

## CONTENTS

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PREFACE TO ALL VOLUMES	VII
EDITORIAL NOTE TO VOLUME VI	XI
Introduction to Volume VI	1
I System of Ethics (1890)	31
<i>Translated by Stephen W. Ball and Rudolf A. Makkreel</i>	
II Present Day Culture and Philosophy (1898)	141
<i>Translated by Patricia Van Tuyl and Rudolf A. Makkreel</i>	
III Dream (1903)	161
<i>Translated by Ramon J. Betanzos and Rudolf A. Makkreel</i>	
IV The Essence of Philosophy (1907)	171
<i>Translated by John Krois and Rudolf A. Makkreel</i>	
V The Types of World-View and Their Development in Metaphysical Systems (1911)	249
<i>Translated by James McMahan and Rudolf A. Makkreel</i>	
VI The Problem of Religion (1911)	295
<i>Translated by Stephen W. Ball and Rudolf A. Makkreel</i>	
GLOSSARY	317
INDEX	329

## INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME VI

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The works in this volume present Dilthey's most deeply held views about the nature of philosophy and how it can guide human practices. They range from an extensive lecture course on ethics, two short texts on philosophy in crisis, a long essay on the changing nature of philosophy, his best-known essay on world-view types, and a final essay on the rootedness of religiosity in lived experience. These works are from the last two decades of Dilthey's life: the lecture course on ethics was given in 1890 and the religion essay was written just prior to his death in 1911. In all these writings, Dilthey is reflecting on the history of human problems with an eye to the future. The emphasis here is less on the theoretical and evaluative issues central to the understanding of human life and history that pervade most of his writings, and more on the ultimate questions that still haunt philosophical and religious thought. Three of these works were available in English before, but are out of print and have been carefully retranslated for this volume. The other three include a text on what philosophy can contribute to present-day culture, the already mentioned essay on religion and the lecture course on ethics. The latter work fills an especially important gap in our overall comprehension of Dilthey and will be discussed in some detail.

Dilthey started his lectures on ethics, posthumously published with the title *System of Ethics*, by acknowledging that any new philosophical ethics will only be effective if it can guide the life of individuals by taking their social situation into account. He promises a social ethics that will address the changes that have marked modern history ever since the French Revolution. He refers to social questions that were still unresolved, namely, the demands of the working classes as formulated in the theories of the socialists. He regards socialism as an attempt at "drawing the ultimate consequences of a very powerful line of thought in natural science," and adds that "if natural selection, heredity, and the animal nature of man really are to be viewed as the sole principles of social change, then the organization of the forms of life in society can only be grounded on these presuppositions"(36). He further notes that Karl Marx saw these

natural forces of human competition as being aggravated by the economic power of capital that threatened ever more workers with “a minimally bearable level of subsistence,” therefore necessitating “an alteration of the existing relationships of property, inheritance, marriage, and family” (36). Acknowledging the inadequacy of many social institutions, Dilthey nevertheless finds the Marxist solutions based on political economy too reductionist. A better solution to these problems must be found through a more comprehensive social ethics that will be able to put our animal nature in context.

Before working this out, however, Dilthey considers the three main ways in which social practices have been evaluated and justified by philosophers. He begins by saying that social institutions can no longer be defended by traditional idealistic principles based on theological and metaphysical systems that posit a transcendent reality. The modern naturalistic system of morality is an advance in attempting to derive its tenets from human nature. Dilthey, however, regards its focus on the competitive nature of human beings and their interest in individual self-preservation as too limiting. He also takes note of a third emerging nineteenth-century approach to ethics based on the study of group phenomena and socio-historical movements. In Germany, this produced a Hegelian type of developmental theory that subordinates individuals to communal ideals that unfold our human destiny. In France and England, it generated biologically rooted theories of evolution that stress our need to adapt to our circumstances. Here again Dilthey finds that no satisfactory solution has come about. To resolve the tensions that remain in the second and third approaches based on individual experience and group phenomena respectively, he concludes that a “critical consciousness” based on anthropological “self-reflection” is necessary. It is this new perspective that is then directed against utilitarianism, which is seen as a “compromise” between a reductive naturalism and a social ethical approach (see 49).

While approving of John Stuart Mill’s efforts to make naturalistic ethics more socially and historically engaged, he finds his goals to be unrealistic. This is because Mill’s utilitarian starting point narrows human beings to sense-based intellects (see 50). The utilitarian principle of maximizing happiness reduces ethics to an intellectual exercise of calculating pleasures that are at base sensuous. Dilthey welcomed Mill’s efforts to introduce qualitative differentiations into the feeling of pleasure as an improvement over Jeremy Bentham’s quantitative approach, but they still fail to uncover the true motives for human action. We do not merely act to quantitatively increase

or qualitatively enhance our happiness. Neither Bentham nor Mill has a real understanding of the ways in which human feelings are rooted in human drives and desires. Therefore, they cannot account fully for what motivates individual human agents. Ultimately, Dilthey dismisses utilitarianism as a social program that placed too much emphasis on governmental legislation.

A true ethics must be able to motivate individuals from within rather than through legislation from without. To better understand human motivation, Mill's utilitarianism needs a richer sense of human nature. Dilthey often criticized the associationist psychology of the British for not appreciating the true interconnectedness of our conscious states, and therefore he proposed a descriptive structural psychology to underscore that what we perceive, feel, and will forms a complex nexus.<sup>1</sup> What we perceive is not just sense-based, but also affected by how we feel and what we will. The delineation of this reciprocal nexus was to provide a contextual understanding for subsequent explanations of human behavior. For the sake of guiding ethical action, Dilthey also thought it important to look deeper for the kind of motivating impulses that can account for social cooperation among human beings. Isolating a special psychological feeling such as the sympathy of David Hume and Adam Smith is not going to adequately explain altruistic deeds. A more encompassing kind of anthropological reflection is needed.

Accordingly, Dilthey defines his task in the lectures on ethics as developing a "psycho-ethical" approach that is rooted in "anthropological-historical analysis" (104). Whereas traditional psychology has analyzed feelings mainly as responses to sense impressions that come from without, a psycho-ethical understanding of the feelings and incentives that can motivate us to act must be rooted in an anthropological analysis of the drives, instincts, and desires that impel us from within. Instead of considering human beings as primarily adapting to their surroundings by intellectual processes and felt responses, Dilthey argues that many of our actions are at root instinctive.

Like many modern philosophers, utilitarians have tended to construct our mental life starting with sense-impressions as the elementary constituents needed to cognize the world. What is cognitively represented is then assessed by feelings so that finally the will can decide how to respond to and act in the world. According to

<sup>1</sup> See Dilthey, *Ideas for a Descriptive and Analytical Psychology*, in *Selected Works* (hereafter SW), vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Dilthey this intellectual reconstruction ignores not only the many ways in which our cognitive perceptions, feelings, and desires are directly interwoven, but also how they are affected by our instinctive life. The anthropological considerations that Dilthey seeks to relate to ethical self-reflection go all the way back to our biological makeup. Thus he states that “instinct and feeling . . . cannot be separated from each other within the concrete biological sciences” (73). Our behavior cannot be separated from the most basic reflex-mechanisms of our body, and much of it does not require any input from the will. Dilthey’s claim that “the schema of a living being consists of reacting to impressions so as to re-establish equilibrium” (70) has led Peter Krausser to characterize Dilthey’s anthropology as a cybernetic system. Although Dilthey did not yet possess the terminology of twentieth-century cybernetics to fill out his stimulus-response schema with concepts such as “self-regulation” and “feedback,” Krausser finds the basic features of self-maintaining functional systems in these lectures on ethics.<sup>2</sup> While there are aspects of this kind of perspective in Dilthey’s biological descriptions, it is unlikely that he would have been content to describe a human being as simply a causal system that reacts to stimuli from its milieu to learn to survive by a process of adaptation.

Throughout his writings, Dilthey makes it very clear that his life-philosophy is not to be reduced to a biological theory of organic self-preservation and mere self-propagation. Instead, he sees life as in essence generative and expansive. It encompasses both natural forces and emergent powers. Applying this to social life, Dilthey claims that the “psychological core of the original content of virtue” lies in “the joyful consciousness of power and the intensification of the feeling of life that is connected with it. We find its counterpart in a shared joy (*Mitfreude*) when observing others exert power” (83).

We even identify with the exertion of power by others as long as it is not directed against us to diminish ours. Dilthey states that “just as we see animals living in herds, we humans are instinctively governed by a drive for sociability” (126), which he defines as an anthropological sense of solidarity. This human solidarity encompasses a fellow-feeling (*Mitgefühl*) or bondedness-with-others that goes deeper than the sympathy (*Sympathie*) of the British moralists. Sympathy is a feeling “transferred from one living being to

<sup>2</sup> See P. Krausser, “Dilthey’s philosophische Anthropologie,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 1 (1963): 211–221.

another” (89). It affects us from the outside and can motivate us to act, but is it a reliable source of motivation? Dilthey asks similar questions about the “pity” that tragedy is said to arouse and the “compassion” for all living beings that Schopenhauer locates at the root of morality. Sympathy, pity, and compassion are modes of “suffering with (*Mitleid*)” that Dilthey regards as a mere “conjoint movement or being stirred” (*Mitbewegung*)” (89, 96) from without. Kant had criticized sympathy for being too passive and ultimately replaced it with an active moral feeling of participation (*thätige Theilnehmung*) in such late writings as *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Dilthey is less critical of sympathy but calls it a superficial psychological response. Moreover, he points to the limits of Schopenhauer’s appeal to compassion by seeing our relations with others as a sharing of both suffering and joy. He writes:

Being engaged with and having our feelings stirred by suffering or joy outside us is an elementary phenomenon. It is everywhere connected with the imaginative re-creation and vicarious understanding of the inner states of others. But this presupposes an already existing consciousness of a bond and commonality, and is dependent on them. . . . [O]n the general foundation of fellow-feelings that reach back into animal life, we develop benevolence and respect for the interests of others (105).

It is by drawing on a dynamic fellow-feeling of solidarity that stems from within—the inner sense of belonging to something larger than ourselves—that we can gain the basis for fully engaging with others through practical understanding. Only then can the sympathetic response of feeling stirred by others become a true concern for them that will activate us. Similarly, the pity associated with tragedy ever since Aristotle is according to Dilthey, “merely the feeling that precedes the tragic sentiment. The latter is based on engagement, imaginative understanding, and re-creation. Consciousness of kinship is part of it and indeed elevates it to a higher level. On this, then, is grounded a kind of consciousness of the solidarity of human destiny” (102). The resulting tragic sentiment is the fellow-feeling of human solidarity in which the burdens of life are shared.

Anthropologically, we are naturally engaged with others around us, but the strength of this solidarity will vary. The extent to which we are motivated by a sense of solidarity is a function of the local sphere of commonality of objective spirit that nurtures us from birth on. Morally, however, it is our task to cultivate this local sense of solidarity into the incentive of benevolence (*Wohlwollen*), which

is potentially universal. Human beings must actively *will* the welfare of all others to be ethical. Just as the psychological feelings of sympathy and compassion were too ephemeral to move us to act with the conviction and consistency that defines ethical behavior, so the anthropological sense of solidarity cannot become an ethical incentive if it is not transformed into the “willing to do well” (*wohlwollen*) that characterizes benevolence.

With benevolence we are leaving the level of our instincts and drives for the level of explicit willing. It is interesting to note that Dilthey distinguishes three philosophical conceptions of the role of the will in ethics. The first assigns the will a *negative* role and expects us to deny our bodily and animal nature and to rise above it. This supra-worldly stance is assigned to Neo-Platonism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Schopenhauer. Because it negates life, this would be the least attractive ethical standpoint for Dilthey. Schopenhauer draws the ultimate consequence from it by declaring the individual self to be unimportant.

The second philosophical approach limits the will from without. This *restrictive* kind of ethics is identified with the Stoics and Kant who expect individuals to restrain their selfish inclinations when they come into conflict with the demands of practical reason. It is the ethical position that brings out what it means to submit to what reason prescribes as the right thing to do.

The third ethical approach attempts to limit the will from within. It develops a *formative* conception of the will that seeks to bridge the gap between the animalistic aspects of human life and our spiritual potential. Dilthey’s efforts to properly understand the nature of human drives can be seen as directed at more fully explicating this formative standpoint into an ethics of resolve. It also coheres with his aim as a philosopher of life to articulate an ethical system that proceeds from the ground up. While accepting life as we inherit it, this formative approach to ethics also stresses the need to cultivate and shape it. Here Dilthey alludes to the moderating life-style of the ancient Greeks where self-control and resolve was essential (see 82–83).

The human benevolence that Dilthey wants to cultivate as a formative ethical stance is not some divinely inspired ideal, nor is it the purely rational sentiment that Kant proposed. Benevolence expands the natural bond (*Band*) that is felt in solidarity into a volitional commitment (*Bindung*) to others. It is at this point that Dilthey begins to speak of obligations and duties that bind us mutually. Solidarity and benevolence provide the background for the

recognition of a reciprocity of obligation. This means that “even when the will binds itself, not to another, but to itself—a case to which the label of obligation can be applied only by extrapolation—the will divides itself, so to speak, into earlier and later acts. We are truly obligated, however, only vis-à-vis another to whom we are bound because our will concluded an act or entered a relationship, requiring us to remain the same over time” (106). This stabilization of mutual dependence can then be institutionalized as a social system of justice. Dilthey writes: “When compulsion within an association is added to this relationship and endowed with absolute (not merely relative) coercive measures, then a judicial system of law emerges” (107). But what makes this possible is the individual will “view[ing] itself as committed to the world of values through duty and justice. . . . From a personal standpoint, this commitment involves a *sense of what is right or just*. It comes with its own feeling of duty to mutual order and possesses a moral value completely independent of any purposes” (107). The expression, “sense of what is right or just,” attempts to capture what Dilthey means by *Rechtschaffenheit*, which can also be translated as “uprightness.” But uprightness has the connotation of a private virtue, which loses the social dimension that Dilthey attempts to incorporate. This becomes more evident in the next part of the *System of Ethics*, which focuses on social ethics.

In this final part, Dilthey delineates what he considers the three main volitional incentives that drive the evolution of ethical life. The first incentive of the will is the striving for personal excellence along the lines of the formative kind of ethics we saw him espouse. The second incentive centers again on benevolence as a social virtue. The third volitional incentive is described as “the consciousness of the commitment that inheres in the duty to do what is right” (128). At the heart of this sense of commitment is the respect for others as ends in themselves. The respect for others that was reflexive or implicit in instinctive solidarity and felt in benevolence is now recognized to be at the core of the reflective commitment to do what is right. This socially directed sense of rightness is independent of any external enforceability.

In the concluding lecture of section three, Dilthey moves from the level of subjective volitional incentives to that of objective ethical principles. He does so by drawing on an early essay from 1864 in which he affirmed that moral oughts are unconditional, as Kant had claimed, and that accordingly they may be considered as synthetic a priori practical judgments. This may seem strange, not only



because Dilthey expressed his reservations about synthetic a priori theoretical judgments throughout his life, but also because the just discussed incentives of will were rooted in empirical instinctive relations such as solidarity. But now Dilthey makes it clear that the ethical obligations we adopt as adults have a prescriptive and normative quality that is not empirically derivable. The three social incentives that we spoke of earlier are now reformulated as synthetic a priori ethical principles and in doing so are given a new ranking. Now the commitment to what is right or just is given priority over the feeling of benevolence because it represents our most fundamental obligation. Dilthey refers to character when speaking of his commitment to what is right or just, and although he does not mention Kant here, it is interesting to note that it was at the level of character that Kant had specifically located the virtue of uprightness (*Rechtschaffenheit*) in his lectures on anthropology. By contrast, the virtue of beneficence (*Wohthätigkeit*) that follows up on benevolence merely manifests one's inborn good-heartedness according to Kant. The responsibility that comes with the uprightness that recognizes what is right is an achievement that presupposes active character formation.<sup>3</sup> Dilthey affirms that the commitment to what is right or just is unconditional, yet it is not abstract like Kant's categorical imperative. The commitment is based on respect for other human beings as ends in themselves rather than on Kant's respect for a higher law. Qua moral principle, this commitment to justice is called a *synthetic principle of unity* because it involves the obligation to identify with the rights of the other. The second ethical principle loosens this being bound by the other into the broader feeling of benevolence. Benevolence "does not place us into that rigid chain of mutual obligation through the will's sense of what is right, but rather in a free reciprocal relation of human sentiments that, without a feeling of compulsion, pervades the whole moral world" (135). The principle of benevolence transforms the respect for the rights of others into a caring for their fate.<sup>4</sup> It adds a more free and open-ended *synthetic principle of multiplicity* that encompasses

<sup>3</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Vorlesungen zur Anthropologie*, in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, herausgegeben von der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (AA), 29 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902–1997), 25: 632.

<sup>4</sup> Dilthey considered women to be more attuned to this principle of benevolence than men, on the basis of which he made the unfortunate assumption that they are not likely to act in accordance with his first more fundamental principle of commitment. This led him to say things about their role in political life that go against his generally more liberal views about human social life.

both what unites and differentiates human beings. Although benevolence was also a Kantian virtue, Dilthey's affirmation of it seems to be more in the spirit of Lessing who encouraged a tolerance of difference.

It is not until he formulates his third ethical principle that Dilthey invokes universal *validity*. It moves beyond both the universal commitment of equity and what he calls the "unsurveyable" universality of benevolence to project a universal ideal of perfection. But this ideal does not provide the law-bound universal validity of a homogeneous consensus valid for all time. The attempt to articulate a universally valid morality will according to Dilthey produce different forms over time. He writes:

The urge toward perfection, like benevolence and fidelity to mutual justice, involves a creative synthesis of our moral organization; however, its conception and clarification in consciousness is obtained in combination with the theoretical content of the human spirit. Thus, there are as many different ways to understand the nature and basis of this urge for perfection and value as there are cultural stages (136).

The universal ideal of perfection produces a *synthetic plurality* of articulated cultural systems over time, some of which are religious and some secular. Thus the creative nature of morality expresses itself in three forms of synthesis: as the *unity* (*Einheit*) of commitment to what is right, as an encompassing but undifferentiated *multiplicity* (*Vielheit*) of benevolence, and as a differentiated *plurality* (*Mehrheit*) of systems that aim to perfect the "striving for inner worth" (136).

Whereas traditional ethics located the ideal of inner worth in individual character, Dilthey's social ethics also projects this ideal into the historical world of cultural development. Here we find the paradox that will define the rest of this volume: The very attempt to create a universally valid form of morality produces historically distinct ethical systems, each claiming to possess its own inner worth. In these lectures, Dilthey suggests that different ethical systems will have points of intersection that support each other in life, and merely clash in theory. But if the attempt to perfect morality in universally valid terms requires theoretical input about its social context that manifests itself in different organizational forms, then the clash among ethical systems cannot be waved aside. In the final paragraph of the *System of Ethics*, added by the editor Herman Nohl from another text by Dilthey, we see him reject ethical

theories that attempt to derive his three ethical principles from one overarching principle. We are urged to only accept ethical principles that are formed from the ground up. But this does not solve the problem of adjudicating among the various systems that have evolved over time and disagree precisely about which of the different ethical principles should be given priority. This is the kind of problem that will haunt Dilthey throughout his late writings. It lies in the recognition that the systematic totalizing produced by the philosophical striving for universal truth seems to aggravate the problem of relativism produced by our ever-widening historical understanding.

In the next essay, "Present-Day Culture and Philosophy," Dilthey reflects on the tasks of philosophy as it is about to enter the twentieth century. He bemoans the fact that his own age "is no wiser with respect to the great mystery of the origin of things, the value of our existence, or the ultimate worth of our activity than were the Greeks in the Ionian or Italian colonies or the Arabs during the age of Averroes. Indeed, because we find ourselves surrounded by such rapid scientific progress, these problems are more perplexing today than in any previous age" (146). Both the natural and human sciences have become increasingly professionalized and specialized. This has given philosophy the task of rethinking their systematic interconnection now that metaphysics has been repudiated. One consequence of the success of the sciences is the rise of positivism, which Dilthey describes as "the philosophy of the natural scientists. . . . They have found in the expansion of knowledge a clearly circumscribed purpose for their existence, and so, for them, the question of the value and purpose of life is resolved personally. Dispassionately and with resignation, they simply accept the inscrutable" (149). For Dilthey, philosophical reflection on the larger questions about the ultimate worth of our existence requires a broader life-philosophy that is not just based on personal considerations as he found it in the writings of Nietzsche and other contemporaries. Dilthey is especially critical of Nietzsche's notion that the will to power motivates individuals, for it leads their strivings to be "cut off from the purposive systems of culture, and thereby emptied of content" (155). Nor is Nietzsche's response to the rich resources of history adequate. Dilthey recognizes that the mere accumulation of "relative historical facts" can produce skepticism, but he warns that "not until we appropriate all forms of human life, from primitive cultures up to the present age, can we complete the tasks of seeking what is universally valid in the relative, of locating a secure future

on the basis of the past, and of raising the subject into historical consciousness" (159).

The increasingly dominant theme of the rest of this volume is that of philosophical systems and world-views. Here Dilthey could be said to be doing meta-philosophy. Dilthey's interest in the classification of types of philosophical systems coincided with his growing interest in their relation to the sciences. This may have been inspired to some extent by Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg, one of Dilthey's main teachers while he studied in Berlin starting in 1854. Trendelenburg distinguished between logico-metaphysical systems that stress the role of mechanical forces going back to Democritus and those that stress the role of rational thought as in Platonism. A third alternative is Spinozism, which he regarded as an attempt to find the identity of these two approaches: the scientific and speculative.<sup>5</sup>

But an even earlier 1852 journal entry by the nineteen-year-old Dilthey begins with a threefold distinction of life-attitudes that he associates with the rise of individualism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when the times were not yet ready to accommodate modern ideals. These attitudes are closer to what he would later define as world-views as distinct from philosophical systems. A typical German life-attitude was inspired by the adoption of lofty Fichtean ethical ideals that is followed by bitter disappointment with harsh reality. Here Dilthey refers to Goethe's *Werther* and Hölderlin's *Hyperion* as displaying painful yearning. He found a more empirical British counterpart in Lord Byron, who after experiencing disappointments in the life of sensuous pleasure and sexual passion seeks to overcome the consequent feeling of emptiness by seeking to defy the forces of tyranny and fighting for the liberation of Greece. A third response to this divide between reality and human ideals is found in the mature Goethe, who after having experienced Werther-like despair came to discern in life signs of eventual reconciliation. Also noted here is the influence of Spinoza's pantheism on the late Goethe.

Dilthey's first extensive delineation of a threefold typology of philosophical systems can be found in his 1898 essay "Die drei Grundformen der Systeme in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Fr. A. Trendelenburg, "Über den letzten Unterschied der philosophischen Systeme," in *Historische Beiträge zur Philosophie*, vol. II. (Berlin: Verlag von G. Bethge, 1855), 1–30.

<sup>6</sup> See Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, (hereafter *GS*) IV (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft, Göttingen & Ruprecht, 1959), 528–554.

Further important steps on the way to the later formulations published in this volume are the lecture course “System der Philosophie in Grundzügen” of 1899<sup>7</sup> and a 1900 treatise on pantheism, which already contain a definitive delineation of three world-view types.<sup>8</sup>

“The Dream” is a talk that Dilthey gave in 1903 on the occasion of his seventieth birthday and offers an informal introduction to his three types of world-view. He describes how he became engrossed with an engraving of Raphael’s painting *The School of Athens* while overnighting in the castle of Count Yorck von Wartenburg. “Tired and sleepy as I was, I lay down and went right to sleep. And immediately Raphael’s picture and the conversations we had had were swallowed up in a busy dreamlife” (165). Dilthey began to imagine movement among these figures as later philosophers entered and intermingled with them. Gradually the three groups in the painting moved further apart. The three increasingly distant groups defined themselves in terms of differing world-views. The first group consisted of materialists leading up the positivism of August Comte; then he identifies proponents of an idealism of freedom, ranging from Plato to Kant; and finally, a group that hovered around Pythagoras and Heraclitus. The latter group, which also came to include Bruno, Leibniz, and Goethe, seemed the most encompassing in espousing “a ubiquitous, spiritual, divine force in the universe, a force that inhabits everything and every person, and which functions throughout according to natural laws, so that, apart from it, there is no transcendent order and no sphere of free choice” (167). But even this group could not satisfy the other thinkers and all attempts to mediate among the groups failed. When he awakens disappointed, Dilthey recognizes more than ever the conditioned and limited nature of every world-view, but also that historical consciousness allows us to understand why that must be. We can be consoled by the realization that each world-view “expresses, within the bounds of our thought, one side of the universe. Each world-view is to that extent true; but each is one-sided. It is impossible for us to see these sides simultaneously. We have access to the pure light of truth only in variously refracted rays” (168). The talk ends up with a kind of guarded optimism, encouraging us to “strive towards the light, toward the freedom and the beauty of existence. But not by means of a

<sup>7</sup> See Dilthey, *GS* XX, 237–252.

<sup>8</sup> Dilthey, “Der Entwicklungsgeschichtliche Pantheismus nach seinem geschichtlichen Zusammenhang mit den älteren pantheistischen Systemen,” *GS* II, 1957, 312–390.

new beginning that shakes off the past. We must take the old gods with us into every new homeland” (169). Again this is followed by a warning directed against Nietzsche’s ahistorical image of human beings, for as Dilthey says often: “What man is, only his history can tell him” (170). Why Dilthey thinks that old gods should not be preemptively dismissed will become more evident in the last essay where the function of religiosity is reexplored. Philosophy will never totally replace religion, as we are again forced to recognize in the twenty-first century.

As in “The Dream,” the 1907 essay “The Essence of Philosophy” does not yet offer a full presentation of Dilthey’s typology of world-views. This is because it was expected to define philosophy more generally. It was written for a volume on *Systematic Philosophy* in a series entitled *The Culture of the Present* edited by P. Hinneberg. Together with some of the best-known German philosophers of the age, such as Rudolf Eucken, Theodore Lipps, and Wilhelm Wundt, Dilthey was asked to consider philosophy for its potential contribution to European culture at the beginning of the twentieth century. He explores the nature of philosophy in two stages, proceeding both historically and systematically. Central to the historical part is an attempt to derive the essential features of philosophy from a survey of its main formulations. Central to the systematic part is a theory of world-views, which on the one hand, considers the relation of philosophy to religion and poetry, and on the other hand, examines the formative law that guides the function of world-views and their typology.

The historical part of “The Essence of Philosophy” can be considered as one of the most concentrated Diltheyan texts that sums up the main ideas of his earlier works going back to *The Introduction to the Human Sciences*.<sup>9</sup> He is especially concerned to show why all systematic metaphysics must fail even while philosophy always manifests “the same tendency towards universality, towards grounding, the same direction of mind towards the whole of the given world” (198). Dilthey surveys European philosophy starting with the Greeks with the aim of gaining a first estimation of the essence of philosophy. The path begins with the Socratic love of wisdom and the Platonic conception of knowledge as science. This then leads to the Aristotelian conception of philosophy as an overall science, which in turn generates a process of internal differentiation into special sciences—a process that is still going on. A constant

<sup>9</sup> See Dilthey, *SW* 1.

theme of this historical survey is that metaphysics is never able to live up to what is expected of it, which then leads to ever new compensatory modes of philosophy such as Stoicism and the late Roman philosophies of life. Dilthey sees similar developments within the history of philosophy starting with the seventeenth century in which “the courage to strive for strict, universally valid knowledge and the transfiguration of the world by means of this knowledge” (186) leads to a new concept of metaphysics. Now philosophy seeks rigor through allying itself with the mathematical natural sciences while differentiating itself by methodological reflection aimed at universality and unconditional grounding. Although this constructive method of Descartes and Spinoza is undermined by the epistemological approach of Locke, Hume, and Kant, the transcendental critique of the latter led to a new German metaphysics ranging from Schelling to Schopenhauer (see 186–89). Assessing these formulations as well as subsequent attempts at metaphysical world interpretation by Johann Friedrich Herbart, Hermann Lotze, and Gustav Fechner, Dilthey concludes that “it is not possible to take the understanding of the world as it is given in experience and as it is cognized by means of the particular sciences and deepen it by using a metaphysical method that differs from their way of proceeding” (189–90).

Dilthey therefore turns to the possibilities of a non-metaphysical definition of the essence of philosophy and in doing so distinguishes three forms of it in his own time. These are 1) an epistemological approach that is primarily concerned with grounding the universal validity of the natural sciences, 2) an encyclopedia of the sciences as a comprehensive system, and 3) philosophy as the science of inner experience, that is, philosophy as a human science. Dilthey looks to Kant and Hermann von Helmholtz as representative of epistemological efforts to legitimate the empirical sciences. The encyclopedic approach includes Comte who is credited for “purifying the sciences from every indemonstrable excess resulting from metaphysical conceptions” (193). Hume is considered as one of the fathers of the third form of post-metaphysical philosophy in that he devoted himself to the “scientific cognizance of man as an intellectual, moral, and social creature” (195). Hume’s conception of the moral sciences eventually generated a more general theory of the human sciences that would also broaden our understanding of philosophy itself.

The first epistemological way of approaching philosophy provides discursive cognition (*Erkenntnis*) that is purely conceptual and



intellectual. Since Kant expected philosophy to also provide the certainty (*Gewissheit*) of a more comprehensive knowledge (*Wissen*),<sup>10</sup> he felt the need to relate “all cognition to the essential ends of human reason” (192) by replacing the traditional academic conception of philosophy with a world-oriented philosophy. But to the extent that the epistemological approach was primarily focused on our access to the world through outer experience, this goal of a more comprehensive knowledge remains an unfulfilled ideal according to Dilthey. The third or human-science approach that Dilthey pursued claims to have a more direct access to philosophical knowledge by relating outer experience to our inner experience. It aims to supplement our phenomenal cognition (*Erkenntnis*) of nature with concrete knowledge (*Wissen*) of the inner reality of human life.<sup>11</sup> Positivists like Comte who espouse the encyclopedic view of philosophy deny the reality of inner experience, but aim to overcome the discursive or piecemeal nature of cognition by constructing a comprehensive developmental account of all the sciences. Whether their efforts to establish the systematic relations among all the sciences adds up to philosophical knowledge is left undecided. But they certainly do not address the riddles of life that are rooted in our inner experience.

Beyond these three partial answers to the question about the essence of philosophy, there is according to Dilthey a need for a “standpoint above the parties” (197), namely, that of historical consciousness according to which each of the approaches actualizes one possibility of philosophizing. “Each brought to expression an essential feature of philosophy and at the same time its limitations pointed to the teleological nexus that conditions it as a part of a whole in which alone the complete truth is found” (199). Thus there is a historical nexus that leads from the metaphysical thought of the Greeks, who confronted “the riddle of the world and life in a way that was universally valid,” to the post-metaphysical approaches of modernity: “everything that takes place in philosophy

<sup>10</sup> Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B850.

<sup>11</sup> All sciences, including the human sciences, are conceptually mediated and thus cognitive according to Dilthey. But to the extent that the human sciences reflectively assess inner experience for its reliability (*Sicherheit*), they can also contribute to philosophical knowledge. The traditional rational demand for certainty (*Gewissheit*) that Kant still upheld is not humanly attainable according to Dilthey. For more on his views about the relation between cognition and knowledge, see *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, SW 3, 1–4, 24–33.



is determined in some way by this starting point and its basic problem” (198).

As Dilthey winds up the historical part of his search for the essence of philosophy, he makes it clear that it need not be restricted to the systems of professional or academic thinkers. He traces “the connecting links between philosophy, religiosity, literature, and poetry” (200) from Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism to Montaigne, Lessing, Nietzsche, and the life-philosophy of the late nineteenth century. This section of Dilthey’s text forms a kind of transition to the second main part in which he focuses on the life-nexus that encompasses the individual and society to find philosophy’s proper place there.

This new way of contextualizing philosophy allows us to recognize its more general function of expressing world-views. In defining the significance of world-views, Dilthey relies on the descriptive psychology that he began to develop in the late 1880s. Its central role was to articulate a psychic structure in which cognitive, emotive, and volitional functions cooperate in apprehending and evaluating what is actual and in determining our norms and the goals of our actions. This conception as refined in the “Ideas for a Descriptive and Analytic Psychology”<sup>12</sup> (1894) distinguishes three functions within this structural nexus, namely, world-cognition, life-experience, and principles of action. The central link in this structural coherence is life-experience. It goes beyond what world cognition has taught us by reflecting on what we value in life. It prepares us, not only for what kind of goals we set, but also for philosophical reflection more generally.

In addition to this way of relating philosophy to the structural nexus of individual human beings, Dilthey establishes a corresponding linkage of philosophy, religion, and poetry with the structure of society. What distinguishes these endeavors from other social systems is that they are removed from the practical concerns of everyday life. “The commonalities that bind religion, poetry, and philosophy, and which separate them from other spheres of life are based, finally, on the fact that the application of the will to achieve limited ends has been eliminated. Here human beings are emancipated from the attachment to specific givens in that they reflect on themselves and the overall relatedness of things” (210).

<sup>12</sup> See Dilthey, “Ideas for a Descriptive and Analytic Psychology,” in *SW*, 2, 115–210.

It is at this point that Dilthey begins to analyze the concept of world-view itself. We have already seen that experience can lead us to reflect on life, and this can happen to those who are religiously or poetically inclined as well as to those who are more intellectually inclined. All world-views use the reflection inspired by life-experience to find an answer to the great riddles of life. What distinguishes religious world-views is that they evaluate our life-experience through communion with the invisible horizon of life. Dilthey points out that the “language in which religious communication about the divine is manifested must always be simultaneously sensory and spiritual” (219).<sup>13</sup> This imaginative fusion of the visible and invisible differentiates the religious world-view from both its subsequent poetic and philosophical counterparts. Poetic world-views gear the imagination to what is concretely visible in this world and attempt to give it a symbolic significance for life in general, and what distinguishes philosophical formulations of world-views is their attempt to surpass the imagination and conceptually define them in a universally valid manner.

The contextual reference to religion and poetry in the attempt to define the role of world-views in philosophy is a distinctive feature that characterizes not only this essay, but Dilthey’s philosophy in general. It distinguishes him, as someone coming to philosophy from theology, from Edmund Husserl, who came from mathematics and wanted philosophy to be recognized as a rigorous science that rises above reflection about world-views. It is thus worth noting that in the two years preceding the publication of “The Essence of Philosophy,” two important works by Dilthey about the affinity of philosophical, theological, and poetic questions appeared. One was *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels* of 1905, which includes a lengthy chapter on the development of Hegel’s world-view in relation to his theological studies.<sup>14</sup> The other was *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* of 1906 with essays on Lessing, Goethe, Novalis, and Hölderlin.<sup>15</sup> The sections on the world-view of Lessing and the development of

<sup>13</sup> This anticipates how Ernst Cassirer subsequently characterizes the mythical world: “In it . . . things and signification are undifferentiated, because they merge, grow together, condescend in an immediate unity.” *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 24.

<sup>14</sup> See Dilthey, *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels, Gesammelte Schriften*, IV, 40–191.

<sup>15</sup> The essays on Goethe and Hölderlin are translated in Dilthey, *Poetry and Experience*, SW 5.

Novalis's world-view<sup>16</sup> count among Dilthey's important grounding documents for the so-called *geistesgeschichtliche* turn in literary and cultural studies. These works were more effective as a counterforce to positivistic tendencies in the human sciences than Dilthey's more extensive *Introduction to the Human Sciences*.

An impressive instance of this *geistesgeschichtliche* method in "The Essence of Philosophy" is the section entitled "Religion and Poetry in Relation to Philosophy." One might suspect that Dilthey would want to develop a hierarchical schema like Comte's law of three stages, but this is not the case. Dilthey is much more interested in showing that the "basic differences between the philosophical, religious, and poetic world-views produce the possibility that a transition of a world-view from the religious or artistic form into the philosophical form will occur and vice versa" (213–14). His theory of world-views does not construct a law of unilinear development but traces a more complex development in which there can be cross-fertilization. Thus he shows specific stages and forms in the development of the religious world-view from primitive magical actions and techniques to "a freer, esoteric relation between the soul and the divine" (217). The basic types of religious world-views can in many cases be regarded as preliminary stages of philosophical world-views. Poetic world-views are different in that the significance of experienced reality is not immediately expressible in the conceptual language of philosophy. This is because "a poetic world-view asserts itself most effectively, not in direct assertions, which are never exhaustive, but through the energy with which a manifold content is united and its parts are articulated to form a whole" (228–29).

The few pages about the structure and types of philosophical world-view anticipate what Dilthey will develop in more detail a few years later in the "Types of World-View," and will therefore be discussed later. But "The Essence of Philosophy" already develops the main argument for the impossibility of metaphysics. This is because the basic categories such as being, cause, value, and purpose are rooted in different attitudes adopted by individuals toward the world. These categories can neither be derived from each other nor from some higher principle. "It is, so to speak, only possible to perceive the world through one aspect of our relation to it—never the overall relation as it would be determined by the systematic unity of these categories" (236). Therefore, Dilthey recurs to his central

<sup>16</sup> See Dilthey, *GS*, XXVI, 78–112 and 194–204.

thought about overcoming relativism through historical consciousness. “What can be distilled from the enormous work expended by metaphysicians is the historical consciousness that they have repeatedly experienced the unfathomable profundity of the world. The last word of the spirit that permeates all these metaphysical efforts is not the relativity of each world-view, but the sovereignty of the human spirit over against each single one of them and at the same time the positive consciousness that in the various spiritual attitudes one and the same reality of the world is there for us” (237).

The disproportionately short parts 4 and 5 of “The Essence” warrant two comments. Their brevity points to the limited space allotted to each work in the volume on *Systematic Philosophy*. Thus Dilthey gives only a short summary of some of the functions of philosophy: philosophy as a theory of knowing, as a theory of theories, and as an inquiry into how life-experience nurtures the formation of a world-view as a mode of reflecting on life. The true essence of philosophy derives from the fundamental function of human self-reflection. It is this that leads philosophers to both turn inward and examine their place in society. Beyond that Dilthey discusses the relation of philosophy to the moral world by giving it firm standards, and finally he claims that one of its most important functions is to examine the inner relations among the sciences. In the section on “Extending the Spirit of Philosophy to the Sciences and Literature,” Dilthey offers insight into how philosophical critique can be applied to culture. Accordingly, “the spirit of philosophy can be found wherever a thinker has moved beyond the systematic form of philosophy to examine what is peculiar or obscure in human life such as instinct, authority, or faith” (244). Philosophy can be made effective outside its own traditional domain.

In the concluding sentence of “The Essence of Philosophy,” Dilthey returns once more to the need to coordinate historical and systematic considerations in making sense of the functions of philosophy. This was the leading theme of his *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, whose preface promised to “combine a historical approach with a systematic one in order to attain as much certainty as possible about the philosophical foundations of the human sciences.”<sup>17</sup> Just as there the historical development of the human sciences was used to examine their foundations, legitimacy, and interrelations, so here Dilthey speaks of the “three problems of grounding, justifying, and interconnecting the particular sciences” that must be related to “the

<sup>17</sup> Dilthey, *SW* 1: 47.

need for ultimate reflection about being, ground, value, purpose and how they are linked in a world-view” (247).

The essay entitled “The Types of World-View and Their Development in Metaphysical Systems” appeared in the influential volume *Weltanschauung, Philosophie und Religion*,<sup>18</sup> in which Dilthey together with four of his closest followers (Bernhard Groethuysen, Max Frischeisen-Köhler, Georg Misch, and Eduard Spranger) first presented themselves as a so-called school. Dilthey’s essay does not reiterate the hope expressed in his talk “The Dream” nor the faith in historical consciousness of “The Essence of Philosophy.” Whereas the talk of 1903 was imbued with the eclectic spirit of allowing differing schools of thought to coexist, now he writes that “the archives of history do not confirm the peaceful conversations depicted in Raphael’s ‘School of Athens’ . . . . The contradiction between increasing historical awareness and the claim of the various philosophies to universal validity has become more and more severe” (252). No effective way has been found to express and articulate the overall connectedness of things in the universally valid way that the separate sciences have achieved. Philosophical systems have failed in their attempts to conceptually define the world in its totality, but perhaps there is another way to fathom what is ultimately real, namely, through world-views.

In “The Essence of Philosophy,” Dilthey tried to open up philosophy and give it new cultural functions, including that of forming world-views, but in “The Types of World-View,” he adopts a more existential tone to account for their formation. He laments that the growth in historical awareness has generally produced a sense of anarchy. Only later does he make it clear that a *reflective* conception of historical consciousness can overcome the destructive effects that mere increased historical awareness has had. True historical consciousness must be more than the collection of disparate data; it must place “the actually-existing conflict of the systems in their overall context” (272). What this means is that historical consciousness has to be understood in light of the third kind of post-metaphysical kind of philosophy discussed in “The Essence of Philosophy” that led to the emergence of the human sciences from the Humean moral sciences. Dilthey ends his introduction to “The Types of World-View” by claiming that “philosophy must seek the inner coherence of what is cognizable, not in the world, but in human beings. To understand

<sup>18</sup> Max Frischeisen-Köhler, ed., *Weltanschauung, Philosophie und Religion* (Berlin: Verlag Reichl, 1911).

life as lived by human beings is our aspiration today” (254). From the perspective of life, the real reason why philosophers have created their overarching systems is the human need to be guided by a world-view as they confront the future.

World-views are formed in response to the existential needs of life itself. Normally, our thoughts and actions are directed at the onward-moving chain of events that we are caught up in. But we can suspend this forward movement and shift to “a state of repose directed at the baseline of life,” in which we also focus on what is felt. In this lived experience or existential state, “I respond to people and things, I take positions with respect to them, I fulfill their expectations of me and I expect something from them. Some make me happy, expand my existence and increase my strength, while others exert pressure on me and limit me” (254–55). I am not merely observing the world and acting on it, but orienting myself in it and judging it in light of my basic life-concerns (*Lebensbezüge*). To be sure, this momentary lived experience only gives me insight into my own world.

The second phase in the formation of a world-view involves a shift from the reflexivity (*Innewerden*) of lived experience (*Erlebnis*) to the reflection (*Besinnung*) of life-experience (*Lebenserfahrung*), which stores and compares these kinds of responses to our situation with those of others. Although each of us gathers a different fund of life-experience, “its common substratum is formed by insights into the power of chance, of the corruptibility of everything that we possess or love, hate or fear, and of the constant presence of death, which is all-powerful in determining for each of us the meaning and sense of life” (255). But attempts to find an overall sense of order from our life-concerns and the experiences based on them prove to be frustrating. Life shows ever new aspects that render it enigmatic as a whole. We cope with this by means of certain life-moods that are formed on the basis of certain recurring life-experiences. These life-moods (*Lebensstimmungen*) are attitudes that attune (*stimmen*) us to the world and can initiate the formation of a world-view that seeks to solve the riddle of life. There are, according to Dilthey, certain higher forms of life-mood that are especially suggestive for our attempts to understand the incomprehensible overall givenness of life. They evoke aspects of reality that speak to our life-concerns. At this initial level of their formation, world-views are metaphorical, and to that extent philosophical world-views overlap with poetic and religious world-views.

Fully developed philosophical world-views have a recurrent and more developed structure whereby a cognitive sense of what the

world is like leads to an evaluation of it, which in turn produces ideal goals that can serve to guide our life. To this extent world-views reflect our overall psychic life, which is not only intellectual, but also affective, and volitional. Even philosophical world-views “do not arise from the mere will to cognize. Conceiving what is actual is an important moment in their formation, but it is only *one* moment. World-views are rooted in life-conduct, life-experience, and the overall structure of our psychic life” (262). This more layered development is common to all world-views, even though they vary in accordance with the conditions that influence our lives. These further conditions include climate, ethnicity, political and national differences, as well as other cultural and historical changes. As varied as world-views may end up being, they are not random aggregates of beliefs, but integral configurations that disclose typical patterns that recur and strive for dominance. History discards many world-views, but because they are projective and speculative, they cannot be fully refuted. They are deeply rooted in human life and produce ever new constellations.

Before Dilthey analyzes the recurring types of world-view, he considers the spheres in which they are formed: namely, philosophy, religion, and literature or poetry. Many of the academic functions of philosophy, such as epistemology, are allied with the sciences, and because of their close ties with praxis, they are constrained by external organizations of society. What sets world-view formation apart is the release from these external pressures. Thus Dilthey focuses his analysis on those philosophers who possess what he calls “metaphysical genius” (263) as well as on religious thinkers and poets. From early on Dilthey was suspicious of metaphysical system building, especially as it was perfected by Hegel. In Book 2 of the *Introduction of the Human Sciences*, Dilthey allowed for metaphysical reflection as long as it does not become doctrinal or dogmatic. This suggests that what we should mainly expect from a metaphysical genius is a world-view that speaks to our more general life-concerns and promotes practical wisdom.

Dilthey begins his analysis of world-view types with religion. Because primitive peoples were limited in their ability to comprehend and control their circumstances, they turned to individuals who claimed to possess techniques of appealing to inscrutable higher forces. This made sorcerers, traditional healers, and priests into early intermediaries to the supernatural. Consequently, the meaning of what is actual, the worth of this life, and our practical ideals were derived from our relation to what is invisible. Dilthey writes



that “the efficacy of the invisible is the fundamental category of elementary religious life. Analogical thinking combines religious ideas with teachings about the origin of the world and human life, and about the origin of the human soul” (264). He distinguishes three main types of religious world-view. The first posits “an immanence of world-reason in the order of life and the course of nature” (265) and is often called pantheism. The second type points to “a spiritual All-One that provides the connectedness, truth, and value of all that has been dispersed into particular existing beings and to which they must return” (265). Dilthey sees this exemplified in Chinese and Indian pantheism. The third religious world-view type is modeled on “a creative divine will that brings forth the world and creates man in its own image or stands in opposition to a realm of evil and enlists the pious into its service for this struggle” (265). This religious world-view type corresponds to Judaic-Christian theism and would seem to produce dualisms.

The arts in general do not set out to create a world-view. Their main function is to represent singular events and scenes and to then develop them in ways that enhance their human significance without explicitly guiding us how to live our lives. However, for much of the past, artists were commissioned by religious institutions and expected to illustrate things relevant to religious world-views. Dilthey points out that there is much sublime art that was inspired by religious content, “as is shown by Giotto’s religious epic paintings, by great church architecture, and by the music of Bach and Handel” (267).

Poetry, however, has an inherent relation to world-view formation because its medium of language can call up much more of our life-experience than the visual and musical arts. By imaginatively exploring life-possibilities that human beings cannot otherwise realize,

poetry expands their selves and the horizon of their lived experiences. . . . Life is its point of departure and life-concerns about people, things and nature are made central. Thus universal life-moods come into being from the need to bring together the experiences that derive from life-concerns, and the overall essence of what is experienced in individual life-concerns is the poetic consciousness of the meaning of life (267–68).

Poetry transforms events into symbols of what characterizes life in general. Dilthey points to the novels of Stendhal and Balzac as portraying life as governed “by dark impulses rooted in a nature without purpose” (268). Goethe’s world-picture by contrast finds



“in life a creative force that unites organic formations, human development, and the orders of society into one worthwhile coherent whole” (268). Whereas Goethe regards nature as inherently purposeful, Schiller derives purposes from the human will. His dramas show life as the stage for heroic deeds and thus prepare the way for a world-view that stresses the freedom of humans to assert themselves over against a deterministic nature and institutional forces.

Philosophers with a metaphysical bent have attempted to add logical and epistemic rigor in formulating world-views that are scientifically grounded. They replace the symbolic coherence of poetic world-views with conceptually articulated and systematically organized world-views. Whereas writers like Goethe and Balzac offered visions of the natural world into which human passions and feelings are interwoven, metaphysicians bring out the structural layering of fully developed world-views where the comprehension of what is actual provides the basis for an assessment of life that in turn sets the stage for the setting of purposes. Comprehension of what is actual forms a world-picture that sums up our cognition of reality. The assessment of life then expresses how we feel about the ways of the world and serves to clarify our values. Based on this kind of reflective evaluation it becomes possible to define the purposes, rules, and ideals that should guide our will. The challenge here is how to achieve these many tasks in a coherent and convincing manner. Since the scientific task of establishing universally valid assertions is premised on examining distinct spheres of reality separately, Dilthey doubts that any metaphysical effort to construct a total system can be universally valid. Each attempt will break down at some point and lead to alternative solutions.

Metaphysical systems have been classified in terms of empiricism and rationalism, realism and idealism. But in order to assess these systems for the world-views expressed in them, Dilthey's prepares us for his typology by distinguishing among “life-attitudes” that are defined by “relations of dependence, affinity, reciprocal attraction or repulsion” (274). Metaphysicians who resemble Balzac in seeing human consciousness and spirit as ultimately *dependent* on nature and as subordinate to its deterministic laws exemplify the world-view type of *naturalism*. Those metaphysicians who feel an *affinity* between nature and the human spirit and allow for a Goethean continuum of life, represent what Dilthey calls “*objective idealism*.” Finally, those who think in the more dramatic terms of *attraction and repulsion* tend toward an *idealism of freedom* that posits the moral independence of individuals.

The metaphysical world-view of naturalism goes back to the pre-Socratic philosopher Democritus and was further developed by Epicurus and Lucretius. In modern times, naturalism was refined by British empiricists like Hobbes and Hume, French philosophers such as d'Alembert and Comte, and German thinkers such as Ludwig Feuerbach and Ludwig Büchner. What unites these manifestations of this world-view type is the claim that natural processes exhaust what is actual. Spiritual life is merely formally distinct from what is physical and functions solely according to natural causality. Naturalism is pluralistic: "its epistemology is sensualism, its metaphysics is materialism, and its practical attitude is two-fold—a will for pleasure and a reconciliation with the overwhelming and alien course of the world by submitting to it in one's way of thinking" (276). More developed forms of naturalism such as that of Lucretius saw the limits of a life in pursuit of sensuous pleasures that are inherently ephemeral and came to find solace in contemplating the intellectual world order. We can conclude that naturalism gives priority to the cognitive aspects of human life over the affective and volitional.

By contrast, the idealism of freedom gives priority the volitional dimension of human life. Dilthey introduces it as "the creation of the Athenian spirit. In Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, the sovereign, formative, and shaping energy of this idealism becomes the principle by which the world is understood" (282). And of course, it found its supreme flowering in Kant and Fichte. Dilthey also adds Maine de Biran, Bergson, and William James to his list. Opposition to naturalism is its defining principle: Our bodies may be physically conditioned, but our spirit is free. The sovereignty of the individual person at the same time creates an inner bond with other persons that is normative. The epistemology of the idealism of freedom transposes empirical facts into what Dilthey calls "facts of consciousness" (285) and may even go so far as to claim, as Kant does, that we legislate a formal lawfulness to nature so that we can make sense of its empirical content. In its Platonic form, the idealism of freedom conceives of reason as a formative power that "shapes matter into a world" (285). In Christianity, it finds a theistic formulation according to which God creates the world *ex nihilo*. The sensible world is given a supersensible source. The metaphysics of the idealism of freedom is dualistic and discloses polarities between the sensible and the supersensible, the immanent and the transcendent, the phenomenal and the noumenal.

The third world-view type, which is objective idealism, tends toward monism. Dilthey considers objective idealism to be the most pervasive

form of metaphysics. He finds it in “Xenophon, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, and everything associated with them, in the Stoic system, in Giordano Bruno, Spinoza, Shaftesbury, Herder, Goethe, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Schleiermacher” (287). Although not part of this original list, Leibniz is given special attention because he was able to enrich the austere monism of Spinoza with the intuition that “every individual thing mirrors the entire universe from its own place” (287–88). Leibniz expanded Spinoza’s pantheism into a panentheism that still allows God to be thought of as an individual being. “To conceive the universe as a single whole in which each part is determined by the ideal meaning nexus of the whole: that is the great new thought of Leibniz’s system” (288).

Dilthey also differentiates the three types of world-view according to their epistemological-methodical approach. The approach of naturalism is to extend the deterministic laws of the physical world to what is ordinarily referred to as mind and spirit. The idealism of freedom attempts to derive this kind of natural lawfulness from universal formal conditions established by consciousness for both cognition and action. It champions the autonomy of the life of spirit. The approach that pervades objective idealism is very different according to Dilthey. It is rooted in a life-attitude that is contemplative, intuitive, and aesthetic. This contemplative attitude takes a momentary pause from the work of scientific cognition and the purposive strivings of moral action to also evaluate the world on the basis of feeling. It is a world-view that links our own being with the world as a whole. And “as we expand our own life-feeling into a feeling of kinship with the whole world and experience our affinity with all the phenomena of what is actual, we find a similar increase in our enjoyment of life and the consciousness of our own power” (289). The universality of objective idealism moves beyond the unilinear and explanative lawfulness of naturalism and the dualistic idealism of freedom to an intuitive mode of comprehensive and reciprocal understanding. It is the most systematic type of world-view because it discerns inner connectedness throughout the world. Yet it too cannot legitimate or justify its claim to be universally valid. The scientific standard of universal validity is premised on delimiting one’s sphere of inquiry. None of the three metaphysical world-view types satisfies that condition because they totalize. There is always some gap to fill that leads each of the world-view types to spawn “a restless dialectic” (292).

As a hermeneutical thinker and philosopher, Dilthey tends to avoid what he sometimes calls the pseudo-logical terminology of a

dialectic. Life is too complex and the forces active in the world are too inter-tangled for any dialectical logic to provide satisfactory answers to our ultimate questions. It is thus revealing that in the context of discussing world-views, he uses the term “dialectic” to point to their inner breakdown, whether in terms of the failure of metaphysical systematization or in terms of their ability to fully capture the *Zeitgeist* or spirit of an historical period. By allowing us to separate philosophical world-views from their supposed metaphysical consummation, Dilthey gives them a more prominent socio-cultural relevance. But even when historians appeal to them to characterize the *Zeitgeist* of a period, Dilthey warns that they should not be conceived monolithically. Thus he points out that there will always be cultural and other dynamic or productive systems that are not fully in tune with their age, and external organizations or institutions that still exert power despite having outlived their relevance.<sup>19</sup>

Although conceptually defined universally valid metaphysical systems are beyond our capacity, Dilthey never gave up his faith that we can know the world by means of universally valid scientific truths. His faith in universal history is not the Hegelian claim to know the *telos* of history in its totality, but the conviction that it is possible to cognize the productivity of history in the making. Our task is not to project the universality of the whole of history, but to discern what is universal in its parts. The hermeneutical challenge is to understand individuality as the intersection of universality and particularity. This is the spirit of objective idealism without the letter of any metaphysical dogma.

The last essay in this volume is also the last to flow from Dilthey’s pen. He wrote it while vacationing in Tyrol, and it is incomplete because Dilthey died unexpectedly on October 1, 1911, from an outbreak of dysentery there. The essay is entitled “The Problem of Religion.” Because religion is deeply rooted in human life and has permeated its history, it is important according to Dilthey for both its adherents and its opponents to better understand its import. Many aspects of human culture such as the arts and philosophy grew naturally out of religion and only gradually became independent. This would eventually lead them to challenge religion “insofar as it originated from a restrictive, dogmatic faith and the pressures exerted by a powerful clergy. And this negation uses the weapon of reason to dissolve the irrational and transcendent aspects of faith” (298). Dilthey

<sup>19</sup> See Makkreel, *Dilthey, Philosopher of the Human Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 394–399.

points to ways in which in ancient Greece, in Rome, and again in Arabic culture, an opposition developed between more philosophical rational religion and positive ritual-based religion. Similarly, in the Enlightenment, thinkers such as Lessing and Kant rationalized religion and valued it for its moral effects. But these kinds of rationalizations capture only part of the essence of what Dilthey regards as religiosity. Religion cannot be dialectically sublated into philosophy. It contains a mystical core that can only be accessed by lived experience. Dilthey finds more promise in the “inner development of Christian religiosity” that began with “the Catholic mysticism of Port-Royal, the English and then the American sects, [and] German-Protestant Pietism” (301). This renewed sense of religion was then deepened by Schleiermacher when he related mystical lived experiences to the intuitive insights of the Fichtean phase of transcendental philosophy. Whereas the mysticism of Saint Frances and Eckhart was a “rare experience of union with God,” Schleiermacher’s mysticism conveys a more “constant consciousness supported by a relation to the invisible context of things—a consciousness that arises from the recurring effects of this context on the psyche” (304). Schleiermacher reinterprets the religious experience as uniting a finite individual with the infinite coherence of things. Whereas traditional mystics tend to deprecate this-worldly existence relative to a transcendent reality, Schleiermacher’s mysticism affirms and sanctifies our life in this world-order. According to Dilthey,

probably the most profound insight of Schleiermacher’s universal intuition is that the religious lived experience contains in itself the basis for explaining the multiplicity of religions and the basis for justifying their legitimacy. Religion involves intuition and feeling evoked by the effects of the universe on the individual subject. Just as our psyche is alerted by the senses to the impressions of particular things, so we experience the universe in the intuitions and feelings that emanate from its unity (305).

This allows us to see the multiplicity of religions universalistically as a series of creative individuations rather than relativistically as a series of contingent particulars.

Dilthey continues by tracking how Schleiermacher influenced certain subsequent German theologians. But he also argues that the problem of religion should not be relegated to theologians. It should be studied from the standpoint of the human sciences in order to do justice to religiosity as a felt relation to the invisible. He also

notes approvingly that Carlyle and Emerson “link the religion of lived experience—to be sure, as it had developed in their native countries—with German transcendental philosophy” (303). However, Dilthey reserves special praise for the psychological religious insights that can be found in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* of William James. He describes James as someone endowed with an astonishing gift for seeing the realities of psychic life. “Uninfluenced by previous psychological system building, he possessed the resources that came with the acceptance of possible effects stemming from unconscious psychic life. In America, he found himself surrounded by sects in which religious lived experience asserted itself with great force, independent of tradition.” (312).

Dilthey admits that some of the cases studied in the *Varieties* are rather strange, but on the whole James expands our understanding of religion as only a genius can. Dilthey, who did not relate religion to a transcendent world, but discerns in religious experience a mystical link to an invisible horizon of life, clearly felt an affinity with James’s language of our religious sense of “the more.” He also admired the contributions of James because he was convinced that the human science of religion needs to be analyzed by a philosophically-framed psychology, which is referred to as “anthropology” in the last paragraph of this unfinished essay. This shift is important because the study of religion must also consider how our subjective experiences objectify themselves in shared practices. We saw that Dilthey began his social ethics by looking for an anthropological context for our respect for others. He found this in an instinctive sense of solidarity. What is acknowledged here is merely an initial and familial sense of kinship or fellow-feeling that can be ethically cultivated; solidarity is by no means an endorsement of a permanent submission to a collective will. Similarly, the mystical experience that Dilthey places at the core of religion is not a state of submission or resignation to an otherworldly being, but provides a supportive orientation that can activate our engagement with others in this life. As Dilthey stated in his “Plan for the Continuation of the Formation of the Historical World,” religiosity “points to something strange and unfamiliar” in our lived experience, “as if it were coming from invisible sources, something <pressing in> on life from outside, yet coming from its own depths.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Dilthey, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, SW 3:285.

Like Schleiermacher and James, Dilthey pointed to the centrality of lived experience in religion. Yet to capture the essence of religion, he also considered it important to follow out the many ways in which these experiences have been objectified in historical practices and expressed in doctrinal formulations. Unfortunately, Dilthey's unexpected death prevented him from indicating what the proper balance should be between these two approaches. One would suspect that some of the universal characteristics among the wide variety of established religions would derive from the same kind of processes that Dilthey pointed to in the formation of world-views. But since world-views are not as such institutionalized, other socio-political forces would need to be considered in order to account for doctrinal religions.

This concludes our six-volume edition of Dilthey's *Selected Works*. All the essays in this volume show that Dilthey made important contributions to practical as well as theoretical philosophy. From his social ethics to his attempts to put philosophy in a socio-cultural context and define its role in refining world-views, Dilthey's concern is to orient us in this life. Just as there is no one world-view type that can exhaustively articulate the meaning of life, so there is no simple progression from primitive religious manifestations of world-views to their artistic and philosophical forms. Personally, Dilthey seems to have been most attracted to the philosophical world-view of objective idealism for its inclusiveness, but also because it most readily lends itself to religious and poetic expression.

R.A.M  
F.R.

## INDEX

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- activation: biological stimulus and response, 70–72, 75; and engagement. *See also* actualization
- actuality: cognition of, 182, 234–35, 270, 273; phenomenal cognition of nature, 15; and universal concepts, 176
- actualization, 15, 29, 45, 88, 105, 112, 137, 289
- actual world: analysis of, 164; apprehension of, 207, 250; interpretation of, 212, 216, 222, 289; mechanical view of, 186–87; and poetic world-view, 210–14, 224–31; as referent, 52; and religious world-view, 29, 39, 211–14; and science and, 143, 146–47, 184, 192; semblance in art, 225–26; world-views and scientific cognition, 26, 259–60
- aesthetics, 72, 83, 225; and attitude of contemplation, 289–91; and objective idealism, 26, 108, 123, 130, 281; and universal validity, 109
- affinity, 24, 26, 274, 289, 291–92
- Albertus Magnus, 221, 223
- alienation, 92, 108, 115
- alter egos, 264
- altruism, 3, 96–97
- America, 28, 29, 301–2, 312
- “Amphiboly in Moral Concepts” (Kant), 101
- Anaxagoras, 284–85
- animalism, 36, 37
- animality, 40–41, 81–82, 87–88, 281
- animals: natural sciences and humans as animal beings, 34; sentience and benevolence, 94
- anthropology, 2–6, 8, 29, 46, 104–5, 115–16, 315–16
- Anthropology* (Kant), 241
- Apelt, Ernst Friedrich, 283–84
- Apology* (Plato), 182
- apperception, 73–74, 206, 225
- apprehension, 212, 254; objective, 69, 206–8, 211, 222, 233, 235, 271, 290; religious communion with the invisible, 212; and world-view, 233, 235
- approval, 89–90, 118, 136
- archetypal phenomena, 87–89, 105
- Archimedes, 165
- Aristippus of Cyrene, 280–81
- Aristotle, 5, 25, 34, 39, 45, 63, 126, 179, 199, 251, 290; and classification of philosophy, 182–83; *eudaimonia*, 82; and idealism of freedom, 282, 285
- Arnauld, Antoine, 302
- Arnold, Matthew, 311
- art: and aesthetic pleasure, 108–9, 194–96, 225, 229; and apprehension of the world, 212; in context of society, 208–11; and historical consciousness, 108–9; and imaginative recreation, 5, 91, 94, 102, 103, 105, 108, 109; literary figures as philosophers, 202–4; and lived experience, 226–30; and moral example, 37, 109; and philosophy, 197, 202–4, 210, 232; and semblance of actual world, 225–26; universal validity, 109; and world-view. *See also* poetic world-view
- asceticism, 154, 216, 219, 241, 300n, 310
- association, English theory of, 44
- associationist psychology, 3, 59, 195
- attitudes, life. *See* life-attitudes
- attunement, life moods and, 21, 257–58
- Augustine, 41, 166, 223, 241
- Averroes, 10, 146, 251, 283
- Babeuf, François-Noël, 35
- Bacon, Francis, 11, 151, 193
- Baer, Karl Ernst von, 243



- Bain, Alexander, 78, 195  
Balzac, Honoré de, 23–24, 37, 268–69  
Barthold, Georg Neibuhr, 159  
*Basic Facts of Psychic Life* (Lipps), 196  
Bastiat, Frederic, 61, 62  
Bauer, Ferdinand Christian, 307  
belief, 22, 53, 120, 149, 201, 215–17, 220, 252, 257  
belonging, 284; social solidarity and sense of, 5, 104–5, 245  
Beneke, Friedrich, 47, 55, 195–96  
benevolence, 5–9, 88–89, 93–96, 97; and Christianity, 98; and commitment to what is right, 6–7, 44, 106–8; and general well-being, 108, 139; as incentive, 5–7, 83, 126–27; and justice, 6–9, 97–98, 107–8, 135–36; and obligation or duty, 7, 83, 107, 135–36; and participation, 93, 94, 100; and respect for others, 93–94, 100, 105, 138–39; and solidarity, 4–7, 93–94, 104–5, 135; and sympathy, 5, 96, 109; and synthetic principle of multiplicity, 8–9; and tolerance of difference, 9; and the will, 5–7, 8, 138; and women, 8n, 136  
Bentham, Jeremy, 2–3, 47, 51–53, 62, 195  
Berkeley, George, 231  
Bernoulli, Daniel, 62  
Biblical criticism, 302, 307  
Biester, Johann Erich, 157  
biology. *See* evolution; instincts  
Böhme, Jakob, 201  
boldness. *See* *courage*  
bonds, associative, 129–30  
Bruno, Giordano, 12, 26, 155, 165–66, 223, 230, 266, 283, 287–89  
Buchner, Friedrich Karl, 279  
Buddha, 81, 123, 241  
Buddhism, 6, 81, 123, 241  
Buffon, Georges-Louis Leclerc, Compt de, 253  
*Buried Temple* (Maeterlinck), 152  
capitalism, 61–62  
Carlyle, Thomas, 28–29, 54–55, 113, 152, 203, 234, 243, 286–87, 303, 306–7  
Carneades, 278  
Cassirer, Ernst, 17n  
categorical imperative, 8, 55, 104, 241  
categories, 18–20, 109, 291; and cognition, 236; derivation of, 18, 187, 236; synthesis and practical, 136–38; world-views and categorization, 236  
Catholic Church, 36–37, 45, 132, 138–39, 299n  
causality, 25, 64–65, 115, 147, 210–11  
cause, concept of, 63  
certainty, 15, 19, 52, 133, 256; religious, 216–17, 221. *See also* universal validity  
chain of cause. *See* causality  
Charron, Pierre, 161  
children, 76, 94  
Christ, 41, 200, 212, 221, 241, 308–9  
Christianity, 6, 28, 299–300n, 312; and benevolence, 98; and gnosis, 16, 39, 200–201, 224, 266; and idealism of freedom, 25; and inner experience, 41–42; and natural theology, 37–38, 252; and Pietism, 302–3; Protestant Reformation, 42; Roman Catholicism, 36–37, 45, 132, 138–39, 299n; Schleiermacher and history of, 307–8  
Cicero, 39, 41, 126–27, 185, 234, 282  
circularity, *viii*, 40, 49, 62–63, 177–78, 286  
Clarke, Samuel, 130  
Clement of Alexandria, 200  
cognition: of the actual, 182, 270, 273; and categories, 236; compassion and cognitive awareness, 98; and concept formation, 175–77; and culture, 247; Kant and world-cognition, 285; as limited, 68, 182; and naturalism, 25; objective validity of, 278, 313; phenomenal cognition, 14–15; and philosophy, 14–15, 174, 182; as purely conceptual, 14–15; and sensualism, 277; of uniformities, 176, 206, 276; world-cognition, 16, 208, 222, 234–35, 238, 239, 278  
coherence: and empiricism, 25, 189, 278, 279; and objective idealism as world-view, 289–90, 292

- commitment to what is right, 133–36, 139; and benevolence, 6–7, 44, 106–8; as ethical incentive, 128–29, 133–34; and ideals, 133, 135
- commonality, solidarity and bond of, 91, 104–6, 108
- communion, religious experience of, 17, 22–23, 28–29, 176, 212, 214–19, 264–65, 299–300n, 304–5, 310
- community: Christian principle of, 45, 220, 267, 300n; as social form, 114–15, 119–20; and solidarity, 92, 102
- compassion, 93–94; and cognitive awareness, 98; as incentive, 96–97, 99, 126–27; justice as negative form of, 101; shared joy, 4, 83, 91, 99–100, 103. *See also* sympathy
- compulsion, 7–8, 101, 107, 109–10, 165
- Comte, August, 12, 18, 25, 34–35, 61–63, 67, 148, 166, 169, 179, 193, 233–34, 243, 279
- Condillac, Étienne Bonnot de, 43, 253
- conduct. *See* life-conduct
- conscience, 41, 43, 53, 115, 125, 133
- consciousness: contemplation and self-awareness, 291; empirical consciousness, 25, 66, 179, 232, 245–46, 256; and identity and, 106; nexus of, 188–89; reality as fact of, 67. *See also* psychic life
- consistency, 6, 82, 86, 88–90, 118, 135, 137
- constructivism, 14, 186–88, 253, 261–62
- contemplation, 82–83, 154, 182, 283; and aesthetics, 289–91; as life attitude, 25–26, 39, 152, 289–92; world-negation and contemplative reason, 39. *See also* reflection
- contentment, 58, 87, 90, 103, 112. *See also* satisfaction
- cooperation, 3, 45, 80, 90, 92, 103, 112, 125, 208, 260
- Corneille, Pierre, 268
- cosmic reason, 39
- courage, 59, 77, 82, 84–85, 87–90, 105, 110, 112, 186
- creativity, 131, 197–98, 206, 210, 226
- Critias, 153
- critical consciousness, 2, 49, 50, 166, 168, 234
- Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant), 86, 192
- cultural systems, 9, 87, 129, 209–10, 213, 245
- culture: ethos as ethical incentive, 113, 130–32
- The Culture of the Present* (Hinneberg, ed.), 13
- customs, 53, 55, 110, 116, 119–20, 125–26, 240, 251–53, 256–57, 268
- D'Alembert, Jean le Rond, 25, 165–66, 193, 233, 243, 253, 279
- The Data of Ethics* (Spencer), 47–48
- death, 21, 35, 103, 114, 169, 217, 255–57, 263–64; idealization of ancestral dead as heroic, 120–22
- Death of Empedocles* (Hölderlin), 227, 268
- Democritus, 11, 281, 285
- De Principiis* (Origen), 200
- Descartes, René, 14, 42, 65, 165–66, 179, 186–87, 223–24, 266
- descriptive psychology, 205
- desire, 3–4, 58, 74–75, 79–80, 87, 111–12, 117, 206, 280
- Deussen, Paul, 311
- devotion, 87, 90, 117, 129, 139, 241–42
- Dialogue on Natural Religion* (Hume), 253
- Dietrich, Franz, 311
- Dionysius the Areopagite, 39
- dispositions, ethical, 109–10; and evolution of social life, 112–13; and power, 111–15; virtue, 99; and the will, 87–89
- “Doctrine of Virtue” (Kant), 101
- dogma, religious, 22, 27, 36–37, 39, 157, 212, 221–22, 238, 265, 270, 305–6, 308–9; and authority for religious truth, 301–2; and restrictive ethics, 27, 157, 298–99; and universal validity, 251
- domains, specific cultural, 239–40, 262–63, 272

- doubt, 147, 167, 251. *See also* skepticism
- “The Dream,” 12, 20, 161–70
- dreams, 216–17, 254, 264
- drives: and activation, 70–72; in livings beings, 70–79; morality and resistance to, 81; movement, impulse to move, 79; pleasure (enjoyment) and biological, 48, 71–72, 76, 79; protective or defensive impulses, 76–78; and purposiveness, 80; rest as requirement, 79; satisfaction of, 75, 80, 112, 240; sensory, perceptual, representational, and intellectual forms, 80–81; sensory feelings independent of, 80–81; sociability, 4–5, 126–27, 210; and social structures, 113–15; transformation into desires and passions, 78–79; and the will, 81–82. *See also* desire; instincts; motivation
- dualism, 6, 23, 63, 65, 81, 181, 220, 235, 288, 309; and concepts of good and evil, 123–24, 220, 223–24; and idealism of freedom, 25–26; and justice system, 107; and negative morality, 81
- Dumas, Alexandre, 37
- Dürer, Albrecht, 78
- duty. *See* obligation or duty
- Eastern cultures and philosophies, 131–32, 180, 218–19, 231, 270, 311
- economic systems, 145, 149, 176, 262, 312
- education, 38, 184, 223; ethical training, 59; and moral development, 60–61, 109; as utilitarian instrument, 52, 58, 60–61
- egoism, 44, 56, 90, 99, 127–28, 132, 256
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 28–29, 203, 303, 306, 312
- empathy, *viii*, 89, 135–36
- Empedocles* (Hölderlin), 227, 268
- empirical consciousness, 25, 66, 179, 232, 245–46, 256
- empiricism: and coherence, 25, 189, 278, 279; and ethics, 8, 54, 126; and metaphysics, 24–25, 278; and philosophy, 168, 173, 191, 195, 198, 208, 231–33, 253; and religion, 214–15, 284, 312; and sciences, 14, 168, 190–91, 232, 278–79, 284; and sensualism, 277–78, 278–79; and universal validity, 173, 177, 186, 278. *See also* positivism
- emulation, 109, 121
- encyclopedic systems: and essence of philosophy, 14, 192–94; and knowledge, 14–15, 148, 192–93, 199, 234
- Epictetus, 185
- Epicureans, 40, 44, 131, 185, 275, 280, 281–82, 288
- epistemology: epistemological approach to philosophy, 14–15; and essence of philosophy, 14–15, 176–77, 190–95; and foundation of ethics, 48–50; Kant and, 13–14, 188; and metaphysics, 24–25; morality, epistemological principle for, 63–66; and three methods, 66–67; and world-view, 22; world-views and approaches to, 25–26
- epochs of human life, 41, 45, 84, 131–32, 202, 208, 212, 247, 260
- Erdmannsdörffer, Berhard, 163
- eros*, 181
- essence of philosophy, 173–74, 196–98; and encyclopedic systems, 14, 192–94; and epistemology, 13–14, 176–77, 190–95; and Greek *philosophia*, 180–85, 199; historical nexus of, 180; and history of philosophy, 13, 246; and human sciences, 14–15; and inner experience, 14–15, 19, 194–97; and metaphysics, 14–15, 19, 186–96; and world-view, 199, 211–14
- “The Essence of Philosophy” (1907), 13, 17–20, 315n3
- ethics: and art, 108–9; and concepts of good and evil, 123–24 (*see also* evil; the good); and critical consciousness, 49–50; and cultural contexts, 44–48, 116–19; ethical dispositions, 87–89, 109–15; formative, 81–82; incentives for ethical behavior

- (*see* incentives, ethical); and inner-experience method, 41–44, 48–49, 66–67; as learned rather than instinctive, 59–60; and metaphysical method, 38–41, 49; moral precepts as unconditional, 7–8, 133–39; negative, 81; as a priori synthesis, 7–8, 113, 134, 138; questions concerning hypotheses, 64–65; restrictive, 81; and social phenomena, 44–48; social value of, 38; and socio-historical method, 2, 43, 44–48, 66; theological morality and, 36–37. *See also* morality
- Ethics* (Spinoza), 273
- eudaemonism, 55–59, 62–63, 82, 89–90, 102, 182, 272
- Euripides, 241
- evil, 23, 43, 52, 114, 123–25, 216, 223–24, 251, 265
- evolution: biological theory of, 46–47; and Dilthey's life-philosophy, 3–4; and Hegelian thought, 2; and human behavior, 3–4, 34, 46; scientific theory of, 2, 46–48, 116–17; and social ethics, 46–47; socialism and influence of, 35–36; and theory of social ethics, 46–48
- exclusion, social, 92, 96, 105, 108
- experience. *See* inner experience; lived experience
- Faust* (Goethe), 102, 126–27, 143, 167, 225, 228, 230, 268, 289–90, 304
- Fechner, Gustav Theodor, 14, 86, 188, 189
- feelings: and instinct, 72–74; for others (*see* compassion; empathy; fellow-feeling; sympathy); sensory feelings independent of drives, 80–81; and strivings in social contexts, 111–12; and the will, 72–74, 82–85
- fellow-feeling, 4–5, 29, 93, 94, 102–5, 127, 245. *See also* pity; sympathy
- fellowship. *See* fellow-feeling
- Fénelon, François de Salignac, 302
- feudal-militaristic societies, 35, 36, 52–53, 133
- Feuerbach, Ludwig, 25, 55, 58, 59, 279, 280, 282
- Fichte, Johan Gottlieb, 11, 25, 28, 133, 144, 145, 179, 189, 212, 233–34; in Dilthey's "Dream," 166; and world-views, 273, 283, 284; and religion, 288, 303, 304, 309, 314
- formative ethics, 81–82
- formative power, 25, 40, 285
- foundation, 64–65
- Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor, 251
- freedom, 42; art and, 225; and historical consciousness, 169–70; Mill's principle of, 60; movement and need for, 79; and philosophy, 210–11; and primitive peoples, 118; and religiosity, 299; volition and moral freedom, 42–43. *See also* idealism of freedom as world-view
- French Revolution, 35, 47, 50, 72, 146
- Fries, Jakob Friedrich, 283–84, 302–3
- Galileo, 42, 144, 153, 153n, 243
- genius, 273
- Gnosticism, 16, 39, 224, 266
- goal-directedness. *See* purpose
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 17, 23–24, 26, 60, 144, 158, 212, 225, 227, 228–31, 234, 304; in Dilthey's "Dream," 12, 167; *Faust*, 102, 126–27, 143, 167, 225, 228, 230, 268, 289–90, 304; and German life-attitude, 11; *Iphigenia*, 167, 229; "Proemion," 292–93; *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, 11, 158; and world-view, 268–69, 287–88, 289, 293
- the good: dualism and concepts of good and evil, 123–24, 220, 223–24; and inner experiences, 43; personal well-being and the common, 61; and religious world-view, 220; and social ethics, 123–25, 124; and Socratic-Platonic philosophy, 182–83; utilitarian concept of happiness as, 2–3, 27, 47, 51–53, 56, 61–62; world-view and definition of, 232, 258–60
- gratitude, 96, 104–6
- Grimm, Jakob, 311
- Grimm, Wilhelm Karl, 46
- Grotius, Hugo, 127, 145, 184

- group-phenomena, 2, 44–48  
Guizot, François, 166
- habituation, 91–92, 110, 116, 119  
happiness: benevolence and the  
happiness of others, 93–94; joyful  
consciousness of power, 4, 83–84;  
Mill's principle of, 56–57; and Mill's  
utilitarianism, 2–3; quantification  
and measurement of, 51–54; utilitar-  
ian principle and the good as, 2–3,  
47, 51–53, 56, 61–62; and wealth,  
47, 62
- Hartley, David, 44  
hatred, 21, 76–78, 96  
hedonism, 131, 280
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich,  
*viii*, 58; in Dilthey's "Dream,"  
166–67; and essence of philosophy,  
179, 188–89, 232, 233, 234, 236;  
Hegelian development, 2, 46; and  
metaphysical systems, 22, 26–27,  
149, 287–98; and practical reason,  
129, 159; and religion, 17, 307,  
311; and theory of social ethics, 46;  
and world-view, 17, 273, 283–84,  
287–89
- Helmholtz, Hermann von, 14, 67, 191,  
243
- Heraclitus, 12, 26, 166, 181, 231, 234,  
257, 270, 275, 287–90
- Herbart, Johann Friedrich, 14, 93–94,  
97, 133, 188–89, 195, 283
- Herodotus, 180–81
- heroes: idealization of, 120–22, 273,  
303–4
- heroism, 88–89, 133, 152, 303–4; and  
idealism, 273; life as setting for, 24,  
85, 268–69
- Hertz, Heinrich, 243
- Hinneberg, P., 13
- Hippias, 253
- historical consciousness, 12, 20, 159;  
and freedom, 169–70; of nineteenth  
century, 156–59; and relativity of  
world-views, 146–47; and shape of  
the future, 158–59; and universal  
validity, 254, 272; and world-views,  
213
- history, scientific study of, *vii*, 166
- Hobbes, Thomas, 25, 40, 53, 92, 153,  
187, 193, 233–34, 276, 280
- Hodges, H. A., *vii*
- Hölderlin, Friedrich, 11, 17, 227, 268,  
304
- Homer, 241
- honesty (truthfulness), 104–6, 124,  
211, 242, 245
- human sciences, *vii–viii*, 14, 19–20,  
312; and essence of philosophy,  
14–15; and methodology, 174; phi-  
losophy as a human science, 196; and  
universal validity, 168–69, 175–76,  
196. *See also specific sciences*
- Humboldt, Wilhelm von, 60
- Hume, David, 3, 14, 25, 37, 42–44,  
54, 59, 62, 89, 108, 116, 128; and  
essence of philosophy, 179, 187–88,  
195; and world-view, 253, 278–79
- Husserl, Edmund, 17
- hylozoism, 288
- Hyperion* (Holderlin), 11
- Ibsen, Henrik, 37, 268
- idealism, 2, 68, 123; and positivism,  
54; subjective, 98; and transcenden-  
talism, 64–65
- idealism of freedom as world-view:  
and art, 286–87; and Athenian  
philosophy, 25, 282–83; and auton-  
omy, 283; Christian formulation of,  
25, 244, 266, 283, 284–85, 301; and  
consciousness of power, 293–94;  
and divine authority, 285–86; and  
dualism, 25–26; and ethical norms  
and duties, 284; and "facts of  
consciousness," 25; and formative  
reason, 285; and heroism, 285; in  
history of philosophy, 166, 233–34,  
283–84; and human agency, 274,  
282–88, 286–87; and idealism of  
personality, 286; and independence,  
284; and Kant, 166, 212, 283,  
285, 301; and life conduct, 286;  
methodology of, 26, 293–94; and  
opposition to other world-views,  
25, 282–83, 288; and Plato, 25; and  
transcendental philosophy, 286; and  
universal validity, 26, 285, 286, 289,  
293; and the will, 25, 284–85

- ideals: cultural systems and production of, 9; and emulation, 121; idealization of the dead, 120–22; and “oughts,” 123, 136, 138–39. *See also* perfection
- “Ideas for a Descriptive and Analytic Psychology,” 16
- identity: and consciousness, 106; fidelity to self as obligation, 128; and human solidarity, 91–92; and objective idealism, 292–93; and recognition of the not-I, 98–99; self-sameness of the ego, 256; Spinoza’s principle of, 65, 187
- Ihering, Rudolf von, 119
- illusion, 65, 89–90, 101–2, 197, 207, 224, 225, 240–41, 268
- imagination, 71, 73–74, 150–51; and anthropology, 316; and idealization, 121, 123; and poetic world-views, 17, 23–24, 230, 266–69; and sympathy with others, 5, 91–92, 94, 102, 103, 105, 108, 109
- imaginative re-creation, 5, 43–44, 89, 91–92, 105, 108–9
- impulses, 87; biological stimuli and responses, 74–81; humans and ambivalent, 49; and motivation, 3, 90–92; social systems and moral development, 115–16; and specific feelings, 91, 96
- incentives, ethical: benevolence, 5–7, 83, 126–27; commitment of the will, 128–29, 133–34; compassion or sympathy, 96–97, 99, 126–27; and cultural ethos of an era, 113, 130–32; death, 120–21; ethical behavior as end in itself, 42, 46, 57–58, 103–4; and ethical dispositions, 112; feeling for others, 91; and instinct, 3; love, 126–27; personal satisfaction, 126; pleasure or pain, 57–58; as principles, 8; and social customs, 113, 125–26, 130–32; solidarity, 5–6, 92–93, 129–30; sympathy, 3, 60, 90–93, 126–27; and will, 7–8, 116. *See also* motivation
- inclinations, 58, 91, 260
- indifference, 53, 94–95, 117–18
- individualism, 11, 37
- individuality, 27, 133, 151–52, 233, 245, 291, 302, 305–6
- individuals: and social organization, 174–75
- inequality, social, 34–35
- inner experience: and altered states of consciousness, 310; and essence of philosophy, 14–15, 19, 194–97; and evolution, 66; factuality of, 42; and feelings, 54–55, 63–64; and intuitionistic ethics, 42; as method, 41–44, 42; philosophy as science of, 196; psychic life, 205–8; and reality of consciousness, 194–95; religious experience (*see* communion, religious experience of)
- inner life, 69; as fact of consciousness, 67; and illumination of the actual world, 212; and lived experience, 212; of others, 95; of religion, 301. *See also* psychic life
- instincts: customs compared to, 119–20; and feelings and, 72–74; in livings beings, 70–79, 71; movement, impulse to move, 79; and passions, 78, 182; protective or defensive impulses, 76–78; rest, need, 79
- integrity, 124
- intellectual history (history of ideas), 14, 17–18, 44–48, 45, 59, 205, 251, 271; Dilthey’s critique of Nietzsche, 10–11, 13; and *Zeitgeist*, 27
- The Introduction to the Human Sciences*, 13, 18, 19–20
- intuition, 28, 98, 154–55, 187, 189, 283, 291–92, 305, 307
- intuitionistic ethics, 42, 54–55
- the invisible, 17, 22–23, 28–29, 152, 176, 214–19, 255, 264–65, 299–300n, 303–4
- inwardness. *See* inner experience
- Iphigenia* (Goethe), 167, 229
- Islam, 123, 146n, 224, 255
- Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich, 282–83, 288
- James, William, 25, 29–30, 195, 286, 302, 311–12
- Jodl, Friedrich, 60
- joy: shared joy, 4–5, 83, 91, 99–100, 103. *See also* happiness

- judgments: moral, 56, 89, 133–34, 136; practical judgments as synthetic a priori, 7–8, 134; theoretical judgments as non a priori, 8
- Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels* (Dilthey), viii, 17
- justice: and benevolence, 6–9, 97–98, 135–36; and commitment of the will, 6–9, 44, 106–8; custom and ethical law, 119–20; as negative form of compassion, 101; religion and retributive, 122–23; and Roman natural law, 252; and sense of what is right, 7–8, 21, 97, 105–8, 106–8, 128–29, 135; and social bonds, 6–7; and social equality, 132; universality of, 101
- Justin Martyr, 200
- Kant, Immanuel, 14–15, 25, 28, 42–44, 97, 127, 313–14; “Amphiboly in Moral Concepts,” 101; *Anthropology*, 241; and benevolence, 93; *Critique of Pure Reason*, 86, 192; in Dilthey’s Dream, 166; “Doctrine of Virtue,” 101; and duty principle, 8, 44, 81–82, 129; and epistemology, 13–14, 63, 188; and essence of philosophy, 179, 187–89, 224, 231, 241–43; and idealism of freedom, 166, 212, 283, 285, 286, 301; *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 5, 101; Nietzsche and, 153; and religion, 300–303, 306; and respect for the other, 104; and restrictive ethics, 6, 81; and sympathy, 5; and synthetic a priori theoretical judgments, 7–8, 55, 134, 136–38, 148; and unconditional moral will, 134; and world-cognition, 285; and world-view, 266, 282–83, 286, 288, 290–92 (see also idealism of freedom under this heading)
- Das Kapital* (Marx), 36
- kinship, and human solidarity, 5, 26, 29, 88, 102, 114, 132, 289
- knowledge: and certainty, 15, 156–57; Christian *gnosis*, 200; contrasted with cognition, 15, 182; and critical consciousness, 181; encyclopedic approach to, 14–15, 148, 192–93, 199, 234; of eudaemonia and purpose, 182; and inner experience, 15, 68; Kant on, 191; and life-experience, 207–8, 255–56; and philosophy, 168, 179–83, 190–91, 196, 199, 222, 246–47; religious, 200, 215–16, 223–24, 263–64, 269, 314; as scope and purpose of science, 13, 144, 149, 165, 181–82, 190–91, 196, 199, 209, 269, 278–79; skepticism and uncertainty, 156–57, 185, 278; and transfiguration of the world, 14, 186; universal theory of, 19, 183, 187, 238–43, 246; and universal validity, 13–14, 92, 144, 148–49, 168, 179, 181–82, 198, 207–9, 222, 313; world-views and, and 269. See also wisdom
- Kotzebue, August von, 127
- Krausser, Peter, 4
- Lagrange, Joseph-Louise, 243
- Lange, Friedrich Albert, 68, 224
- Lao Tse, 241
- Lassalle, Ferdinand, 36
- Lavater, Johann Kaspar, 302
- law: justice, custom, and ethical law, 119–20; legislation as motivation for ethical behavior, 60; and religion, 120–21
- Leben Schleiermachers* (Dilthey), viii
- legislation: as motivation for ethical behavior, 60
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 42, 50, 65, 144, 156–57, 179, 187, 189, 199, 223, 231; in Dilthey’s Dream, 12, 165–66; and panentheism, 26, 283, 287–88, 291; *Theodicy*, 157; and world-view, 233–34, 287–88
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, 9, 16, 17–18, 28, 50, 157, 202, 231, 253, 299n, 300, 301, 307
- life-attitudes, 11, 24, 26, 203, 230, 273, 286; and art or literature, 229–30, 266–68; and attunement, 21; contemplation, 25–26, 39, 152, 289–92; indifference, 53, 94–95, 117–18; naturalism, 275–76; religious, 265–66; and world-views, 11, 18–19, 21, 24, 26, 193–94
- life-concerns, 21–23, 228–29, 254, 256, 257–58, 264–68



- life-conduct, 210, 240–41; ethical methods and preference in, 38; and eudaemonia, 182; heroic, 122, 228; and knowledge, 182; and philosophy, 33–34, 174, 185; and world-views, 22, 38, 162, 228, 262, 286
- life-experience, 16
- life-moods, 21, 23, 164, 267–68; and attunement, 21, 257–58; and solution to the riddle of life, 258; and world-views, 257–58
- Linnaeus, Carolus, 276, 280
- Lipps, Theodore, 13, 196
- literature: literary figures as philosophers, 202–4. *See also* poetic world-view; poetry
- lived experience, 21; and general life experience, 255; as individual experience, 255; and meaning, 258; and mysticism, 28–29; and philosophy, 240–41; and poetic reflection, 226–27; reality as, 196, 203; and reflection, 16, 17, 19, 21; and religiosity, 1, 28–30, 223, 303, 307, 310, 315n3; and structure of psychic life, 211–12; and subjectivity, 314; and world-views, 21, 161–62, 211–12, 232–43. *See also* inner experience
- living beings: basic organization of animals, 70–71; and consciousness, 71–72; instincts and drives in, 71–79; pleasure and motivation in, 48, 71–72; as purposive, 71–72; and reflex mechanisms, 4, 74–75; stimulus response in, 70–71
- Locke, John, 14, 42, 50, 53, 67, 179, 187–88, 231, 301
- logic, 187, 190, 194–95, 239, 270, 298, 313
- Lotze, Hermann, 14, 93, 97, 107–8, 188–89
- love: *eros*, 181; as incentive, 126–27
- Lucretius, 25, 185, 227, 234, 280, 281
- Mach, Ernst, 65, 148, 243
- Maeterlinck, Maurice, 150, 152, 203, 244
- magic, 18, 100, 121; religious world-view and, 18, 215–17, 220, 264–65
- Maimon, Salomon, 314
- Maine de Biran, Marie-François-Pierre, 25, 234, 282, 286
- Malthus, Thomas Robert, 36
- manifestation of will, 103
- Marcus Aurelius, 185, 202–3
- marriage, 2, 36, 111, 115, 118, 240
- Martinus Capella, 193
- Marx, Karl, 1–2, 36
- materialism, 12, 25, 40, 63, 157, 165–66, 234–35, 272, 276–77, 280, 288
- mathematics, 17, 144, 153, 153n, 158, 165–66, 184, 186–93, 235–36, 269–70, 278
- matriarchy, 119
- Mayer, Julius Robert von, 243
- meaning: and cognition, 68; and conception of the universe, 26; of life, 21–23, 30, 34–35, 37–38, 41, 136, 151, 228; and lived experience, 257–58; and poetic world-view, 210, 224–31, 226, 228, 240–41, 267–68; and religious world-view, 218, 221; and values, 130; world-views as expressions of, 212
- means and ends, 115, 260, 314
- mechanistic metaphysics, 49, 64, 279–80
- Meister, Wilhelm, 167, 227
- Meister Eckhart, 39, 304
- memory, 63, 71, 150–51, 212, 225
- metaphysical systems, 186–87; critique of, 40–41; and external phenomena, 188; Greek concept of, 183; as inadequate, 2; and method, 188; and natural sciences, 40; and philosophy, 183; and self-preservation, 39; and universal validity, 235–37, 269, 271–72; and world-negation, 39
- metaphysics: and essence of philosophy, 14–15, 19, 186–96
- The Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant), 5, 101
- Microcosmus* (Lotze), 97
- militarism, 36, 132
- Mill, John Stuart, 2–3, 47, 54–62, 148, 195, 243
- Minucius Felix, Marcus, 200
- misfortune, 85, 121–22
- Moleschott, Jacob, 279
- Mommsen, Theodor, 144



- monism, 25–26, 65, 283, 287, 291  
monotheism, 132, 220, 265–66  
Montaigne, Michel de, 16, 156, 203  
Montesquieu, 184, 253  
mood as attunement, 21, 257–58  
morality, 97–101, 305; and biological theory of evolution, 47; contemporary contexts for study of, 34; epistemological principle for, 63–67; and group-phenomena, 44–48; incentives for moral behavior (*see* incentives, ethical); moral precepts as unconditional, 7–8, 133–39, 134; naturalistic system of, 2, 131, 252–53, 276–77; negative, 81; restrictive, 81; sympathy and moral judgment, 89; theological, 33, 37; and universal validity, 9–10; utilitarian, 51, 54, 61, 62–63  
moral oughts: as unconditional, 7–8, 134  
Moravian sect, 302–3, 306–7  
motivation, 2–6, 10, 48–49; biological drives (*see* drives); for ethical behavior (*see* incentives, ethical); pleasure and pain as, 52–53, 58–60, 126, 137–38, 206–7; sanctions as, 53; and utilitarianism, 2–3, 60–61, 63; will to power, 10–11, 154, 269, 281  
Muellenhoff, Karl, 311  
Müller, Max, 311  
multiplicity, 97, 236–37, 245; and benevolence, 9; of religion, 297, 305; synthetic principle of, 8–9. *See also* plurality  
music, 23, 267, 297  
mysticism, 201, 220, 292; and Christianity, 40, 220–23, 301, 304–10; and historical consciousness, 156–57; and inner experience, 40, 157; and lived experience, 28–29, 220–23, 269, 301, 308; and psychology or human sciences, 29; religion and lived experience, 28; Schleiermacher's, 28, 304–6, 308–10; and world-negation, 39  
*Natural History of Religion* (Hume), 253  
naturalism as world-view, 2–3, 275–86; and causality, 25; and cognition of the actual, 25, 234–35, 276, 277–78; and determinism, 26; and empiricism, 25; and evolution of social systems, 277, 281–82; and history of philosophy, 280–81; *vs.* idealism of freedom, 25, 282–83; in literature, 267, 281; and materialism, 25, 234–35, 267–68; and mechanistic metaphysics, 279–80, 289; and metaphysics, 24–25; methodology of, 26; as pluralistic, 25; and positivism, 234–35; and relativism, 25–26, 277–78; and religion, 265, 275–76, 280; as science, 279–80; and sensualism, 25, 275–85; and universal validity, 25, 26  
natural sciences, 176–77, 183–84; and human sciences, *vii–viii*, 1–2, 196; and materialism, 40–41, 235, 276; mathematics, 14, 144, 186, 278–79; and metaphysics, 40; and monism, 65, 284; and philosophy, 14, 148, 182–84, 186, 190–93, 197, 199, 238–39, 247, 270; and positivism, 235, 243; and religion, 33, 305, 313–14; and rigor, 14; and sensualism, 278; and social development and organization, 144–46, 168–69, 300; and universal validity, 14, 26, 144–45, 193. *See also* evolution  
natural theology, 122–23, 187, 252–53  
Neander, Johann August Wilhelm, 311  
negative ethics, 81  
Neo-Kantians, 68n, 164n5, 188n, 192, 310  
Neo-Platonism, 6, 16, 201, 224, 266  
Nicholas of Cusa, 223, 291  
Nicolai, Christoph Friedrich, 157  
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 10, 13, 16, 144, 147, 150, 153–55, 169, 203, 212, 243  
Nohl, Hermann, 9–10  
not-I. *See* others (not-I)  
Novalis (Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg), 17–18, 303, 306–7  
objective idealism as world-view, 23, 30; and apprehension of coherent world, 289–90, 292; and art or aesthetics, 26, 108, 123, 130,

- 281, 291; and Christianity, 224, 283–84, 291; and cognition of the actual, 234–35; and contemplative life-attitude, 26, 289–92; and determinism, 292; as distinct from other world-views, 233, 274, 284, 288, 292; and history of metaphysics, 233, 287–89; methodology of, 26, 289–92; and monism and, 25–26, 292–93; and problem of world-foundation, 192–93, 292–93; and reflection, 290–91; and relationship between inner and outer world, 234–35; and universality, 13–14, 25–27, 26, 290–91
- objectivity, 63, 155, 168, 183, 186–88, 213, 220, 313; objective apprehension, 206–7; and universal validity, 155, 169
- obligation or duty: and benevolence, 83, 107, 135–36; commitment to what is right, 6–7, 44, 106–8, 128–29, 133–36, 139; contrasted with benevolence, 7, 135–36; and development of ethical consciousness, 118–19; and ethical development, 122; fidelity as obligation to the self, 128; of gratitude, 96, 104–6; “oughts,” 7, 105–6, 134–36, 242; and respect for the other, 103–4
- Oldenberg, Hermann, 311
- “oneness,” 209, 236–37, 301
- “One universe” doctrine, 291
- On the Basis of Morality* (Schopenhauer), 97, 99
- Origen, 200
- Ortega y Gasset, José, *vii*
- others (not-I): compassion for, 98–99; identity and recognition of, 98–99; judgment about the worth of, 89; objectification of, 255; philosophy and understanding of, 205; respect for, 29, 93–94, 100, 103–4, 105, 138–39; and supra-individual purpose, 87
- “oughts,” 7–8, 105–6, 134–36, 242
- pain, 54, 56, 57–58, 62, 63, 68, 73, 91–92, 98–102, 117–18, 147, 206–7
- panentheism, 23, 26, 235, 265–67, 288
- panpsychism, 86
- pantheism, 11–12, 23, 26, 86, 152, 230, 235, 272, 283, 307
- Parmenides, 291
- participation, 5, 93–95, 100
- Pascal, Blaise, 156–57, 241, 302
- passion, 78, 79, 87, 182, 280, 288
- patriarchy, 107, 118–19
- Paul, the Apostle, 275
- pedagogy, *vii*. *See also* education
- perfection, 40, 41, 43–44; cultural forms of, 9, 136; and ideals, 121–23, 136, 242; and inner worth, 41, 138
- perseverance, 82, 86, 122
- personality, 12, 106, 222, 235; Christianity and idealism of, 152, 166, 217; idealism of, 12, 283, 286; philosophy and character, 179; philosophy and cultivation of, 152; and religious genius, 201, 217; and self-consciousness, 106
- pessimism, 56–57, 147, 257, 290
- Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich, 60
- philosophical world-view, 213–14; and lived-experience, 232–43; and psychic life, 212–13; relationship with poetic world-view, 224–31; relationship with religious world-view, 214–24; structure of, 232–33; types of, 233–35; and universal validity, 231–37, 233
- philosophy: and the actual, 186; and art or literature, 197, 202–4, 210, 232; conflicting systems of, 251–54; as a cultural system, 9, 208–11, 245; and empirical consciousness, 245; and empiricism, 168, 173, 191, 195, 198, 208, 231–33, 253; as encyclopedia of the sciences, 192–93; epistemological approach, 14–15; as foundational, 239; future of, 197–98; general subject matter of, 183–84, 190–92; Greek conceptions of, 180–84; and historical consciousness, 16–17, 197–99; history of, 174, 247, 251–54; and human sciences, 174–76; and idealism of freedom, 245; and intellectual disposition, 183–84; and knowledge, 183, 190–92; literary figures as philosophers, 202–4; and “metaphysics,”

- philosophy (cont.)  
183; and methodological consciousness, 244; non-metaphysical definitions of, 190–96; relationship of religious and philosophical world-views, 197, 201–2, 210, 214–24; and riddle of life, 183–84, 191, 210; as science, 13–14, 183–84, 239; and the sciences, 148, 182–83, 186, 190–93, 197, 199, 238–39, 247, 270; and structure of psychic life, 211–12; systems and conceptual limits to, 197–98; as theory of knowing or theory of theories, 19; transcendence and philosophical reflection, 246; typology of philosophical systems, 11–12, 233–35; unitary essence of, 174; and universal validity, 154–55, 168, 174, 181–83, 184, 198–99, 214
- Pia Desideria* (Spener), 157
- Pietism, 28, 157, 301, 306, 310
- pity, 5, 89, 102–3
- Plato, 15, 25, 34, 39, 48, 63, 82, 109, 166, 179, 181–84, 191, 199, 203, 234, 241, 275, 282, 285, 288, 290
- pleasure (enjoyment): and associationist psychology, 44; and biological drives, 48, 71–72, 76, 79; feelings and inner experience, 54–55, 63–64; Hume on, 44; joyful consciousness of power, 4, 83–84; measurement of, 52, 62; and pain as ethical motivations, 52–53, 58–60, 126, 137–38, 206–7; and purpose, 72–73; Schopenhauer on, 97; and sensualism and, 11, 25, 275–77, 280–82; sensual *vs.* spiritual, 281–82; shared joy, 4–5, 83, 91, 99–100, 103; and utilitarian happiness, 2, 27, 43–44, 52, 56–58, 62
- Plotinus, 39, 41, 201
- plurality, 9, 134, 220, 292–923
- poetic world-view, 17–18, 213–14; forms of, 229; literary figures as philosophers, 202–4; and lived experience, 226–30; and objectivity, 230; and psychic life, 212–13; and reflection, 226–28; relationship with philosophical world-view, 224–31, 230–31; and structure of psychic life, 227–28
- poetry, 16; and ethics, 37; and life-philosophy, 150–51
- politics and political life, 22, 47, 61, 80, 93, 128–29, 132, 138, 145–46, 194, 209, 238, 253–54, 260, 270, 282, 303, 312; sovereign political will, 45, 146
- Porphyry, 201
- positivism, *vii*, 15, 18, 157, 166–67, 234–35, 243, 278–79; and epistemology, 192; and idealism, 54; and materialism, 12; and natural sciences, 10, 192, 193; and religion, 148–49; and universal validity, 193–94, 196, 198; and world-views, 193–94, 243–44. *See also* empiricism
- power: dominance and submission in society, 208–9; and ethical dispositions, 111–15; joyful consciousness of, 4, 83–84; objective idealism and consciousness of, 293–94; of religion, 269, 280, 285, 297–302, 312; “will to power,” 10–11, 154, 269, 281
- pragmatism, 286
- “Present-Day Culture and Philosophy,” 10
- Principia* (Newton), 157
- principles of action, 16
- probability, doctrine of, 278
- procreation, 76, 94, 113
- “Prooemion” (Goethe), 292–93
- property, 2, 35–38, 47, 52, 62, 111, 113–15, 119, 128, 133, 240
- Protagoras, 277, 280
- psychic life, 87, 196, 314; and anthropology, 315–16; expansion and intensification of, 87; and naturalism, 277–78; and philosophy, 205–8; and “psychic structure,” 206–8, 233; and psychology, 205, 206; and relations with external world, 68, 205–7, 277; and religious experience, 215, 302, 305, 310–12; and structure of world-view, 258–60, 262; thinking and cognition, 33, 65; unconscious, 312; unity of, 277; William James and elucidation of, 29, 311–12; world-views as reflection of, 22, 212–13, 233

- “psychic structure,” 16, 206–8, 236, 238
- psycho-ethical approach, 3
- psychology, *vii*, 68–69, 138, 155, 184, 206; as “anthropology,” 29; associationist, 3, 194–95; descriptive and analytic, 16, 151, 204, 205; of religion, 302, 311–12
- psychophysics, 86n
- Ptolemy, 165
- purpose: drives and purposiveness, 80; as goals of actions, 147; habit or custom and, 119–20; knowledge and, 182; living beings as purposive, 71–72; supra-individual, 87; and the will, 24, 70, 87; work, 85–86; world-purpose, 246
- Pythagoras, 12, 39, 166, 180–81, 199, 231, 270
- Quesnay, François, 145–46
- Racine, Jean, 231
- Ranke, Leopold von, 166
- rationalism, 24, 28, 39, 42, 130, 156–58, 221, 269, 270–71
- realism, 24, 144, 271–72
- reality: art and semblance of, 18, 225–26; cognition of, 24; external world as phenomenal, 63–64, 67, 69, 256, 290; as fact of consciousness, 67, 188, 194–95; of inner experience, 15, 47, 63, 194–96; as lived experience, 196, 203; as phenomenal, 15, 26, 67, 168, 188; as two-sided, 29–292; world-views as interpretations of, 212, 222, 289
- reflection, 21, 37, 212; and life-experience, 16, 17, 19; lived experience and poetic, 226–27. *See also* contemplation; self-reflection
- reflective attitude, 208, 281, 308–9
- reflexive awareness, 205, 254
- reflexivity, 21
- reflex mechanisms, 4, 7, 48, 70–71, 74–78, 104
- relativism, 9–10, 18–19, 48, 237, 277
- religion, 16; and asceticism, 154, 216; and communion with the invisible, 17, 22–23, 28–29, 176, 212, 214–19, 264–65, 299–300n, 304–5, 310; dogmatism, 22, 27, 36–37, 39, 157, 212, 221–22, 238, 265, 270, 298–99, 305–6, 308–9; faith (*see* religiosity); as human science, 312; and idealism and, 120–23, 214–16, 219; and magic, 18, 22–23, 30, 120–23, 131–32, 154, 215–16, 220, 263–64, 269–70; and natural theology, 122–23, 187, 252–53; Pietism, 28, 157, 301, 306, 310; Protestantism, 149; and psychic life, 212–13; psychology of, 312; rationalizing of, 28, 156–57, 299; and restrictive ethics, 27, 157, 298–99; in structure of society, 208–11, 215–17; and structure of thought, 313–14; and the supernatural, 22, 215–16; theological morality and ethics, 36–37; and transcendence, 214, 223–24, 241; as universal subject-concept, 176; and universal validity, 37–38, 215, 220, 224, 251, 266, 307, 308–9; and world negation, 39, 298–99. *See also* Christianity
- religiosity, 13, 28–29; and communion with the invisible, 215–17; and dogma, 221; and freedom, 299; and history of Christianity, 221, 299–300; and lived experience, 1, 28–29, 223, 303, 307, 310, 315n3; and philosophy, 180–81, 200–204; and Pietism, 301–3; and religious truth, 300–302; and religious world-view, 263–64; and Ritschl, 310; and Schleiermacher, 304–7; as subjective, 222–23; and transcendental philosophy, 241, 303–7
- religious world-views, 17; development of, 217, 263–66; and faith (*see* religiosity); and free will, 222; and idealism and, 120–23, 214–16, 219; and interaction with the divine, 224 (*see also* communion, religious experience of); and magical influence, 18, 215–17, 220, 263–65; and mysticism and, 28–29, 157; and naturalism, 275–76; and natural theology, 122–23, 187, 252–53; and personality, 217; and philosophy, 201–2, 214–24

- reproduction, sexual, 11, 76, 82, 93–94, 100, 113, 115, 116
- resolve, 6, 82–83, 85–86. *See also* commitment to what is right
- respect for others, 29, 93–94, 100, 103–4, 105, 138–39
- restrictive ethics, 6, 27, 81, 157, 298
- retribution, 122–23. *See also* revenge
- revenge, 63, 78, 96, 107
- Ricardo, David, 36
- riddle of life, 164, 180, 202–4, 268, 270, 271, 274; and world-views, 21, 256–61, 258, 282
- right, what is: commitment to, 9, 128–29, 135–36, 139; sense of, 7–8, 21, 97, 105–8, 128, 135
- rights: of the individual, 128, 145; of the other, 8, 101, 128
- rigor, 14, 17, 24, 133, 181, 186, 193, 236
- Ritschl, Albrecht, 149, 308, 310–11
- Romanticism, 210
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 43, 50, 62, 145, 156–58, 212, 283
- Saint-Simon, Henri de, 35
- Sanches, Francisco, 162
- sanctions, 53, 60, 125
- satisfaction: of drives, 75, 80, 112, 240; and feelings of power, 83, 90; and individual excellence, 125–26; and society, 116, 125, 240; and the will to work, 113–14. *See also* contentment
- Savigny, Friedrich Karl von, 35, 46n4
- Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph, 26, 166–67, 187–89, 234, 283–84, 287, 288, 289, 291, 303–4, 307
- Schlegel, Friedrich, 303
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich, 26, 28–30, 49, 81–82, 129, 133, 159, 187–88, 234, 283, 287–89, 291, 303–11; and practical reason, 129
- Schneider, G. W., 76–77
- The School of Athens* (Raphael), 12, 20, 165, 252
- Schopenhauer, Arthur, 55, 150–52, 291; and compassion, 5, 97–102, 127–28, 144; and metaphysics, 14, 26, 39–40, 187–88, 187–89, 204; and negative ethics, 6, 81; and world-view, 224, 236, 266
- sciences: and the actual world, 143, 146–47, 184, 192; and decline of Christianity, 284; development and differentiation within, *vii–viii*, 13–14; and empiricism, 186, 277–78; interconnection among, 148, 190, 199, 247; and objectivity, 186, 190; and philosophy, 13–14, 148, 190, 199, 239, 247, 298; philosophy as, 13–14, 182–83; and universal validity, 14, 26, 144–45, 169, 186, 193, 256, 289–90, 298. *See also* human sciences; natural sciences
- secularism, 9, 34–36, 185–86, 220, 223, 298–99
- security, 10–11, 47, 71, 79, 159, 197
- self-awareness, 291
- self-development, 11, 60
- self-interest, 44
- self-reflection, 2, 4, 19, 49, 149, 182, 186, 238–39; and Schleiermacher, 306–7
- self-worth, 89
- Seneca, 41, 185
- sensations, 63–64, 69, 71–75, 206, 276
- sensualism, 25, 276, 277–78, 280, 288
- sentiment, human, 8, 100, 135. *See also* tragedy
- sex, 11, 76, 82, 93–94, 100, 113, 115, 116
- Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord, 26, 43, 44, 234, 287, 288, 289
- Shakespeare, William, 152, 225–26, 231, 304
- shame, 78, 83
- shared joy, 4–5, 83, 91, 99–100, 103
- skepticism, 10, 37, 99, 132, 134, 137, 147, 149, 156–58, 182, 185, 190, 198, 231, 251, 278, 313–14. *See also* doubt
- Skeptics, 185
- slavery, 114, 115–16, 132
- Smith, Adam, 3, 43, 44, 89, 94–95, 128, 195
- sociability, 4–5, 126–27

- social and cultural development: and adaptation, 130–31; and concept of good and evil, 123–25; drives and social structures, 113–15; epochs of moral culture, 41, 45, 82–83, 131–32; ethical incentives for, 125–31; ethics and study of, 45–48; and individual rights, 145–46; and kinship traditions, 118–19; and moral development, 114–19, 130–32; and political development, 145–46; and power, 112–13; “primitive” peoples as example of, 75, 78, 105, 115–20; and rational transformation, 145; and relationship of custom, justice, and law, 119–20; and religion, 120–23; and social hierarchy, 1, 35, 115–16, 118–19, 145, 280; and societal forces, 113–15; and solidarity, 118–19
- social ethics, 1–2, 7–10, 9, 29–30, 33, 46, 51, 61, 125; among “primitive” peoples, 117–18; and anthropology and, 29–30; and Bentham, 51–53; biological evolution and theory of, 46–48; biological theory of development, 46–47; factions in, 46–48; and general well-being, 111–13, 115; German theory of development, 46; Hegelian model, 2, 46; and Mill’s utilitarianism, 61; and moral dispositions, 111–15; and objectivity, 29; and practical reason, 125; and societal forces, 113–15; “uprightness” as social rather than private virtue, 7–8
- socialism, 1–2, 36, 47, 51, 60–63
- society: art, religion, and philosophy and structure of, 208–11; development of (*see* social and cultural development); and psychic structure, 208–9; uniformity of members of, 245. *See also* social and cultural development; social ethics
- solidarity, human, 4–8, 29, 88, 90–96, 91, 102–6, 108, 209, 245; and benevolence, 4–7, 93–94, 104–5; as ethical incentive, 5–6, 92–93, 129–30; and fellow-feeling, 5, 104–5, 245; and identity, 91–92; as instinctive, 4, 7; and kinship, 5, 26, 29, 88, 102, 114, 132, 289; and respect for the other, 103–4
- Soliloquies* (Schleiermacher), 309
- Solon, 181
- The Sorrows of Young Werther* (Goethe), 11, 158
- speculation, 11, 33, 39, 177, 200–201, 234, 236, 284, 312
- Speeches on Religion* (Schleiermacher), 304–7
- Spencer, Herbert, 34, 37, 47–48, 66
- Spener, Philipp Jakob, 157
- Spinoza, Baruch, 11, 14, 26, 266, 273, 287–88, 289, 291, 304; in Dilthey’s *Dream*, 166; and essence of philosophy, 179, 187, 223, 224, 231, 233–34, 236, 241; and ethics, 65, 92, 127; and Nietzsche, 153, 155
- spontaneity, 66, 68–70, 169, 256, 284, 289
- the state, 108, 127, 131, 132, 184, 238–39, 270, 312; role of, 44, 45
- Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle), 268
- stimuli and responses, 4, 75
- Stoics or Stoicism, 6, 14, 26, 41, 72–73, 82, 185, 202–3, 233–34, 241, 252–53; and Maeterlinck, 152; objective idealism and, 287–90
- Strauss, David Friedrich, 307
- subjectivity, 7, 29, 41, 44, 97, 157–59, 202, 208–9, 216, 223, 237, 240, 271, 274, 314. *See also* inner experience
- submission, 29, 129, 152, 208, 220, 263
- suffering, 5, 41, 57, 84, 93–94, 95, 99–102, 105, 224, 240–41, 310
- sympathy: and fellow-feeling, 127–28; as incentive, 3, 60–61, 90–93, 126–27 (*see also* fellow feeling); and love, 127–28; and moral judgment, 89; pity and tragic effect, 102–3; as “suffering with,” 5
- synthesis, moral synthetic claims, 94n9
- Systema Natura* (Linnaeus), 276, 280
- Systematic Philosophy*, 19–20
- System of Ethics* (Dilthey), 1, 9–10
- Tetens, Johannes Nikolaus, 85
- Thales, 199

- Theodicy* (Leibniz), 157  
theological world-view. *See* religious world-views  
Thrasymachus, 153  
tolerance of difference, 8–9  
Tolstoy, Leo, 37, 150, 152, 244  
*Torquato Tasso* (Goethe), 229  
tragedy, 5, 102–3, 226–27, 268  
transcendentalism: and idealism, 64–65; and religious world-view, 223–24  
transcendental philosophy, 2, 14, 25, 27–29, 41, 64–65, 187, 222–23, 230, 241, 280, 285–86, 291, 298–99, 303–7  
translation, *viii–ix, x*  
*The Treasure of the Humble* (Maeterlinck), 152  
*Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (Spinoza), 273  
Treitschke, Heinrich von, 166  
Trendelenberg, Friedrich Adolf, 11, 163  
truth, 15, 23, 37, 59, 104–6, 124–25, 152, 154, 180–81, 183–84; fidelity as obligation to the self, 128; inner experience as, 195; religion and theistic, 214–15, 223, 265, 283, 307–8, 312–13; as universal, 10, 27, 168–69, 177 (*see also* universal validity)  
truthfulness, 104–6, 124, 211, 242, 245  
Turgot, Anne Robert Jacques, 193  
“Types of World-View,” 18  
uncertainty, 34, 147, 178, 204, 212  
uniformity, 70, 86, 119, 176, 209, 216, 261, 290  
unity, 60, 63; and categorical imperative, 104; of consciousness, 28, 63; and cultural systems, 209–10; individual, 131; inner experience and establishment of, 43, 69–70, 215; Mill and doctrine of, 60; naturalism and psychic, 277; philosophy and unity of the sciences, 174; planlike unity of volitions, 74, 86, 105; in religious world-view, 201, 215, 218–20, 305, 308; social (*See* solidarity, human); synthetic principle of, 8–9, 134–35  
universality, 9, 13–14, 27, 101, 107, 129, 176, 179, 184, 186, 190, 194, 198, 304  
universal validity, 9–10, 14, 20, 156, 188, 262; and aesthetics, 109; and conflicting systems, 251–54; and historical consciousness, 20, 251–54, 272; and human sciences, 158–69, 175–76, 196; and the ideal, 26, 136, 285, 286, 289, 293; and life-experience, 215, 255–56, 259; and mathematics, 144–45; and metaphysical systems, 235–37, 269, 271–72; moral precepts as unconditional, 133–39; of objective causality, 64–65; and philosophical world-view, 231–37; and philosophy, 20, 168–69, 174, 178, 188–89, 192, 203–4, 207–8, 209, 211, 238–39, 246, 251–54, 256, 289–90; and positivism, 193–94, 196, 198; and principles of life-experience, 255–56; and relativism, 10, 253–54; and religion, 37–38, 215, 220, 251, 262, 307, 309; and rigor, 14, 17, 24, 133, 181, 186, 193, 236; and Schleiermacher, 305, 307, 309; and science, 14, 26, 144–45, 169, 193, 256, 289–90, 298; and world-view, 213–14, 258–59, 269  
uprightness, 7–8, 21, 97, 105–8, 128, 135  
Usener, Hermann, 311  
utilitarianism, 2–3; as compromise, 51–60; critiques of, 50, 61–63, 89–90, 92, 109–10; and economic systems, 61–62; and education as instrument, 52, 58, 60–61; and general well-being as the good, 47, 51–53, 56, 61–62, 115; and happiness as the good, 2–3, 27, 47, 51–53, 56, 57, 61–62; historical influences and rise of, 50–51; motivation in, 2–3, 60–61, 63; and pessimism, 57; and ranking of evils, 52; rebuttal of objections to, 58–60. *See also* Bentham, Jeremy; Mill, John Stuart  
*Utilitarianism* (Mill), 47



- validity: and probability, 278; and relativism, 277–78; and uniformity, 176, 206, 276 (*see also* universal validity)
- values, 24, 130–31; absolute, 46; commitment to, 7, 107–8; and cultural systems, 129; and the meaning of life, 130; and practical reason, 129
- Varieties of Religious Experience (James), 302
- Vedanta philosophy, 39, 221
- vengeance. *See* revenge
- Vincent of Beauvais, 193
- virtue, 4, 7–9, 83, 98–99, 123–26
- volition. *See* the will
- Volpato, Giovanni Antonio, 166
- Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet), 109, 145, 157, 253, 283
- wealth, 47, 62
- Weismann, August, 48
- well-being, general, 59, 60, 99, 115; and benevolence, 93–94, 138; and personal well-being, 61; quantification and measurement of, 51–54; and social development, 113–14; and socialism, 61–62; and society, 90; and utilitarian good, 47, 51–53, 56, 61–62
- well-being, individual, 47, 61, 89–90
- Weltanschauung und: Analyse des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation* (Dilthey), viii
- Wildenbruch, Ernst von, 164
- the will: and apperception, 73–74; and benevolence, 6–7, 8; and commitment to what is right (*see* commitment to what is right); and consistency, 6, 82, 86, 88–90, 118, 135; courage and willpower, 84–85; denial of, 100–102; and devotion, 87; and disposition, 87–89; and drives, 81–82; and feelings, 72–74, 84–85; heroic will, 82–83, 82–84, 85; incentives of, 7–8; and instinct, 72–74; manifestations of, 82, 103; and moral consciousness, 87; and perseverance, 82, 86; planlike unity of volitions, 86; and purpose and, 24, 70, 87; and supra-individual purpose, 87; three forms of willing, 73–74
- William of Orange, 48
- “will to power,” 10–11, 154, 269, 281
- wisdom, 13, 22, 181, 185
- Wisdom and Destiny* (Maeterlinck), 152
- women, role of, 8n, 115, 119, 127, 129, 136
- work, 85–86, 113–14; resolve of will required for, 85–86
- working class, 35, 116, 145
- world, external physical. *See* actual world
- The World as Will and Representation* (Schopenhauer), 97, 98, 100–101
- world-cognition, 16, 208, 222, 234–35, 238, 239
- world formation: reason as formative power, 25, 285; world-principle, 246
- world-negation, 39, 298–99
- world-pictures, formation of, 24, 49, 207, 212–13, 218, 258–59, 261, 262, 270
- world-principle, 246
- world-system, 219, 281
- world-views: and attitudes, 11, 18–19, 21, 24, 26, 193–94; concept of, 17; and conceptualization of philosophy, 16; conflict and competition among, 252, 260–62; cultural domains as context of, 262–63, 270; and essence of philosophy, 199, 211–14; as expressions of meaning, 212; and historical consciousness, 213, 272–73; historical development of, 261–62; as interpretations of reality, 212, 216, 222, 289; and life-conduct, 22, 38, 162, 228, 262, 286; and lived-experience, 21, 161–62, 211–12, 226–30, 232–43; in metaphysics, 269–74; and parallel philosophic systems, 133; and personality, 212; philosophy and theory of, 13; relationships among, 214–31; and scientific cognition, 26, 259–60; and structure of psychic life, 211–12, 261; types of, 11–13, 17,



- world-views (cont.)  
233–35, 261, 269–74; and values,  
258–59; world-picture formation,  
24, 49, 207, 212–13, 218, 258–59,  
261, 262, 270. *See also* idealism of  
freedom as world-view; naturalism  
as world-view; objective idealism as  
world-view; philosophical world-  
view; poetic world-view; religious  
world-views
- worship, 55, 119–20, 122–23, 218,  
257, 297, 298, 299–300n, 308
- Wundt, Wilhelm, 13, 64, 66, 74, 122
- Xenien* (Schiller), 102
- Xenophon, 287
- Yorck von Wartenburg, Paul, 163
- Zeitgeist (spirit of an age), 27