

## PART III. METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

### INTRODUCTION

Arts, crafts, and most human activities always have more or less well developed methods. Experience teaches us that following such methods, developed in the course of experience, leads to desired results. There is no need for further critical reflections. But science as a human activity is different. The goal is a knowledge that has—at least for all co-researchers following the same method—the character of an intersubjectively recognized objectivity, i.e., it can be reached as the same again in parallel procedures. That this is the case can only be shown in critical theoretical reflections. Such reflections occur late in the development of a discipline. They reflect upon activities that are already practiced in a community of researchers. The name for such reflections is methodology. The task of methodology is not only positive; it has its negative aspects as well. There is, on the one hand, the task of refuting all kinds of skeptical doubts, but also, on the other hand, of determining the scope and the limits of a method of its claim for objectivity. A further point is essential. The objects of methodology are pre-given in already functioning research procedures. But this also means that successful research can go on without a perfect methodology. Pre-given methodologies may have serious difficulties that need clarification; however, positive research will not stop and wait for perfect solutions.

There have been two viewpoints governing the methodological debate of the so-called human sciences and history. Most widespread is the positivistic thesis that there is only one scientific method, and this is the method of the natural sciences. The human sciences are sciences only to the extent to which such methods are applicable. The rest is poetry. The other side has claimed since Dilthey that the human sciences have their own methodological principles. Not causal laws but understanding is essential for the human sciences. Seen from a phenomenological point of view, the difference has even more substantial reasons. Natural sciences require abstractive reductions. What is bracketed in such reductions is the lifeworld, and with it, the interest in different cultural contexts. The objects of the human sciences, however, are precisely the lifeworld and different cultural contexts of the lifeworld in past and present. Part II attempted to show that understanding has its foundations in the general structures of the lifeworld. Apart from the so-called systematic human sciences, e.g., sociology and economics, the main problem concerns the methodological principles that can serve as warrants for some kind of objectivity in the philological-historical human sciences. Dilthey was convinced that the methodologists of the nineteenth century had shown “beyond any doubt” that there are such warrants. There have also been some attempts to develop a methodology for archaeological research. They have not been very successful, but it is obvious that there will be methodological principles for archaeology, and not all of them are covered by the methodological

principles of philological-historical research. Texts and artifacts are both cultural objects, but they are different.

Furthermore, not only the discussions of the twentieth century but also the disputes already occurring among the hermeneutical methodologists in the nineteenth century indicate that there are serious problems and serious doubts in the realm of the methodological principles of philological-historical research. The task of chapter 6 will be to list such problems with the aid of the material of part I.

To prove that there are methodological warrants of objectivity is a task for general methodology and is not oriented toward the specific problems of the methods of special disciplines. The crucial problem of the methodology of the natural sciences in general is the nature of experiment and its power to falsify hypotheses. There are, of course, further methodological problems in different disciplines such as physics, chemistry, biology, and others. They all depend on the different character of the material, the specific objects of the different branches of the natural sciences. But such questions are more or less questions of the proper application of the general principles. Correspondingly, the methodological hermeneuticists of the nineteenth century distinguished between general and special hermeneutics. The various branches of special hermeneutics are interested in the application of the general principles in different concrete fields, i.e., different cultures and different meta-genres such as theology, law, historical reports, and genres in different written traditions. But the crucial problems of methodology are the problems of general hermeneutics.

The hermeneuticists of the nineteenth century recognized three such principles that can serve as warrants of objectivity and methodologically guided falsifications; the first principle is a version of the levels of hermeneutics, while the two other principles are the two canons of Schleiermacher. Two preliminary remarks are necessary. (1) The problems of the so-called second canon will be considered first, in chapter 6 and a solution will be offered in chapter 7. The problems of the first canon are discussed after the problems of the second canon in chapter 6, and a solution for these problems will be discussed in chapter 8. There are two reasons for this procedure. (a) The key problem of the second canon is the problem of the whole and the parts, and this problem was already discussed in connection with considerations about words and language in Classical Antiquity, while the first prefigurations of the first canon occur only much later with Flacius and his contemporaries. (b) Chapter 7 will show that the second canon taken by itself does not include proper falsification criteria. Chapter 8 will prove that the first canon offers such criteria and that they can then also be applied to the second canon. (2) Following the hermeneuticists of the nineteenth century, the problems of the theory of the levels of hermeneutics will initially be discussed separately in chapter 6. It will be shown that all of these problems can be solved in the framework of new formulations for the two canons.

Chapter 6 is, in short, a list of problems, while chapters 7 and 8 use phenomenological methods to solve these problems. An extension of the phenomenological theory of wholes and parts will be used in the analysis of the alleged circularity of the second canon. The problems of the levels will be solved in the framework of the second canon with phenomenological descriptions of the activities of pre-methodical reading, methodical reading, and methodologically guided interpretations. Chapter 8

will rely on an analysis of subjective and intersubjective time-consciousness. In the end, the main problem will be how such structures can be represented in the context of texts. The problem not only of the analogies, but also of the differences between dialogues and text interpretations—a problem mentioned at the end of chapter 6—will be dealt with in this context.

## Chapter 6

### The Unsolved Problems of Methodological Hermeneutics

#### §20. Levels and rules

The grammarians and philologists of the age of Hellenism created their own written genre and its tradition. It is the tradition of books on grammar in the broad sense of the ancients, which includes commentaries; interpretations of texts; critiques of texts; reports on poets, philosophers; and famous people; and other types of reports (§2, pp. 15ff) useful for the interpretation of texts. It is, in short, *the genre of texts about texts*, i.e., the genre of the written speeches of the scholars about written speeches, their genres, their tradition, and so on. Today the use of the term “literary” has the connotation of talking about poetic literature. But such a restriction is neither acceptable from the viewpoint of the original meaning of the adjective “literary” nor useful for the purposes of a general theory of understanding. The restriction is the product of the at least partially mindless separation of departments in universities of the twentieth century. A written tradition will be understood in the following chapters in a broad sense, i.e., the tradition represented by all texts, even including mail from the Internal Revenue Service. The emergence of a literary genre representing such traditions—i.e., the texts produced by grammarians and philologists of late Classical Antiquity and today by scholars belonging to the departments of the college of the humanities (or liberal arts)—is an ideal possibility in all literary cultures. It is possible because the ideal possibility of reflection, especially in reflections on the past—i.e., the possibility of remembering the past, and finally of remembering and reflecting on the past present in fixed life expressions—is an ideal possibility belonging to the essence of intentionality as such.

Western *philologia* and Western humanism, as a discipline and as an art creating its own genre, have characteristics and features belonging only to the Western European tradition. A neutral term translating the old term *philologos* (§2, pp. 13ff) and applicable to all periods and cultures with a written tradition is “scholar.” It is used for persons having a profound and widespread knowledge of the texts of their own literary tradition as a whole, and who are guided in their research by certain rules recognized by the members of the profession. Thus, as already mentioned, the term “scholarship” can be used as a neutral term applicable to all highly developed literary traditions. If a profession is guided by a set of recognized rules, it can be called a