

## **Comment on Professor Jordan's Paper**

In these remarks I would like to elaborate what I understand to be the thrust of Professor Jordan's paper, and to introduce and relate to his work a notion of lived experience, which is suggested to me by his material throughout. Professor Jordan claims that the phenomena investigated by the moral sciences imply fields of meaning quite different from the meaning found in material objects of mere sense perception. Thus there is in fact a divergence of focus in the methods and the subject matter of the moral and natural sciences. The moral sciences comprehend the subjective, conscious dimension of thoughts,

actions, and values by means of which the artifacts are produced. The attempt to understand this interior dimension of human existence and culture, at least since Dilthey, has linked the moral sciences with descriptive psychology. This attempt has also reinforced the claim of the moral sciences to an autonomous method. Professor Jordan also discusses the idea of a phenomenological moral science by outlining Alfred Schutz's critique of Max Weber, and by asking how it is possible to understand the data of the moral sciences by an interpretation of the actions through which the data have been produced. I shall also speak briefly about his reference to an eidetic psychology.

It was pointed out that Weber's aim in moral science explanation was the attempt to discover, understand, and typify an agent's motives for action. But Schutz has claimed that Weber confused the following two aspects of motive-action explanation as if they were one: (A) The subjective meaning, or the meaning of the action as the agent understands it; and (B) the subjective meaning of the action as it is interpreted by the moral scientist. Weber's assumption that A and B are identical is attended by his belief (1) that A is actually observable and (2) that A is interpreted from the context of meaning supplied by the moral scientist himself. The implication here is that an "objective" and imposed meaning is given to the agent from the outset.

Apparently the issue here is that the agent's subjective intention is not observed in its originary status, but is merely indicated. I believe that we can best understand this subjective intention and its place in moral science by relating it to what has been called by Dilthey "the lived experience" (*Erlebens*). This is that conscious state which is immediately lived through by the human subject and, as such, is epistemologically prior to an idealized or "objective" interpretation such as that discussed under B above. Complementing the lived experience is another concept which has come to be called the life world (*Lebenswelt*). I am convinced, incidentally, that both of these ideas were intuited by Vico in their modern sense. By the term "life world" I shall mean the world in which we actually live, the world intended by everyday awareness as the primary province of reality as it is actually lived. Our immediate consciousness of this world is the lived experience—that is, our awareness unmediated by presuppositions, constructive hypotheses, or arbitrary selectivity. Such experience is immediate in that the status of its content involves nothing more than its being lived. As such, a lived experience is understandable by another only potentially, by derivation, or by interpretation of human cultural expressions.

I believe that the above situation is what Schutz refers to in his claim that Weber mistakes the lived experience of the moral scientist's interpretation process for the lived experience of the agent to be understood. But we must note here that while it is inevitable that we cannot possess the identical lived experience of another, it does not follow that the moral scientist cannot, in principle, experience a content which has the same meaning as that of the agent's. The possibility of such a reliving of another's meaning is a necessary condition for culture. For without a meaningful reliving of another's experience, intersubjectivity of understanding would not exist. Schutz seems to recognize this fact when he tells us that "being with another" (*Mitsein*) is a primordial given in the human condition—that is, one of the existentials without which man would not be man. We might well ask if the explanatory role of eidetic psychology is anything but a reification and clarification of this fact.

At this point Vico's thought is relevant. One reason that the moral sciences have an explanatory priority is that the *verum est factum* formula establishes the very possibility of intersubjectivity. The culture and meaning "made" or constituted by the individual occurs in the lived experience. When the human being deliberately performs the subjective, symbolic operations that constitute a meaning, then it is possible for another to "do the same thing." When another "does the same thing," then he can self-consciously refer to his own states of immediate awareness—that is, a like meaning is potentially lived in each because a similarly constituted meaning is created by the like action or experience of each. For example, for two children to understand the meaning of mastering a bicycle there is entailed a being able to "do the same thing." The doing or making of a like thing provides a basis for a similar lived experience.

When professor Jordan refers to the eidetic psychology, I take it that this is a contemporary response to Vico's charge that the moral sciences must determine the "modifications of mental life." This psychology after Husserl's program would try to determine in an exact and generally valid manner what the universal structures (*eidoi*) of these modifications are. It would ask, for example, how such entities as motives, values, meanings, and volitions are actually constituted in the lived experience of man. Such an eidetic science would help insure that we do not mistake, as Weber apparently did, originary, lived states of experience in an agent for explanatory states of experience in the moral scientist. In other words, it attempts to determine Vico's modifications of mental life, or those universal constituents which

make given experiences what they are and not something else. We may note, finally, that the need for such eidetic and originary science was first conceived by Vico during the lone vigil of his genius.

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