

quently, in the second volume he included a translation of texts connected with Mendelssohn's polemic against Lavater (who publicly challenged Mendelssohn in 1769 to explain his commitment to Judaism or to convert) and his 1783 preface to Menasseh ben Israel's *Vindiciae Judaeorum*, in which he expressed his opposition to religious discipline and excommunication. The third volume contains the complete translation of *Jerusalem* (1783), Mendelssohn's best known work, in which he declared his firm adherence to the Jewish religion, defined by him as a religion of the revealed law, along with two hundred pages of the translator's notes that make the book the first work of commentary of its kind.

The critical reader, familiar with the wealth of highly developed research that in recent decades has helped construct the historical context in which Moses Mendelssohn lived, will find Samuel's idealization rather naive and of scarce benefit to anyone seeking to understand the historical Mendelssohn. The Jewish philosopher of eighteenth-century Berlin was an extremely complex figure. He belonged to the circles of early maskilim in European Jewry, gained fame and esteem as the "German Socrates," but was frustrated and distressed again and again by the vast gap between his unique prominent public standing and his belonging to the Jewish minority which, in Frederick the Great's Prussia, suffered discrimination and civil oppression. His struggle for religious tolerance, which he framed in radical philosophical and political terms in *Jerusalem*, was uppermost among his aims throughout his life, as he constantly wavered between hope and disillusionment. Mendelssohn made his most important contribution to Jewish history by grappling with the challenge of a continued Jewish existence in the changing conditions of a modern state, a civic society and a secular culture. From this standpoint, *Jerusalem* is still one of the major constitutive texts of the modern Jewish philosophical discourse.

Samuel's preface suggests, however, that he was interested in exploiting Mendelssohn and his writings for apologetic purposes. He wanted to provide the British public of his time with better and more precise knowledge about the Jewish religion ("many a notion wants refining; much of what is defective requires to be supplied; and a word of misapprehension to be explained and set to rights" [vol. 3, viii]). Perhaps he also wanted to reply to those British Christians who aspired to see the Jews convert. But whoever reads his notes will find, for example, a long essay in which Samuel suggests, in the spirit of the Haskalah, a rationalization of the cultural norms and religious life of the Jews (vol. 3, note 24). In any event, the revised publication of Samuel's work renews the debate about the character of Jewish culture in England. Is there any truth to the argument put forward in recent years that English Jews underwent processes of modernization from below, scarcely affected by ideas raised by thinkers and without any recourse to the Jewish Enlightenment? Schmidt asserts that Mendelssohn's fundamental ideas about Judaism and Christianity were known in England from the 1820s. Hence, the reprinting of Samuel's work may serve as an opening for further study of the reception of Mendelssohn's thought by an English-speaking public.

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Wilhelm Dilthey. *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*. Edited with an Introduction by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. Pp xiii + 399. Cloth \$55.00.

The first complete English translation of Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833–1911) most important mature work—a seminal work for hermeneutics, phenomenology, critical theory, and the philosophy of history and the human sciences—is to be greatly welcomed. This excellent translation conveys the subtlety and richness of Dilthey's German. Its innovative translations of key terms will provide renewed stimulus to interpreting Dilthey's works.

This edition includes Dilthey's investigation of the structures of consciousness in his three preliminary "Studies toward the Foundation of the Human Sciences," his explora-

tion of the import of the productive systems of historical life for knowledge in *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, and his final and perhaps best formulation of hermeneutics in “The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Manifestations of Life.”

Although Carnap and others utilized the word *Aufbau* in the sense of epistemic “construction,” Makkreel and Rodi clarify how Dilthey used it in the sense of “formation.” The formation of the historical world refers to its articulation in the human sciences which themselves theoretically reflect this historical world (GSW3: 1). They also argue that Dilthey’s theory of the human sciences is not merely an epistemology (*Erkenntnistheorie*), but a theory of knowledge (*Theorie des Wissens*) that relates knowing to its context. Whereas epistemology seeks to establish the foundations of conceptual cognition (*Erkenntnis*), Dilthey places the epistemology of the human sciences within a larger context of the knowledge (*Wissen*) embodied in social practices and historical forms of life. Knowledge encompasses not only the conceptual cognition of reality, but also the values and purposes established about it.

Dilthey accordingly situated the human sciences, which are determined by their respective object and how the object is given (SW3: 38), in relation to a pretheoretical life-nexus and its forms of elementary or ordinary understanding. These are tied up with the temporality, historicity, and structures of social life; with an epochal “objective spirit.” Objective spirit indicates the ways in which the past has been objectified and continues to shape contemporary practices and it is analyzed in the human sciences as cultural systems and the external organization of society. A significant characteristic of the *Formation* is the development of the notion of “productive system or nexus.” This new translation of *Wirkungszusammenhang* suggests a historical efficacy or productivity prior to any analysis of it as either causal or teleological (SW3: 4).

The human sciences include the study of dynamic interconnected systems that articulate the intersection of meaning, value, purpose, and force. Dilthey interpreted these temporally, such that meaning primarily concerns how humans are determined by their past, value is based on their present feeling of life, and purpose is projective striving into the future in the face of productive forces (*Kräfte*) which cannot always be predicted or controlled.

For Dilthey, understanding (*verstehen*) is intrinsically interpretive. Humans can cognize themselves and others only indirectly (SW3: 108), since we are conscious and reflective beings who are bound to the facticity of our bodies and world. Given that we know ourselves and others primarily through actions, life-expressions, and their effects—rather than through introspection or intuition—and that everyday understanding can face breakdowns and what seems distant or strange, elementary understanding leads to higher forms of understanding and interpretation; i.e., hermeneutics. Dilthey’s project of a critique of historical reason proceeds from the context of life in all of its complexity and concreteness to the conceptual cognition of the sciences and, finally, to reflective awareness (*Besinnung*). This reflection is made possible by the prereflective reflexivity (*Innesein* or *Innewerden*) of the human subject and, with its double meaning of “sense” (*Sinn*) as meaning and bodily awareness, constitutes the basic movement of Dilthey’s thought.

Understanding provides more than scientific access to objects—it is fundamentally world-opening (SW3: 226). Understanding aims at truth or validity, and this understanding is the most complete (SW3: 227), but it is also concerned with the contextuality and facticity of human expressions. Dilthey’s phenomenological descriptions of kind of attitude (*Verhaltensweise*), taking a stance (*Stellungnahme*), and life-concern (*Lebensbezug*) show how historical life is both about and matters to the individual in its relational context (SW3: 2).

The human sciences legitimately strive for objectivity and universality. Objectivity in the human sciences links lived-experiences with the social-historical structures that inform them. Yet this objectivity cannot consist of a mimetic copying of reality “as it is” (SW3: 23). The human sciences relate the unique, the accidental, and the momentary to the nexus of norms, values and meanings operative in social-historical reality. They explicate the intersection of the unique and the general in the “historical presentation of the singular occur-

rence.” The significance of the singular in relation to its context indicates that Dilthey’s concern is not exclusively epistemological or scientific. Possibilities for historical vision need self-reflection (*Selbstbesinnung*) if we are to be truly responsive to our situation.

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Robert J. Dostal, editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. xiii + 317. Cloth, \$65.00. Paper, \$23.00.

This twelve-essay collection should introduce Gadamer to new readers while engaging those familiar with his work. Essays treat central elements of Gadamer’s hermeneutical philosophy: his concept of understanding; tradition and authority; the ontology of language; and the centrality of dialogue. A varied group of scholars trace Gadamer’s major philosophical influences and situate him in debates with rival critics of modernity.

The book opens with Robert Dostal’s biographical sketch, from Gadamer’s Marburg years, fascination with Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle, and the Leipzig rectorship, through his productive Heidelberg period, reception of *Truth and Method*, and later engagement with issues like globalization and health. Dostal rejects claims of Nazi collusion, and characterizes as superficial critiques of Gadamer’s writings at this time on Plato and Herder. Dostal might have gone further: Gadamer’s writings develop a politics of recognition among equal, different and autonomous subjects, and his central notions of conversation and I-Thou dialogue are deeply anti-authoritarian.

For a general audience, Charles Taylor best communicates the humane relevance of Gadamer’s thought, astutely captured as the challenge of trying to understand others without absorbing them into our interpretive frameworks but by letting them challenge those frameworks. New readers might also benefit from accounts of Gadamer’s notion of understanding (Jean Grondin) and its ethical dimensions (Georgia Warnke).

For readers more familiar with Gadamer, Brice Wachterhauser illustrates the critical dimensions of Gadamer’s views of tradition and authority, drawing on John McDowell’s work, illuminating the intentional character of belief justification. Falling into neither skepticism nor objectivism, Wachterhauser shows that Gadamer’s claim, “*Being that can be understood is language*,” is inextricably tied to epistemic realism: while our beliefs are formed through interpretations, they remain answerable to the world. “Our world has an ‘inherent’ intelligibility that is . . . ‘independent’ of the languages, traditions and standpoints through which the world is mediated” (73). Otherwise, the world could not challenge us—Wachterhauser’s reading thus has the virtue of accounting for the experience of the tug of, e.g., nature or a text against willful or incorrect claims to know it.

Quite different is an essay by J. M. Baker, who explores Gadamer’s view that the relevance of poetry for philosophy is its speculative content. Contrasting Hegel’s claim that poetry no longer reveals truth and is superceded by the prose of philosophy, Baker illustrates Gadamer’s view with readings of Mallarmé and Rilke. Mallarmé, says Baker, “elaborated a language that at once brings things otherwise inaccessible into presence yet defeats any attempt to name that presence,” his “pure poetry” repudiating reference yet suggesting a kind of revelation. Poetry expresses the “invisible,” by which is meant not the opposite of the material, but “. . . things [that] have in their same material exteriority an invisibility that has first of all to be articulated” (158). This articulation, for Gadamer, is the first task of a post-Hegelian aesthetic.

Richard Bernstein outlines the intersections of hermeneutics, critical theory, and deconstruction, using each to reveal the others’ *aporia*. For Habermas, *phronesis* does not go far enough in understanding modernity’s pathologies, showing the need for democratic political theory. For Gadamer, efforts to build a universal political theory lack an appreciation of human finitude. Derrida’s skepticism about slippage and misprisions of language challenges Gadamer’s account of the “fusion of horizons,” which emphasizes