the development of art. Increasing differences between individuals are primarily “determined through division of labor and socio–political differentiation” (1957, p. 237).

Dilthey’s socio–historical understanding of the mind was not in contradiction to the idea that human beings are natural beings. Like Marx, he emphasized that humans are not only influenced by nature but also influence nature (Dilthey, 1883/1959b, pp. 17–18). However, his focus was not biology but combining the study of psychology with history and the objective with the subjective mind. Dilthey (1957) was well aware of the scope and originality of this attempt. It is a demanding “task to build a bridge between existing psychology and the view of the historical world” (p. 237). Such a goal can only be realized step by step through an inclusion of the “study of historical products” (p. 237) in psychological research. Knowledge of the nature of the human mind is based on the study of the products and lives of the historical mind: “Only this historical self-consciousness of the mind enables us gradually to obtain a scientific and systematic reflection of the human being” (1883/1959a, p. 528).

Marx suggested that history should be the natural science of human beings. Dilthey (1957) echoed that “man cannot learn what he is through meditation about himself, nor through psychological experiments, but only through history” (p. 180). This idea was so crucial that he repeated this argument on several occasions: “What man is, can only be told by his history” (1960, p. 226). “Man recognizes himself only in history, never through introspection” (1958, p. 279). Given the significance of history for understanding humans it is not surprising that Dilthey suggested that “all *Geisteswissenschaften* are based on the study of past history” (p. 278; on the pre-eminence of history in the 19th century, see Shore, chap. 4, and Danziger, chap. 3, this volume).

Dilthey used three labels for psychology: (a) content psychology (*Realpsychologie*), (b) descriptive psychology (or analytical psychology), and

(c) structural psychology. The difference between form and content is a significant philosophical distinction. Dilthey based his argument in his *Habilitationsschrift* of 1864, entitled *Essay on an Analysis of Moral Consciousness* (1962, pp. 1–55), on this distinction. He identified psychology as a formal discipline and suggested that the focus on forms and processes of mental life prevented an examination of the content of the mind: “The psychological laws are pure formal laws; they do not concern the content of the human mind, but its formal conduct and behavior” (p. 43)—a situation that was unsatisfactory to Dilthey. In a manuscript of 1865–1866, Dilthey (1977) argued that “psychological contents are not explained by advancing processes and their laws” (p. 6). As “every experience contains a content” (1958, p. 19), an authentic content psychology includes the totality of mental life. For example, the search for the extension of one’s self should be considered a content of emotional life (1957, p. 156). In his *Draft for the Descriptive Psychology* (around 1880), Dilthey (1977) still teaching in Breslau (1871–1882), argued, “however, if man contemplates the meaning of his life, it is the very content through which meaning is formed” (p. 182).

In 1882 Dilthey accepted a professorship at Berlin, a chair held earlier by Hegel (from 1818 to 1831). His famous *Ideas on a Descriptive and Analytical Psychology* (1957, pp. 139–240) were published during this period (in 1894). He promoted the concept of a descriptive psychology as an alternative to the explanatory experimental psychology of his time. Descriptive psychology should focus on the depiction of the parts and connections of mental life as they are experienced in their totality. The idea that the mind is socio–historical was a general framework and important fact for Dilthey, but beyond this general framework Dilthey sought to understand mental life in all its detail and totality. Thus, in contrast to Marx, Dilthey provided an extensive elaboration on the subjective mind.

Dilthey (1957) suggested that *intelligence* is only one part of mental life. The other parts were *instinctual* and *emotional* life, which he considered the center of mental life, and acts of *volition* (p. 180). These three parts—based on a traditional philosophical–psychological distinction—are always interconnected. However, it is possible in a process of scientific abstraction to distinguish them. It was very important to Dilthey to point out that mental life is more than intellectuality: “It is common to oppose thinking, feeling, and desiring as three separate concepts, as if feeling and desiring contain no thinking. That is wrong” (1990, p. 354). Although Dilthey was interested in the structure of the subjective mind, he always emphasized its connection with the objective mind: The subjective and the objective are connected as “the internal psychological connection is determined by the position of a life-unit within a milieu. The life-unit is in interaction with the external world” (1957, p. 212). For example, acts of volition (internal and subjective) and culture (external and objective)

are interconnected, and thus psychology should “study the nature, laws, and connection of our acts of volition by looking at the external organization of society, the economic, and legal order” (p. 190).

Dilthey used the term *structural psychology* (*Strukturpsychologie*) explicitly in an unpublished manuscript (1962, p. 317). However, already in his *Ideas on a Descriptive and Analytical Psychology*, Dilthey (1957) emphasized the significance of the concept of structure: “A life-unit is determined by and determines the milieu in which it lives. This leads to an organization of internal states. I label this organization the structure of mental life” (p. 200). According to Dilthey, it would be the task of a descriptive psychology to study this structure and the knots that bind the psychological strings to the totality of life. The concept of structure has theoretical implications: “Mental life does not grow from its parts; it is not built from elements; it is not a composite, not a result of interacting atoms of sensation or emotion: it is originally and at all times an overarching unity” (p. 211). Challenging a psychology that focused on these elements, Dilthey (1957) put forth the notion of the “Gestalt of mental life” (p. 220), a term he already used in the 1860s when referring to the “Gestalt of our mental life as an unexplained synthesis of these mental functions” (1990, p. 27).

The concept of a “mental connective structure,” which contains a “stable system of relations of its parts” (Dilthey, 1958, p. 324), represents an alternative to the concepts of natural–scientific psychology. All human experiences are connected and in experiencing the structural connection we accomplish the “totality of life” (1962, p. 317). As the mental structure aims at life’s riches, satisfactions, and happiness, the mental structure also has a teleological character (1957, p. 207). The unity and totality of the mind and the person distinguishes mental life from the physical world and explains Dilthey’s respect for art. In literature, in the writings of Augustin, Pascal, or Lichtenberg we detect, according to Dilthey, an intuitive understanding of the whole connection. However, a descriptive psychology would have to clarify these ideas in a general way (see p. 153).

Dilthey also linked the concept of structure to the concept of development and emphasized, for example, that each biological age has its own normative right. Developmental research should include the study of bodily development, the influences of the physical environment, and the surrounding mental world. All “these conditions influence the connective structure of mental life” (1957, p. 214). Even further, “development is only possible where a connective structure exists” (p. 218). Each biography is situated in a connective structure which is “organized from the inside and connected to a unity” (1958, p. 325).

Dilthey related mental processes to life activities, not in the sense of labor as a first need (Marx) but in a wider sense. In his inaugural lecture in Basel in 1867, he stated that the “purpose of humans is to act” (1957, p. 27). But Dilthey, who included in his reflections on the mind the whole

human being with his or her cognition (intellectuality), emotion, and motivation (volition), saw action as only one expression of life, “only one part of our essence” (1958, p. 206). The problem with action, or behavior for that matter, as a potential core category of psychology is that it does not allow the “complete portrayal of our inner life” (p. 206). This can only be accomplished through the concept of experience (*Erlebnis*) in the sense of a subject’s meaningful encounter with the natural, cultural, historical, and human world.

METHODOLOGIES FOR STUDYING THE MIND

It is justifiable to conclude that there are similar threads within the psychological writings of Marx and Dilthey. Both agreed on the socio-historical nature of the mind, but they differed in their understanding of society, history, and action. A similar constellation can be found with regard to methodologies and methods for studying the mind. Both Marx and Dilthey shared a general approach to the problem, which is nonexperimental but rather philosophical and historical, but they differed with regard to the status of the human sciences. Their general methodology may be subsumed under the category of a philosophical–abstractive version of science, which differed from a natural–scientific one—the two basic modes of performing science¹⁸ in 19th-century Germany.

For example, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) and Hegel promoted a philosophical version of science. For Fichte (1794/1972), “a science has a systematic form; all its sentences are connected through a single principle, and unify in this principle to a whole” (p. 31); “a science must be one, a totality” (p. 33); and “a science should be a building; its main purpose is stability” (p. 35). There was no doubt for Fichte that “philosophy is a science” (p. 31) and that “the essence of science is the quality of its content” (p. 32). For Hegel (1807/1986a), “the true form [*Gestalt*], in which truth exists, can only be its scientific system” (p. 14). His dictum that “truth is the whole” (p. 24) contrasts sharply with an experimental version of science that focuses only on parts and moments and not on totality. These philosophical ideas were the core targets of experimental psychologists and recently of postmodernists. However, with the rejection of such a model of science, the possibilities were not explored sufficiently.

Marx and Dilthey endorsed a philosophical–abstractive version of science, different from classical German philosophy but shaped by its spirit. However, Marx (1867/1962a), who maintained a philosophical–abstractive version of science himself, admired the natural sciences and criticized the

¹⁸The term *science* is used in its German meaning *Wissenschaft*, which refers to the study of the natural sciences as well as the study of art, history, or religion.

methods and content of traditional philosophy (p. 27). For example, the first chapter of *Capital* (Marx, 1867/1962a) is a masterpiece in philosophical abstraction; it is not a natural–scientific text. However, a monistic view of science allowed him to interpret processes of capitalist economy and historical development as a “natural–scientific law” (p. 15). Dilthey, in contrast, attempted to establish the foundation for the *Geisteswissenschaften* and a methodology that would do justice to their very subject matters, which meant not to imitate the natural–scientific one. Although he was skeptical of philosophical systems, he demanded from science that research maintain a philosophical intention. In his hermeneutic writings he became skeptical of psychology as the basic science for the *Geisteswissenschaften* and suggested that all *Geisteswissenschaften* are related to understanding and interpretation (see Dilthey, 1958, p. 205).

Karl Marx

Marx (1932/1968) projected a monistic view of science: “The natural science will later subsume the human science as the human science will subsume the natural science: There will be one science” (p. 544). In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels (1932/1958) wrote,¹⁹ “we accept only one single science, the science of history. History can be viewed from two sides and divided into the history of nature and the history of humans. Both sides cannot be separated” (p. 18). He also used natural–scientific metaphors for describing his methods. For example, Marx (1859/1961) argued that “the anatomy of bourgeois society must be pursued in political economy” (p. 8).

Marx and Engels (1932/1958) criticized traditional German philosophy for starting with what humans imagine and then arriving at real humans. In contrast he suggested a methodology in which one begins with active humans to understand their ideas and imaginations. To the real presuppositions of human existence and history (pp. 28–30) belongs first the fact that humans must be able to live. They eat, drink, and require clothing and shelter. Another presupposition is that a satisfaction of a need leads to new needs. At a certain point in history humans do not just find their means of living, they produce them. Thus, the history of humankind must be studied in relation to the history of production. Finally, procreation is a necessary presupposition of historical development. In short, he suggested that to study the mind one must study the preconditions that make the mind possible. For scientists of the mind this means that they must reflect on and study the preconditions that make the mind possible before they enter into experimentation.

For the analysis of political economy, Marx (1939/1983) offered a

¹⁹This was crossed out in the original manuscript.

method that can be described as a move from the abstract to the concrete (pp. 34–42). Moreover, he intended this method as a general methodology for the scientific mind. According to this method, the starting point for knowledge is the concrete, which appears in terms of sensible objects. In the process of knowledge acquisition one must identify the essence of these objects, represented in abstract concepts. This is not the end of the scientific process. After the scientific mind has developed abstract concepts, it must move from the abstract to a new form of the concrete. This form of the concrete maintains the abstract concepts but at the same time reproduces mentally the objects in totality. Marx used this method in his analyses of economy, and more recently Holzkamp (1973) successfully applied this method to psychology.

Abstraction and analysis played an important role in Marx's thinking and is an essential part of philosophical–abstractive science. In the preface of the first book of *Capital* (Marx, 1867/1962a) Marx made the comparison: “Neither microscope nor chemical reagents serve for the analysis of economical forms. The power of abstraction must replace both” (p. 12). Dilthey (1883/1959a), too, emphasized abstraction and analysis (analytical psychology) and argued, for example, that psychology depends on “identifying general characteristics developed by psychological individuals . . . through a process of abstraction” (p. 30). Of course, traditional psychology has widely neglected a discussion of the quality of abstraction in the process of discovery and justification.

Marx was open to a variety of methods to access the lives of people. He also used what psychologists might call “concrete empirical methods.” He designed a “questionnaire for workers” based on a request from the French journal editor of *La Revue Socialiste*, which contained 100 questions, including “In which trade do you work?” “List the [employees'] sex and age” “Is the work completely or mainly manual or based on machines?” “Report, based on your own experiences, accidents which caused injuries or the death of workers” “How many holidays do you have during the year?” “Report on fluctuations in [your] salary, as far back as you can remember” and “What is the general physical, mental, and moral constitution of workers in your occupation?” (Marx, 1880/1962b).²⁰

Wilhelm Dilthey

Dilthey's (1883/1959b) psychological and methodological writings must be understood within the context of his attempt to establish an “epistemological foundation for the *Geisteswissenschaften*” (p. 116). Dilthey sought to develop a critique of historical reason in the same manner as

²⁰Marx wrote the original version in English. It has been translated into German for the Marx and Engels edition. This is the author's retranslation into English.

Kant developed a critique of pure reason for the natural sciences (see 1958, p. 278). Epistemological positions as outlined by Auguste Comte (1798–1857) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) were unsatisfactory to Dilthey (1883/1959b), as they assimilated history into the concepts and methods of the natural sciences. In contrast, he suggested that the anchor for the *Geisteswissenschaften* is the analysis of human experience, the facts of consciousness, and the mind. The most basic and central human sciences are those that study life-units that “constitute society and history” (i.e., humans; p. 28).

Not surprisingly, psychology is deemed the “first and most elementary among the disciplines of the mind” (Dilthey, 1883/1959b, p. 33). Psychology and anthropology (in the Kantian sense; see Tolman, chap. 9, this volume) study psycho–physical life-units while including the whole of history and all life experiences as their research material. Both disciplines are the “foundation of all knowledge of historical life, as well as of all rules of guidance and development of society” (p. 32). But in contrast to Kant, John Locke (1632–1704), or David Hume (1711–1776), Dilthey—in accordance with his view on human nature—did not limit his reflections to the epistemological subject. Rather, he focused on the total subject, whose psychological essence includes, besides intelligence, emotion and volition.

Dilthey justified philosophically a dualistic view of science encompassing the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) and human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*). The latter include history, political science, law, political economy, theology, literature, and art. More generally, *Geisteswissenschaften* refer to sciences that “have the historical–social reality as their subject matter” (1883/1959b, p. 4). The topic of these *Geisteswissenschaften* is “the historical–social reality as far as this reality has been conserved historically in the consciousness of humankind” (p. 24). Dilthey himself was not completely content with the term *Geisteswissenschaften*, which he borrowed from Schiel, who translated Mill’s *On the Logic of the Moral Sciences*. The term *Geisteswissenschaft* “expresses highly imperfectly the subject matter of this study” (p. 5).²¹ Dilthey was concerned once more that a focus on the mental (*Geist*) would draw attention away from the emotional and the motivational: “A theory that describes and analyzes social–historical facts, cannot ignore the totality of human nature and limit itself to the mental” (p. 6).

Dilthey (1883/1959b) was cautious about his scientific dualism. On the one hand, he emphasized that natural and mental processes are incomparable (p. 11) and that the “total experience of the mental world” (p. 9) justifies the concept of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, which cannot be executed according to the empirical study of nature. Thus, Hegel, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), and Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854) are more rel-

²¹Until the middle of the 1870s, Dilthey used the term *moral–political sciences*.

evant for his epistemological reflections than are Comte, Mill, or Herbert Spencer (1820–1903; see Dilthey, 1883/1959b). On the other hand, he emphasized that mental life is only one part of the psycho–physical life-unit and put forth the notion of the “relative independence of the *Geisteswissenschaften*” (p. 17).

Based on the distinction between natural and human sciences and the intention of a psychological foundation for the *Geisteswissenschaften*, Dilthey composed his *Ideas on a Descriptive and Analytical Psychology* (see 1957). He objected that explanatory psychology (Johann Friedrich Herbart, Herbert Spencer, Hippolyte-Adolphe Taine) was not able to study the mind sufficiently, as causal explanations used in the natural sciences cannot be applied to the mental world. Although explanatory (natural–scientific) psychology builds on basic processes such as association or apperception, descriptive psychology separates description and analysis from the explanatory hypothesis. In descriptive psychology “the complete reality of mental life must be used for description and preferably analysis, and this description and analysis must have the highest achievable degree of certainty” (p. 168). To achieve this goal, descriptive psychology must begin with the developed mental life and not with “elementary processes” (p. 169). Hermann Ebbinghaus (1850–1909; see 1896) challenged Dilthey’s critique of natural–scientific psychology and suggested that all problems can be handled within explanatory psychology.

Dilthey (1957) considered understanding (*Verstehen*) to be the most appropriate “method”²² for psychology, simply summarized in the basic dictum: “We explain nature, but we understand mental life” (p. 144). However, he did not exclude other methods of psychology and acknowledged besides understanding a variety of approaches to psychology, including introspection, comparative methods, experimentation, and the study of abnormal psychology (see p. 199). On the basis of his view of the human mind, according to which the objective mind (expressed in the lifestyle, interaction, customs, laws, state, religion, art, and science of a culture) and subjective mind are interconnected, he emphasized the study of the products of mental life as a “very important complement” (p. 199) in the canon of psychological methods.

Even more significantly, Dilthey suggested that understanding is possible only because of the objective mind:

Each single life-expression [*Lebensäußerung*] represents something common in the realm of this objective mind. Each word, each sentence, each gesture, or each act of politeness, each work of art, and each historical act can only be understood because a commonness [*Gemein-*

²²Rickman (1988) suggested that understanding is not a method. However, Dilthey (1958) himself suggested that “understanding and interpretation is the method which accomplishes the human sciences” (p. 205).

samkeit] connects expression with understanding. (1958, p. 146, emphasis added)

Even the work of “the genius represents common ideas, the mental life [*Gemütsleben*], and the ideal of a time and an environment” (p. 208). From the world of the objective mind, human beings receive nourishment “beginning in early childhood” (p. 208). Consequently, “we can only understand an individual completely, as close as we may be, by getting to know how this individual came to be” (1957, p. 213). The “description of the individual psycho–physical life-unit is realized in biography” (1883/1959b, p. 33).

Dilthey became rather confident about the nature of truth and the outcome of research in the *geisteswissenschaftlichen* context. With regard to metaphysics he suggested that “mental life is in permanent evolution, unpredictable in its further development, at every point historically relative and limited. Thus, it is impossible to connect the latest concepts of these various scientific disciplines in an objective and final way” (1883/1959b, p. 404). However, with regard to psychology, Dilthey believed that an objective knowledge of the processes that constitute the mental life of humankind is possible. It would lead to an “objective science of the mental world” (1990, p. 157).

Thus, Dilthey was not only interested in singularity. On the contrary, he tried to understand the relationship between generality (uniformity) and particularity (singularity), significant for any understanding of mental life. As the mental totality of each human being is particular, it is the “most obvious problem to formulate laws, i.e., uniformities of behavior” (1977, p. 195). He tried to analyze and understand the particular while aiming for general principles. This can be done because “the particular arises on the basis of all these uniformities” (1957, p. 270). He did not envision a purely idiographic description and understanding of the individual but intended an understanding of generalized individuals. His desire for general results can be understood by his emphasis of the notion of an objective mind.

Dilthey’s desire for generality can also be seen in his suggestion to develop types. Particular and individual expressions are not random but can be subsumed under a type as “certain basic forms, which we call—for the time being—types, reoccur in the play of variations” (1957, p. 270). Types are not metaphysical constructions as

humankind contains a system of order just as the objective mind contains an order, which is organized according to types. This system of order leads from the regularity and the structure of the generalized human to types, through which understanding construes individuals. (1958, p. 213)

The focus on types “and what is subsumed under this type” (1962, p. 318)

is not arbitrary. It is an essential part of Dilthey's psychology and philosophy. This typological intention can be identified easily in his philosophy of worldviews (Dilthey, 1960) and in the fact that the *geisteswissenschaftliche* psychologist Eduard Spranger (1924, 1914/1928), a follower of Dilthey, developed types of both personality and adolescent experience.

Dilthey is perhaps best known for his elaboration of understanding. This method is important as "the interconnectedness of the psychological cannot be expressed in concepts" (1977, p. 164). Accordingly "totality and its interconnectedness exist only in experience and in immediate consciousness" (p. 165). Humans experience the totality of their essence, and this totality is "reproduced in understanding" (1958, p. 278). Dilthey distinguished between (a) elementary forms of understanding, which are ubiquitous in everyday life in the form of immediate processes (p. 207), and (b) higher forms of understanding should something contradict our everyday experience (p. 210). In higher forms of understanding we start with an examination of the problem, the involved context, and finally reach understanding. An understanding of a person can be modeled on an understanding of poetry, or an interpretation of literature and art. From empathy arises the (c) highest form of understanding, in which the totality of mental life is effective, the re-experiencing (*Nacherleben*) of other people's experiences (see pp. 213–216). It is another feature of a *geisteswissenschaftliche* psychology as "re-experiencing of the psychological world . . . distinguishes all mental operations . . . from the knowledge of nature" (1977, p. 95). The (d) scientific form of understanding and interpretation leads to hermeneutics (1958, p. 217), with the final goal being "to understand the author better than he has understood himself" (1957, p. 331). Besides the category of understanding, Dilthey developed the concepts of experience, expression, and meaning (see 1958).

CONCLUSION

Marx and Dilthey outlined alternative methodologies for the study of the socio–historically embedded mind. These methodologies, unknown to most contemporary psychologists, were not developed with the same institutional support and vigor as experimental psychology. Their conceptualization of the mind did not become part of the mainstream of academic psychology, and their ideas survived only at the fringes of the discipline. The dominance of psychological experimentation at the end of the 19th century, based on a hasty commitment to one methodology, did not solve the problem of the subject matter of psychology or the nature of the mind—it merely excluded methodological ambiguity. Not surprisingly this exclusion led to a reoccurring dissatisfaction with the status of psychology in the history of the discipline as expressed in various crisis-of-psychology

discourses. If we take the arguments of Dilthey and Marx seriously, then it seems logical to suggest—in the service of knowledge—that an understanding of the mind is limited as long as the objective dimension of the mind is not recognized. Following such a conceptualization, psychology requires more sophisticated methods for studying the mind. The ideas of Marx and Dilthey, philosopher–psychologists of the 19th century, are not the end but a foundation for this project.

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