

What is Hermeneutics

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Abstract:

The word hermeneutics explicitly emerges in the 17th century. In its initial phase, hermeneutics was deemed and defined to be the science or art of interpretation. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, hermeneutics was deemed to be a theory committed to laying out the rules governing the science of interpretation. The basic function of hermeneutics was to give methodological directions to interpretative sciences. The present paper will bring out the origin of Hermeneutics and will highlight the different meaning of the word thought out different historical context.

Keywords: Hermeneutics, interpretation, Herms

The etymological origin of the word “hermeneutics” is identified with “Hermes”, the mythological Greek deity whose role was that of a messenger of the gods or mediator between gods (Henry Virkler, 2007, p.15). Besides being mediator between the gods themselves and gods and humanity, Hermes led souls to the underworld upon death, is the inventor of language and speech, is an interpreter, a liar, a thief and a trickster (Grondin, Jean, 1994, p. 2). These multiple roles make Hermes an ideal representative of Hermeneutics, for, as Socrates noted, words have the power to reveal or conceal, thus promoting the message either in an ambiguous way or in a clear way (Couzens-Hoy, David 1981, p.10-20). The Greek view of language as consisting of signs that could lead to truth or falsehood defines the very essence of Hermes, who is said to relish the uneasiness of the messaged.

Early use of the word Hermeneutics places it within the boundaries of the sacred. The divine message is only understood on its own terms with uncertainty regarding its truth or falsehood. This ambiguity of message is irrationality, a sort of madness inflicted upon the receiver. Only one who possesses a rational method of interpretation, and early hermeneuticist could divine the truth or falsehood of a statement. Hermes is “the messenger from the gods to humans”. His messages are not merely information; they require interpretation as well. Therefore the science of “explaining and understanding” is also called hermeneutics. The appropriate encyclopedia entry for the term hermeneutics identifies humanistic Biblical interpretation as the origin of

hermeneutics. The hermeneutic understanding derives “from the openness, ambiguity and principle of incompleteness of understanding, and especially from the fact, that texts or utterances always display more layers of meaning than can be seen at first sight” (op.cit, 1994, p. 22). The utterances are always a translation of souls, thoughts into externalized language. A sentence thus mediates between the thoughts and the Greek conception or discourse reaches its apex into Stoic distinction between uttered logos and inward logos (*ibid.*, p. 21). The first concerns only with expressions, whereas the second concerns inner thought. The Herminie is simply the loges comprehended in words. Interpreted the spoken word involutes proceeding towards the inward logos. Hermeneutics is a process of mediating meaning that proceeds from the outside to the inside (*ibid.*, p.21).

Greeks also talked of Prophets being the persons receiving divine messages or interpreting the divine messages revealed on others. They also mediated between gods and men. Plato also refers to poets as Hermes. He also described *rhaphsods* (who perform the poet’s works) as interpreters of interpreters. Just like the Prophets, the *hermenes* seem to mediate both between God and man as well as between people and the mediators. Thus, *hermene* is the mediator of something mediated a function that can go on indefinitely, since there is always more to say that can be precisely captured in words. This etymological connection, however, despite it’s plausibility, is widely contested by contemporary philologists. Anyways, there is no universal consensus with regard to the etymological root word of hermeneutics. At best, there is enough room for open mindedness, till competent scholars in the field of hermeneutics can arrive at an etymological consensus in this regard (*ibid.*, p. 21).

The function or the purpose of hermeneutics is to make meaning of a text intelligible; to enquire into the tacit and make it explicit. Contemporary scholars of hermeneutics define it to be the science of interpretation. Broadly speaking, hermeneutics can be deemed to be expressive, explicative, explanatory, communicative and translative in nature. As late as seventeenth century, hermeneutics had no name. Contemporary historians of hermeneutics are tracing it back from such disciplines as literary criticism, exegesis and philology. During the

seventeenth century an embryonic universal hermeneutics was developed along the rationalist lines by such authors as J.C Dannhauer, J.F. Meier and J.H. Charladies. These general theories of interpretation broke through the limits of the regional hermeneutics, incorporated into the Manuals that were specially designed to help in illustrating Scriptures or classical authors. Consequently, the development of the first supra-regional art of interpretation cannot be justly ascribed to Schleiermacher.

The word hermeneutics explicitly emerges in the 17th century. In its initial phase, hermeneutics was deemed and defined to be the science or art of interpretation. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, hermeneutics was deemed to be a theory committed to laying out the rules governing the science of interpretation. The basic function of hermeneutics was to give methodological directions to interpretative sciences. The purpose of hermeneutics was to control the widespread arbitrariness in interpretation. Hermeneutics for long maintained status of an auxiliary discipline that practiced the interpretation of texts or signs. Thus, theology, philosophy, jurisprudence and history etc. cultivated their separate hermeneutical procedures or guidelines with a view to meeting out the requirements of their respective fields of interpretation (Kurt MuellerVollmer, 1988, pp.3-5).

In the second half of nineteenth century hermeneutics has become the cynosure of literary critics, sociologists, historians, anthropologists, theologians and philosophers. Such a warm appropriation of hermeneutics was directed or inspired by the emergence of certain powerful intellectual currents. For example, Freudian theory of human behavior advanced the view that human cultural expressions are manifestation of unconscious and instinctual drives. Karl Marx had already advanced the thesis that a given cultural superstructure is determined by economic substructure and our philosophical and cultural beliefs and values essentially reflect our class interests. Contemporary philosophers of language have claimed that theories of reality within a given culture are actually a function of the linguistic structures superimposed or experience. Many contemporary thinkers have advanced the view that human beings just can't operate behind or beyond the meditation of culture and language. They are simply the products of the given culture and language. Our

cultures and languages provide each community a context of interpretation within which all judgements take place. Human beings are basically interpretative and it is impossible to go beyond our linguistic or cultural matrices. Human consciousness is situated in history and cultural conditioning and cannot transcend this situatedness (Christine Jourdan and Kevin Tuite, 2006, p 52-5).

Contemporary interest in hermeneutics, however, should not be construed as a necessary forward movement towards the achievement of a universal foundational discipline for the cultural sciences. Contemporary intellectuals, thinkers, scholars or theorists hardly agree on the nature, function and methodology of hermeneutics. The social and cultural sciences are deeply riven with interminable disputes and are polarized or fractured into irreconcilably competing paradigms of interpretation. For example, behaviorists, cognitivists, psychologists, Freudians, Gestalts, Functionalists, structuralists, methodologists, and Marxists have fundamental differences with regard to their method and mode of interpretation of individual and collective human behavior or for that matter linguistic expressions and textual formulations of varying hues and colours. These disciplines are rooted in incommensurable perspectives with regard to objects such as a text, a linguistic expression or human nature itself. Paradoxically, these various incommensurable perspectives that disciplines may adopt concerning the same object raise profound questions about the nature of human conceptualization, objectivity, understanding, explanation, and translation may also inspire interest in hermeneutics in our times. In point of fact, in all ages across history, diversity and conflict of interpretations have provided the stimulus and the urgency for acquiring understanding and agreement amongst compelling intellectual paradigms. For example, the rise of modern hermeneutics has itself been closely connected with the post-Reformation debates among Protestants and Catholics over the interpretation of Scripture.

The basic contention of philosophical hermeneutics is that the very human understanding of any type presupposes a cultural background and a situational context. The very description and explanation of actions and events require some background or the other. One of the crucial tasks of hermeneutics is to clearly access the role of background conditions in any process of understanding. Human beings have to negotiate

assumptions, presuppositions, prejudices and horizons. According to hermeneuticists, we do not have an unmediated access to human phenomena. As against phenomenologists who often suppose direct access to phenomena, hermeneuticists underscore that any kind of presuppositionless access to phenomena is impossible of attainment. Any interpretation has got to be an exercise in application as well as refinement. The interpretation can turn out to be either additive or subtractive. Often an interpretation can be elaborate or entail a cluster of hypotheses with a view to clarifying the complexities of a text or vicissitudes of a historical era under consideration. The confrontation of an interpreter's horizons with any unique literary or historical text can not only lead to refinement of his perspective but can yield new pearls of wisdom from the text as well (Crist J.D. & Tanner C.A. 2003, pp. 202–5).

While historical and cultural determination of our understanding and interpretation has been the mainstay of hermeneuticists, some hermeneuticists do opine that human nature transcends historical eras and cultural backgrounds. Thus human beings can achieve mutual understanding even while they live across different historical eras and cultural settings. Our rootedness in our history and culture sufficiently equips us to understand other historical eras and cultural frameworks. While for some hermeneuticists our deep-seated historical assumptions and cultural predilections too powerfully infest us with prejudices to appreciate the beauty and glory of other historical and cultural backgrounds; some hermeneuticists emphasize that our very rootedness is a precondition for cross-historical and cross-cultural understandings. Whether our historical and cultural rootedness is a precondition for understanding the alien modes of thought and action, or this very rootedness is a roadblock to the very possibility of understanding others is a hermeneutical debate of the fundamental significance and has the potential of ironing out various avoidable blind concerns of global civilizational evolution.

One of the abiding concerns of the hermeneuticists is to bring out the essential differences between the social or human sciences and natural sciences. They underline that natural scientific methodology has to be essentially different from social scientific methodology. For example, the goal of the human actions is beyond

the ken of casual analysis. Natural scientists deem their standpoint to be atemporal and ahistorical. On the other hand, hermeneuticists and social scientists cannot afford to embrace the possibility of an absolute standpoint. The social theorists attempt to illuminate or illustrate unique actions. Natural scientists seek to explain repeatable typical events. While natural scientists seek to explain an event or a phenomenon, the task of the social scientists is to understand the dynamics of the social actions and cultural matrices. The hermeneuticists, while bringing out the essential methodological incommensurability between social investigation and natural explanation, not only checkmate populating reductionistic exercises, but also contribute to the qualitative understanding of the social behavior and semantic enrichment of our cultural achievements.

Another most crucial factor in the emergence of modern hermeneutics is the discovery of certain constants so essential to human understanding. For example, “temporarily” and “historicality” may be said to be two such constants. In their ongoing life-world human beings live and experience life temporarily. The successes and failures of the past, the challenges of the present and the goals of the future are some of the characterizing feature of a person’s life-world. Life as it offers“ unusual challenges, unacceptable transactions, unwelcome fluctuations and complex incursions. Humans as temporal beings while facing the ongoing challenges redesign their future aspirations and rethink the relevance of their past. Secondly, man lives historically. He is situated in an era governed by its specific assumptions, presuppositions and predilections. Consequently, these assumptions and presuppositions determine our approach to other historical eras and cultures. Hermeneutics brings out the implications of such constants for human understanding, for they orientate us to specific angles of interpreting human actions, expressions, and artifacts as well as historical events. Our temporality and historicality certainly and surely orientate our perspective of interpretation. These ineliminable conscious or unconscious directions or controls of our interpretative viewpoints need to be factored into any mature and judicious account of hermeneutics. As its self-critical best, hermeneutics discovers what is commonly known as hermeneutical circle. It underscores that we cannot grasp parts without grasping the whole of the text and we cannot grasp whole of the text unless we grasp its“ parts. Thus we need to be constantly engaged with the whole and parts of the given texts. Such a dynamic and constant revisiting of the whole as well as parts of a

given text may lead to ever-increasing refinement and sophistication in the ongoing process of interpretation (Dowling M., 2004. pp. 30–9).

The ongoing process of comprehending relationship among the parts and wholes though circular yet contributes to the sharpening of our understanding. The hermeneutical circle highlights the possible merits of the new or alternative interpretative hypothesis which may better account for the text-elements. The circle persuades us to a revision of interpretations in the face of an alternative hypothesis which may be more encompassing and enlightening. Accordingly, the hermeneutical circle enlightens us on the suitability, acceptability, methodological status and hermeneutical resilience of a given hypothesis. Such an open-ended ongoing self-authentication of an interpretative hypothesis powerfully guards us against any possible complacency or somnolence. It may be compared and contrasted with the other possible or alternative hypotheses. Every interpretation can not be deemed to be equally relevant or significant, for every interpretation does not stand equally to serious tests of evidence. Every interpretation is not equally considerable for every interpretation does not do equal justice to the texts under consideration, every interpretation is not equally misleading and equally illuminating.

Hermeneutics is deeply rooted in the traditions, cultures and religions. We must trace its roots to the exegetical contributions of early Christian fathers. We must be receptive to theories of interpretation originating in early Protestant theology. The hermeneutics of the Enlightenment apart from the contributions of Schleiermacher, Droysen, and Dithery may also be taken into account.

Historically, the scholarly study of religion as well as the rise of modern hermeneutics is closely associated with the religious tradition of liberal Protestantism. Indeed, liberal Protestantism might be said to have emerged through a series of bitter hermeneutical debates concerning the application of historical-critical methods to the Christian Bible. Liberal Protestantism resolved the issue by defining the essence of religious faith as experience rather than doctrine or historical belief. (Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem, 1991, pp. 263-280). The problems of hermeneutics are more unavoidable in the scholarly study of religion than in many other

academic disciplines, for reasons both conceptual and historical. Conceptually; religions themselves may be regarded as communities of interpretation, so that the scholarly study of them takes the form of an interpretation of an interpretation. Since the scholarly interpretation of religion most often rest on different assumptions than the religious interpretation, the religious participant frequently regards the scholar's interpretation as reductionistic and alien. Hence a perennial debate among scholars of religion regarding the degree to which the scholarly interpretation of religion must do justice to the believer's own point of view (Arvind Sharma, 2001, p. 6). Diversity and conflict of interpretations have provided the stimulus and the urgency for acquiring understanding and agreement. Dilthey pointed out, for example, how the rise of modern hermeneutics was itself closely connected with the post-Reformation debates among Protestants and Catholics over the interpretation of Scripture, just as Schleiermacher's own attempt to establish a universal hermeneutics was admittedly prompted by his attempt to overcome some doctrinal misunderstandings. The incommensurate perspectives that disciplines may adopt concerning the same object, such as a text, language, or human nature, raise profound questions about the nature of human conceptualization, objectivity understanding, explanation and translation. Hence it is not surprising that for many intellectuals, hermeneutics is increasingly coming to occupy the role that epistemology did a since Rene Descartes and John Locke (Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva, 2007 p 25-30). Hermeneutics in the Middle Ages witnessed the proliferation of non-literal interpretations of the Bible. Christian commentators could read Old Testament narratives simultaneously as prefiguration of analogous New Testament episodes, as symbolic lessons about Church institutions and current teachings and as personally applicable allegories of the spirit; in each case, the meaning of the sign was constrained by inputting a particular intention of the Bible, such as teachings, morality; but these interpretative strategies were posited by the religious tradition rather than suggested by a preliminary reading of the text. (J.C Mallery, 1986, p.3). Martin Luther is commonly considered responsible for discovering or revitalizing hermeneutics. The principle of Sola Scripture does indeed suggest the existence of a fully worked out hermeneutics. Luther himself worked out exegesis and delivered lectures without, sponsoring any hermeneutical theory. The modern hermeneutics was inspired by the doctrinal debates and theological disagreements unleashed by the Reformation within

Christianity pioneered by Luther and others in sixteenth century. Since interpretation is fundamental to all the intellectual disciplines-to the natural sciences as well as the humanities-one might have expected hermeneutics to have arisen earlier in Western culture than it did. Although there were many controversies within Judaism and Christianity concerning the interpretation of the Bible-just as pre-Reformation humanists were concerned with the exegesis of the texts of antiquity it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that modern hermeneutics was born. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is generally acknowledged to be the founder of modern hermeneutics, but it was Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) who first dreamed of developing a foundational discipline for the cultural sciences that would render their conclusions as objective and as valid as those of the natural sciences (Harvey, Van 2005, pp 201-5). Schleiermacher, the founder of hermeneutics as well as of liberal Protestantism, was particularly influential in articulating the outlines of modern philosophy of religion. He regarded the various religions as culturally conditioned forms of an underlying and universal religious sensibility. Thus he not only moved the locus of faith from belief to experience, but also laid the foundations for a descriptive science of religion. Schleiermacher's hermeneutical theory is organized around two foci: (1) the grammatical understanding of any characteristic modes of expression and the linguistic forms of the culture in which a given author lived and which conditioned that author's thinking and (2) the psychological understanding of the unique subjectivity or creative genius of the author. Both these foci reflect Schleiermacher's own indebtedness to Romantic thinkers who had argued that any individual's mode of expression, however unique, necessarily reflects a wider cultural sensibility or spirit. A correct interpretation requires not only an understanding of the cultural and historical context of an author, but a grasp of the author's unique subjectivity. This can be accomplished only by an "act of divination" an intuitive leap by which the interpreter "relives" the consciousness of the author. By seeing this consciousness in the larger cultural context the interpreter comes to understand the author better than the author understands himself or herself. So far as the interpretation of religion is concerned, Schleiermacher's influence is to be found less in his hermeneutical theory which is dominated by the problem of recovering the author's meaning, than in his views that (1) religiosity is an essential and a priori aspect of human nature and (2) language is the medium of all

understanding (Kurt Mueller-Vollmer 2006, pp. 72-86). The first assumption has elicited many attempts to develop what Paul Ricoeur has called “regional hermeneutics”: rules governing the interpretation of religious expressions are unique and autonomous type. One of the earliest and most influential of these attempts was Rudolf Otto's analysis of the "numinous" in his famous book, *The Idea of the Holy* (op.cit , 2001, p. 192). Dilthey's hermeneutics quite obviously rests on a sharp distinction between the methods of the cultural sciences and those of the natural sciences. The distinctive method of the cultural sciences is understanding, whereas that of the natural sciences is explanation, The natural scientist explains events by employing universal laws, whereas the historian neither discovers nor employs such laws but, rather, seeks to understand the actions of agents by discovering their intentions, purposes, wishes and character traits. Such action is intelligible because human actions, in contrast to natural events, have an “inside” that we can understand because we too are persons. Understanding, then, is the discovery of the “I” in the “Thou”, and it is possible because of a shared universal human nature. Insofar as Dilthey's hermeneutics rests on understanding as a distinctive act that requires an imaginative identification with past persons, one can discern the influence of Schleiermacher. But Dilthey developed an elaborate and complex theory of experience and its relationship to various forms of expression that constitutes nothing less than the philosophical anthropology and epistemology he thought necessary to establish hermeneutics as a foundational discipline of the cultural sciences.

Dilthey developed a sophisticated analysis of the temporality of experience and the way in which human experience is bound together by units of meaning. These meanings become objectified in human expressions. He held that our knowledge of our own experience as well as of the experience of others is available only through these objectified expressions. Consequently, we come to know human nature through historical knowledge that is through understanding the varieties of objectified forms in which humanity has expressed its own experience of life. Ultimately, history is the variety of ways in which human life has expressed itself over time. Indeed, we can grasp our own possibilities only through historical reconstruction and understanding. Through understanding of the life-expressions of past persons, we come to understand the humanity of which we are a part.

The attempt to construct a universal hermeneutics for the cultural sciences inevitably leads the theorist to propound some theory of human nature and its expressions. Having uncovered the radically different forms of consciousness and belief exemplified in history, for example, Dilthey then thought it important to develop a psychology that would account for this diversity of worldviews while affirming the „unity of human nature“ that made it possible for an interpreter in one culture to understand a person in a strange and different culture. But, it may be asked how can the appeal to some abstract principle such as the 'unity of human nature'⁵ aid an interpreter who is actually confronted with cultural expressions so different and strange that a sympathetic act of understanding seems impossible? Dilthey never solved this problem. (op.cit 2006, p, 148-152).

In recent years, however powerful intellectual currents have brought hermeneutics once again to the fore so that interest in it has burgeoned among literary critics, sociologists, historians, anthropologists, theologians, philosophers, and students of religion. These currents include (1) new theories of human behavior in the psychological and social sciences in which human cultural expressions are regarded as manifestations of unconscious and instinctual drives or as reflections of class interests; (2) developments in epistemology and the philosophy of language that have led to claims that what counts as reality for a given culture is a function of the linguistic structures superimposed on experience; and (3) the arguments advanced by philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger that all human experience is basically interpretative, and that all judgments take place within a context of interpretation mediated by culture and language behind which it is impossible to go. Underlying all these currents is the assumption that human consciousness is situated in history and cannot transcend it - an assumption that raises important questions concerning the role of cultural conditioning in any understanding.

Wittgenstein's way of thinking about hermeneutics, is not a characteristic way of looking at hermeneutics as it involves no theory of hermeneutics. This way of thinking about hermeneutics is not interested in establishing rules for the interpretation of texts or in providing foundations for cultural sciences. This approach aims at the analysis, clarification and if possible resolution of conceptual issues pertaining to explanation and interpretation

in their various contexts. It tries to establish the logical connection between meaning, truth and validity. It ascertains what is meant by rationality and irrationality. It tries to discover numberless normative and non normative uses of language. This way of looking at issues has a direct bearing on the problems pertaining to hermeneutics.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1898-1951), for example, would raise such question as “what does it meant to understand?” Wittgenstein argued that the function of a philosopher is to analyses carefully the concrete uses in specific contexts of words like „understanding“. For Wittgenstein, it was philosophically and methodologically imprudent to attempt to provide a general theory of understanding. Such theories bewitch our minds and such a bewitchment may itself become a source of most philosophical difficulties and illusions. Our job rather is to look at how such words are actually employed and embedded in concrete practices.

For Wittgenstein as for Heidegger explanation and interpretation make sense only within a horizon of presuppositions, practices, and assumptions that our culture mediates to us. Like Heidegger, Wittgenstein also saw the human situation itself to be hermeneutical. However, as against Heidegger, he does not think that such a foundational feature of human existence can justify the construction of ontology. Rather, such a primordial condition must orientate us towards the plain task of exploration of the concrete forms of discourse or language games in which human beings engage. Such an exploration can hopefully lead us to the dissolution of philosophical perplexities.

The later Wittgenstein, advanced a radical critique of objectivist and essentialist philosophical theories. In his later phase, he came to realize the inadequacy of his earlier understanding of language. It was a mistake to assume that description of the facts was the most fundamental or foundational function of language. The later Wittgenstein came to realize that besides being used descriptively, language can be used exhortatively, metaphorically, allegorically, parabolically and in many countless ways. For example, illustratively speaking,

promising, asking, commanding, thinking, play-acting, story-telling and praying can be cited as some of the other functions of language. Words derive their meaning from their use, and each word has a meaning in one context which can change if used in another context. Therefore, he recommended that instead of engaging in conceptual or theoretical analysis, philosophers should engage in careful description of the countless uses of the language. While using language, we cannot help operating in and through language-games which provide us our understanding of the world.

One cannot go beyond the language-games as it is impossible to arrive at truth defined as correspondence with or picturisation of reality. The meaning or the truth operates intra-linguistically. We do not have a yard stick of external reality with reference to which we could understand the meaning or truth. It is the context of the multiple uses of language which determines the meaning or truth of various propositions for various purposes. Ideas and language are not independent, but essentially inseparable. An idea is made up of the very stuff of words. Just as we can't separate mind from its organic embodiment, so it is impossible to separate thought from language. Therefore it is impossible to arrive at objective, universal, transcendental truth. There is no final objective and universal account of reality. Any philosopher searching for the same is suffering from conceptual illusions and linguistic confusions. In order to relieve him from conceptual illusions and linguistic confusions he needs to be illuminated on multiple functions, purposes and uses of language. This is the most appropriate method of liberating the philosopher from his confusions and misconceptions (Ambrose, Alice., 1972, pp. 287–318).

The post Kantian philosophy branched off into various directions and orientations. One of the clear, distinct, itself to the discovery and appropriation of complexities of experiences categorical philosophical directions is the emergence of a distinctive philosophical movement namely hermeneutics, in the late nineteenth century. The specific assignments of hermeneutics are; clarification in the processes of interpretation, relation of interpretation to scientific explanation, articulation of the progress of validation of an interpretation and explication of the logic governing the understanding and interpretation of human actions and artifacts such as

art-works, literature, history, rituals, symbols, law etc. Hermeneutics underlines the richness and complexity of experiences. It examines the significance of the historicity and temporality of human understanding. It explores the hermeneutical circle bringing out the merits and demerits from such a situation thereof. It brings out crucial differences between natural and social fields of investigation. One of its most crucial and significant moments is to bring out and highlight the background assumptions that operate in nearly all forms of understanding.

Like phenomenologists and existentialists, hermeneuticists explore the richness of lived experiences. They underline the categorical distinction between theory and experience. They view theory as abstract, but they suggest that an experience is always subtler than any one of its theoretical appropriations. While the experience is dynamic, theory is static. A theory emerges by recourse to simplification and abstraction; there is an intentional oversight of the unique features of an action or event. No theoretical perspective however sophisticated can ever reconstitute the multidimensional complexity of a given experience.

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