
Wilhelm Dilthey: Classical Sociological Theorist

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Abstract

This paper argues that Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) deserves to be regarded as a classical sociological theorist. We tend to think of Comte as the “founder” of sociology and count Marx, Weber and Durkheim as the “big three” classical theorists. Yet we ignore Dilthey. Dilthey is at least as important in his own way as Comte and other recognized classical theorists. In this paper some of Dilthey’s key ideas are discussed to indicate the heuristic power of his interpretive social science.

The aspects of Dilthey’s contribution which are discussed have all had a significant impact on contemporary sociological theory and research. They will continue to influence our thinking and empirical endeavors. I will emphasize such ideas as *Geisteswissenschaften*, hermeneutics, “the hermeneutic circle,” *Verstehen*, *Sinnzusammenhang*, *Historismus*, *das Leben*, *Erlebnis*, and *Weltanschauung*. The English translation of those German terms is part of the interpre-

lem in this analysis. Heidegger's appropriation of Dilthey's hermeneutic example, has clouded the sociologically heuristic meaning of that Dilthey, no less than any other classical theorist, must be analyzed and used using the best principles of sociological hermeneutics.

I. Introduction

Wilhelm Dilthey (1831-1911) is a significant classical sociological theorist — not just a philosopher (Ortega y Gasset 1963), historian (Tuttle 1969; Kluback 1956) or humanist (Kuhns 1988) — who has contemporary relevance for sociological theory (Habermas 1971, 1984, 1987; Mesure 1990; Nisbet 1976; Radnitzky 1973; Plantinga 1980; Winch 1967). But Dilthey's significance is not fully recognized by everyone; in fact he is often overlooked entirely (e.g. Antoni 1959; Aaron 1968, 1970; Bottomore 1962; Bulmer 1984; Gadamer 1988; Jay 1984; Oakes 1987; Oberschall 1965; Popper 1972). In this era of what Weber referred to as the iron cage of rationality (Scaff 1989) Dilthey's work has relevance for contemporary sociological theory in many ways. He moves far beyond the critiques of inconsistent philosophical thinkers like Scheler (1958, 1961a, 1961b). Most obvious is Dilthey's impact on work in the "interpretive" mold (Turner, Beeghly and Powers 1995, 1998). Thus, for example, Giddens (1995) indicates Dilthey's contribution to Ethnomethodology. Prus (1996) argues that Dilthey is a root source of qualitative, ethnographic Symbolic Interactionism and Phenomenological Sociology. These are all aspects of what Ritzer (1996) calls the "Social Definition Paradigm" (SDP), although Ritzer does not highlight Dilthey's contribution. Ritzer lists Weber as the exemplar of the SDP; Neuman (1997) considers Weber and Dilthey as founders of Interpretive Social Science (ISS). Ironically, today Dilthey is more widely appreciated in Culture Studies and philosophy (Bambach 1995; Alexander and Seidman 1990) than he is in sociology.

Why is Dilthey often overlooked by sociologists? Part of the answer is provided by Kalberg (1997) in his discussion of the neglect of some of Weber's central insights concerning rationalization and the general thesis found in Weber (1965, 1968a, 1968b). The "parameters" of postwar American sociological theory did not extend to certain non-positivist traditions. Dilthey does not fit neatly into the positivist narratives that have been most influential among English-speaking sociologists, narrative accounts that start with Comte, Spencer and Durkheim. He is central to an earlier "German Tradition" (Levine 1995; Ormiston and Schrift 1990) which begins with Johann Martin Chladenius (1710-1759), Friedrich Ast (1778-1841) and Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). That tradition is not as well known to mainstream sociologists as the work of French and British thinkers, most of whom ignored Dilthey. The earlier German tradition is also not as well known to sociologists as the later German sociological thinkers, who drew on his insights without always explicitly giving him direct credit (e.g. Weber, Simmel, Mannheim). While aspects of Dilthey's work have been known to historians (Hodges 1952; Tuttle 1969) and are now becoming relevant to Postmodernists interested in Heidegger (Ormiston and Schrift 1990: 26-28), the history of continental hermeneutics (Mueller-Vollmer 1985: 1 - 53; Schleiermacher 1998 [1838]; Dilthey 1996) is not generally appreciated in mainstream sociolog-

ical theory. Part of the explanation for the neglect of Dilthey may be the manner in which his work has been translated. But even those with a knowledge of the German language still overlook Dilthey. Parsons (1937), who translated parts of Weber and did much to introduce Weber to American sociology, barely mentions Dilthey or hermeneutics. Yet, a full comprehension requires a background in the German debates of the nineteenth century (Kusch 1995).

In addition to Weber (Hughes 1958, Kaesler 1988), it is very difficult to conceive of the work of Simmel (Levine 1971), G. H. Mead (Martindale 1960), Schutz (1967), Garfinkel (1967) and Goffman (1997; Lemert 1971) without Dilthey's contribution to the German tradition in social science (Iggers 1973; Levine 1995). Martin Buber, a sociologist at the Hebrew University, was also influenced by Dilthey, who was his professor at the University of Berlin (Berry 1985: 27; Kepnes 1988: 194 - 206).¹

Although it is not widely recognized, the German Historicist tradition (Iggers 1968), the German Hermeneutic Tradition (Mueller-Vollmer 1985), and the German Tradition in sociology (Levine 1995) are very important components in American sociology today. They have significance worldwide because of the Frankfurt School (Jay 1973) and the continued impact of the interpretive, hermeneutic approach (Ferraris 1988, 1996). Dilthey's use of the hermeneutic method and explanatory understanding is a key aspect of contemporary sociology, although that is usually not well understood. If the problems associated with structure versus agency and macro collectivities versus micro individuals are to be solved, there needs to be a return to a consideration of Dilthey's epistemological assumptions. That ultimately requires going back to Kant (1951, 1963, 1965, 1968) and Hegel (1965), and those like Schleiermacher (1998), Trendelenburg (Wach 1926) and Dilthey who interpreted them to create an epistemologically-grounded theory of interpretation (Palmer 1969; Simmel 1977 [1892]).² There are fruitful insights in Dilthey's work that are still worth considering (Tillman 1990). Therefore, it is worth reading Dilthey and further refining our comprehension of his contribution. It is time to bring Dilthey back in. The dialogue (Arnett 1986; Levine 1995; Mitscherling 1987) is impoverished by his absence.

There are several excellent texts in English which present different interpretations of Dilthey (Hodges 1949, 1952; Ermarth 1978; Rickman 1979; Bulhoff 1980; Plantinga 1980; Makkreel 1992).³ Here I am less concerned with the nuances of different interpretations than with the central outlines of the generally agreed upon contributions.

It is assumed here that social science (Giddens 1976) and history (Mandelbaum 1938, 1971; Collingwood 1956; Tuttle 1994) require acceptance of fundamental ontological and epistemological assumptions (Dilthey 1927 Vol. VII [1907], Husserl 1962; Palmer 1969; Popper 1966; Radnitzky 1973), despite the very popular radical postmodernist critique of those assumptions (Heidegger 1962 [1927]; Gadamer 1988 [1960]; Sontag 1966; Rorty 1979; Rosen 1987). Instead of discussing those philosophical assumptions in depth, however, we will

turn to an overview of Dilthey's key concepts in order to "resume the dialogue" on those questions (Mitscherling 1997).

II. Major Theoretical Contributions:

This paper will consider some of Dilthey's specific contributions, especially his contributions to sociology. (However, much of what is said is relevant to anthropology and social science generally.) It will emphasize his ideas of: (A) social sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), (B) methodical interpretation (*hermeneutics*), (C) *the hermeneutic circle*, (D) understanding (*Verstehen*), (E) ecological nexus (structural form, *Sinnzusammenhang*), (F) historicism (*Historismus*), (G) Life (as existential experience, *das Leben*), and (H) worldviews (*Weltanschauungen*). However, this paper does not attempt to "cover Dilthey" in all respects. General treatments are available (e.g. Hodges 1952; Ermarth 1978; Plantinga 1980; Makkreel and Rodi 1989). They do not, however, succinctly stress the specific importance of Dilthey's key ideas for sociology (Martindale 1960; Maus 1962; Habermas 1971; Bakker 1995). By and large most sociologists are not familiar with Dilthey's contributions. Even specialists in theory often overlook his work.

A. *Geisteswissenschaften*.

The term *Geisteswissenschaften* can be translated in many ways. Usually it is thought of as an early way of discussing the social sciences. Dilthey's use of the word *Geist* has been misunderstood because the term is often connected with Hegel (1965; Inwood 1992; Ashley and Orenstein 1998: Chap. on Hegel). For some, that is grounds for dismissing the idea out of hand. In Dilthey's case, however, it was more directly connected with John Stuart Mill (Hodges 1949; Makkreel 1992; McRae 1974). Thus, another reason that Dilthey has been neglected is that few sociologists comprehend the significance of John Stuart Mill's work in shaping the discourse on methods. Today, Mill's *Logic* would not be considered a work on the philosophical problem of symbolic logic but could be called a textbook on social science methodology and meta-theory.

Today we refer to Mill's moral sciences as the "social sciences" or even "sociological sciences" (*soziologischen Wissenschaften*). Dilthey was greatly influenced by Mill's "On the Logic of the Moral Sciences," which is Book VI of *A System of Logic* (1974: 831 - 952). Lewis Feuer has called Mill's Book VI "the most enduring essay on the method of the social sciences which has ever been written, ..." ⁴ Dilthey had great respect for Mill's classic. But Mill's approach to "moral science" made assertions which Dilthey thought were subtle errors. "No sooner was the expression successfully Germanized than Dilthey denied that Mill's empiricist — perhaps more importantly 'inductivist' — account of the human sciences would do; ..." (Ryan 1987: 171). Therefore, Dilthey wrote his own *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (or, "Introduction to Social Science"). That work has been translated by Rudolf Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi. Thus,

Dilthey (1989 [1883]) is available to all English-speaking sociologists. Today we would call Dilthey's classic work a contribution to theory and methods. But the problem of translation still exists. For example, what does "human sciences" mean? Are the human sciences related to sociology?

The German word used in the translation for "moral" sciences is *Geist* (not the German word *Moral*) but the use of that word *Geist* was not necessarily Dilthey's first choice. At one point he even considered using a more literal translation, the old term "*moral-political sciences*" (*moralisch-politische Wissenschaften*; Dilthey [1936] GS XVIII: 221, cited by Makkreel and Rodi 1989: 10). Early drafts contain other terms like "sciences of human action" (*Wissenschaften vom handelnden Menschen*). Again, Dilthey was not primarily interested in following a Hegelian usage (Inwood 1992). He was as much Neo-Kantian as he was Neo-Hegelian (Bakker 1995).

However, the term *Geisteswissenschaften* - which is the word translated as human sciences — had been introduced into the German language in the 1849 translation of Book VI of John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic* (Frisby 1976: xxi, footnote 35). As stated, Dilthey was impressed by Mill's work and accepted many aspects of Mill's methodology. For Dilthey, as for Mill, the key to understanding society is the individual. But unlike Mill, Dilthey did not think of individuals as *homo economicus*. He rejected the Utilitarian concept of the individual as a utility maximizer. Dilthey considered the individual in terms of the "whole man" or "whole woman," as a "person" (*Geist*, Greek *psyche*, "soul"). That is, Dilthey's social science was to be constituted on the basis of adequate understanding of the whole person as a human being.

Dilthey wrote his introduction to sociology in order to emphasize the notion that many people today call "methodological individualism." But his brand of methodological individualism (as opposed to Comtean structuralism) was somewhat different from Mill's methodological individualism. When Mill wrote about the moral sciences he thought of individuals as utility maximizers; when Dilthey wrote about the moral sciences he thought of individuals as whole persons (Misch 1960).

Dilthey was interested in human beings as flesh and blood persons (James 1950), although not just from a Heideggerian ontological perspective (Scharf 1997). For Dilthey, much of what we now call social science is properly concerned with that which makes human beings distinctively human, rather than animals (*homo sapien sapiens*), or income maximizers, or cogs in society (Habermas 1987). He did not want to base the scientific study of human beings on a reductionist model (e.g. *homo sapien*, *homo sociologicus*, *homo economicus*) (Dahrendorf 1968; Frisby 1976; Gluck 1985). He wanted to base his "social science" on the study of the whole person. He was not a socio-biologist or a positivist; he would not have considered "rational choice theory" to be a complete approach to what is most important in the study of human beings and society. (Rational choice theory is more closely linked to Mill.) His was an interpretive,

individualizing, "psychological" sociology. That approach has more heuristic value than many sociologists are willing to acknowledge. Dilthey would definitely not be seen as a fore-runner by those who take a strictly "positivistic" (Halfpenny 1982), behavioristic or rational-choice (Alexander 1995) perspective. But his work is extremely important as the classical grounding for interpretive approaches that look at human beings as whole persons. Many Feminist Sociologists, for example, might be interested in Dilthey's work. But he has not been taken up by Feminists (McDonald 1993). Marxists have also ignored Dilthey, despite Marx's interest in "species being" (Jay 1984; Rosen 1987). Anyone who takes a Symbolic Interactionist approach (Prus 1996) would want to read Dilthey's *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, which — with some changes in terminology — could easily be regarded as an "Introduction to Sociology" from the interpretive perspective (Dilthey 1989 [1883]).

Today the distinction between social science and natural science (i.e. what Dilthey called the *Geisteswissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften*) is maintained at almost every university, albeit the German terms are usually not recognized by native English speakers (Makkreel 1997 [1969]). In fact, the tendency is to mis-interpret the meanings of these words (e.g. Leahey 1997: 195 - 198). Dilthey did not invent the distinction, but his contribution to the debate on the exact epistemological grounding of that distinction is part of the reason for the widespread acceptance of a distinction. Today the term *Geisteswissenschaften* is translated as "social science" in most American and Canadian universities. Dilthey's views on the *Geisteswissenschaften* are in many ways taken for granted by all those who differentiate between "social science" and "natural science," even if they have never heard of Dilthey (Antoni 1959).

When the word science is used in English, it typically refers to the natural sciences. The social and natural sciences have not always been distinguished from one another (Speziali 1973). Even when there is a general recognition of some notion of "culture" (Kroeber and Kuckhohn 1952), little attention is paid to the philosophical roots of anthropological and sociological assumptions (Leavitt 1991). If there was no distinction in people's thinking then the blanket term science would automatically cover the social sciences too.

Even if one accepts some version of the "unified science" thesis (e.g. Nagel 1961 [1954]) it is still unlikely that the heuristic value of the distinction will be completely ignored (Radnitzky 1973; Rickert 1962; Spiegelberg 1965). Those who do not differentiate social science and natural science — or do not feel that it is an important differentiation — (and also do not simply take a positivistic version of the "unified science" approach, e.g. Durkheim 1964; Popper 1972: 153-190) are few and far between.

One of Dilthey's most significant contributions is that he made the distinction between "social science" and "natural science" more than a common sense kind of differentiation. He provided a philosophical rationale for the distinction and, in a sense, invented the *Geisteswissenschaften* (Alexander 1995). The distinction

between social science and natural science is so widely accepted today, even by people who have never heard of Dilthey, that it is accepted as a “natural” distinction, not a “constructed” one.

Unlike Heidegger (1962), Dilthey did not adopt an idiosyncratic concept of the individual human being (i.e. Heidegger’s *Dasein*). Dilthey was interested in a social science which was not completely materialistic and he constructed an epistemological basis for such a social science. Dilthey did not try to extend philosophy to a radically new form of ontology (Kisiel 1993; Scharf 1997). In Dilthey’s epistemology the possibility of a science for the study of human beings as social actors was real, even though it had never been done systematically in quite that way before. Dilthey did not attempt to challenge the fundamental assumptions of the Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman world view. Heidegger’s dismissal of that world view may have led to an aristocratic “Junker” world view (Winson 1982: 403).

Dilthey’s *Geisteswissenschaft* made it possible for Weber (1968a), Schutz (1967 [1932]) and others to avoid the Heideggerian trap (Comay 1987). Schutz, for example, utilized Weber’s *verstehende Soziologie* in conjunction with Husserl’s “phenomenology” to develop a special kind of “phenomenological sociology.” He was willing to accept “traditional” ontological assumptions that Heidegger — in direct confrontation with Dilthey — rejected in the name of “anti-foundationalism” (Gadamer 1988: 195-344). The problems of modernity (Scaff 1989) do not have to lead to postmodernist rejection of epistemological foundations for social science.

C. The Hermeneutic Circle

Postmodernists claim that accepting the ontological assumptions of any pre-Heideggerian philosophy involves a belief in something that has no foundation (Kisiel 1993; Bonner 1997). The postmodernist view is that if you start off with Judeo-Christian ontological assumptions you will arrive at conclusions that are already implicit in those assumptions. That is inevitable, they argue, due to the *hermeneutic circle*. Gadamer (1988), for example, has written on the hermeneutic circle and “totalizing” assumptions. But it would be a mistake to think that Heidegger or Gadamer discovered the notion. It was already well known in Dilthey’s day. Essentially the hermeneutic circle is the paradoxical situation where in order to know the parts it is necessary to know the whole, but in order to know the whole it is also necessary to know the parts. Where does one break into the circle? How does one discover “totality” without understanding the components? Is the circle always a “vicious circle” which simply leads to tautologies? Can it sometimes be a “spiral” which leads to a broader “horizon” of understanding?

Dilthey firmly believed that the problem of the hermeneutic circle is not insurmountable. It is a spiral not a vicious circle. Think of the interpretation of scripture. The understanding of any part of a text, for example Christian scripture, is

conditioned by the understanding of the whole text; but, one cannot understand the whole without understanding the parts. Nevertheless, one can learn more about the Bible. It is not necessary to give up altogether, or to leave interpretation to the politically powerful. Thus, for example, for Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin and other Protestant reformers (Ferraris 1996: 25 - 32), the Bible can be understood by itself alone, without necessarily having to rely on a tradition of interpretation. At the Council of Trent the Roman Catholic Church view became that the tradition of the Church had binding doctrinal authority. The way in which the words were understood by the early Church Fathers was the only right way to understand those words (Connolly and Keutner 1988: 4-5). What is left for the Roman Catholic scholar is exegesis of the original meaning of the words, as understood by the Church. For Luther, as for Roman Catholic theologians, the intention can be found in the text. There is one and only one correct interpretation versus many incorrect interpretations. The harmony of parts and whole is sufficient grounds to provide a correct interpretation of difficult passages like Romans 1:17.5 Of course, Luther felt that the Holy Spirit had to inspire any interpretation of scripture.

For Friederich Schleiermacher, however, the circle is not self-sufficient (Dilthey 1996). Instead, hermeneutic analysis is, in part, an aid to the original intention of the author of the text. The correctness of the interpretation of a text cannot be based merely on the immanent “text intention.” The author’s intention is also important. Both “grammatical” and “psychological” aspects have to be considered. But how can we interpret the intention of the author? Can we even be sure that the author knew his or her intention? We need to use some kind of psychological understanding (Dilthey 1962, GS V [1894]).

For Schleiermacher it is not possible to reach a definitive interpretation. We can reach a defensible interpretation, but we cannot rule out the possibility that we may be mis-interpreting the text either grammatically or psychologically. Dilthey then came along and argued that not only does the hermeneutic circle apply to the grammatical part of the hermeneutic analysis, it also applies to the psychological part (Dilthey 1977). That is, we can be relatively objective and “scientific” (*wissenschaftlich*) because we have an “intersubjective framework” that is based in reality. Our psychological makeup is not entirely arbitrary. Therefore, *Verstehen* is not a mystical identification or irrational grasping of reality; it is a kind of interpersonal “induction.” One might say that Dilthey believed that we are all “scientists of the human” in that as human beings we learn to comprehend and understand everyday life. We go through a series of “conjectures and refutations” from earliest childhood. We are all engaging in what Gandhi called “experiments with truth.” Thus, *Verstehen* is not a mystical “empathy” or “intuition,” or even a general “sympathy.” It is part of our psychological make-up to use a version of the “hermeneutic circle” even in everyday life (Dilthey 1985). Luther did not really just rely on the text by itself; he also used his objective knowledge of the world, which he had gained through intersubjectivity as a

human being. When Luther interpreted scripture it was not merely a matter of his getting locked into a completely tautological system. Nevertheless, we can obtain an even fuller understanding of Luther's implicit assumptions than Luther himself could have done (Dilthey 1959). There is not necessarily anything irrational about that.

With the benefit of hindsight there is also increased insight, not just for theologians. The same is even true for natural scientists. In contemporary work on the sociology of science it has become increasingly clear that there is a kind of "hermeneutic circle" even in positivistic science. Thus, for example, the notion of a "paradigm" in physics carries with it the implication that physical laws are not arrived at purely on the basis of empirical evidence and inductive logic. The falsifiability of an empirical test is closely associated with the initial paradigmatic assumptions built into the scientific theory. The logic of the hypothetico-deductive approach in science is circular. That does not mean that scientific theory is merely a vicious circle. Recognition of the fruitful aspects of the hermeneutic circle involves comprehension of the importance of grasping the parts in relation to the whole, as well as the whole in terms of the specific parts. Thus, we need to know the "major paradigm" in order to understand the way in which the specific research hypotheses are intended, but we need to have an accurate grasp of the detailed hypotheses to really know what the major paradigm is all about.

D. *Verstehen*

Verstehen as empathetic and non-empathetic interpretive understanding is central to social science. There has been much discussion of the precise meaning of *Verstehen* (Truzzi 1974), particularly the famous Abel-Wax debate (Abel 1954 [1948]). Should *Verstehen* always involve complete empathy or sympathy with the subject? It is generally agreed that *Verstehen* does not just involve empathetic understanding; it can also be a non-empathetic, unsympathetic interpretation. Dilthey (1959, 1976) makes that clear (Habermas 1971; Hodges 1952; Jung 1995; Makkreel 1992).

Few sociologists have bothered to carefully examine Dilthey's use of the term *Verstehen*. Dilthey's usage is not the same as Weber's since Weber attempts to incorporate causal adequacy in a way that Dilthey was not concerned to do (Ringer 1997: 29). Dilthey may have over-emphasized the degree to which natural sciences deal in causal laws. On the other hand, Dilthey's fears of a positivistic approach to social science may not have been groundless. Behaviorist approaches and socio-biology are the kinds of sociology with which he might have had difficulty (Alexander 1985). He might not have rejected them outright but he would have emphasized that they cannot provide "understanding" of human beings considered as distinctively human rather than simply as a part of nature. He would never have accepted the notion that sociology is merely a foot-

note to biology.

Dilthey stressed human agency. He "contrasted the 'freedom' of the human mind with the lawfulness of nature" (Ringer 1997: 29). That emphasis on human freedom is part of the reason that Dilthey is sometimes accused of irrationalism and vitalism. But unless we assume strict determinism there is every reason to accept Dilthey's concern with *Verstehen* of inner connections. Dilthey believed that we need to understand human meaning. Understanding is a part of comprehension of human agency.

The use which we as human beings make of hermeneutics when we interpret the actions of other humans is a "double hermeneutic" (Hollis 1996). The first step is direct understanding of an action. It is not altogether different from the direct understanding that we use to interpret the behavior of an animal. As human beings we know what someone is doing when she or he is swinging an axe or a golf club. But the second step is more complex. We also have to use "explanatory understanding." We need to be able to tell whether the axe is being used to chop down a tree or as a murder weapon. We need to be able to distinguish between an amateur and a professional golfer. We have to have an understanding of what W. I. Thomas called the "definition of the situation" and what Wittgenstein called the "game" (Hollis 1996: 370-371; Bartley 1985). Thus, for example, a classical philologist or biblical hermeneuticist must be able to not only recognize a specific text but also utilize explanatory understanding concerning the intention behind the text. Was it written as allegory or should it be taken on a more literal level? In English we use the term "understanding" to indicate the first step, regardless of whether we understand the behavior of a squirrel or of a ten year old child. When the term *Verstehen* is used we can be more certain that the second step is included. We cannot use "explanatory understanding" to fully grasp the behavior of the squirrel but we can use it to get a deeper sense of the social action of the child.

There is a general mistaken impression that *Verstehen* requires "empathetic understanding" of a kind that is basically irrational or mystical (Kepnes 1988). Sometimes the process of hermeneutic understanding is said to require "getting inside people's heads." However, Dilthey does not require that *Verstehen* include a complete and total comprehension of the inner workings of the "mind" of the other person or persons one wishes to understand. The kind of explanatory understanding that Dilthey has in mind is the kind of understanding that we all use everyday in order to get through life. When we interact with other human beings we use some measure of understanding. A person who did not use understanding would not be human. Even mentally challenged people still have a very good grasp of many interpersonal situations and develop a high degree of understanding a good deal of the time. We say, in popular parlance, that someone is "crazy" when that person does not conform to our view of what is "normal" behavior or action. We feel justified in making such judgments even if we are not trained psychiatrists because there are definite parameters of human conduct.