

Defining human sciences: Theodor Waitz's influence on Dilthey

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ABSTRACT

The work of Theodor Waitz is an important but hitherto unnoticed source of Dilthey's concept of 'human sciences' (*Geisteswissenschaften*). Waitz (1821–64) was an outstanding philosopher and psychologist who, in the late 1850s, devoted himself wholeheartedly to empirical anthropology. In this field Waitz distinguished himself for his defence of the unity of humankind against mainstream polygenic and racial doctrines. Waitz inspired Dilthey's articulation of psychology into two branches: the 'descriptive' one and the 'explanative' one. Even more remarkably, in a work reviewed by Dilthey in warmly favourable terms, Waitz explicitly mentioned and defined the 'sciences which treat of the spirit (*Geist*)'. Some of Dilthey's most interesting ideas are thus prefigured in Waitz's long underrated work.

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1. Introduction

Theodor Waitz is a German philosopher (1821–64) whose name is probably unfamiliar to most readers. However, his remarkable influence on Wilhelm Dilthey is a strong incentive to take an interest in his work.¹ Unfortunately, Waitz is never mentioned in Dilthey's highly influential *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (1883): perhaps for this reason, Dilthey's debt to him has been systematically ignored – or, at best, greatly underrated.² Nevertheless, this gap can be easily filled. Besides a favourable review of a writing of Waitz's, several respectful quotations scattered throughout many of Dilthey's writings, spanning over thirty years, prove that he was quite familiar with

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¹Theodor Waitz is not to be confused with the historian Georg Waitz (1813–86), Ranke's pupil, occasionally mentioned by Dilthey.

²Dilthey quotes Waitz twice in the preparatory materials for the planned second volume. See Dilthey, *Grundlegung*, 133 f., 141; the latter reference is included in the English translation: Dilthey, *Introduction*, 318. Partly due to academic reasons, these materials remained unpublished. See the editors' preface to Dilthey, *Grundlegung*, x–xi.

Waitz's ideas. Therewith Dilthey reveals his peculiar far-sightedness: he was among the few who fully appreciated Waitz's outstanding contributions to philosophy, psychology and anthropology, which went largely unnoticed in Germany at the time.

At a first approximation, Waitz's influence on Dilthey can be traced back to two main factors. First of all, Waitz subdivided psychology into the two branches of *descriptive* and *explanative* psychology, as Dilthey later did. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, Waitz singled out the sciences 'which treat of the spirit (*Geist*)', thus providing an early and contextually pertinent instance of the concept of *Geisteswissenschaften*. A closer look at Waitz's work will undoubtedly offer powerful insights into the historical roots of the concept of human sciences as it was developed by Dilthey.³

Determining Waitz's position in the philosophical landscape of his time is not necessarily unproblematic. He is usually associated with Herbartianism, yet this relation has to be clarified. Despite his general allegiance to a few basic tenets of Herbart's thought, Waitz admittedly dismissed many keystones of Herbartianism. It is particularly remarkable, in this context, that Waitz influenced Dilthey precisely when he distanced himself from Herbart. To a certain extent, Waitz can be considered a Neo-Aristotelian: that is, he shares much with one of Dilthey's teachers, Adolf Trendelenburg, who was among the most active promoters of a renaissance of the Stagirite's philosophy in nineteenth-century German thought.⁴ Moreover, Waitz proved his intellectual independence and scientific maturity with his work as an anthropologist, culminating in a multi-volumed *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*. In this field, Waitz distinguished himself for an innovative defence of the unity of humankind against mainstream polygenic and racial doctrines (Maigné, *Anthropologie de Theodor Waitz*). Despite the limited fortune of his work in Germany, Waitz influenced British anthropology considerably after the translation into English of the first volume of his *Anthropologie*, with the title *Introduction to Anthropology*. His demonstration of the unity of humankind was valued, among others, by no less than Charles Darwin, who repeatedly quoted Waitz in *The Descent of Man* for his convincing arguments against polygenism and as a source of empirical data.⁵

³A closer investigation of Dilthey's sources is in line with a recent plea for a 'new look' at Dilthey's work: Makkreel, *Introduction*, 20.

⁴Concerning Dilthey's debt to Trendelenburg, and *via* Trendelenburg to Aristotle, see Hartung, *Theorie der Wissenschaften*, 305 and *passim*. Another important source of Dilthey's rebuttal of positivism was Lotze: see Woodward, *Hermann Lotze*, 280.

⁵Darwin (*The Descent of Man*, 226) writes: '[T]he most weighty of all the arguments against treating the races of man as distinct species, is that they graduate into each other, independently in many cases, as far as we can judge, of their having intercrossed'. And in the footnote: 'See a good discussion on this subject in Waitz, 'Introduction to Anthropology', Engl. trans. 1862 [1863], 198–208, 227'. Several other references to Waitz occur in the book.

2. Waitz's life and career

Born in Gotha in 1821, twelve years before Dilthey (1833–1911), Theodor Waitz belonged to the same generation as Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–94) and Rudolph Hermann Lotze (1817–81). Waitz's most noteworthy teacher was Moritz Wilhelm Drobisch, an independent representative of the Herbartian school whom he followed in Leipzig for one year.⁶ In 1844, with a Latin dissertation concerning chapter 10 of Aristotle's *On Interpretation*, Waitz obtained the *venia legendi* at the University of Marburg, where he would spend the rest of his professional life. His first remarkable – indeed memorable – work is a critical edition of the Greek text of Aristotle's whole *Organon*, supplemented by a Latin commentary. This monumental edition, accomplished by Waitz at age 23 together with his dissertation, is a master-work of nineteenth-century philology. Unconditionally praising it, the celebrated historian of Ancient Philosophy Eduard Zeller mentions that even Hermann Bonitz, the editor of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, would later include Waitz's exemplary work among his models (Zeller, *Theodor Waitz*, 366). Two years later, along with the second volume of *Organon*, Waitz published his first textbook on psychology (Waitz, *Grundlegung der Psychologie*).

Appointed extraordinary professor of Philosophy in 1848, Waitz subsequently wrote a second, two-volume work on psychology (Waitz, *Lehrbuch der Psychologie*), three relevant articles on the same subject (see below), and a handbook of pedagogy (Waitz, *Allgemeine Pädagogik*). Carl Ludwig, the celebrated physiologist, became one of his best friends; yet academic life in Marburg had much disappointment in store for Waitz, whose intellectual brilliance aroused the suspicion of the small-minded political authorities of Electoral Hesse. Uninvolved in the 1848 upheavals, Waitz was criticized for not having distanced himself from them explicitly enough. Denied a promotion to full professor, Waitz was then removed from the commission selecting the high-school teachers, a post assigned to a newly arrived, confessionally orthodox *Ordinarius* of theology (Zeller, *Theodor Waitz*, 368–9).

Waitz reacted to these oppressive circumstances with a dramatic change in his research plans. His commitment to pedagogy being clearly discouraged, Waitz turned to a new field, almost completely neglected in Germany at the time: anthropology. Among the reasons for this rather unpredictable choice, one should mention Waitz's intellectual curiosity, together with his propensity for scrupulous research, but also his willingness to refute the widespread polygenic – often blatantly racist – theses. As an anthropologist, Waitz made 'the first large-scale systematic effort to establish something now taken for granted, namely that humanity is one' (Jahoda, *Waitz*, 176).

⁶For biographical data see Zeller, *Theodor Waitz*; Gerland, *Waitz*; in English, Mark, *Anthropology*.

Waitz died of typhus in 1864, aged forty-three, contracted in Munich during a research stay. This left his projected six-volume *Anthropologie der Naturvölker* incomplete. The geographer Georg Gerland then resumed the work, relying upon work materials left by Waitz for the fifth volume, and autonomously completing the sixth. With his extended review of Waitz's book (Gerland, 'Psychologische Anthropologie'), published in the first issue of the official journal of the 'psychology of the peoples', Gerland also linked Waitz's researches to the *Völkerpsychologie* carried out by Moritz Lazarus and Heymann Steinthal.⁷

3. Descriptive and explanative psychology

Introducing the *Organon* edition, Waitz colourfully depicts the miserable state of philosophy:

In the present age, philosophy has been exposed to such a danger that it looked as if we heard Aristotle himself urge: 'protect the republic from harm!' Some philosophers, indeed, practiced this discipline so cunningly that – deceived by their dreams – they unblushingly eluded not merely people but ultimately truth itself, to follow their vain hopes instead. Thus, it is a good sign that the study of Aristotle recently began to be reinstated.⁸

(Waitz, *Organon*, iii)

Waitz praises Aristotle's philosophy, in which 'each part is always linked to another, and all of them appear appropriate and connected to one another'. The core of this pronouncement is a commitment to a certain idea of science, whose origin is individuated in Aristotle and which is at odds with idealism – a fatal threat to philosophy. A few years later, Waitz duly applied these principles in his report on the state of psychology, a science which he considered of strategic importance to overcome the above mentioned menace threatening philosophy.

In a series of three essays published in 1852–53, Waitz interestingly indulges in polemic considerations that are merely hinted at in his volume-length psychologies (Waitz, *Lehrbuch der Psychologie*, v). In the first two essays, Waitz denounces the shortcomings of the awkward psychological systems of the Schellingians and Hegelians, overtly driven by speculative principles and interests. In the third one, he considers the Herbartians, to whom

⁷On the relationship between *Völkerpsychologie* and Dilthey, see Lessing, *Dilthey und Lazarus*; Feest, *Hypotheses*, 51–2.

⁸*Philosophiam vidimus nostra aetate in tantum discrimen adductam, ut ipsum Aristotelem clamantem audire videremur "ne quid detrimenti caperet respublica": non defuerunt enim qui in philosophia excolenda ita versati sint, ut somniis delectati non solum homines, sed etiam ipsam veritatem spe inani eludere non erubescerent. Quare pro bono habendum est omine, quod nostro tempore Aristotelis studium instaurari coepit*. The sentence in double inverted commas stems from the decree of the Roman Senate issued to allow dictatorship in the imminence of fatal dangers for the State. That was, for instance, the case of Catalina's conspiracy, famously foiled by Cicero.

he is customarily assimilated. Herbart, as is well known, aimed at grounding psychology upon three pedestals: experience, metaphysics, and mathematics (Herbart, *Psychologie als Wissenschaft*). Experience (he means 'internal' experience, or introspection) reveals the internal stage upon which the ideas (*Vorstellungen*) make their way into consciousness, according to the degree of their intensity, mutual 'contrast', etc.; metaphysics sets the most fundamental of all psychological hypotheses – the unity of the soul – defending it against materialism; finally, mathematics accounts for the scientific character of psychological laws.

Waitz undoubtedly keeps a low profile in his criticism of the Herbartian school. To begin with, he unconditionally backs Herbart's proposition that one should rigorously stick to experience. As to metaphysics, Waitz notes indeed that Herbart's psychology is basically inconsistent with his own metaphysical tenets. Surprisingly, however, this for Waitz is a strength, rather than a weakness (Waitz, *Realistische Psychologie*, 657).⁹ In the end, this inconsistency makes Herbart more independent of metaphysics than any other psychologist of the time. Finally, Waitz touches upon the role of mathematics. Herbart's pupils, he notes, have different opinions on the matter: whereas Drobisch glorifies mathematics, Gustav Schilling and Wilhelm F. Volkmann consider it widely dispensable (Waitz, *Realistische Psychologie*, 658). Notwithstanding his training with Drobisch, Waitz himself always prevented mathematics from seeping into his psychology. On the whole, Waitz praises Herbart for having taken seriously the frequently evoked *scientific* character of the discipline: he shaped a 'realistic' and scientific (i.e. '*naturwissenschaftlich*') psychology (Waitz, *Realistische Psychologie*, 658–9).

One reason for Waitz to keep a certain distance from Herbart and the Herbartians was their tendency to overestimate the role of cognitive acts (*Vorstellungen*) in psychology. Waitz rather insisted on the systematic emergence of emotional acts from the interplay of representations (Waitz, *Lehrbuch der Psychologie*, 291–3; see Gebhard, *Waitzs Grundanschauung*, xxxv). For this reason, he has been given a preeminent role among the founders of a true 'affective science' (Romand, *Waitz's Theory*). In sum, Herbart's psychology is considerably better than any idealistic pseudo-system of psychology; yet it needs a deep reform, consisting of two main steps: 1) metaphysics and mathematics should be kept aside from psychology, which rests upon experience, and 2) Herbart's mechanistic, basically intellectualistic account of the human mind should be overcome.

Remarkably, Waitz singles out two aspects within Herbart's psychology: a *descriptive* one and an *explanative* one. Herbart's above mentioned three pedestals are re-organized and differently grouped: the descriptive part

⁹Waitz's estrangement from Herbart and Drobisch on metaphysics was already noted by Stout, *The Psychological Work*, 354; 363.

corresponds to experience, while the explanative part is made up of mathematics and metaphysics together. It is highly interesting to consider Waitz's attitude towards this bipartite arrangement. As we have seen, Waitz strongly recommends to build upon experience, and dismisses the typically Herbartian (i.e. metaphysical and mathematical) 'explanative' tools. However, this does not amount to a rebuttal of *any* explanative psychology altogether.

Rather, Waitz first suggests to narrow the gap between these two departments of psychology, and to think of them in terms of *division of labour*. In his account, two things are required from sound scientific investigations: '1) special knowledge of the appearances themselves, considered in the whole extension and multiplicity of the empirical material; 2) inquiry into the conditions of their realization in general, and of their connection with each other' (Waitz, *Naturphilosophische Psychologie*, 874). This subdivision, which 'must be drawn' since 'the very beginning' of any scientific inquiry, is sometimes referred to, he goes on, as that between 'cognizance and knowledge, or *description and explanation*'.¹⁰ At work here is the plain principle of division of labour, which is 'widely adopted in the natural sciences', whereas it 'less clearly' admitted among 'the historical ones'. Division of labour does not simply produce an advantageous relief from fatigue: in science no less than in everyday life, its application often decides the final success of the entire enterprise. Waitz clearly distinguishes here the natural sciences from the historical ones, despite stating that they are both supposed to apply the 'simple doctrine' of division of labour.

Interestingly, Waitz traces the historical roots of this subdivision back to '[...] empirical and rational psychology in Kant and in his forerunners: the former discipline investigates appearances as such, the latter guarantees an insight into what lies behind the appearances, i.e. into their metaphysical explanative causes [...]' (Waitz, *Realistische Psychologie*, 661). Among Kant's forerunners, Christian Wolff was the first to split psychology into two parts – empirical and rational – in analogy with the empirical and the speculative part of physics. Within Wolff's system, empirical psychology should be placed immediately before rational psychology, as a sort of observational introduction. However, with a telling move, in his Halle lectures Wolff subverted this order. He cut off empirical psychology from its rational counterpart and placed it immediately after ontology (*metaphysica generalis*), in order to use it as a first, introductory step to his *metaphysica specialis*. Despite Wolff's own suggestion that this rearrangement mainly served to soothe the 'vexation' (*Verdruß*) provoked by ontology (Wolff, *Ausführliche Nachricht*,

¹⁰Waitz, *Naturphilosophische Psychologie*, 874: emphasis added. The original reads '*Kenntnis und Erkenntnis*' and '*Beschreibung und Erklärung*'.

232), he clearly made an effort to render empirical and rational psychology relatively independent of each other.

4. Dilthey on Waitz's psychology

In *Ideas for a Descriptive and Analytic Psychology* of 1894, Dilthey adopts Waitz's distinction between descriptive and explanative psychology, together with his historical reconstruction. With the bipartition of *psychologia empirica* and *psychologia rationalis*, Dilthey notes, Wolff was the first to introduce this arrangement (Dilthey, *Ideas*, 129). Dilthey obviously knows how this story went on: in the Transcendental Dialectic of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant famously demonstrated that Wolff's rational psychology should be totally dismissed because of its irremediably fallacious presuppositions. What becomes, then, of the dichotomy under consideration? For Dilthey, the permanent and 'valuable core of Wolff's theory' is the very distinction 'between a descriptive and an explanative approach', along with the insight that the former is 'the experiential basis and means of control' of the latter' (Dilthey, *Ideas*, 129). In Kant's view, after all, empirical psychology should be banned from metaphysics but does not simply disappear (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 700 [B 876]). Kant considered empirical psychology too important to be dropped, or to let it fall prey to materialistic tendencies: to avoid that, in the namesake lectures given since 1773, and in his 1798 book, he developed his anthropology (Kant, *Pragmatic Anthropology*; Kant, *Lectures on Anthropology*). Conceived as a 'pragmatic' discipline, Kant's anthropology incorporates empirical psychology and reconsiders its achievements from the 'cosmic' point of view of philosophy (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 694 [A 838/B866]). Besides, Dilthey was among the first scholars who correctly interpreted Kant's anthropology within that framework (Dilthey, *Brief*, 23), against coeval commentators who – misled by merely formal similarities – insisted on its kinship with the Wolffian 'scholastic' empirical psychology.

At this point in his *Ideas*, Dilthey introduces Theodor Waitz, who came next and developed 'the modern sense of this distinction' (Dilthey, *Ideas*, 129). Waitz is credited with two merits. First, with his 1849 *Psychologie als Naturwissenschaft*, he refounded the endangered explanative psychology. Waitz, in fact, was 'the first in Germany to found an explanative psychology on the model of modern natural science', that is, he recognized that 'explanative elements' have a 'hypothetical character'. Secondly, Waitz 'supplemented this explanative psychology with a plan for a descriptive psychology' (Dilthey, *Ideas*, 130). Dilthey dwells on the methods and tasks of Waitz's 'descriptive psychology' (description, analysis, classification, comparison and the theory of evolution) and on his 'explanative or natural scientific psychology', which elaborates the materials 'that descriptive psychology furnishes' (study of the laws of the psyche, and of its relations to the organism and

the external world). Finally, Dilthey approvingly quotes Waitz's diagnosis that 'the clarity of the scientific approach depends essentially on the sharpness and purity with which one carries out and adheres to this division of tasks'.¹¹

Given Waitz's marginal role within mainstream histories of psychology, Dilthey's claim that he was the first to develop a sound *explanative psychology* in Germany may sound exaggerated or biased. No doubt that scholars like Herbart, Lotze, Fechner, Helmholtz or Wundt are far more frequently listed among the fathers of a new psychology. Yet Dilthey's reconstruction does make sense, at least from his perspective. Despite its merits, Herbart's psychology still suffered from obsolete metaphysical presuppositions. Within subsequent 'explanative' psychologies, however, the substitute for Herbart's metaphysics was quite often *physiology*. In total disagreement with this perspective, Dilthey vehemently denounces the 'bankruptcy' (Dilthey, *Ideas*, 141) of any explanative psychology based on physiology, and its consequent irrelevance – worse: its dangerousness – for the human sciences (Dilthey, *Ideas*, 163–9).

Bypassing both metaphysics and physiology, Waitz's method of integrating psychological observation with *hypotheses* concerning the nature of mental facts represents, in Dilthey's view, the most promising and balanced approach to explanative psychology. Tellingly, Dilthey depicts Waitz as a 'bold and steadfast discoverer prematurely interrupted in his labors. Otherwise he might have attained, alongside Lotze and Fechner, a quite different place in the history of modern psychology than what has thus far been allotted to him' (Dilthey, *Ideas*, 131). Having given Waitz full credit for his crucial advancements, Dilthey makes it clear that we should 'go beyond Waitz by further recasting the relations between descriptive and explanative psychology'. More specifically, he insists that Waitz's psychology failed to consider the 'totality of human nature' and to grasp the 'full content of the psychic nexus' (Dilthey, *Ideas*, 131). However, Dilthey claims, these developments can be achieved by going further down the way traced by Waitz himself.

Last but not least, Dilthey also praises Waitz for his improvement of *descriptive* psychology: with his *Anthropologie*, he took a step in the direction of a welcome widening of the empirical basis of psychology. Waitz's 'great work on the anthropology of primitive peoples was meant to be one of several works on descriptive psychology' – and, as Dilthey notes, it was projected 'without even casting a glance back at the manuals of the Herbartian School' (Dilthey, *Ideas*, 130, 131). Thus, Dilthey reveals the bond between the two apparently unrelated parts of Waitz's intellectual activity, providing a convincing interpretation of the relation between psychology and anthropology within his work.

¹¹Dilthey, *Ideas*, 130; quoting from Waitz, *Naturphilosophische Psychologie*, 874.

5. Turning to anthropology

Let us now consider the second phase of Waitz's intellectual activity. In the face of the ambiguity of the term, a preliminary clarification of Waitz's concept of 'anthropology' is needed. Commentators individuate two main tendencies in nineteenth-century German anthropology: whereas Adolf Bastian's ethnology and Rudolf Virchow's physical anthropology followed the methods of natural sciences, Waitz inaugurated anthropology as *Geisteswissenschaft* (Bunzl, *Franz Boas*, 43).¹² This description captures an essential aspect, but requires further qualification. Introducing his new subject, Waitz explains:

Led to it by psychological studies, I had from the beginning no hope of arriving at a perfect solution of a question which it were desirable should be treated by the united powers of the zoologist and the geologist, the linguist, historian, and psychologist. But as such a happy combination may be long in occurring, there remained but the alternative either to leave the question in abeyance, or to try its solution with insufficient means.

(Waitz, *Introduction*, 1)

Waitz makes sure to stress the backwards state of the art in his home country. To some extent, he notes, anthropology has fallen into discredit in Germany because of the 'romantic' treatises on the subject, inspired by Schelling's speculative-styled philosophy of nature. But there is more: '[s]cientific problems, which seem to lie between or embrace the several branches into which we are accustomed to divide human knowledge, are, amongst us, not favoured by fate'. The reason is manifest: '[i]f formerly philosophy took charge of such orphan problems, they are at present no longer considered, since philosophy has gone out of fashion; and consequently in our universities there is neither a faculty nor a professor who takes charge of them' (Waitz, *Introduction*, 1).

There is no doubt that the 'orphan problem' in question is the nature of the human being. Its clarification involves both natural and historical sciences, and cannot be successfully attained ignoring either side of the question. For a long time, Waitz notes, three main unilateral opinions have dominated the field: the purely naturalistic, the theological and the idealistic-philosophical. 'The first places man altogether in nature; the second does so in part; the third places him entirely *above* nature' (Waitz, *Introduction*, 4). None of them has primacy over the others. Waitz goes on:

In opposition thereto, it is requisite to declare in this place, once for all, that Anthropology is to be considered as an empirical science, because its subject, *Man*, is only known to us empirically, and hence it is requisite to study man

¹²See also Gingrich (*The German-Speaking Countries*, 80–1), who shows how Waitz shaped a non-racial paradigm in cultural anthropology and influenced Bastian, Virchow, and even Franz Boas.

by the same method which is applied to the investigation of all other natural objects.

(Waitz, *Introduction*, 5)

The plea for the empirical method, which we already encountered in Waitz's psychology, does not imply any overestimation of the physical aspect of the human being. On the contrary, Waitz recommends resorting to the whole experience, encompassing the psychological and socio-historical facets as well.

In order to manage the ensuing complexity, Waitz insists on a clear subdivision of tasks between natural sciences and the human sciences:

[i]n attempting to limit the sphere of Anthropology, and to assign to this science a proper and well-defined position among other allied branches of human knowledge, our attention is first directed to two departments of study, differing greatly in matter and method, but which, nevertheless, in spite of their external dissimilarity, possess this in common, – that they both make Man the exclusive subject of their consideration, in the investigation of his nature; we allude to the Anatomy, Physiology and Psychology of man, on one part; and to the History of Civilization *together with all its affiliated sciences*, on the other.¹³

Unfortunately, the italicized words of the last quotation have been omitted from the English translation of 1863. This infelicitous slip prevents English readers from grasping a part of the argumentation, which is essential to the present context. We are faced with two 'departments' (*Fächer*) of science, the latter being represented by the history of civilization together with all its affiliated sciences. The role of historical knowledge within Waitz's anthropology is thus quite relevant. It leads the group that we would call *Geisteswissenschaften* – and that, as I shall show, he named so himself. At the core of Waitz's history of civilization stands the *individual* person: opposing romantic ideas about *Volksgeist*, he insists that 'there is no agent, real and substantive, which can be considered as the spirit of a people or of humanity; individuals alone are real' (Waitz, *Introduction*, 324; see Petermann, *Real sind die Individuen*). Dilthey would later agree with this plea for the crucial role of individuality.

Upon closer investigation, then, anthropology is assigned the task of *mediating* between physical and historical knowledge about the human being. Taking both aspects into account, anthropology acquires 'a better right to its name, inasmuch as the nature of man mainly rests upon this, – that he steps out of his individual life, and enters into a social connection with others, by whom he himself arrives at a higher and truly human development' (Waitz, *Introduction*, 8). Affirming once again his historically oriented

¹³Waitz, *Introduction*, 5–6: italicized words added. Cf. the German original (Waitz, *Anthropologie*, 4): '[...] wir meinen die Anatomie, Physiologie und Psychologie des Menschen auf der einen, die Culturgeschichte mit allen sich ihr anschließenden Wissenschaften auf der anderen Seite'.

approach, Waitz writes that the human being, 'appears in history neither as a living body [...] nor as a spiritual being [...], but as a combination of physical and psychical life'; accordingly, the human being 'must be considered as a whole in the reciprocal action of his physical organization and his psychical life; for it is only as a whole that he appears as the elementary basis of history' (Waitz, *Introduction*, 9).

Thus, anthropology is not fully conceived of by Waitz as *Geisteswissenschaft*. Despite his rather broad conception of anthropology, however, he clearly privileges *psychological* motives when it comes to the definition of the thorniest issues in anthropology, like the capital problem of the unity of humankind. Whether humankind admits of different species (races) or amounts to one single progeny is a question bearing massive consequences: in the former case, Waitz believes, a natural aristocracy would be established, and the other races could be 'used like domestic animals, or may, according to circumstances, be fattened or used for psychological or other experiments without any compunction' (Waitz, *Introduction*, 13). Sadly enough, this was no mere rhetoric. In the U.S., in France, in Britain and in Germany alike, anthropologists mainly defended polygenism and sometimes overtly endorsed racial discrimination. In the U.S., where the question of slavery was a hot topic in the imminence of the Civil War, many scientists called for a radical disjunction between the human races, which was sometimes outspokenly instrumental to slavery (Mark, *Anthropology*, iv).

Waitz insists that the question of the unity of mankind cannot be solved on purely physical grounds. Psychological consideration play a decisive role: 'with regard to man, the mere physical organization and its mutability is insufficient to enable us to decide the question of the unity of the species, since the character of humanity consists, first and foremost, in the specific development of psychical life, and only secondarily in the physical organism as the embodiment of this spiritual essence' (Waitz, *Introduction*, 15). Seen from this vantage point, the (psychological) unity of humankind is not necessarily identical with its (biological) descent from a single pair of ancestors. Waitz definitely endorses the view that the similarities among human beings outweigh all differences, attesting to the unity of humankind against any counterargument.

It is remarkable that Waitz ventured to defend the unity of humankind and to assign more importance to psychic life in an epoch when anthropology mostly followed the opposite path. Frequently, anthropologists fell prey to a despicable mensural mania and devoted themselves to massive measurements of average bone-lengths and cranium capacities among the different human 'races' (Krüger, *Anthropometrie*). Supporters of this deplorable kind of anthropology accused opponents of downgrading their 'purely scientific' methodology in favour of a suspiciously confessional doctrine; but since Darwinism also implied monogenism, albeit on a totally different basis, they were

frequently sceptical of Darwin's ideas as well (Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*).

In an infamous pamphlet entitled *On the Negro's Place in Nature* (1863), James Hunt – the head of the London Anthropological Society – did not shy away from voicing his disgust for the 'gigantic imposture known by the name of Negro Emancipation' and from stigmatizing Waitz's allegedly misplaced engagement against slavery (Hunt, *On The Negro's Place*, viii, 2). That the English translation of Waitz's book was promoted by the London Society directed by Hunt is surely ironic, but instructive (Mark, *Anthropology*, iv). Waitz provided a balanced defence of monogenism on a rational, non-confessional basis, but also in non-Darwinian terms (Waitz's *Anthropologie* and Darwin's *Origin* both appeared in 1859). From his provincial Marburg, unaffected by the incandescent polemics that troubled many Victorian anthropologists, he thereby effectively favoured the affirmation of monogenism among them.

At any rate, Waitz is adamant in claiming the importance of the unity of mankind both for science in general, and for a group of sciences in particular: 'The question of the unity of the species and the nature of man specially belongs to those branches of science which treat of the spirit (*Geist*)'. The 1863 English translation, which reads 'branches of knowledge which treat of the intellect' (Waitz, *Introduction*, 12) is dually misleading: Waitz chooses the words 'sciences' and 'spirit' (*Geist*). Speaking of '*Wissenschaften, welche das Gebiet des Geistes behandeln*' (Waitz, *Anthropology*, 13) he manifestly intends the group of *Geisteswissenschaften*, which represents one of the two main departments of sciences in general. Dilthey, who obviously read the German text and who, before 1883, often privileged the phrase '*Wissenschaften des Geistes*', may have found inspiration both in Waitz's ideas and in his virtually identical terminology.

Dilthey became acquainted with Waitz's writings on anthropology quite early. His 1863 review of *Anthropologie der Naturvölker* opens with the following words: 'The human spirit (*Geist*) is the noblest object of philosophy, whose most vital and intuitive form, and the closest to concrete sciences, is anthropology. It embraces all natural sciences, geography, history, and every branch of philosophy' (Dilthey, *Die Anthropologie von Waitz*, 373).¹⁴ However, anthropology falls short of this broad definition whenever it is dealt with in the wake of some recent fashion. Waitz's book stands above the multitude of fanciful 'spiritualistic' anthropologies inspired by Schelling, and of the opposite 'dismissive view[s] of man', that is, the materialistic approaches to the subject (Dilthey, *Die Anthropologie von Waitz*, 374).

¹⁴In his review, Dilthey touches exclusively upon the themes of Waitz's first volume. He also announces (Dilthey, *Die Anthropologie von Waitz*, 375) a forthcoming discussion of the second and third volumes (the second part of which was then still to be published at the time), which never followed.

Admiring Waitz's ability to manage, in his 'Marburg isolation', a huge amount of data about the peoples from all over the world, Dilthey insists on the demonstration of the unity of the species provided in the reviewed book and adheres to Waitz's sharp criticism of any injection of prejudice or practical interests into scientific research. Waitz's idea of the human species is thankfully not aprioristic (like e.g. Rousseau's 'perfectibility') but rather the result of a thorough analysis, whose results are summarized by Dilthey into four characteristics shared by every human group: (1) adaptation; (2) language; (3) right and property; (4) religious thoughts (Dilthey, *Die Anthropologie von Waitz*, 376–7). It is important to stress Dilthey's acceptance of Waitz's demonstration of the unity of humankind. He agrees both with Waitz's methodology and with his results: humankind is one, and its unity is quintessentially a matter of psychological traits, rather than of physical ones (Dilthey, *Die Anthropologie von Waitz*, 377).

Dilthey's interest in empirical researches on anthropology was not ephemeral. It is perhaps appropriate to recall here his parallel appreciation of the ethnological studies of Adolf Bastian, whom he occasionally portrays in romantic, idealized terms: a young traveller who boldly rides an elephant across East Asia pensively immersed in reading the Church Fathers (Dilthey, *Bastians Reisen*, 287; see San Lio, *Dilthey e Bastian*). However, Dilthey always distinguished ethnology – a discipline concerning 'the natural articulation of the human race' and its distribution 'over the face of the earth in light of its physical characteristics' (Dilthey, *Introduction*, 91) – from anthropology, which is closely related to psychology and to the human sciences (see below, § 6). For this reason, anthropology first 'explicates the universal human type', and ethnology then proceeds to fulfil its 'more narrow', comparative scope.

As we have seen, Dilthey regards Waitz's anthropology as a monumental contribution to *descriptive psychology*. Once he went so far as to invoke Waitz's empirical results within a discussion of the universality of Kantian morality: Kant, he noted, deduced 'moral conscience' metaphysically, whereas Waitz's research allow us to draw reliable conclusions from empirical evidence (Dilthey, *Versuch einer Analyse*, 6). Anthropology borrows from both natural and human sciences, but its final outcome is a powerful widening of the empirical basis of our knowledge of the human *Geist*, including its allegedly 'elementary' manifestations, which can serve to assess philosophical and practical questions. Neither Europeans nor Americans should consider other peoples at their disposal, nor is the scientist allowed to ignore them in his analysis of the human dispositions and spirit. Dilthey definitely shares Waitz's stance concerning the relevance of the unity of humankind for those sciences 'which treat of the spirit (*Geist*)'.

6. Conclusion: critical issues

In sum, Waitz's influence on Dilthey can be traced back to four main points: (1) his clear formulation of the *difference* between descriptive and explanative psychology; (2) his pioneering development of a sound *explanative* psychology based on hypotheses; (3) his contribution to *descriptive* psychology with his large-scale anthropological study of the primitive mentality; (4) his *distinction* between the natural sciences and 'the branches of science which treat of the spirit (*Geist*)', a group in which the 'History of Civilization together with all its affiliated sciences' plays a fundamental role. In the light of these elements, there can be little doubt that Waitz's psychological and anthropological writings stand among the most important sources for Dilthey. Within Waitz's work, psychology and anthropology are closely related with each other (i), and with historical knowledge (ii). It is only in the light of this powerful link that the meaning and character of the human sciences can be properly understood (iii). As a conclusion, I shall now discuss these three points in more detail.

As far as the relationship of psychology with anthropology is concerned (i), Dilthey's attitude has raised discussions among commentators (Sombart, *Beiträge*; Ineichen, *Dilthey*; Marquard, *Leben und leben lassen*; Orth, *Einleitung*). Occasionally, in fact, Dilthey uses the phrase 'anthropology and psychology' as a hendiadys, meaning 'anthropological psychology' (or *vice versa*). Already in 1865 Dilthey hails this two-headed discipline, – 'psychology and anthropology' – and calls it the most fundamental of all human sciences.¹⁵ In *Introduction to the Human Sciences* this belief is reiterated (Dilthey, *Introduction*, 83–4). Dilthey affirms that 'the science of anthropology and psychology provides the basis of all knowledge of historical life', adding that 'this science' (in the singular form) is not concerned with man 'immersed in himself' but rather strives only 'to correct' the subjective type that the historian has in mind, in order to 'render it fruitful'. This goal can be attained by an extension of the traditional methodology of 'anthropology and psychology': instead of focussing 'on uniformities of human life, it must uncover typical differences in that life'. This progress will turn descriptive psychology into a science of the *individual*, a true 'anthropology and psychology' (Dilthey, *Introduction*, 84). Clearly, Dilthey enriches Waitz's ideas by insisting on further elements, such as the analyses of the irremediably individual and unique character that emerges, for example, from the work of biographers: 'one can describe the true procedure of the biographer as the application of the science of anthropology and psychology to the problem of bringing to life and making intelligible the nature, development, and destiny of a life-unit' (Dilthey, *Introduction*, 85–6).

¹⁵ 'Allgemeine grundlegende Wissenschaft des Geistes': Dilthey, *Grundriß der Logik*, 26. For a contextual analysis, see Lessing, *Von der Realpsychologie zur Strukturtheorie*, 70.

We can now turn to the relation of these twin disciplines with historical knowledge (ii). As previously shown, Waitz's book on anthropology avowedly supports historical knowledge. Investigating the so-called *Naturvölker*, Waitz explains, does *not* amount to abandoning the realm of history in favour of 'bare nature'. Historians are not allowed to get rid of the 'peoples in the state of nature' with the trivial argument that, by definition, these peoples have undergone no historical development yet. In Waitz's words, we 'should have but a one-sided conception of man, if our notion of him were only derived from the history of civilization without taking into consideration the requisite supplement arising from the study of uncivilized nations, and of man in primitive state' (Waitz, *Introduction*, 8–9). People in the state of nature *do* matter for historians too, simply because of their different development and because of their non-historicity, which calls for an explanation (Waitz, *Über die Einheit*, 291). Thus, Waitz's anthropology belies any abrupt contraposition of anthropology vs. history as two allegedly clear-cut alternatives, the former dominated by the insistence on human being as a *natural*, the latter as a *socio-historical* product (Marquard, *Anthropologie, philosophische*). Probably, this rigid contraposition was among the factors standing in the way of a full appreciation of Waitz's importance in the development of Dilthey's ideas. Rather than opposing it, 'psychology and anthropology' essentially comply with historical knowledge of the individual insofar as they are dealt with as 'descriptive', empirical and unprejudiced disciplines.

Interweaving psychology and anthropology with historical knowledge, Waitz laid the foundations for the definition of human sciences, in Dilthey's specific meaning (iii). This claim, however, needs to be circumstantiated in the light of the critical discussion of the origin of *Geisteswissenschaften*. Commentators rightly insist on Dilthey's overall independence from Hegel's concept of *Geist* (Makkreel, *Dilthey*, 42), even though some have remarked a certain similarity to the Hegelian 'objective spirit' (Rickmann, *Dilthey*, 60–3; Holborn, *Dilthey*, 98; Kornberg, *Dilthey*, 314). Occasionally, it has been implied that Dilthey may have borrowed the *term* from Jacob Schiel's German translation, published in 1862–63, of John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic*, where the 'moral sciences' of Mill's sixth book are rendered with *Geisteswissenschaften*.¹⁶ On closer analysis, two principally different issues are conflated here: the first *occurrence* of the term within German language, and Dilthey's *source*. The former question, more philological than philosophical, is settled: Schiel's translation of Mill was not the first occurrence of the term, as Rothacker (*Logik und Systematik*, 6) wrongly suggested, since '*Geisteswissenschaften*' is attested in German much earlier (Diemer, *Beiträge*, 187;

¹⁶A partial German translation appeared in 1849 with a different title (Mill, *Die induktive Logik*), yet it did not include the sixth book on 'moral sciences', and therefore has no relevance here. The 1849 abridged translation had been reportedly approved by J.S. Mill himself (Schiel, *Vorwort*, xiv).

Diemer, *Geisteswissenschaften*, 211). Throughout the nineteenth century, the term recurred both in the singular and in the plural, often as synonymous with idealism (Makkreel, *Emergence*, 295–6). The latter issue – that of Dilthey's sources – is indeed thornier. Dilthey does remark that Mill's *System* – in Schiel's version – boosted the diffusion of the term *Geisteswissenschaften* (Dilthey, *Introduction*, 57). However, despite his altogether 'ambivalent attitude' towards Mill (Lessing, *Empirie*, 13), Dilthey defended a radically different epistemological stance. Disappointingly, in fact, Mill basically applies the same method of the natural sciences to the moral ones.¹⁷ By contrast, Waitz's work did not merely offer an occasional, abrupt and even misguided reference to the 'sciences of the spirit': rather, Dilthey considered his book 'exemplary' from a methodological point of view (Dilthey, *Einleitungen zu Untersuchungen*, 51).

As we have seen, the classification of the sciences elaborated by Waitz anticipates Dilthey's own scheme, where descriptive psychology grants fundamental support to all human sciences. Therefore, when it comes to the identification of Dilthey's sources, Waitz becomes an unavoidable term of reference. Of course, there would be no point in arguing that Dilthey was inspired only by Waitz. Dilthey's vast culture and lively intellectual curiosity had made him acquainted with a variety of ideas and prolific insights about many subjects, including the one under discussion. Still, given his demonstrably strong influence and the actual similarity of their stances, the hitherto forgotten Waitz should be considered among the most important sources of Dilthey's concept of the human sciences.

There is no doubt, however, that Dilthey went consciously further than that. I am not thinking of Dilthey's later insight that hermeneutics, rather than psychology, should be considered the basis for the human sciences. Even earlier, when he still assigned this task to psychology, Dilthey related it to the study of individuality more decidedly than Waitz did.¹⁸ Two main innovations aided this achievement: on the one side, the individuation of a new descriptive 'psychological taxonomy in which the total content of psychic life can find room', encompassing the 'powerful reality of life that the great writers and poets have always striven to grasp'; on the other, the development of a credible explanative psychology capable of breaking down the hugely 'complex social and historical reality' into its authentic components, that is, into the psychic link between the people who live within it: a task, Dilthey adds, of great importance 'for those concerned with the system of the human sciences' (Dilthey, *Ideas*, 132).

¹⁷See Mill, *System der Logik*, 446–7 and Dilthey, *Introduction*, 157–8. Interestingly, Dilthey associates here Mill and Buckle, whose methodology is elsewhere explicitly opposed to Waitz's (Dilthey, *Einleitungen zu Untersuchungen*, 51).

¹⁸See Dilthey, *Contributions*. On the development of Dilthey's idea of psychology after 1894, see Makkreel, *Dilthey*, 250–4, 341–5.

Besides, one should keep in mind that, as far as psychology is concerned, Waitz and Dilthey faced two different situations. Waitz's main opponents were the idealist 'psychologists' following Schelling and Hegel; Dilthey struggled against an experimentally well-developed mechanist 'explanative' psychology. Still, they shared the need to have an unprejudiced descriptive psychology prior to any other development. An interesting comparison of their points of view is offered by Hermann Ebbinghaus in his polemic review of Dilthey's *Ideas*. Ebbinghaus notes that Waitz supported 'descriptive' psychology without excluding, however, a truly scientific psychology that could benefit from it. Dilthey, he notes, sometimes endorses the same view; at other times, he expresses scepticism towards any kind of scientific psychology (Ebbinghaus, *Über erklärende*, 171).

Though Dilthey unquestionably relied upon many other sources, it is justified to affirm that he was proceeding further on a path paved some forty years earlier by Theodor Waitz. Waitz's work is surely unique: multifaceted, somehow inconstant and uncustomary and yet coherent, far-sighted, scientifically and morally enlightened. It stands at the crossroad of many different and variously nuanced stances of nineteenth-century thought. From that age, to an extent that has been hitherto underestimated, Waitz effectively influenced subsequent thought – and, as remarked by Dilthey, could have been even more influential under more favourable biographical circumstances.

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