THE META-PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DILTHEY'S WORLD-VIEWS

WILHELM DILTHEY'S THEORY OF WORLD-VIEWS AND ITS META-PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE

By AUSTIN NOONAN, B.A.

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Lay Abstract

In this thesis, I aim to clarify how philosophy should attune itself to historical knowledge by analyzing Wilhelm Dilthey's theory of world-views. More specifically, I aim to investigate the utility of Dilthey's theory as a response to history's insight into the contingent nature of philosophy. I argue that Dilthey's view of philosophy as a natural extension of our psychological need for stability is capable of accounting for the contingency and plurality of philosophical systems without sacrificing philosophy's claim to a unique and universal essence. To support my argument, I use Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* as a characteristic case of philosophy failing to incorporate historical knowledge and show that Dilthey's theory can overcome this failure through its account of reflective historical consciousness.

Abstract

In this thesis, I argue for the viability of Wilhelm Dilthey's theory of world-views as a form of meta-philosophy by defending its response to the challenge of history that arose in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century. I show that Dilthey's account of philosophy as a universal activity that is rooted in our psychological need for stability successfully integrates history's insight into the contingency and plurality of philosophical systems without abandoning their truthfulness or tradition. To demonstrate and qualify the success of Dilthey's theory, I apply it to Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* which I argue fails to sufficiently address its own historical contingency when it presents its account of and response to the problem of absurdity as a descriptive fact of critical consciousness. I show that Dilthey's concept of reflective historical consciousness has the necessary resources to overcome Camus' lack of reflection upon historical contingency. I argue further that Camus' work reveals the inadequacy of Dilthey's typology of philosophical world-views by resisting classification by its categories. My thesis therefore contributes to contemporary work on meta-philosophy by showing that Dilthey's theory of world-views, while limited by its typologies, offers its history of philosophy as a viable form of meta-philosophy.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
Myth	*The Myth of Sisyphus*, written by Albert Camus.

Declaration of Academic Achievement

I declare that I authored this thesis by myself using the feedback provided to me by Dr. Johannes Steizinger and Dr. Barry Allen. It has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for any previous degree. The work presented is completely my own except where I have marked it with clear references.

Chapter 1: The Historicist Challenge to Philosophy

In the 1840s, a major portion of German philosophy began to experience an identity crisis that left a lasting impact on the practice and purpose of philosophy. Frederick Beiser, in his analysis of philosophy after Hegel, establishes the severity of this crisis by arguing that speculative idealism, a prominent form of German philosophy, lost both its characteristic method and distinctive subject matter (Beiser 15).

Leading up to the crisis, speculative idealism typically employed a deductive and a priori method to provide a foundation for the empirical sciences (Beiser 15).[1] Beiser argues that this method of moving from universals to particulars became "discredited" in the 1840s because of the widespread belief that "all content, all knowledge of existence, has to derive from experience alone" (Beiser 16). While the collapse of this key philosophical method was taking place, the empirical sciences were reaching ever higher stages of power and prominence (Beiser 16-17). This development in the intellectual landscape meant that the empirical sciences were laying claim to content traditionally reserved for philosophy and achieving valid results in an autonomous and reliable manner (Beiser 17). Speculative idealism therefore lost its claim to a distinctive subject.

A key feature of this larger identity crisis is the rise of history as an authoritative science. Katherina Kinzel writes that professional history sought authority over the whole

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[1] Beiser acknowledges that the foundationalist program of speculative idealism employed several different forms of this general method such as "reasoning from self-evident principles, intellectual intuition, a priori construction, dialectic."

of the "human-historical world" and began to historicize philosophy itself (Kinzel 26). This process of historicization was an especially serious threat to philosophy because it undermined philosophy's claim to "unconditional truth" (Steizinger 224). History undermined this claim because it demonstrated that philosophical systems are rooted in and relative to their historical contexts. Far from achieving universal and necessary knowledge, philosophy, as a product of history, was now considered contingent and plural. The plurality of philosophical systems could no longer be considered a temporary byproduct of the search for unconditional truth, their existence was taken to be a function of the diverse historical contexts out of which philosophy arises.

The historicist challenge to philosophy and the larger identity crisis of which it was a part produced a wide variety of proposed re-orientations for philosophy. Wilhelm Dilthey is a 19th century German philosopher who placed the conflict between history and philosophy at the center of his work. He was a key representative of the *Lebensphilosophie* (philosophy of life) movement, which played a critical role in the re-vitalization of philosophy in the so-called long 19th century. Dilthey believed that history's insight into the contingency and plurality of philosophical systems seriously threatens the possibility of universal validity and promotes a form of destructive skepticism which undermines humanity's ability to orient itself in the world. Dilthey sought to overcome the anarchy of thought caused by increased historical awareness by creating a theory of world-views which accepts the contingency and plurality of

philosophical systems without thereby abandoning philosophy's unique essence, universal knowledge, and truthfulness.

Dilthey argues that philosophical systems are expressions of a special kind of world-view which we use to orient ourselves in the world. On Dilthey's account, philosophical world-views emerge from our psyche as a response to the inherent chaos and instability of human life. They aim to provide us with a universally valid and stabilizing orientation that should determine our actions based on a cognition and evaluation of what is actual. Philosophical world-views are therefore not products of thought alone, they are created from the fullness of our psychic life as it confronts the world. Dilthey sought to demonstrate through empirical analysis that all philosophical world-views share the same basic *form* and *function* because of their rootedness in the universal structure of human psychic life. By showing that the *activity* or *practice* of creating philosophical world-views is a natural extension of our psychological makeup, Dilthey attempted to provide philosophy with a haven from historical contingency. There may be a plurality of historical systems but they all stem from the same psychological need for stability and all possess the same basic structure.

At the same time however, Dilthey's account respects the contingency and plurality of philosophical systems because he argues that no philosophical world-view will ever achieve the universal validity and scope to which it aspires. Each world-view fails to achieve the universality it presents because they are all necessarily rooted in and characterized by a limited aspect of human psychic life. For Dilthey, a philosophical

world-view which is primarily rooted in our capacity to think necessarily cognizes, evaluates, and determines the world in a different manner than a world-view which prioritizes feeling or willing. It is the irreducibility of our psyche's basic parts which leads Dilthey to construct an account of philosophical world-view types. Each of the many world-view types retains a level of truthfulness as genuine answers to the riddle of life that are rooted in our psyche, but they never reach the universal heights to which they aspire. Particular systems are therefore contingent not only on their historical position but also on their psychological origin. They cannot attain universal scope and validity because they are, from the very beginning, rooted in different and limited features of our psychic life.

Despite his belief in the contingency and plurality of philosophical systems, Dilthey did not abandon philosophy to an eternal conflict between relative systems. He supplemented his analysis of this plurality with a meta-philosophy which preserves universal validity. This meta-philosophy consists of *reflective historical consciousness* as a perspective which rises above the limitations of individual systems to survey the whole of historical human life. We are not restricted to limited world-views; we can also, through reflection on the nature of philosophical world-views, stand above the plurality of systems and see the universal ground from which they spring. Dilthey abandons the possibility of a universally valid system of philosophy to preserve a universally valid meta-philosophy.[2] When philosophy engages with the world and the riddles of life, it

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[2] See VI 254.

operates on the level of world-views. It creates a limited but truthful framework which we can use to cognize, evaluate, and determine the world. When philosophy engages with philosophy, when it undergoes deep self-reflection, it attains a universally valid perspective on its own existence as an extension of our psychic life which is thoroughly determined by historical contingency.

Here I argue that the framework of Wilhelm Dilthey's theory of world-views is an appealing form of meta-philosophy because it successfully accounts for the contingency and plurality of philosophical systems without sacrificing their truthfulness or the possibility of universal validity. I take seriously the modern insight that absolute systems of belief are implausible given our understanding of history and culture. The contingency and plurality of philosophy systems can no longer be ignored as an unfortunate byproduct of the search for universal truth. These qualities must be taken seriously and integrated into philosophy's self-understanding. My claim is that Dilthey's central argument that philosophical systems emerge from and reflect our underlying life attitudes is a successful response to history's challenge. By showing how the activity of creating philosophical world-views emerges as a function of our psychic life, Dilthey is able to preserve the truthfulness of philosophical thought as it engages with the world in history, without thereby ignoring its contingency and plurality. Dilthey's theory allows us to preserve and understand the plurality of philosophical world-views as truthful frameworks through which we cognize, evaluate, and shape the world. At the same time, his concept of reflective historical consciousness preserves the boundaries of our world-views by

placing them in a psychological and historical context, thereby maintaining the contingency and plurality of philosophical systems.

To demonstrate the viability and appeal of Dilthey's theory of world-views as a form of meta-philosophy I apply his framework to Albert Camus' influential existentialist essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*. I argue that Camus' account of and response to the problem of absurdity fails to adequately consider its own contingency and therefore unjustifiably excludes the plurality of other philosophical world-views which characterize modern life. Camus's work is susceptible to this critique because he frames his analysis as revealing a *descriptive fact* of critical consciousness as it engages with the world. I argue further that Camus' work lacks the conceptual resources necessary to overcome this problem and therefore falls into the dilemma of either undermining its own value or obscuring other plausible ways of interpreting life. Following this critique, I demonstrate how Dilthey's theory is capable of preserving Camus' insights while also respecting the plurality of alternative ways of living. By treating Camus' work in *Myth* as the expression of a world-view which emerges from his psychic life and historical context, Dilthey's theory delimits the boundaries within which it is valid. Camus' description of and response to absurdity is therefore not a simple, inevitable product of critical thought; it is a *possible* response for a certain life attitude and context, namely that of Albert Camus himself. On Dilthey's theory, Camus' analysis remains valuable for other people who find themselves struggling with similar problems, but it does not attain the universality that Camus suggests.

This work is based on a careful reading of the relevant primary sources of both Albert Camus and Wilhelm Dilthey. For Camus, my analysis is restricted to his 1942 work *The Myth of Sisyphus*, since it is a self-contained essay on the problem of absurdity that Camus saw plaguing the modern mind. For Dilthey, I consulted four main works: "Present Day Culture and Philosophy" (1898), "Dream" (1903), "The Essence of Philosophy" (1907), and "The Types of World-View and Their Development in Metaphysical Systems" (1911). The earliest of these works is, as the name suggests, Dilthey's survey of his own age and philosophy's place in it. It is important for several reasons, not the least of which being the fact that it reveals how Dilthey understood and responded to the cultural forces which surrounded and informed the challenge of history. "Dream" was a talk Dilthey gave on his seventieth birthday and is relevant to our investigation because it expresses his response to the seemingly irresolvable conflict which separates the plurality of philosophical systems and leads to an anarchy of thought. This paper gives us a window into Dilthey's larger formulation of and response to the historicist challenge. "The Essence of Philosophy" is a comprehensive investigation of philosophy's appearance in history which reveals its rootedness in the psychological fabric of life and helps Dilthey build a theory of world-views that incorporates the truths of historical consciousness. "Types of Philosophical World-View and their Development in Metaphysical Systems" clarifies how philosophy, as a universal function of human psychic life, gives rise to truthful world-views which are reflected in the universal perspective of historical consciousness. My critical reconstruction of these primary

sources is supported by reference to relevant secondary literature. Where differences of

interpretation arise, I attempt to defend an original reading of the author.

Chapter 2: *The Myth of Sisyphus*: A World-View in Waiting

Introduction

Albert Camus' 1942 work *The Myth of Sisyphus* is an influential existentialist essay that investigates whether suicide is the logical course of action for people living under absurdity. Human life is absurd according to Camus because of the irresolvable conflict between humanity's desire for absolute meaning and the world's unreasonable silence (Camus 49). Ultimately, Camus argues on the basis of his conception of the mind that life under absurdity is not only worth living but is also more satisfying than a life full of meaning (Camus 51). To support this position, Camus draws three normative consequences from the human confrontation with absurdity by appealing to the value self-honesty.

The first of these normative consequences is revolt. For Camus, every moment of an absurd life is given value by the continuous conscious revolt of lucid individuals against the conditions of absurdity (Camus 53). For Camus, revolt consists in maintaining lucid recognition of absurdity even as the world's unreasonableness continues to frustrate our deepest desire for meaning. The second normative consequence of absurdity is freedom. Camus argues that a full recognition of absurdity and death should destroy people's relationship to the future and liberate their relationship to the present (Camus 56-57). Once lucid, agents no longer restrict their actions in the hope of actualizing future purposes; they give everything to the present. The final consequence of Camus' normative account is passion. According to Camus, all scales of value presuppose belief in a

transcendent metaphysical unity which orders life. Since absurdity destroys the possibility of such a belief, Camus argues that we should abandon all scales of value and glorify the mere quantity of experiences. Under the reign of absurd indifference, the only value in life is the conscious revolt of lucid individuals. It is the solitary value of revolt that drives the mind to accumulate the greatest possible quantity of experiences.

I contend that Camus' account, while consistent on many fronts, fails to consider its historical rootedness as just one possible response to the death of god. In other words, Camus fails to respond to the contingency of his own view and the plurality of other views because his account lacks the required reflexivity. Camus makes this mistake by presenting his narrow formulation of the mind and its commitment to self-honesty as a *descriptive* and *universal* fact of human life. He does not respond to the psychological, social, and historical contingencies that shape his analysis and offers little or no justification for his account of the mind. As a result of these limitations, Camus' wrongly frames his normative response to absurdity as the *only* honest option for people who engage critically with the world. In other words, Camus' failure to reflect on the contingency of his own position culminates in the unjustified exclusion of other no less honest responses to the mysteries of life. My argument is that Camus' assumption about the human mind and his response to absurdity are only *one* possible way to critically engage with the world. To highlight the contingency of Camus' view, I offer alternative accounts of the mind, self-honesty, and scales of value. I argue that my alternatives are not only plausible but also produce more appealing consequences than Camus' account.

The normative outlook of Camus' account is unappealing because it severely and unnecessarily restricts the value, meaning, and purpose available in a self-honest life. I argue that all three of Camus' normative consequences are unappealing compared to the consequences of my alternative conceptions. Camus' first consequence, revolt, is unappealing because his account of the mind and its commitment to self-honesty necessitates the maintenance of our desire for absolute unity even after we recognize that this desire will never be fulfilled. This consequence is unappealing because it requires us to constantly re-experience the pain of having our desire for unity fail. It is unnecessary because moving on from a desire once it has been proven impossible does not necessarily betray self-honesty. My alternative conception of the mind preserves our recognition of the world's unreasonableness without requiring us to maintain a frustrated desire for absolute unity. Camus' second consequence, freedom, is unappealing because his formulation of self-honesty as living *solely* with what one knows demands that we abandon our purposes by cutting ties with the future and giving everything to the present. In contrast, conceiving of self-honesty as the commitment to *recognize* and live with truth preserves purpose and hope as possible sources of fulfillment. Finally, Camus' third consequence, passion, is unappealing because it unnecessarily destroys the depth of value available in human life by condemning all scales of value. I posit an alternative conception of the metaphysics of value which preserves the depth and meaning we gain from hierarchies of value. To complete this task, I will reconstruct the framework of Camus' analysis, his formulation of absurdity, his account of the human mind and its commitment to self-honesty, and his corresponding normative consequences.

Camus' Guiding Framework

Before we can investigate Camus' account of the human mind and its engagement with the world's unreasonableness we must first understand the larger framework that Camus uses in defining his thought. In the opening pages of *Myth*, Camus makes it very clear that he is not interested in providing arguments for the existence of absurdity; instead, he takes absurdity as his starting point and investigates its consequences (Camus 1, 14). Camus wants to describe an "intellectual malady" that he believes has infected human life (Camus 1). Given the descriptive nature of his task, Camus explicitly characterizes his work in *Myth* as provisional (Camus 1).

Lambert argues that Camus' decision to open the work with a statement about its provisional nature "suffices to guarantee a context of relative expression for the entire essay" (Lambert 193). This relative context is then, Lambert argues, counterbalanced by the strong, committed, and universal way that Camus expresses the content of his thought (Lambert 193). Lambert argues that this balance between introductory disclaimers and strong expressive style ultimately overcomes "modal objections" against Camus which accuse him of embracing his "own doctrine absolutely" (Lambert 193). Even if Camus' framing of his argument as provisional refutes these modal objections, it does not justify his treatment of absurdity as a *universal* and *necessary* product of the human mind investigating the world. I argue that Camus's approach is problematic because it fails to account for the contingency of his own view and the plurality of plausible alternatives that characterize modern life. Camus' work in *Myth* therefore lacks the required

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reflexivity of modern philosophies. Nevertheless, it is important to remember as we reconstruct Camus' account that he understands this work as fundamentally *descriptive*, otherwise we run the risk of mistaking his strong expressive style as evidence of an inconsistency that is not there.

The Feeling of Absurdity

Camus first defines absurdity as a vague and elusive feeling of divorce which alienates a person from their life (Camus 4-5). Despite its elusive nature, Camus argues that the feeling of absurdity can be investigated by considering the actions and attitudes that it gives rise to (Camus 10). Camus considers several such actions and attitudes. He writes of the weariness born from questioning the mechanical life of the modern worker (Camus 11); the horror of recognizing death's inevitability (Camus 12); the estrangement born from investigating the external world (Camus 12); and the discomfort of encountering a stranger in the mirror (Camus 12-13). While each of these examples is unique, they all embody Camus' initial definition of the feeling of absurdity as a divorce. They all involve a person becoming alienated through conscious recognition of irreducible realities.

Thomas Pölzler convincingly argues that Camus' feeling of absurdity is best understood as an underlying and elusive mood which gives rise to powerful emotions. The feeling of absurdity in the narrow sense, as a vague and elusive "lower key" feeling, is a mood because it is indeterminate, long lasting, not intense, non-intentional, and not rooted in any particular cause (Pölzler 480-481). When Camus writes about the absurd

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climate, he is referring to the absurd mood as a gradually changing and long-lasting affective state (Pölzler 481).

On the other hand, the actions and attitudes considered above are emotionally fraught because they are intentional, intense, short-lived, cognitively impactful, and rooted in specific experiences (Pölzler 481-482). The horror one feels when one lucidly confronts the true reality of death is an example of an absurd emotion. The absurd mood is a causal condition for absurd emotions because of the affective context it provides for the appearance of absurd emotions (Pölzler 482). Pölzler argues that Camus himself understood the feeling of absurdity to have this form by referring to Camus' argument that absurd emotions create an "exclusive world in which they recognize their climate" (Pölzler 482). Interestingly then, the absurd mood gives rise to absurd emotions, and it is through the emergence of absurd emotions that the lucid mind recognizes the underlying absurd mood.

The feeling of absurdity, while significant, is not the totality of Camus' account. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, he makes a critical distinction between the feeling of absurdity and the notion of absurdity (Camus 27). He argues that the feeling of absurdity "lays the foundation" for the notion (Camus 27). That "the climate of absurdity is in the beginning" and "the absurd universe" is the end (Camus 10).

There is a debate in the literature about the nature of this relationship, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss all the competing theories. It is enough for our

present purpose to consider Thomas Pölzler's convincing epistemological reading.[3]

Pölzler argues that the feeling of absurdity "lays the foundation for" the notion of

absurdity in the sense that it promotes the discovery of the notion (Pölzler 486). The

feeling of absurdity is absurd precisely because it facilitates the discovery of the notion of

absurdity (Pölzler 486). This reading is consistent with Camus' claims that the feeling and

the notion of absurdity are not identical, and it is also in line with a metaphysical reading

of the notion of absurdity which will be discussed in the next section. The feeling of

absurdity is therefore epistemologically foundational for the notion of absurdity. The

absurd feeling neither creates nor constitutes the notion of absurdity, being instead the

affective mechanism that reveals the underlying metaphysical notion.

The Notion of Absurdity

As we have seen, Camus' account of absurdity is deeply rooted in humanity's

emotional life; it is first encountered as an indeterminate and disorientating feeling of

divorce between people and their life. Absurdity itself, however, cannot be reduced to the

absurd mood nor to the absurd emotions that arise from it. The notion of absurdity is the

underlying metaphysical problem that is discovered through an experience of the feeling

of absurdity.

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[3] For alternative interpretations see Matthew Bowker's *Albert Camus and the Political Philosophy of the Absurd: Ambivalence, Resistance, and Creativity* and Avi Sagi's *Albert Camus and the Philosophy of the Absurd.*

The first component of this notion is the human mind's desire for a knowable and absolute meaning of life, what Julian Young refers to as the desire for a "grand-narrative meaning" (Young 188). Such a meaning for Camus would provide the mind with an absolute understanding of itself and the external world (Camus 15-16). It would allow humanity to feel at home in a familiar and unified world, to reduce all of reality to "terms of thought" (Camus 16). Significantly, Camus argues that this desire is valuable not only for its own sake but also as a necessary condition for human happiness more broadly (Camus 17-19).

Unfortunately, the moment the mind acts on this essential impulse, the illusory world of habit collapses into an ocean of irreconcilable pieces (Camus 17). The mind desperately struggles to find some metaphysical certainty on which it can establish unity but is only ever met with disappointment. At most the mind is confident that it and the external world exist, but such knowledge is insufficient because it lacks the content necessary to establish metaphysical unity (Camus 17). Attempts to provide this content through empirical knowledge also fail for Camus because their methodology inherently precludes the possibility of establishing metaphysical unity (Camus 18-19). The description and enumeration of empirical phenomena will never teach Camus that the world is his (Camus 18-19). It is at this point, Camus argues, that the mind is forced to admit that reality is not reasonable (Camus 20). The world's unreasonableness, its silence in the face of honest and relentless inquiry, is the second component of absurdity.

The notion of absurdity is therefore defined as the irreducible tension between the human desire for meaning and the world's unreasonable silence (Camus 20, 48-49). It is important to note that there is a variety of interpretations pertaining to Camus' notion of absurdity. Some authors, including Pölzler, read Camus' notion of absurdity as a *metaphysical* conflict between humanity's desire for transcendent meaning and the world's unreasonable silence (Pölzler, 483). In contrast, Avi Sagi interprets the absurd as a phenomenological tension rooted solely in humanity's *experience* of itself and the world (Sagi 47). There is also Matthew Bowker's psychological account of the absurd which argues that humanity rejects the meaning that it simultaneously longs for (Bowker 51-55). While each of these accounts is valuable, I will not delve into them in detail. For the purpose of critiquing Camus' normative response to absurdity I assume Pölzler's metaphysical interpretation.

The Three Consequences of Absurdity: Revolt, Freedom, and Passion

Using his account of the notion of absurdity, Camus constructs three normative consequences which he argues makes life under absurdity more appealing than a life full of traditional but illusory meaning. Camus calls these three consequences revolt, freedom, and passion.

 The first normative consequence that Camus draws from absurdity is the value of revolting against the despair of living in a world without knowable meaning. More precisely, Camus argues on the basis of a commitment to self-honesty that we must revolt against absurdity by preserving it in constant contemplation and awareness (Camus 50-

52). This preservation of absurdity is a form of revolt because it involves facing "the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it" (Camus 52). Since absurdity is a tension born from two distinct components, Camus argues that we ought to preserve both our desire for transcendent meaning and our recognition of the world's unreasonableness. As Camus puts it, revolt "is an insistence upon an impossible transparency" (Camus 52). To let go of our desire for absolute meaning or believe in a reasonable world is to betray self-honesty (Camus 52). This normative consequence is significant because it provides Camus with the conceptual resources to argue against both suicide and faith. Suicide is not the logical conclusion of absurdity because death necessarily destroys the conditions of absurdity and betrays the mind's commitment to self-honesty (Camus 52-53). Camus condemns faith on the grounds that it ignores the unreasonableness of the world and thereby robs life of the revolt that gives it value (Camus 51-53). The first consequence that Camus draws from the absurd is revolt and it is revolt which gives life value and majesty (Camus 53).

The second normative consequence is that we ought to abandon our relationship to the future and live *solely* in the present. That is how Camus understands freedom. He argues that before becoming conscious of absurdity people lived with purpose; they looked to the future with hope and adapted their behaviour to actualize desirable possibilities (Camus 56), all of which restricts the range of actions and thoughts available to us in the present moment. In other words, the freedom to shape the future necessarily involves a loss of freedom in the present (Camus 56).

The mind reconciled to absurdity does not suffer any such restrictions because it ceases to belong to the future (Camus 56). It abandons its relationship to the future and to purpose because it knows that death is "the only reality" (Camus 55). For Camus, a true and full recognition of death destroys our freedom to shape the future: "what freedom can exist in the fullest sense without assurance of eternity?" (Camus 55). To live with purpose and hope is therefore a betrayal of the mind's commitment to self-honesty because it presupposes belief in the illusory form of freedom that death destroys (Camus 55). The freedom to direct one's life toward desirable ends is therefore replaced by absurdity with an unrestricted freedom in the present. Camus views this consequence positively because it means lucid thinkers can enjoy the fullness of their present preferences.

The final consequence of Camus' normative response to absurdity is something he calls passion. According to Camus, living with a scale of values necessarily presupposes that one believes in a transcendent meaning of life (Camus 58). Camus implicitly believes that all scales of value must be *grounded in* or *derived from* some larger transcendent metaphysical unity. Once the lucid thinker is aware that knowledge of such transcendent meaning is impossible, Camus argues "that what counts is not the best living but the most living" (Camus 58). In other words, absurdity destroys all value judgments and promotes the mere accumulation of experiences (Camus 58-59).

I argue that Camus grounds his normative call for accumulation on the previously established value of conscious revolt (Camus 60-61). In other words, he is able to argue in favour of quantity only because every moment of life is an opportunity to revolt. Thus,

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Camus states that a conqueror and post office clerk are equal if they both possess consciousness (Camus 66). His commitment to indifference is so strong that he states "no depth, no emotion, no passion, and no sacrifice" is worth twenty more years of lucid experience (Camus 61). For Camus, living with a scale of values negates the absurd and betrays the mind's integrity because it presupposes a belief in an illusory meaning of life.

To summarize, the revolt against absurdity through constant awareness makes life valuable because the mind inherently values self-honesty, truth, and integrity. Absurdity promotes a completely unrestricted present because a consciousness of death's inevitability logically demands abandoning hope for the future. Finally, passion is characterized as the maximization of experiential quantity because belief in a scale of values is incompatible with a recognition of the world's unreasonableness.

The Source of Camus' Normative Response

A key component of Camus' response to absurdity that remains obscure is the normative mechanism through which his three consequences acquire their binding force. In other words, what is the source or ground of Camus' normative response to absurdity and how is such a source consistent with absurdity's destruction of all scales of value? I argued in the previous section that Camus grounds his values of revolt, freedom, and passion in a commitment to self-honesty, but that begs the question why self-honesty should be upheld in the first place.

One viable interpretation comes from Richard Lambert, who argues that Camus fails to properly relativize "the duty to be truthful" when he uses it to justify the continual

maintenance of the absurd (Lambert 195). According to Lambert, Camus treats honesty as "an a priori imperative, an unarguable obligation" and this is a problem because it is inconsistent with Camus' supposed relativism (Lambert 195). Lambert suggests that Camus probably introduced this commitment to self-honesty because of "the wish to preclude suicide" as a possible response to the absurd (Lambert 196). This interpretation is plausible because of the many times the Camus directly and explicitly proffers self-honesty as a guiding value for his diagnosis of and response to absurdity.[4]

However, despite the plausibility of Lambert's reading, I argue that there is a more charitable interpretation of the value Camus attributes to self-honesty that renders it consistent with his destruction of all scales of value. Far from regarding self-honesty as an absolute value, Camus is merely *describing,* in a passionate literary style, the human mind's inherent standard and the application of that standard to the perpetual frustration of its deep desire for unity. I therefore take seriously Camus introductory remark that "there will be found here merely the description, in the pure state, of an intellectual malady" (Camus 1). The question then becomes what Camus believes this standard to be.

The key to answering this question lies in the precise language that Camus uses to define his primary question in *The Myth of Sisyphus.* I noted in the introduction that his primary aim is to investigate whether there is "a *logic* to the point of death" (Camus 8; my emphasis). In other words, Camus wants to know if the logical answer to the world's unreasonableness is suicide. Camus' formulation of this question is not just a dramatic

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[4] See *The Myth of Sisyphus*, pp. *5, 20, 30, 38, 39, 48.*

way to express his engagement with absurdity; it reveals his belief in the mind's inherent

evaluative standard. Camus views logic as the mind's self-imposed discipline which

includes the value of self-honesty (Camus 53). In *Myth* then*,* Camus is merely *describing*

the conclusions that the mind reaches when it applies its inherent standard of honesty to

the reality of absurdity. Suicide is ultimately not the *logical* answer to absurdity because

the human mind has a self-imposed discipline that prioritizes the preservation of truth

over escaping the pain of absurdity through death. When Camus writes that truth "must"

be preserved he is speaking from the point of view of the absurd mind. It is a "fact" that

the mind is "prey to its truths" (Camus 30). Camus is therefore not applying self-honesty

as an absolute value; instead, he only describes how the mind naturally reacts to

absurdity. The confusion regarding this point derives from the fact that Camus offers this

description in passionate and absolute language. My reading renders his use of self-

honesty consistent with his third consequence namely, passion, because he is not making

an absolute value claim. Self-honesty, as a value that is applied to the problem of

absurdity, is *relative* to the nature of the human mind.

The Problems of Contingency and Plurality

Despite the significance of the interpretative debate I have considered, a deeper

problem plagues Camus' project in *Myth*, namely, its lack of critical reflection upon its

own contingency and its subsequent dismissal of any viable alternatives. To put it another

way, Camus does not account for the historical rootedness of his own work. Without due

justification he presents his account of and response to the problem of absurdity as a

universal and *necessary* outcome of the human mind's critical engagement with the world. More justification is provided for the construction of his three absurd consequences but even here he fails to acknowledge the historical contingency of his account. As a result, his argument in *Myth* obscures other valid ways of engaging critically with the world.

While constructing the notion of absurdity Camus makes many claims about the nature of the human mind which have important consequences for his overall analysis. He states for instance that the "mind's deepest desire … is an insistence upon familiarity, an appetite for clarity" (Camus 15). In this single sentence, Camus makes major claims about the structure and capabilities of the mind without defending them. He argues in the same breath that the mind will *only* be satisfied if reality is reduced "to terms of thought" (Camus 16). Additionally, Camus argues that our "nostalgia for unity" and "appetite for the absolute" act as the "essential impulse for the human drama" (Camus 16). Camus then adds another normative element to his account by stating that "there is no happiness if I cannot know" (Camus 19). I call this assumption normative because Camus uses it in his construction of absurd consequences. It directly affects the behaviour that Camus deems honest under absurdity. In all these passages, Camus presents his view of the mind as a descriptive fact without providing evidence or justification. As a result, the problem of absurdity, understood as the tension between the mind's deepest desire and the world's unreasonableness, is also presented as a descriptive fact of human life that applies to everyone who thinks honestly about the world.

This is problematic for two interrelated reasons. The first problem is a lack of critical self reflection upon his argument's own contingency. Even if Camus provided more justification for his account, he would still fail to address its historical, psychological, and social contingency. Camus' account of the mind is not objective science; he is not performing psychological research using rigorous empirical methods. Instead, his description of the mind is a product of his life-experience as it has been shaped by a particular social and historical moment. This does not mean that Camus' conclusions are untruthful, but it does mean that they are not universal facts of critical consciousness. His failure to address this contingency creates a second problem. By presenting his account of the mind as a descriptive and universal fact he obscures the reality that other critical and valid world-views exist which express different conceptions of the mind and the limits of its knowledge.

Both of these problems also characterize Camus' understanding of self-honesty. When he writes that he "must sacrifice everything" to his certainty in absurdity and that he "cannot free himself" from his truths, he presents self-honesty as either a *universal* fact or *absolute* value. On my interpretation, as previously explained, while Camus does not posit self-honesty as an absolute value, he still builds it into his *universal* account of the mind. This is problematic because he offers no justification for his assumption that the human mind must sacrifice everything to its truths. In other words, he does not defend his treatment of self-honesty as a universal norm from the reality of historical contingency. He passes off his interpretation of the mind's inherent standard as a descriptive and

universal fact without providing any justification for this strong and potentially controversial assumption. On Lamberts reading, the same problem remains. Camus' assumption of self-honesty as an absolute value is called into question by historical contingency, which undermines Camus' account because it reveals that his use of self-honesty as a standard is only a reflection of his lived experience and historical moment, not a universal fact or absolute value. Here as before, the primary problem with Camus' analysis is his lack of reflexivity regarding the psychological, historical, and social factors which shape his world-view.

However, it is not just the value Camus' attributes to self-honesty that is called into question, it is also the normative consequences his draws from it. There are two distinct aspects of his use of self-honesty that I want to highlight. First, he argues that self-honesty requires the mind to maintain its awareness of its desire for absolute unity even after it knows that this desire is impossible to fulfill. Second, he argues that self-honesty involves living *solely* by what we know.

The first point is significant because he needs it in order to justify revolt as the first consequence of absurdity. As we saw, revolt consists in an "insistence upon an impossible transparency" (Camus 52). It cannot involve "negating one of the terms of the opposition" because that "amounts to escaping it" (Camus 52). In other words, we must maintain awareness of our desire for absolute unity and our awareness of the world's unreasonableness because self-honesty demands it. But this is not the only way to formulate self-honesty as a normative standard. For example, if we understand self-

honesty as the commitment to strive always to *recognize* the truth, we can allow for the possibility of our desires changing. My desire for absolute unity could dissipate after I recognize the world's unreasonableness, which is still consistent with self-honesty because a change in desire does not imply a failure to recognize the truth. Revolt is a consequence of the absurd only because Camus constructs his account of the human mind and the value of self-honesty in a very specific way. My different formulation seems prima facie equally plausible because it accounts for a truth that seems commonplace, namely, that our desires change, while still preserving the core normative force of self-honesty. My formulation may be even more appealing because it does not require us to continually reproduce the alienation and pain of having our desire for absolute unity eternally frustrated. If self-honesty and our desire for absolute unity really are built into the structure of our minds as necessary components, then revolt retains normative force even though the point remains that Camus has done nothing to support or defend his particular account of the mind against other plausible alternatives.

The second aspect of Camus' formulation of self-honesty reveals the same problem. By defining self-honesty as the commitment to live *solely* with what one knows he necessarily destroys our relationship to the future because we do not know if the future will ever arrive. The ever-present possibility of death makes it impossible, in Camus' eyes, to know the future. This formulation also necessarily excludes hope because by its very definition hope involves wishing for a specific future that we do not know will happen. Here again, however, it is possible to formulate a different definition of self-

honesty that preserves our relationship to the future and our capacity for hope. Self-honesty formulated as the requirement to *recognize* and *live with* what we know to be true achieves just this outcome and is prima facie just as plausible as Camus' definition. My formulation preserves our relationship to the future because setting purposes and restricting one's actions in the present does not involve a failure to recognize and live with the truth of death. It entails living with more than what we know (namely, the future) but that does not negate our recognition of death's inevitability.

Similarly, this formulation preserves the legitimacy of hope because optimistically wishing for a certain kind of future does not undermine our recognition of the truth that the future isn't promised. Even metaphysical hope about the afterlife is consistent on this formulation with the normative requirement of self-honesty. Blindly hoping that there is something after death even though you find no evidence to support this wish makes no belief or knowledge claim and therefore does not contradict the requirement to recognize the truth that the world is unreasonable. Just as before, Camus' formulation of self-honesty may be unappealing in comparison with mine because it robs life of the value we receive from pursuing ends and hoping against all odds. Camus' formulation of self-honesty is only one possible account that has no more intrinsic plausibility than any other account of the same phenomena.

Finally, the same two problems of contingency and plurality also characterize Camus' third absurd consequence, passion. As we saw above, Camus abandons scales of value because he believes they presuppose an unknowable metaphysical unity. In other

words, Camus' substitution of quantity for quality is predicated upon his view of the metaphysics of value. But he offers no explicit argument or justification in defense of this view. He simply takes for granted his belief that hierarchies of value must be grounded in metaphysical unities. It is however just as plausible to assume a naturalistic view of value hierarchies which locates their source in psychology, society, or history. An agent who holds such a view could then reflect, change, and act on some scale of values in a self-honest way. This view might even be considered more appealing because it adds depth to the value of human life. For instance, twenty years of lucidity does not necessarily outweigh the depth, emotion, passion, and sacrifice of fighting for justice and equality. Camus' third consequence of absurdity therefore suffers from the same lack of reflexivity that undermines his first two consequences. By failing to consider the contingency of his own view, Camus unjustifiably dismisses alternative accounts of critical thought.

To summarize, Camus' decision to frame his analysis of absurdity as a *description* means that his position lacks the self-reflection that is necessary to adequately engage with contingency and plurality. By claiming to describe the nature of the human mind and its engagement with the limits of knowledge, Camus puts forward a universal account of human life that needs to be justified and defended. Due to the structure of *Myth,* he failed to respond to both the historical rootedness of his own work and the competitive claims of other historical world-views.

Conclusion: The Limits of Absurdity

Albert Camus' 1942 work *The Myth of Sisyphus* is an influential and insightful existentialist essay which argues that human life is fundamentally absurd because of the irresolvable conflict between humanity's desire for absolute unity and the world's unreasonableness. Despite the literary and philosophical achievements of *Myth,* Camus' work on the problem of absurdity is plagued by his failure to reflect critically upon the contingency of his view as it is shaped by personal, social, and historical factors. By presenting his formulation of and response to absurdity as a *universal* feature of the mind's critical confrontation with the world Camus unjustly ignores the plurality of alternative world-views which have emerged from the conditions of modern life. I have argued that this lack of reflexivity is not an isolated incident but a pattern which characterizes the entirety of Camus' construction of and normative response to the problem of absurdity.

Chapter 3: Wilhelm Dilthey's Theory of World-Views as a Viable Meta-Philosophy

Introduction

Wilhelm Dilthey was a 19th century German philosopher who placed the tension between history and philosophy at the center of his work. He believed that two aspects of historical consciousness seriously challenged philosophy's self understanding as the keeper of universal validity. He refers to the first of these as "the spirit of skepticism" that emerges from the tension between the "boundless variety" of competing philosophical systems and their individual claims to universal validity (Dilthey, "Types" 251). Dilthey argues that this tension has a long history in the practice of philosophy and cites several different historical epochs where skepticism prevailed because of it ("Types" 251).[5] While this tension is not new, Dilthey believes it is more pronounced in his own age because the rise of history as a professional science demonstrates with new power and insight how each philosophical system fails to attain the universal validity it seeks. The second aspect of historical consciousness that threatens philosophy is its relativization of all historical life-forms as contingent products of a particular time and place (Dilthey, "Types" 252).[6] Dilthey argues that this second aspect is even more destructive than the previously mentioned skepticism because it makes a positive claim against the possibility of absolute

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[5] Dilthey discusses the skepticism which partially characterized the Greek enlightenment, Hellenistic philosophy, late Medieval philosophy, and the Renaissance.
[6] Dilthey briefly traces how this historical consciousness emerges from the history of philosophy on 252-253.

validity ("Types" 253). Pervasive doubt about the possibility of resolving the conflict between philosophical systems is one thing, but positive knowledge that all philosophical thought is historically conditioned and therefore contingent is an entirely different beast.

Dilthey responds to history's challenge by affirming its negation of universally valid metaphysics. He does not attempt to critique the two insights of historical consciousness directly; rather, he believes that philosophy must adapt itself to their veracity. To do this, Dilthey turns his attention away from the ever-elusive external world and instead seeks to cognize the inner, psychological coherence of human life ("Types" 254). This movement away from a universally valid conceptualization of the world toward an understanding of life's psychological unity will become clearer as we progress through Dilthey's account of human life. For now, it is important to know that Dilthey undertakes such a project by creating a theory of world-views which reconceptualizes philosophical systems as expressions of a special kind of structure which we employ in our effort to know, evaluate, and determine the world. These underlying philosophical structures are not mere creations of the mind, being instead a distinct type of world-view, which is "rooted in life-conduct, life-experience, and the overall structure of our psychic life" (Dilthey, "Types" 262). Both religious and poetic world-views share this psychological origin and purpose but philosophical world-views are distinguished by their "will to universally valid knowledge" (Dilthey, "Types" 269). This distinguishing feature means that philosophical world-views compete against one another to achieve universal status.

Despite this inherent drive towards universal validity, Dilthey argues that no particular world-view ever attains the lofty stature it desires. This perpetual failure is, in Dilthey's eyes, caused by several forms of contingency which characterize every philosophical world-view. The first form of contingency that undermines the search for universal validity is historical contingency. Dilthey acknowledges the limiting influence that historical position exerts upon the formation and expression of philosophical world-views. The second form of contingency is social. Dilthey argues that philosophical world-views always emerge within a given social context as cultural systems which form connections with other institutions of human life. These connections play a role in determining the precise character of philosophical world-views. Both these forms of contingency are important for our understanding of philosophical world-views but they do not hold the answer that Dilthey seeks in response to destructive historical consciousness. It is the third form of contingency that holds the key to Dilthey's re-orientation of philosophy. He argues that metaphysical world-views will never attain the universal validity they desire because they are inescapably rooted in irreducible psychological attitudes that emerge from the basic elements of human psychic life, such as thinking, feeling, and willing. These attitudes (or life moods as Dilthey sometimes calls them) initiate the creation of world-views as a response to the chaos and instability of life. They seek to answer life's greatest riddles and thereby provide us with a firm orientation in the world. The plurality of philosophical world-views is therefore born not from mere theoretical disagreement but from the diverse range of psychological attitudes that emerge from human life experience. These attitudes are basic and irreducible, they cannot be

reduced to a single outlook or principle. Dilthey therefore responds to the destructive force of historical contingency by further entrenching contingency in our psychic life.

At first glance it may seem counter-intuitive and unclear how such a move enables Dilthey to re-orient philosophy in a successful and satisfying way, but that is just what he accomplishes. While the specific content of a given world-view is contingent upon its underlying psychological attitude, every world-view shares the same basic structure and origin. They all emerge from the same need for stability in human psychic life. The specific life mood and corresponding life experience may be different but every world-view uses our cognitive, affective, and volitional powers to stabilize and guide us. By grounding philosophical world-views in the structures of human psychic life Dilthey provides philosophy with a universality that is situated beyond the tides of historical contingency. There will never be a universally valid world-view but the *activity* of creating philosophical world-views is universal because it is rooted in our psychological structures and needs.

While universal validity is forever beyond their grasp, individual world-views still retain a level of *truthfulness* in their engagement with the world. They reveal one side of reality by subjecting the world to their limited point of view. They take a stance on life and thereby disclose "certain facets of the world" (Dilthey, "Types" 274). No world-view triumphs over the rest but they all contain "a part of the truth" (Dilthey, "Dream" 169). Although personal world-views are limited, Dilthey argues that we have access to a reflective form of historical consciousness which rises above the relativity of world-views

to survey the whole of human life. Reflective historical consciousness is the self-reflection of philosophy; it is a form of meta-philosophy which reveals how philosophical systems express different aspects of life through their rootedness in distinct psychological attitudes and life-experiences. Dilthey argues that this philosophy of philosophy overcomes the threat of historical consciousness because it provides a universal perspective for philosophy that reflects the "sovereignty of the human spirit" as it engages with the same reality of the world ("Essence" 237).

The following two chapters argue that Wilhelm Dilthey's theory of world-views is an appealing form of meta-philosophy because of its capacity to integrate the valid insights of historical consciousness. It preserves historical contingency and plurality by acknowledging that no single world-view will ever attain universal validity. Human life will forever give rise to new forms of philosophy which structure the world according to their relative perspectives and attitudes. However, this conclusion does not leave philosophy broken and scattered. Dilthey's theory preserves philosophy's unique essence as a special kind of world-view that emerges as a natural extension of our psychological structures and needs. Furthermore, his account of reflective historical consciousness reveals that life is the core of all philosophical systems and gives us a deeper understanding of the "great connections among systems" (Dilthey, "Types" 274). Through philosophy's self-reflection, we can step back from our individual world-view and access a universal perspective of philosophy as it exists in history. We can see how other philosophical world-views that don't align with our own are also truthful orientations of

life that are born from the same fundamental activity. Dilthey's theory of world-views therefore offers contemporary philosophy a form of meta-philosophy which preserves contingency and plurality without thereby abandoning truthfulness.

Establishing the Problem: The Anarchy of Thought

Before diving into Dilthey's theory of world-views it is first worth exploring how he understood the identity crisis facing philosophy in the 19th century. This investigation will provide insight into how Dilthey's precise concerns and starting point influence his response to the challenge of historicism. For this task we will consult his works "Present-Day Culture and Philosophy," "Dream," and "The Types of World-view and Their Development in Metaphysical Systems."

In "Present-Day Culture and Philosophy", Dilthey argues that the 19th century is characterized by the "profound contradiction" that its scientific and historical mastery over life undermines its understanding of the value and worth of human existence ("Present Day" 146). According to Dilthey, the scientific progress of the 19th century has cultivated a "sense of actuality" and a mastery over nature ("Present Day" 143-144).[7] Dilthey's age possesses a strong "sense of actuality" because it has turned its attention towards the empirical world with great success ("Present Day" 143). Scientific advancements in fields like chemistry, ecology, anthropology, history, and political science led to an unprecedented understanding of the empirical world (Dilthey, "Present

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[7] Dilthey also discusses the relativization of social orders as a third characteristic of his age, but this topic is beyond the scope of our current discussion; see "Present-Day Culture and Philosophy," 145-146.

Day" 143). This sense of actuality is also reflected in the "poets and writers" who moved away from an "idealistic pathos" towards a realism that sought to "examine everything thoroughly" (Dilthey, "Present Day" 144). Across the board, human activity directed itself more fully towards the world of human life. The second, related, characteristic of Dilthey's age is its progressive mastery over nature. For Dilthey, the natural sciences delimited "a sphere of universally valid knowledge" and on the basis of that knowledge provided humanity with ever increasing power over the empirical world ("Present Day" 144). Increased empirical knowledge allowed humanity to predict and create desirable outcomes (Dilthey, "Present Day" 145). This sense of actuality and this scientific mastery is the first component of the 19th century's profound contradiction.

The second component lies in the fact that Dilthey's age was radically skeptical of humanity's value, meaning, and purpose. Dilthey argues that three primary factors contributed to the emergence of this skepticism. First, Dilthey argues that the success of the natural sciences undermined the foundational presuppositions of religion and metaphysics ("Present Day" 146). Second, philosophy's critical analysis of consciousness and cognition cast doubt on essential concepts like space, time, causality, and reality (Dilthey, "Present Day" 147). Finally, and most importantly, the development of historical analysis led to the relativization of all historical beliefs as contingent products of a specific time, place, and people (Dilthey, "Present Day" 147). It should already be clear from this brief survey of Dilthey's thought that he had an accurate and strong handle on the reality of his age. He was keenly aware of the ways that cultural changes and

advances in science, history, and philosophy were threatening not only philosophy's essence, content, and form but also society's faith in its own values. Dilthey's ability to accurately understand the problem of his age is an important first step in the viability of his response to historicism's challenge.

Dilthey's Response to the Rise of the Empirical Sciences

Before moving on to Dilthey's engagement with the problem of history, we must survey his position on philosophy's response to the rise of the empirical sciences and his age's corresponding sense of actuality and mastery of nature. Dilthey argues that philosophy must perform two functions for the empirical sciences. First, it is tasked with developing new methods to establish a firm foundation for the empirical sciences (Dilthey, "Present Day" 148). These sciences are, according to Dilthey, the only source of universally valid truth about the world ("Dream" 168). This belief is not in conflict with Dilthey's argument that reflective historical consciousness offers a universal perspective because the empirical sciences investigate the coherence of the world whereas reflective historical consciousness provides a universal perspective on human life as it exists in history. The point remains that "the basic science of philosophy" consists in grounding the empirical sciences which "extract an order based on laws from phenomena and raise it to a consciousness of itself with the intent of justifying it" (Dilthey, "Dream" 168). Philosophy's second task in relation to the empirical sciences is to establish their systematic interconnection (Dilthey, "Present Day" 148-149). Both tasks attain their full significance only when we appreciate the collapse of speculative idealism and its

foundationalist metaphysics. Dilthey does not abandon philosophy's traditional aim of grounding and unifying the empirical sciences but he does call for new methods in light of metaphysical failure, methods which are "continuous with those of empirical disciplines" (Kinzel 29). Despite the upheavals surrounding him, Dilthey's writing on philosophy's relationship to science is quite optimistic. He expects a "mighty system" to emerge from philosophy's work which will "guide the human race" and "encompass all objective thinking, value-determinations, and purposive ends" ("Dream" 168). Thus, we see that in his response to the rise of empirical sciences, Dilthey firmly re-establishes philosophy's traditional and cultural authority. We will see a similar outcome from Dilthey's engagement with historical contingency.

Destructive Historical Consciousness

In his 1903 work "Dream"*,* Dilthey beautifully summarizes the destructive power of unrestrained historical consciousness. He argues that, when left to itself, rising historical consciousness creates an anarchy of thought through its relativization of all beliefs to historical manifestations of a specific time and place (Dilthey, "Dream" 167). Dilthey frames this argument using a dream he had about the different traditions of philosophy wrestling for universal validity and ultimately ending up divided by a "terribly hostile alienation" ("Dream" 167). The impossibility of unifying these systems and achieving universal validity led to Dilthey's own mental unity being "torn asunder" ("Dream" 167).

This anarchy of thought has important consequences for humanity's understanding of its normative and purposive ideals. Dilthey writes that the "power to reanimate past ages seems to have as its consequence an impotence of the human spirit to shape the future according to its own firm intentions" ("Present Day" 158). The bare accumulation of relative historical data creates "dissolution, skepticism, and impotent subjectivity" (Dilthey, "Present Day" 158). The 19th century therefore reveals for Dilthey a fundamental human tragedy: "a conflict between aspiration and ability" (Dilthey, "Present Day" 147). The more knowledge we gain about history the more lost we become within it. History on its own does not have the resources necessary to respond to this anarchy; it cannot respond to the problem of relativization that it creates. Dilthey had a clear understanding of this problem and developed a new philosophy of philosophy to account for the insights of historical consciousness. Later we will see how Dilthey accomplishes this task by using the philosophy of history as a new form of meta-philosophy.

The Failure of Metaphysics and Life-Philosophy

The next step in this investigation of Dilthey's response to historical contingency is to understand why he thinks that metaphysics and other forms of life-philosophy fail as solutions to the impoverishment of the human spirit. When it comes to metaphysics, Dilthey is swift and severe in his condemnation. He writes that academic metaphysics is a field of "wishful thinking" that achieves only a "shadowy existence" under the light of historical consciousness and skepticism (Dilthey, "Present Day" 149). He refers to

metaphysical conceptions as "academic futilities" and "glittering fairy tales" that fail to solve the riddle of human life ("Present Day" 149-150).

Following this rejection of metaphysics, Dilthey goes on to consider whether *life-philosophy* and its rejection of metaphysical presuppositions can overcome the crisis of meaning affecting the modern world. In contrast to the lofty but ungrounded speculation of traditional metaphysics, life philosophy operates according to "a methodical mode of induction" that seeks in human experience a new understanding of happiness, value, purpose, and meaning (Dilthey, "Present Day" 150). While life-philosophy's direct reference to life is an advance over metaphysical methods, Dilthey argues that it fails to offer a sufficient response to the problem of his age ("Present Day" 150-151). Life-philosophy fails because it claims to discover through its method a universally valid or definitive formulation of the happiness, value, purpose, and meaning of human life (Dilthey, "Present Day" 151). Despite its rootedness in human life, life-philosophy makes the same mistake as metaphysics did by trying to "grasp an ultimate unconditioned" (Dilthey, "Present Day" 151). It transgresses the historical, geographical, and personal limits of its thought and "becomes completely false when it takes its corner for the world in general" (Dilthey, "Present Day" 151). As examples of this kind of life-philosophy Dilthey discusses Schopenhauer, Carlyle, and Maeterlinck ("Present Day" 151-152).

Dilthey's critique of these life-philosophers amounts to arguing that they don't take seriously the valid insights of historical consciousness. They abandon traditional metaphysical methods but still reach for the unattainable goal of a "ultimate

unconditioned" and thereby unjustly ignore the historical rootedness of their views (Dilthey, "Present Day" 151). "History is their refutation" because they have not appropriately adapted philosophy to the inescapable facts of historical awareness (Dilthey, "Present Day" 151). Historical consciousness and the contingency that it implies are serious problems that philosophy must address in its reorientation. Dilthey does not make the same mistake because he does not claim to solve the riddle of life in a universal and unconditional manner ("Dream" 164). According to Dilthey, "philosophy must seek the inner coherence of what is cognizable, not in the world, but in human beings" ("Types" 254). It must abandon the metaphysical aspiration of reducing *the world* to a single system of conceptual thought and instead seek a universal perspective of *human life* which preserves the manifold philosophies which characterize human history. Dilthey does not abandon philosophy's essence or its search for universal validity; he argues only that historical consciousness changes the kind of universality that is possible. The distinction between seeking the inner coherence of the world and seeking the inner coherence of human life will become clearer as more of Dilthey's thought is reconstructed. It is enough for our present purpose to know that Dilthey takes the insights of historical consciousness as serious truths which must change the kind of universal validity that philosophy seeks.

Dilthey's Solution: A Theory of World-Views

We have seen how Dilthey's philosophical age was characterized by a profound identity crisis that threatened to rob philosophy of its traditional methods, aims, and social

functions. A key component of this identity crisis is the rise of historicism, which confronted philosophical systems with their own historical contingency. This was an especially powerful criticism because philosophy had traditionally understood itself as searching for unconditional truth about the world. We have seen how Dilthey understood this crisis and we explored his rejection of traditional metaphysics and other life-philosophies. Dilthey took historical consciousness seriously and sought to reconceptualize philosophy to reflect this fact while still maintaining philosophy's claim to universal validity. With all this in mind we can now investigate Dilthey's response to the challenge of history.

Dilthey begins his reorientation of philosophy by noting that the destructive force of historical consciousness also points the way to its resolution. In "Dream", he writes that "the very historical consciousness which has produced this absolute doubt can also define its bounds" (Dilthey, "Dream" 167). Historical consciousness defines its own bounds because it directs philosophy's attention towards the rootedness of its systems in the fabric of human life. This is what Dilthey meant when he said that philosophy must seek the inner coherence of human beings: historical consciousness reveals to us how philosophical systems are "among the most important and revealing creations of life" ("Types" 254). They are the doors into a universal understanding of human mental life which, as we will see, has the power to overcome the destructive force of historical consciousness.

This refection on historical consciousness leads Dilthey to an analysis of philosophy's roots in the structures of human psychic life. He begins his analysis of life by considering the fact that we can suspend the typically forward-looking attitude of our thought and action by entering into a state of repose (Dilthey, "Types" 254). This state of repose is significant because it goes beyond considering life in terms of causality by looking at the *life-concerns* which characterize our relationships with other people and things (Dilthey, "Types" 254). To put it simply, the state of repose involves a kind of responsiveness that allows us to feel the various ways that we relate to other people and things. Each life concern paints life with its unique colour (Dilthey, "Types" 257). Certain parts of life "make me happy, expand my existence, and increase my strength, while others exert pressure on me and limit me" (Dilthey, "Types" 254-255). Essentially, the objects and people that fill up reality occupy a definite space and meaning within our life, and we understand them as objectifications "of life and spirit" (Dilthey, "Types" 255). Dilthey concludes from this that "the life of each individual creates its own world out of itself" ("Types" 255).

The next step of Dilthey's investigation of life through the lens of historical consciousness reveals that we can form life-experience by reflecting on life and creating "objective and general knowledge" from our specific experiences and relationships ("Types" 255). Reflection on an experience with the beauty of a sunset may give rise to knowledge about the value of such an experience. But the formation of life-experience is not just isolated to the individual, for as Dilthey argues, "the interconnectedness of

individuals" produces a "general life-experience" ("Types" 255). In other words, communities, like the individuals that compose them, generate their own knowledge about life concerns and the world to which they apply.

Dilthey argues further that analysis of the changing and diverse structures of life-experience reveals that life is "full of contradictions" and "completely enigmatic as a whole" ("Types" 256). He refers to the contradictory and fractured nature of life as "the riddle of life" and argues that we cannot unify our life-concerns and experiences into a single whole (Dilthey, "Types" 256). At the center of this riddle and irreducibility is our encounter with the reality of death (Dilthey, "Types" 256-257). He argues that death will always be an "incomprehensive counterpart to life" which can make us view life as something "alien and fearsome" (Dilthey, "Types" 257). In addition to the incomprehensibility of death, Dilthey refers to the transitory and finite nature of all things as well as the destructive power of nature as sources of alienation ("Types" 257).

Fortunately, the life-experiences which reveal these riddles are also the source of life moods and attitudes which, through the creation of world-views, assist people in overcoming the alienation of life (Dilthey, "Types" 257-8). The repetition of certain experiences can create specific moods and attitudes through which we interpret the world (Dilthey, "Types" 257). While these moods change over time with new experiences, certain types of mood persist within specific individuals (Dilthey, "Types" 257). For instance, Dilthey discusses how some people prioritize finding enjoyment in the present while others strive after great goals that give them a satisfying sense of permanence

("Types" 257). Dilthey also discusses how some "solemn natures" seek something permanent beyond this world in light of its transience ("Types" 257). For Dilthey, each of these life moods are equally valid since they are all rooted in a specific response to the same riddle of life. For some "the world appears strange, a colourful, volatile drama," while for others the "world is familiar like a home" (Dilthey, "Types" 257).

Dilthey argues that world-views emerge from these life moods as attempts to solve the riddle of life ("Types" 258). Given this shared origin, world-views tend to exhibit the same structure as a nexus that uses a world-picture to derive meaning, ideals, and principles for action (Dilthey, "Types" 258). This structure itself, Dilthey argues, is rooted in the "laws of the psyche," which state that we form "determinations of the will" based on an evaluative attitude that is grounded in our "conception of what is actual" ("Types" 258). Essentially, our understanding of what exists grounds our ability to evaluate different objects and conditions, and these evaluations in turn determine what actions and ends we pursue. Our psychic life, as a productive system, expresses itself in the structural configuration of world-views (Dilthey, "Types" 259). This expression of psychic life in world-views warrants more attention.

Let's us begin with the first part of world-view structures: cognizing what is actual. As noted above, Dilthey argues that people form a specific world-picture on the basis of their cognition of the world ("Types" 259). Through "elementary operations" of thought we "articulate the basic structures of actual reality" based on our perception of ourselves and the world (Dilthey, "Types" 259). We build a conceptual world that is stable

and allows for a kind of freedom over reality; we make judgments and create concepts that seek to grasp what is universally valid in actual reality (Dilthey, "Types" 259).

We build an evaluative attitude on top of our cognition of the actual through our capacity to feel. Dilthey writes that this capacity to feel allows us to enjoy our existence as a value ("Types" 259), and then consider other objects and people in terms of their ability to "raise and expand our existence" ("Types" 259). We determine the productive value of a thing through its ability to "aid or harm us" (Dilthey, "Types" 259). Dilthey argues further that we seek out an "absolute standard of assessment" for these values by trying to place them in relation to the world ("Types" 259). As such, these values take on a meaning in relation to the whole of life and conversely the whole of life "receives a sense" (Dilthey, "Types" 259). The emotional relationships which underlie value and meaning act as the foundation of a world-picture through which we evaluate and understand life (Dilthey, "Types" 259).

The third, and highest level, of world-view formation corresponds to the determinations of will and involves "the ideals, the highest good, and the supreme principles through which a world-view obtains, for the first time, its practical energy" (Dilthey, "Types" 259). Cognition and evaluation, on their own, provide no impetus for action. It is only when our world-view integrates with our capacity to will that it can imbue us with direction and motivation. The world-view moves beyond its function as an image through which we view the world to become a nexus that orients us and determines action. "The world-view now becomes formative, creative, and reformative" (Dilthey,

"Types" 259). It is worth noting that this level of world-view itself develops in stages (Dilthey, "Types" 260). It involves intentions, striving, the setting of purposes, the consideration of means, and finally the creation of a comprehensive life-plan, highest good, norms of action, and ideal for the cultivation of self and culture (Dilthey, "Types" 261).

It should be clear that world-views "are not products of thought" (Dilthey, "Types" 262). The cognition of what is actual is an important step in the formation and development of world-views but it does not capture the full picture (Dilthey, "Types" 262). World-views are deeply rooted in our "life-conduct, life-experience, and the overall structure of our psychic life" (Dilthey, "Types" 262). Through the creation and development of world-views the riddle of life transforms from an irreducible and "confused" set of problems into a "conscious and necessary system of problems and solutions" (Dilthey, "Types" 260). Each world-view untangles the nexus of contradictions that lie at the heart of life and attempts to solve them in accordance with its specific structure. World-views, Dilthey argues, develop into full explications of their implicit nature and structure ("Types" 260). Through this development, world-views obtain "permanence, stability, and strength" as products of history (Dilthey, "Types" 260).

Given that world-views are historical products rooted in our life-experience and psyche, they manifest in a variety of different shapes despite their common structure. Dilthey writes that many factors determine the specific shape a world-view takes ("Types" 260). He writes of large-scale factors like climate, political organization, history,

and geo-political context as well as small scale factors like individual difference and personal milieu (Dilthey, "Types" 260). Dilthey argues from analogy that individual world-views compete for power in the same way that diverse life forms fight for survival in the natural world ("Types" 260).

We have already seen how world-views, on Dilthey's account, emerge from our life-experience and aim to solve the riddle of life. Dilthey expands on this idea by arguing that there is a lawful relation in human life that moves human beings to seek "inner stability" in the face of the nature's restless change and power over us ("Types" 260). We move from a state of "flux" and "inconstancy" towards the creation of a stable evaluative framework on which we can build solid purposes (Dilthey, "Types" 260). We want to impose order and stability on the chaotic face of life. This motivation behind the formation of world-views also explains their competition. "World-views which further understanding of life and lead to useful life-goals endure and drive out lesser world-views" (Dilthey, "Types" 260).

It is important to notice that Dilthey qualifies this evolutionary view of world-views by arguing that there is an "incalculable moment" that affects world-view formation and success ("Types" 261). This incalculable moment includes the "variations of life, the succession of eras, changes in scientific situation, and the genius of nations and individuals" (Dilthey, "Types" 261). He seems not to explain how the material conditions of a given age affect which kinds of world-views emerge and survive. Nevertheless, incalculable factors determine which problems related to the riddle of life

emerge in a given context and how they are responded to (Dilthey, "Types" 261). There are "ever new combinations of life-experience, moods, and thoughts" which affect the formation, development, and competition of world-views (Dilthey, "Types" 261).

In addition to their common structure and diversity, historical comparison shows that world-views tend to coalesce into common types that persist over time (Dilthey, "Types" 261). Specific instances of a world-view type may be destroyed or refuted but the "great types uphold themselves alongside each other as autocratic, indemonstrable, and indestructible" (Dilthey, "Types" 262). Dilthey takes the persistence of diverse world-view types as evidence that no world-view has advanced so much as one step on the path towards universal validity ("Types" 262). Recall that Dilthey believes history "causes relativist problems" because it undermines "human universals" by providing a "survey of the *totality* of human differences" (Kinzel 31). Dilthey's respect for human differences shows in his theory of world-views even as it transcends relativity by positing a universal structure of human psychic life. In fact, the great types persist precisely because they are rooted in different and irreducible qualities of human life-experience. Each type's "rootedness in life endures and continues to be active and is always producing new configurations" (Dilthey, "Types" 262).

The next task is to understand what the great types of world view are and what features of life and culture they are rooted in. Dilthey argues that world-views are conditioned by the cultural domains from which they arise ("Types" 262). He argues further that the domains of economy, society, law, and government act as "the foundation

of culture" (Dilthey, "Types" 262). These foundational domains do not on their own create world-views because they are conditioned by a division of labour that restricts the individual will to a specific role within a predefined system (Dilthey, "Types" 262-3). In other words, these domains do not create world-views because individuals working within them do not aim to comprehend, evaluate, and direct the entire course of human life. In these domains, individuals view life in terms of "a limited task within a definite domain" (Dilthey, "Types" 263).

In contrast to these important but restrictive cultural domains stands the religious, artistic, and metaphysical world-views of geniuses who live in a "region of freedom" that seeks "an understanding of life that should be able to face the given with an unfettered and sovereign attitude" (Dilthey, "Types" 263). The "worthwhile and powerful world-views" to which these free domains give rise are of special interest for our investigation of the challenge of history. Despite their relative freedom, Dilthey argues that religious, artistic, and metaphysical world-views have different laws of formation, different structures, and different types ("Types" 263). By investigating the unique aspects of these different world-views we can achieve a more complete picture of world-views and their role in overcoming the historicist challenge.

Religious World-Views

Dilthey argues that the distinctive life-concern at the root of religious world-views is the experience of depending upon an "unfamiliar" and "invisible" world that is beyond the scope of our control and cognition ("Types" 262). Experiences of central importance

to early humanity, such as hunting, war, harvest, sickness, old age, and death, seem to be decided by forces emanating from this invisible world (Dilthey, "Types" 262). As a result, Dilthey writes that early humans sought to influence this world through "prayer, offerings, and submission" ("Types" 263). This desire to unite with higher powers led to the creation of religious vocations within the human community which over time became more organized and distinct (Dilthey, "Types" 263-4). This tradition of religious-life experience develops over the course of history and produces a "spiritual ordering of life" (Dilthey, "Types" 264). Dilthey refers to the distinctive nature of religious world-views as "the efficacy of the invisible" ("Types" 264).

Religious life-experience invests objects and people with meaning in virtue of the efficacy they are considered to possess from the supernatural world (Dilthey, "Types" 264). The invisible world of the supernatural is believed to work through finite things and people to shape the world (Dilthey, "Types" 264). The evidence of the efficacy of religious belief is the worship of holy sites, people, images, and sacraments (Dilthey, "Types" 264). This experience of the efficacy of the invisible grounds religious life-experience and institutions but it is the specific experience of religious genius at various points in history that constitutes the genesis of true religious world-views (Dilthey, "Types" 264-265). Dilthey argues that their "concentrated religious experience" unifies the various threads of religious life-experience into religious world-views "whose essence is to derive the meaning of what is actual, the value of life, and the practical ideal from a relationship to the invisible" ("Types" 265).

Despite the diverse range of religious world-views that have arisen over the course of history, Dilthey argues that there are three main types which stand the test of time ("Types" 265). First, there are religious world-views that understand the invisible as "an immanence of world-reason" that orders life and nature (Dilthey, "Types" 265). Second, there are world-views which center "a spiritual All-One" which grounds the unity, truth, and value of all particular things and to which all such things must return (Dilthey, "Types" 265). Finally, there are religious world-views that introduce "a creative divine will that brings forth the world and creates man in its own image or stands in opposition to a realm of evil and enlists the pious into its service for this struggle" (Dilthey, "Types" 265). All three of the great religious world-view types conflict with more worldly oriented outlooks such that some form of naturalism frequently arises in contrast to them (Dilthey, "Types" 265).

Dilthey argues that religious world-views tend to have a "definite kinship" with systems of metaphysics such that the conflict between religious world-views at an early stage in history prepares for the conflict that arises between different metaphysical systems ("Types" 265). Despite this close relationship, religious world-views are always fundamentally characterized by an obscure theological core that will never be fully elucidated or rationally grounded (Dilthey, "Types" 265). It is this obscure origin and the structure that arises out of it that fundamentally characterizes all religious world-views and distinguishes them from their metaphysical counterparts (Dilthey, "Types" 266). In fact, it is the religious world-view's reliance on a one-sided relationship to the invisible

and incognizable world of the supernatural that explains its limitation as world-view (Dilthey, "Types" 266). The "higher beings" of religious world-views attain their character through their relationship to our life concerns (Dilthey, "Types" 265). We paint them with our own colours, as it were, and maintain the relationship through a one-sided experience of "pleading, requesting, and sacrificing" (Dilthey, "Types" 265).

Poetic World-Views

The next cultural domain of interest for our investigation of world-views is that of art. Dilthey opens this analysis by arguing that the significance of art works lies in their ability to create an "ideal expression of life-concerns" from "something singular" in the nexus of life ("Types" 266). Art selects a particular aspect of life and draws out the life-concerns which inherently characterize it. However, artistic works themselves do not constitute the creation of a world-view as such. The relationship between a work of art and a world-view is secondary (Dilthey, "Types" 266-267). To explain this secondary relation, Dilthey looks to the course of history. As artistic expression developed and "deepened" under the reign of religion, the life-attitude of artists became freely expressed through the "inner form" or structure of their works (Dilthey, "Types" 267). Artists like "Michelangelo, Beethoven, or Richard Wagner" developed their own world-view on the basis of an inner drive and then expressed the fundamental life-attitude of that world-view in their art (Dilthey, "Types" 267).

This relationship between world-views and works of art holds for all mediums of artistic activity though poetry has a special relationship to world-views in light of

language's unique ability to express the significance of everything that is experienced (Dilthey, "Types" 267).[8] Like other forms of art, poetry frees an event from its place in the restless advance of time and uses it to express the related life-attitude and life-concerns which constitute its meaning (Dilthey, "Types" 266). Poetry also gives us access to "life-possibilities" that we wouldn't otherwise be able to experience (Dilthey, "Types" 267). The distinctive character of poetic world-views is their ability to "let us see the significance of events, people, and things from the perspective of life-concerns" (Dilthey, "Types" 268). Whereas religious world-views prioritize our relationship to an invisible world, poetic world-views prioritize our affective relationship to life. The foundation of poetic world-views lies in the universal life moods which arise from the need to consolidate our experience of life-concerns (Dilthey, "Types" 267). In other words, our life-concerns do not remain isolated instances of significance but come together to form a unified mood. These universal life moods underlie and are embodied within the work of great artists (Dilthey, "Types" 268). These universal moods, by grabbing hold of and expressing the essence of individual life-concerns, capture the "poetic consciousness of the meaning of life" (Dilthey, "Types" 267-268). That is to say, poetic world-views interpret and seek to solve the riddle of life through the life-concerns we experience. As Dilthey puts it, "the riddle of life is concentrated in an inner nexus of life-concerns that interweaves human beings, their fates, and life-environment" ("Types" 268). Put another

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[8] Dilthey has a broad conception of poetry which includes epics, dramas, and novels (Dilthey 267-268).

way, poetic world-views develop and ultimately aim to make "life understandable from itself" (Dilthey, "Types" 268).

Given that poetic world-views arise from the life-view and life-attitude of poets, which are themselves natural products of life and life-concerns, poetic world-views always reveal new aspects of life (Dilthey, "Types" 268). Poetry "reveals infinite possibilities for seeing, evaluating, and creatively advancing life" (Dilthey, "Types" 268). There are always new experiences, new life-concerns, new ways of viewing and relating to life, and therefore new ways of understanding life from its own perspective. Dilthey writes of Stendhal and Balzac seeing "in life a web of illusions, passions, beauty, and decay created by dark impulses rooted in a nature without purpose; a web in which a strong will is victorious" ("Types" 268). In contrast, "Goethe sees in life a creative force that unites organic formations, human development, and the orders of society into one worthwhile coherent whole" (Dilthey, "Types" 268). Both examples seek to understand life from the perspective of life-concerns and yet come to very different conclusions about the essence of life. Dilthey closes his analysis of poetic world-views by arguing that they prepare the way for the great types of metaphysical world-view and also make them accessible to a greater number of people ("Types" 269).

To summarize, poetic world-views are created from the universal life moods of great poets and are expressed in their literary achievements. Despite developing under the reign of religion, poetic world-views do not prioritize the efficacy of the invisible. Instead, they prioritize understanding life from its own perspective. That is to say, poetic

world-views are structured around the aim of unifying the individual life-concerns of great poets and expressing the essence of these life concerns as the meaning of life. Like religious world-views, poetic world-views take an important step in the formation of metaphysical world-views by expressing in artistic form the essence of the universal life-moods that also underlie metaphysics.

Metaphysical World-Views

Metaphysical world-views are the final form of world-view that Dilthey considers. Like their religious and poetic counterparts, the great metaphysical world-views of history are rooted in the life-experience and life-moods of great thinkers as they are shaped by the contexts within which they live. Metaphysical world-views emerge in history as a response to the demand for universally valid knowledge, which arises from the "whole process of the genesis and consolidation of world-views" (Dilthey, "Types" 269). The drive behind all world-views, the drive towards inner stability and a firm orientation in the world, moves beyond the poetic expression of the essence of life and demands universally valid knowledge (Dilthey, "Types" 269). The "bizarre and extreme" theological core of religious world-views cannot stand up to the critique of reason and, as a result, the religious reliance on faith, tradition, and authority gives way to "rationally based validity" (Dilthey, "Types" 269). The structure of metaphysical world-views is determined by this will to universally valid knowledge (Dilthey, "Types" 269). Religious and poetic world-views prepare the way for metaphysics, therefore, but they are fundamentally structured around different principles (Dilthey, "Types" 269).

To further explain the structure and development of metaphysical world-views, Dilthey gives a short genealogy of their origin and development in Babylonia, Egypt, and the Greek colonies of Ionia ("Types" 269-270). He argues that the first determining factor for metaphysical world-views is their relationship to science (Dilthey, "Types" 270). It was through its relationship to science that metaphysics expanded on the world-picture of sensory experience, objectified feelings and will into "concepts of values, goods, purposes, and rules," and applied logic and epistemology to the riddle of life (Dilthey, "Types" 270). In their attempts to solve the riddle of life, metaphysical world-views use the "conditioned and finite givens" of life to argue for "a universal being, a first cause, a highest good, and ultimate purpose" (Dilthey, "Types" 270). Metaphysical world-views take the limited representations and concepts of science and use them to "fashion auxiliary concepts" that aim to reach beyond experience (Dilthey, "Types" 270).

The second determining factor for the structure of metaphysical world-views is their relationship to culture (Dilthey, "Types" 270). Philosophy permeates, contributes to, and gains from every purposive structure of culture (Dilthey, "Types" 270). Philosophy defines the procedures and cognitive value of the particular sciences, develops the "unmethodical life-experiences" of literature into "a general assessment of life," systematizes the concepts of law, relates political form and technique to the highest aims of human life, destroys the inaccessible cores of dogma, and rationalizes art by providing it with a purpose (Dilthey, "Types" 270).

The final determining factor that Dilthey considers is the location of each metaphysical system in the history of philosophy ("Types" 271). He argues that every metaphysical system approaches the problem of life from one perspective and set of concepts (Dilthey, "Types" 271). The contrast between the search for logical coherence and their historical position means that metaphysical world-views take on a dual structure, being simultaneously representative and singular (Dilthey, "Types" 271). They are representative because they express in systematic form a "definite position of scientific thought," and they are singular because the specific details of this position are unique to their structure (Dilthey, "Types" 271). In other words, we can group metaphysical world-views into types without implying that each instance of a given type is identical (Dilthey, "Types" 271). Dilthey argues further that every metaphysical system seeks to be the single source of universally valid knowledge. The metaphysical geniuses of history therefore always interpret the differences introduced by the various systems as a contingent reality that must be overcome ("Types" 271).

It is clear from these three determining factors that Dilthey treats philosophy as a "psychological, social, and historical manifestation" (Steizinger 238). It is psychological because philosophy is clearly rooted in the universal structures of human psychic life. It emerges from life in the development of world-views as the drive for universal validity. This drive reflects the human mind's desire for stability and orientation in the face of life's constant change and uncertainty. As Steizinger puts it, "philosophy is an enhancement of this pursuit of inner stability by reflection" and is therefore a "natural

continuation of life experience" (Steizinger 238). This core psychological function of seeking stability through universal validity has implicit consequences for philosophy's relationship to historical contingency. Philosophy by its very nature strives to overcome the chaos and contingency of life by providing us with a fixed point (Steizinger 238). Steizinger argues that defining philosophy as a key psychological function allows Dilthey to invest it with "regularity, necessity, and universality" (Steizinger 238).

This search for a fixed point in response to the chaos of life is something that characterizes both Dilthey and Camus' work but there are subtle differences which are worth exploring. In *The Myth of Sisyphus,* Camus responds to his experience of life's absurdity by creating a universal normative response that he argues *logically* follows from critical engagement with the world. The fixed point that Camus looks for and tries to create in response to the riddle of life is a *result* of critical consciousness. In other words, he attempts to create a universal world-view. This attempt is ultimately unsatisfying because it does not adequately address its own contingency and historicity. It fails to reflect upon its root in Camus' own life-experience and thereby unjustly casts aside other truthful world-views. Dilthey on the other hand responds to the chaos of life by finding a fixed point in the *activity* of philosophy. There is no universal world-view but there is a universal activity of creating philosophical world-views in response to our common psychological needs. Dilthey's fixed point is stronger than that of Camus because it preserves the contingency and plurality of responses to life without abandoning universality all together.

Philosophy is also clearly social because the philosophical world-views we create are always partially determined by the society that surrounds us. Philosophy "forms a cultural system that establishes different kinds of connections," including the creation of various institutions like "schools, academies, or universities" (Steizinger 238). These institutions and other forms of social bond place individual philosophers in a social context that shapes their work. There is consequently a give and take between society and individual philosophers.

Philosophy is finally clearly historical because every system of thought emerges at a definite place in the history of philosophy. Dilthey stresses the relationship between student and teacher as a unity that produces a stable development of conceptual structures. Philosophy's "tradition and authority" provide it with "unity and continuity" (Steizinger 239). Dilthey's empirical analysis of the three great types of metaphysical world-view clearly indicate the ways that the philosophical tradition conditions contemporary systems. This has significant implications for Dilthey's re-orientation of philosophy because it demonstrates that history does not produce isolated moments in a sea of absolute relativity; instead, there is a unified tradition of philosophy that is rooted in its psychological essence and extends through every system of thought.

Dilthey argues that differences arise among metaphysical philosophies from the "rational character" of these works ("Types" 271). That is to say, metaphysical world-views are not differentiated solely according to their place in history; instead, difference is built into the very method of seeking universally valid knowledge. Some differences

act only as a stage in the overall development of metaphysics, such as dogmatism and criticism (Dilthey, "Types" 271). However, other differences persist across history because they are necessary products of metaphysical attempts to "present in a systematic way all that is contained in the apprehension of actual reality, the assessment of life, and the setting of purposes" (Dilthey, "Types" 271). For instance, when we consider the problem of grounding metaphysics the tensions between empiricism and rationalism, realism and idealism arise (Dilthey, "Types" 271). There is also the opposition between "the one and the many, being and becoming, causality and teleology" (Dilthey, "Types" 271). There are similar confrontations in practical philosophy, such as the difference between utilitarianism and deontology (Dilthey, "Types" 272). Reason can apply opposing concepts to the same metaphysical domain in its search for universal knowledge (Dilthey, "Types" 272). With the aim of overcoming this internal divisiveness, some philosophers tried to classify metaphysical systems into comprehensive categories that reflect the conceptual oppositions built into the structure of metaphysical world-views (Dilthey, "Types" 272).

Dilthey argues that such conceptual development is important because it lays the groundwork for the creation and unification of the various positive sciences ("Types" 272). However, metaphysics goes beyond the limited knowledge of the positive sciences because it seeks to apply scientific methods to the "totality of the universe, and life itself" (Dilthey, "Types" 272). To expand on this argument I shall investigate the three great metaphysical world-view types and their attempts to claim universal validity.

The Three Great Types of Metaphysical World-View

The first great type of metaphysical world-view that Dilthey considers is naturalism. He begins his analysis by considering the typical life attitude that underlies all instances of naturalism (Dilthey, "Types" 275). Naturalism is based on the view that life "consists in satisfying animal drives and remains subject to the external world from which we draw sustenance" (Dilthey, "Types" 275). Naturalism is based on the insight that we are determined by and dependent upon the natural world (Dilthey, "Types" 275). Dilthey argues that this life-view is as old as the human race and always characterizes some portion of the human population ("Types" 275).[9] The form of behaviour that corresponds to this life attitude involves placing the will under the power of "the instinctual animal life" of the body as it relates to the external world (Dilthey, "Types" 275). Thought too is placed in service to our animal nature and is used to promote its satisfaction (Dilthey, "Types" 275).

Dilthey argues that in addition to characterizing metaphysical naturalism, this underlying life attitude finds expression in the literature of many cultures, especially as a reaction to religious rule ("Types" 275). Both sides of this recurring conflict serve a purpose. Religion provides a "necessary but frightful disciplining" and naturalism affirms the legitimacy and value of natural life (Dilthey, "Types" 275). It is only when this life-attitude becomes a philosophy that true naturalism is born (Dilthey, "Types" 275-6). On this underlying life attitude naturalism builds a philosophical system that argues that

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[9] For examples of naturalism throughout history, see (Dilthey, 275).

"only the processes of nature are actual" (Dilthey, "Types" 276). It is the physical reality of nature which grounds all the facts of life including those of spirituality and consciousness (Dilthey, "Types" 276). Dilthey argues that the justification for naturalism's various philosophical systems lies in the "extent and force" of the physical reality which is given in experience ("Types" 276). The physical reality of life is so far reaching that theoretical consideration of it results in the conclusion that we are "entirely subject to this physical order" (Dilthey, "Types" 276). Naturalism's epistemology is sensualism, its metaphysics is materialism, and its practical philosophy prioritizes the value of pleasure and submission to the all-powerful course of nature (Dilthey, "Types" 276). All three of these aspects deserve more attention.

Dilthey argues that naturalism's epistemology, that is, sensualism, has two main components. First, sensualism argues that human cognition and its products are ultimately grounded in external sense-experience (Dilthey, "Types" 277). Second, sensualism argues that sensual pleasure and displeasure are the only criteria for our "evaluative and purposive determinations" (Dilthey, "Types" 277). Dilthey argues that these two core components demonstrate that sensualism is a direct product of the naturalistic life attitude that I have discussed ("Types" 277). Dilthey then traces the historical development of sensualism from its origin in the work of Protagoras through its advance under David Hume to its positivist culmination in D'Alembert, Feuerbach, Moleschott, Büchner, and Comte ("Types" 276-278).

Dilthey opens his analysis of naturalism's metaphysics by distinguishing mechanistic explanation from mechanistic metaphysics, where the former is a positive scientific procedure which is compatible with many world-views and the later is a metaphysical outlook that reduces actuality to mechanism ("Types" 279). In mechanistic metaphysics, particular material elements are considered the source of all motion no less than spiritual facts (Dilthey, "Types" 279). "All the inwardness that religion, myth, and poetry had ascribed to nature is removed" (Dilthey, "Types" 279). Dilthey argues that naturalism only takes on a scientific form with the emergence of mechanistic metaphysics ("Types" 279). The central problem that characterizes all versions of naturalist metaphysics is the question of how to derive the spiritual world from the mechanistic movements of the physical world (Dilthey, "Types" 279-280). Dilthey quickly surveys several historical attempts to provide such a mechanistic metaphysics, arguing that the persuasive and explanatory power of these systems lies in the fact that their foundation is "an external, spatial, palpable reality that is accessible to exact natural-scientific thought" ("Types" 280).[10] In other words, these theories attempt to explain all that is given in life on the basis of a rigorous understanding of empirical reality. In addition to its inherent persuasive power and rootedness in human life, Dilthey argues that materialistic metaphysics emerges in history as a counter-force against the obscure metaphysics of religion and spirituality ("Types" 280). Its historical role has been to promote the separation of Church and State (Dilthey, "Types" 280). Under this materialistic

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[10] Dilthey discusses Epicureanism, Lucretius, Hobbes, Feuerbach, Moleschott, and Büchner ("Types" 280).

metaphysics, value and purpose are "blindly generated products" of nature which are important to us only because of our inner life and feelings (Dilthey, "Types" 280).

We come now to naturalism's practical philosophy and ideal for life. Dilthey argues that naturalism's relationship to nature is constituted by the two components of passion and thought ("Types" 280). Given this dual structure, naturalism's practical ideal is also determined by both passion and thought (Dilthey, "Types" 280). From the perspective of passion, human beings are completely determined by the course of nature (Dilthey, "Types" 280). Yet, through thought, we are able to rise above the determinism of nature (Dilthey, "Types" 280). These two poles of naturalism give rise to several distinct historical ideals (Dilthey, "Types" 280). Dilthey first discusses the hedonistic ideal of Aristippus, who argued that our actions should aim at maximizing the pleasure derived from "the optimal motion occurring in our sensory organism" ("Types" 281). This ideal is based on the belief that perception, feeling, and desire are all products of the way our senses interact with the external world (Dilthey, "Types" 281). Pleasure arises from an optimal relation between our sense faculties and the external world as they move together (Dilthey, "Types" 281). Dilthey then analyzes a second ideal in the history of naturalism which he argues is expressed in the work of Lucretius ("Types" 281). Lucretius expressed in his poetry "an ideal of tranquility" which arises when one "identifies with the steadfast, lasting coherence of the universe" (Dilthey, "Types" 281). By adopting the cosmic world-perspective of Greek atomism, Lucretius was able to rise above the contingent concerns of human life and experience a deep peace of mind (Dilthey, "Types" 281). Reflecting the

tension between passion and thought is a third movement in the practical ideal of naturalism, which locates human well-being in "enduring spiritual pleasure" as much as in sensuous pleasure (Dilthey, "Types" 281). Dilthey provides as evidence the long tradition ranging from Epicureanism to modern thinkers who tried to explain in naturalistic terms the development of human culture ("Types" 282). That Dilthey considers Lucretius a representative of the second practical ideal of naturalism despite the fact that he was an Epicurean is a sign that Dilthey's typology of philosophical world-views is an insufficient account of the history of philosophy. I will develop this line of critique further when I apply Dilthey's theory of world-views to Albert Camus.

Despite the many strengths of naturalistic world-views, Dilthey argues that they ultimately fall into an "endless dialectic" with respect to their position on life ("Types" 276). Naturalism cannot overcome the fact that its foundation, matter, as a phenomenon of consciousness, cannot be the source of consciousness (Dilthey, "Types" 276). There is also the problem of deriving sensation, feeling, and thought from the movement of matter (Dilthey, "Types" 276). Finally, naturalistic morality is unable to explain the highly variable development of societies across history (Dilthey, "Types" 277).

The second great type of metaphysical world-view is called "the idealism of freedom" (Dilthey, "Types" 282). Dilthey opens his analysis of this world-view type by exploring its origin in "the Athenian spirit" and its continuation through Roman philosophy, Christian apologetics, Scottish philosophy, German idealism, and French philosophers ("Types" 282). He argues that a defining characteristic of the idealism of

freedom is its opposition to all forms of naturalism and pantheism on the basis of its completely different conception of life (Dilthey, "Types" 282-283). Dilthey traces the constant battle between these world-views as it is expressed in the systems of past philosophers ("Types" 283). Following this historical evidence, he dives into his analysis of the life attitude that he argues characterizes all proponents of the idealism of freedom, namely one that "confronts all givens with sovereign self-sufficiency and contains within itself the independence of the spiritual from all these givens" (Dilthey, "Types" 284). Built into the very foundation of this attitude is the belief that the essence of the human spirit is fundamentally distinct from the "physical causality" of the natural world (Dilthey, "Types" 284). This life attitude is also characterized by a recognition that its sovereign spirit is connected to other people "by means of an ethical norm or duty" (Dilthey, "Types" 284). Human beings under this attitude are both internally free and bound by ethical norms (Dilthey, "Types" 284). The "spontaneous and free vitality" of the individual spirit limits and is limited by the equally spontaneous vitality of other people (Dilthey, "Types" 284). "This vital volitional way of determining and being-determined" is projected beyond our relationship to other people and characterizes every relationship we have (Dilthey, "Types" 284). Consequently, the divine is not to be found in physical causality but in a removed purpose-giving reason that is independent of nature (Dilthey, "Types" 284). In other words, the idealism of freedom is founded on a life attitude that prioritizes the volitional aspect of human life. It is the experience of the will as sovereign that grounds the emergence of this world-view type.

Dilthey argues that this world-view type's epistemology is founded upon the "facts of consciousness" and that it gives rise to a diverse range of metaphysical systems ("Types" 285). Attic philosophy first formulated this world-view type's metaphysics as a "formative reason that shapes matter into a world" (Dilthey, "Types" 285). Plato and Aristotle advance a metaphysics based on a recognition that conceptual thought and moral will are connected to a spiritual order that is independent of the natural world (Dilthey, "Types" 285). Roman philosophy formulated this world-view using a unique conception of the will and an "authoritative relation to God" which opened the way for Christian idealists of freedom to replace formative reason with a creator God (Dilthey, "Types" 285). This Christian consciousness eventually gave way to German transcendental philosophy (Dilthey, "Types" 285), the perfection of which is Schiller's account of a supersensible world that is posited as the "will's ideal of endless striving" (Dilthey, "Types" 285). Despite the differences in these accounts, they are all rooted in a life attitude that centers our human freedom. Dilthey argues that this type of world-view is indestructible because it is "the metaphysical consciousness of heroic humanity" which is constantly reborn in every heroic act ("Types" 285).

Nevertheless, just as naturalism as a type is never destroyed despite being plagued by an endless dialectic, so too does the idealism of freedom, as a type, face an insoluble problem (Dilthey, "Types" 286). The idealism of freedom cannot ground itself in universally valid knowledge (Dilthey, "Types" 286). Roman philosophy becomes circular when it attempts to justify its presuppositions about life on the basis of historical norms

which are themselves founded upon Roman presuppositions about life (Dilthey, "Types" 286). Christian philosophy's transcendent spirit is only the "symbolic expression" of the human will sacrificing itself for "the power to bring about a supersensible order" (Dilthey, "Types" 286). Transcendental philosophy and French idealism also fail to provide a universally valid ground for this world-view type (Dilthey, "Types" 286). The idealism of freedom is indestructible despite a succession of failures across history because it is rooted in a life-attitude that recognizes the dignity and power of human agency while also demanding a "reliable norm for establishing goals" (Dilthey, "Types" 286).

The final metaphysical world-view type is what Dilthey calls objective idealism ("Types" 287). Dilthey begins his investigation of objective idealism by considering some of its greatest contributors and surveying the kinship of their metaphysics ("Types" 287). Dilthey writes that Xenophon, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Stoicism, Giordano Bruno, Spinoza, Shaftesbury, Herder, Goethe, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Schleiermacher are all key representatives of objective idealism ("Types" 287). He then considers the specific ways that these thinkers depend upon the metaphysical work of their predecessors (Dilthey, "Types" 287). Dilthey expands on his historical investigation of objective idealism by tracing some of the battles it has fought throughout history against both naturalism and the idealism of freedom ("Types" 288).

The conflict between these systems is clearly evident, Dilthey argues, in their different epistemologies ("Types" 289). We have already seen how naturalism builds a mechanistic view of life upon the uniformity of the physical world (Dilthey, "Types"

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289). We have also seen how the idealists of freedom seek universal validity in the facts of consciousness (Dilthey, "Types" 289). Objective idealism approaches the riddle of life with a completely different method that is rooted in a unique life-attitude (Dilthey, "Types" 289). It arises from a contemplative life attitude, also referred to as meditative, aesthetic, or artistic, that prioritizes the "life of our feelings" (Dilthey, "Types" 289). If naturalism prioritizes our cognition of the actual and the idealism of freedom prioritizes our volitional powers, then the third great world-view type is unsurprisingly rooted in an attitude which priorities our affective capabilities. Through our feelings "we personally experience the richness of life and the value and joy of existence" (Dilthey, "Types" 289). The contemplative attitude of objective idealism expands this personal experience to a universal level such that we imbue the actual world with the values that we feel (Dilthey, "Types" 289). As Dilthey puts it, "the moods evoked in us by what is actual, we rediscover out there" ("Types" 289). This expansion of our feelings, this kinship we feel with world, imbues us with greater personal enjoyment and power (Dilthey, "Types" 289). This attitude amounts to a feeling of oneness with the world and all its particulars. It involves the dissolution of life's dissonances into a "universal harmony of all things" (Dilthey, "Types" 290). We are able to apprehend this universal harmony on the basis of "a simultaneous viewing of all the parts" (Dilthey, "Types" 290). To prove that this is the epistemological form of objective idealism, Dilthey briefly traces the theories of some of its greatest proponents including Heraclitus, the Stoics, Spinoza, Leibniz, Schelling, Schopenhauer, and Schleiermacher ("Types" 290-291).

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Following this journey into the epistemological history of objective idealism, Dilthey returns to the metaphysical formula that is common across all instances of this world-view type. The basic principle of objective idealism is that "all phenomena of the universe are two-sided" (Dilthey, "Types" 291). Through perception, the phenomena of life are given to us as sensible objects that stand in physical relation to one another, while through apprehension from within, these same phenomena form a life-nexus that we can experience in "our own interior life" (Dilthey, "Types" 291). We can experience phenomena as both outer and inner, as external objects we sense and internal components of a whole of which we are also a part. Objective idealism is characterized by and rooted in a "consciousness of affinity" that places us in relation to all things as parts of the same divine whole (Dilthey, "Types" 291). Dilthey argues that this consciousness is first found in several religions and arises in metaphysics as the immanence of all things and values as parts of a whole that has a definite meaning and sense ("Types" 292). The representatives of objective idealism reexperience in their own lives the life of the whole and thereby find in all phenomena "an inner, vital, and divine coherence" (Dilthey, "Types" 292). Corresponding to this metaphysical conception is a determinism which views the parts as determined by the whole and the whole "as subject to inner determination" (Dilthey, "Types" 292).

Despite its rootedness in life-experience, objective idealism too falls victim to a restless dialectic that ultimately results in a recognition of "the insolubility of the problem" that it was formulated to solve (Dilthey, "Types" 292). The world-nexus which

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objective idealism seeks to understand is not cognizable (Dilthey, "Types" 292).

Metaphysics is always limited to projecting specific aspects of the subject's life-nexus

into life "as a world-coherence" (Dilthey, "Types" 292). Attempts to ground objective

idealism in thought fail because a will is always required for any action to exist (Dilthey,

"Types" 292). On the other hand, attempts to ground objective idealism in the will always

fail because they presuppose "purpose-determining thought" (Dilthey, "Types" 292).

Several other irreducible tensions afflict objective idealism and make universal validity

unattainable (Dilthey, "Types" 292). We are left only with "a general attitude or

dispositional world-view" (Dilthey, "Types" 293).

To summarize, all three types of metaphysical world-view, like their poetic and

religious predecessors, fail to achieve the universal validity that world-views inherently

strive towards in the face of life's restless change. Naturalism is rooted in a life attitude

that prioritizes our cognition of the mechanistic natural world and gives rise to normative

ideals based on the value of sensual pleasure or tranquility. The idealism of freedom is

rooted in a life attitude that experiences the sovereignty and ethical norms of the human

spirit as paramount. It is a world-view type that prioritizes our volitional nature and

argues from the facts of consciousness for a universally valid ethical theory. Finally,

objective idealism, as a world-view type, is rooted in a contemplative life-attitude that

imbues the world with the values derived from the life of our feelings. Given this attitude,

objective idealism interprets human life as one vital part of a divine, coherent, and

immanent whole. All three of these great world-view types fail to achieve the universal

validity they seek. Each one, in its effort to totalize reality, gives birth to the irreducible dialectics that reveal their limitations. Despite this inevitable failure, each world-view type continues to exist because of their rootedness in indestructible elements of human life. Each one untangles the riddle of life from a definite perspective and provides the orientation and unity that humans need. The question now becomes what all this means for the problem of historical consciousness discussed earlier.

Reflective Historical Consciousness

With a comprehensive understanding of Dilthey's theory of world-views now in hand we can turn to the implications that he draws from it for the problem of historical contingency. Recall that historical contingency is a problem that philosophy needs to address because it undermines the possibility of universal validity and leaves humanity stranded in uncertainty. Without the confidence provided by universal truth, Dilthey fears that humanity will lose its ability to stabilize and direct itself in the world. If every product of human activity is historically contingent, then philosophy has no universal essence and humanity is forever lost in a sea of relativity. Dilthey develops his response to historical contingency on the basis of his belief that the source of philosophy's woes also contains within itself the seeds of a solution ("Dream" 167). Philosophy must overcome the destructive power of historical contingency by using *reflective* historical consciousness to reveal philosophy's roots in human psychology (Dilthey, "Types" 272). Reflective historical consciousness discovers two key aspects of philosophy's nature which are essential for its response to historical contingency.

The first boundary that reflective historical consciousness uses to accomplish this task is the fact that world-views differentiate themselves in accordance with an inner law ("Dream" 167). We have already seen how religious, poetic, and metaphysical world-view types are rooted in and characterized by unique structures and concerns. This aspect pushes back against the absolute doubt that reflection on historical contingency can induce because it shows that world-views, while limited and relative, still exhibit a form of lawfulness that can be investigated and understood. This boundary shows that philosophical systems are far from being lost in a sea of isolated historical points. There is an inherent lawfulness to the structure of philosophical world-views as they emerge in history from of our psychological need for stability and orientation.

The second liberating boundary of reflective historical consciousness is the recognition that all world-views are "grounded in the nature of the universe and in their relationship to finite, cognitive spirit" (Dilthey, "Dream" 168). Put another way, world-views are "grounded in life itself, in life-experience, in responses to the problem of life" (Dilthey, "Types" 272-273). As a result of this rootedness in human life, they all involve a cognition of what is actual, an evaluation of the actual, and the establishment of purposes (Dilthey, "Types" 273). World-views not only exhibit lawfulness, they also exist in and arise from the same context: the same empirical world and the same psychic structure of human spirit. They are all built upon life moods which seek to solve the riddle of life and overcome alienation. Across all the differences of culture and individuality, there is a shared world and a shared psychic structure that gives rise to lawful world-views which

orient us in life. Historical consciousness liberates the essence of philosophy from destructive doubt by directing us towards its rootedness in the basic fabric of human psychic life.

It is this second boundary that is especially important for Dilthey's attempt to overcome historical contingency. Philosophy is saved from dissolution amid chaotic historical differences because it is rooted in the universal structure of humanity's mental life. Its particular manifestations are historically conditioned in several ways but this partial relativity does not destroy philosophy's unique character and function. "Even when philosophical views are shaped by historically contingent factors, there is nevertheless an essential continuity that unites all philosophical systems" (Kinzel 35). This is the kind of balance between universality and contingency that Dilthey believes other life philosophers failed to grasp when they took their corner for the world at large. Historical contingency does not necessarily destroy philosophy's claim to universality since its various systems are rooted in the same structures of human psychology. Each system "participates in the ahistorical nature of philosophical reasoning" (Kinzel 35).

Given this rootedness, Dilthey argues that all world-views express "within the bounds of our thought, one side of the universe" and are all "to that extent true" ("Dreams" 168). We have already seen this truth in action in our consideration of the three great types of metaphysical world-view. Naturalism, the idealism of freedom, and objective idealism are all rooted in the same empirical world and psychic structure of the human mind. Yet they also all approach the riddle of life on the basis of irreducibly

different life-attitudes. This difference in approach, this one-sidedness, does not mean that world-views are untrue. It only means that they "express the many-sidedness of reality for our understanding in different forms while referring to one truth" (Dilthey, "Dream" 169). They capture and reveal a part of the truth, they show us one side of reality by taking a stance on life and by "being-immersed-in life" (Dilthey, "Types" 274). As Steizinger argues, no world-view's perspective "captures the whole of life, but every perspective is rooted in and represents a particular aspect of life" (Steizinger 239). Furthermore, because they are rooted in irreducibly different aspects of life these world-views "do not necessarily conflict with each other" (Steizinger 239). Conflict between systems is born from the metaphysical attempt to take the part for the whole, to assert one perspective as paramount. This is the "fallacy of metaphysics" that we saw Dilthey reject earlier (Steizinger 239).

Nevertheless, even if Dilthey's decision to root philosophy and its types of world-view in the universal structure of human life overcomes destructive historical consciousness, it seems to accomplish this task by entrenching contingency in the very fabric of human experience. Philosophy being grounded in life means that its world-view types remain relative to one another and incapable of completely reducing the world to a single system of conceptual thought. Consequently, this theory of world-views seems to destroy their claim to universal validity and scope (Steizinger 240). But Dilthey's analysis of reflective historical consciousness does not end here. Historical consciousness does destroy the possibility of a universally valid metaphysics or world-view because we will

never be able to totalize life, to see beyond the curtain, to grasp the "one truth" (Dilthey, "Dream" 169). However, it also "preserves the unity of the human soul" by letting us see deeper into the unfathomable nexus of life (Dilthey, "Dream" 169). It acts as a "philosophy of philosophy" which "overcomes within itself the limitations of the particular manifestations of the metaphysical mind" (Steizinger 240). As a "proper philosophical understanding of life," reflective historical consciousness "does not fall prey to the relativism of particular world-views, since it knows the special character of life" (Steizinger 240). The final truth of historical consciousness is "not the relativity of each world-view, but the sovereignty of the human spirit" and "the positive consciousness" that in each of our attitudes "the same reality of the world is there for us" (Dilthey, "Types" 237).

Steizinger characterizes the tension between the relativity of each world-view and the universality of historical consciousness as an "ambivalent result regarding relativism" (Steizinger 241). The historical expression of life's irreducible aspects in systems of philosophy "implies dependence, limitation, particularity, and transience," but reflective historical consciousness preserves philosophy's claim to "sovereignty, completeness, universality, and infinity" (Steizinger 241). Katherina Kinzel stresses that even though the "universal historical standpoint" overcomes the problem of relativism, world-views themselves do not (Kinzel 37). Their relative validity for Kinzel means that "the conflict between different" world-views "is eternal" (Kinzel 37). For Kinzel, Dilthey does not

overcome the problem of relativism because he builds it into "the ahistorical relation of conceptual thinking to the puzzles of life" (Kinzel 37).

I agree with Steizinger that Dilthey's analysis of the relationship between relative world-views and reflective historical consciousness is ambivalent. Dilthey does make a few more claims about the outcome of historical consciousness but they offer little clarification regarding philosophy's future. For instance, he writes that historical consciousness "breaks the final chains" because it teaches us that every world-view is a part of the unfathomable nexus of life which is accessible "to the vital core of our being" (Dilthey, "Dream" 169). He also argues that we must take solace in the fact that all world-views contain a part of the truth and we must allow our own world-view to take "energetic hold of us" (Dilthey, "Dream" 169). But neither of these points fully clarifies how philosophy is supposed to proceed in balancing the creation of contingent world-views and access to reflective historical consciousness. His thought on philosophy's relation to science, discussed at the start of this chapter, provides very clear and optimistic direction for future philosophers engaging with the empirical sciences but the same cannot be said for philosophy's relationship to metaphysics and history. On the one hand, we saw Dilthey reject academic metaphysics rather swiftly as exercises in wishful thinking, but he also clearly argues that metaphysical world-views and their search for universal validity are a natural development of the human mind's search for stability and coherence. When Dilthey writes that we should let our limited world-views take energic hold of us, does that include maintaining their claim to universal validity? If so, how can

this claim be sustained in light of our simultaneous obligation to rise above our world-view and see philosophy from the vantage point of historical consciousness? Is Kinzel correct that Dilthey fails to overcome the problem of contingency by entrenching conflict between systems? These are questions I pursue in the conclusion to this chapter.

Conclusion: Dilthey's Successful Response to Contingency and Plurality

There is a charitable way to read Dilthey's theory of world-views and reflective historical consciousness which renders it a consistent and successful response to the problem of history. I argue against Kinzel's position that Dilthey creates an eternal conflict between world-views by highlighting that world-views can retain their encompassing nature without continuing to pursue universal validity. I argue that Dilthey's account of world-views as socially and historically conditioned systems that seek to solve the riddle of life on the basis of a life attitude successfully overcomes historical contingency by grounding philosophy's essence in a universal account of human psychic life. This account preserves for philosophy a unique function in society against the challenge of historicism. At the level of world-views, philosophy is tasked with confronting the riddle of life and raising to conceptual clarity a systematic response rooted in the basic elements of human life. Its role in society remains normative; our world-views and their relative solutions to the riddle of life provide direction and orientation for society. At the level of historical consciousness, philosophy preserves its claim to sovereignty and universal validity as it places philosophical world-views in their overall context of life and illuminates with systematic form the inexhaustible depth of

human life. The important thing then becomes providing a consistent rendition of the relationship between world-views and historical consciousness which clearly indicates how it overcomes the problem of historical contingency without creating an eternal conflict.

The first step is to recognize that Dilthey's harshest critique of metaphysics is directed specifically against *academic* systems of metaphysical thought which create "empty possibilities" and "unruly" conflict ("Present Day" 149). In the same breath, he directs philosophy to establish a "well-founded consciousness" of "what connects human strivings" (Dilthey, "Present Day" 149). In other words, philosophy must take seriously the skepticism of Dilthey's age and seek the inner coherence of human life rather than that of the world. The inner coherence of human life is exactly what reflective historical consciousness reveals through its empirical analysis of life. The necessity of moving away from academic metaphysics does not mean we have to abandon world-views; it only means that we should stop trying to justify them as universally valid solutions to the riddle of life. Our personal world-views should take energetic hold of us by shaping the way we cognize, evaluate, and act in the world. We can allow our world-views to continue colouring our understanding of the universe without thereby arguing that our particular colouring is universally valid. Applying Dilthey's framework to the case of Camus' work in the *Myth of Sisyphus* illustrates this point clearly and also renders Camus' world-view more consistent.

As a reminder, in chapter two I argued that Camus' influential account of and response to the problem of absurdity suffers from a seemingly irresolvable tension between its claim to a universal account of critical consciousness and its failure to address its own historicity and contingency. Camus argues in *Myth* that the human mind's deepest desire is to reduce the world to the terms of thought and thereby come to feel at home in it (Camus 16). He argues that this desire is impossible to fulfill because the world is unreasonable (Camus 49). Absurdity, as the tension between our mind's deepest desire and the world's silence, is for Camus a descriptive fact of our critical engagement with the world but he offers little justification in defense of this position, leaving readers of his work with two equally unappealing options. On the one hand, they can accept his work as descriptively accurate at the price of ignoring the plurality of alternative world-views which characterize human history, or, on the other hand, they can reject Camus' work as a mere expression of his particular experience and historical moment. The first option is unsatisfactory because it involves disregarding other plausible philosophical world-views with no justification. The second option is unsatisfactory because it undersells the potential insight and value of Camus' outlook on life in *Myth*.

When we place Camus' work on absurdity in the context of Dilthey's theory of world-views we get a solution to this problem, since Camus' work in *Myth* can be understood as a philosophical world-view that "brings a particular aspect" of life's incomprehensible nexus "to our attention" ("Dream" 169). Far from being rooted merely in Camus' subjective experience or historical moment, the absurdity born from desiring

absolute unity in a world that will never provide it is the expression of a typical life attitude that is rooted in the universal psychic life of human beings. Similarly, revolting against the impossibility of reducing the world to terms of thought is, in Dilthey's terms, only one possible response to the riddle of life. The value of Camus' work is therefore saved from the graveyard of historical chaos because Dilthey's theory allows us to appreciate how Camus' account of and response to absurdity contains "an intuitive insight that arises from being-immersed-in-life" ("Types" 273). It captures a true side of reality that holds value for people like Camus, whose desire to feel at home in the world is crushed by the impossibility of understanding and justifying it in terms of thought. At the same time, when it is formulated as a world-view, Camus account of absurdity recognizes its relative validity and leaves space for other plausible attempts to solve the riddle of life using an aspect of human psychic life. Considered as a world-view therefore Camus' account lets go of its claim to universal validity and scope and accepts its contingency while also grounding itself in the basic structures of human life and thereby preserving its value for likeminded people.

Camus' argument ran into the problems discussed above because his thought, like the life-philosophers that Dilthey critiques, "takes its corner for the world in general" ("Present Day" 151). Camus, like those life-philosophers, rejected metaphysics as a viable means of gaining true knowledge about the world but he, also like them, preserves the metaphysical aspiration to universal validity (Dilthey, "Present Day" 150). He did not respect the limits of his perspective when he treated absurdity as a descriptive and

necessary consequence of critical engagement with the world. I have argued that the best way to overcome this shortcoming is to treat Camus' work in *Myth* as the expression of a world-view which holds relative validity as it expresses a true part of life's one reality.

My analysis should explain why I disagree with Kinzel's reading of Dilthey's theory of world-views as an eternal conflict of philosophical systems. Dilthey's dual system of world-views and reflective historical consciousness allows systems of relative validity to exist simultaneously without conflict. On Kinzel's view, Dilthey would preserve Camus' claim to universal validity and set it in opposition to other world-views which respond to the riddle of life, including those which offer different responses to the same key problem (the world's resistance to the terms of thought). The problem of history remains poignant on this reading because Dilthey can offer no solution to the endless battle between systems of thought whose contingency is rooted in life. On my reading, Camus' world-view can coexist peacefully with other contingent world-views because reflective historical consciousness permeates these systems and places them in their overall context as limited and truthful products of human psychology as it confronts the mystery of life. There is no dissolution of thought, no insurmountable gap between systems, no absolute doubt separating the contingent world-views. They can all step back from their committed views and reflect on the whole garden of philosophical flowers (systems).

Gardening is actually a useful analogy for representing Dilthey's response to the problem of historical contingency. If we treat all of reality as a garden and every type of

philosophical world-view as a flower, then we can see how historical consciousness overcomes historical contingency. Every flower in this garden emerges from and is rooted in the same soil, which is an image for Dilthey's argument that every philosophical world-view is rooted in the universal structure of human psychic life. Each flower performs the same basic activity of using the soil's nutrients to grow and blossom in a manner consistent with its species, representing Dilthey's view that the different types of philosophical world-view all perform the same psychological function (growing, developing, blossoming into a system) using the concepts provided by the philosophical tradition (nutrients in the soil) in a way that is consistent with the basic aspect of life which grounds them (the system's seed in thinking, feeling, or willing). In addition to the contingency rooted in the flower's seed and the history of the soil, each flower's growth and character is conditioned by its place in the soil, referring to Dilthey's argument that philosophical world-views are not only conditioned by the structure of psychic life and the philosophical tradition but also by the social structures that provide its immediate context. Now imagine this garden as a community-run project where different members of the community can come to plant and tend their own flowers. In addition to having a favourite flower which they tend to and know the most about, each gardener can also step out of the garden to survey it as a whole. From this perspective (reflective historical consciousness), every gardener can see the character and value of every flower while also recognizing that they exist in one garden. The gardener therefore rises above cultivating only one flower and can come to know the overall context of the garden. This refers to the ability of reflective historical consciousness to raise us above the relative perspective of

our separate world-view to appreciate the overall context of life as a soil that sustains many truthful responses to the riddles of life. When the community gardeners turn their attention to their favourite flower they do not believe this is the universal favourite. Their experience surveying the entire garden and even talking to other gardeners about different flowers has taught them that every flower has relative value. Furthermore, they recognize that every gardener, no matter their favourite flower, is engaged in the same basic activity of gardening. This reflects the fact that the activity of performing philosophy, the activity of creating philosophical world-views, is universal. Thus, philosophers who accept Dilthey's theory of world-views can continue to see the world from their limited perspective without claiming universal validity because they can also rise above this perspective through the self-reflection of historical consciousness and appreciate the universal context of philosophy.

At this point, I want to anticipate and respond to a potential objection against Dilthey's system. It may seem that Dilthey's account of reflective historical consciousness does not overcome the threat of historical contingency because it is itself only an expression of Dilthey's lived experience and age. To put it simply, Dilthey's formulation of reflective historical consciousness is itself historically conditioned and therefore contingent. In fact, Dilthey's attempt to overcome historical contingency by grounding philosophy in an account of the universal structure of human psychic life is structurally similar to Camus' account of absurdity as a problem that arises from the universal structure of the mind.

The answer to this objection lies in Dilthey's methodology. His approach to the problem of history is immanent, meaning that the problem of historical consciousness also establishes it own boundaries ("Dream" 167). "It starts with a historical understanding of philosophy and arrives at a philosophical understanding of its history" (Steizinger 226). This immanent methodology provides Dilthey's account of reflective historical consciousness with a way to cut through historical contingency. Considering the problem of historical contingency leads to Dilthey's formulation of philosophy as a theory of world-views that are rooted in life.

It is also important to note that Dilthey's thought on reflective historical consciousness is not static, he is not claiming to have the final say on the universal structures of human psychic life. The character of reflective historical consciousness is inherently flexible because it is rooted in empirical and historical analysis. It is open to further refinement and development as new information is provided. Dilthey expresses this sentiment clearly when he writes that his use of historical comparison as a method leaves the details of his work open to different interpretations ("Types" 274). This openness to further refinement becomes especially important when we consider the case of Camus' response to absurdity as a philosophical world-view. A close reading of Camus' work in *The Myth of Sisyphus* reveals that his world-view does not fit neatly into any of the three great types of metaphysical world-view which Dilthey identifies. Camus is not a naturalistic, an idealist of freedom, or an objective idealist. Camus' world-view therefore reveals the insufficiency of Dilthey's typology of philosophical world-views.

The types of philosophical world-view do not appear to be reducible to thinking, feeling, and willing. A more accurate account of empirical psychology and the history of philosophy is needed to overcome the limits of Dilthey's historical comparison. This argument is not a threat to the general framework of Dilthey's theory of world-views as a form of meta-philosophy, however, because what remains firm is the core message that philosophical systems are fundamentally expressions of life attitudes that are socially, psychologically, and historically conditioned. These expressions are by nature incapable of providing a universal answer to the riddle of life, but they are also truthful. They reveal true aspects of human life and provide us with usable normative standards. At the core of Dilthey's response to destructive historical consciousness is a commitment to humble self-reflection and a flexibility that might well be adopted by all philosophy. Dilthey's theory of world-views is a viable path forward for meta-philosophy because of its ability to respond to the problems of contingency and plurality.

Chapter 4: Dilthey's Success and its Relevance

I set out to investigate the problem of historical consciousness as it came to prominence in late-19th century philosophy, and especially to assess the viability of Wilhelm Dilthey's theory of world-views as a response to the modern challenge of history. I used Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* as a case study in the application of Dilthey's theory, since I believe his descriptive endeavour is representative of the risk of ignoring historical contingency. In chapter 2, I criticized Camus' account of and response to the problem of absurdity, putting forward an interpretation of Camus' use of self-honesty as a normative standard, attempting to take seriously Camus' commitment to descriptive analysis of the human mind. I argued that far from treating self-honesty as an absolute value, Camus merely described the mind's inherent commitment to logic, truth, and integrity. I criticized Camus' account on the grounds that it failed to address its own historical contingency and unjustly dismissed other plausible responses to the mysteries of life. By framing his analysis as a description of the mind's critical engagement with the world, Camus wrongly presented his relative world-view as a universal product of thought. Historical contingency is a problem for Camus' account because it reveals a dilemma that he cannot (as I argued) easily escape from. Either Camus' account accurately describes the universal structure of critical consciousness or only reflects his own lived experience and historical moment. The first option is a problem because it leaves his theory without a reply to other plausible accounts of critical consciousness, in effect denying the plurality of world-views. The second option is also unsatisfying

because it chains Camus' work to its time and undermines the true scope of his insight. Hence my conclusion that a different philosophical framework is needed to adequately address the question of contingency and plurality.

In chapter three, I argued that Dilthey's theory of world-views is a viable solution to the threat of destructive historical consciousness because it strikes a careful balance between respecting historical awareness and preserving philosophy's claim to universal validity. I surveyed the identity crisis facing philosophy in Dilthey's place and age, and explored Dilthey's own understanding of his cultural context. This reconstruction set the stage for a close inspection of Dilthey's theory of world-views and reflective historical consciousness. I reconstructed Dilthey's analysis of world-views as they emerge in history from the universal fabric of human psychic life, describing his account of their structure, function, diversity, and contingency. I then analyzed his concept of reflective historical consciousness as a meta philosophy that overcomes the limitations of other systems and preserves the possibility of universally valid philosophical knowledge. On the basis of this reconstruction, I showed that Dilthey successfully overcomes the problem of contingency by limiting it to the level of philosophical world-views and thereby freeing historical consciousness from the chains of conditioned thought. I applied Dilthey's framework to Camus' engagement with absurdity and demonstrated how it can preserve the value of Camus' insights without ignoring alternative ways of engaging critically with the world. I also put forward an interpretation of the relationship between Dilthey's theory of world-views and his account of historical consciousness, arguing that

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Dilthey's formulation of this relationship overcomes historical contingency by preserving the encompassing perspective of world-views without setting them in conflict with one another. Finally, I show how treating Camus' work in *The Myth of Sisyphus* as a world-view demonstrates the insufficiency of Dilthey's world-view typology and corresponding psychology. A new analysis of history and empirical psychology is needed to render reflective historical consciousness more accurate though this conclusion does not undermine the viability of Dilthey's general framework. Wilhelm Dilthey's philosophy of life is a successful form of meta-philosophy, able to integrate the historical insight into contingency and plurality into philosophy without thereby sacrificing its claim to truth and universal validity.

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