

This article was downloaded by: [105.236.62.21]

On: 30 July 2013, At: 08:38

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



South African Journal of Philosophy

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsph20>

Understanding the Linguistic Turn and the Quest for Meaning: Historical Perspectives and Systematic Considerations

Danie Strauss^a

^a Dept of Philosophy , University of the Free State , Bloemfontein 9300, P.O. Box 339

Published online: 04 Jun 2013.

To cite this article: Danie Strauss (2013) Understanding the Linguistic Turn and the Quest for Meaning: Historical Perspectives and Systematic Considerations, South African Journal of Philosophy, 32:1, 90-108

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2013.810419>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Understanding of the *Linguistic Turn* and the *Quest for Meaning*: Historical perspectives and systematic considerations

Danie Strauss

School of Philosophy
North-West University
Potchefstroom Campus
dfms@cknet.co.za

Abstract

Although the linguistic turn is usually described in historical terms this article aims at combing the significant historical transitions with systematic philosophical considerations. Against the background of earlier rationalistic and empiricist trends particular attention is given to the successive epistemic ideals manifest in the *conceptual rationalism* of the Enlightenment, followed by the *historicism* of the 19th century and subsequently by the *linguistic turn*. An assessment of these transitions will explore systematic issues, in particular the relationship between *universality* and what is *individual*, the difference between *functional laws* and *type laws*, and regarding the limits of concept formation the distinction between *conceptual knowledge* and *concept-transcending knowledge*. This distinction enables the introduction of a new understanding of the difference between *rationalism* and *irrationalism*. Apart from Dilthey the linguistic turn penetrated also the thought of thinkers such as Freud, Wittgenstein, Frankl, Heidegger, Habermas, Dooyeweerd and Gadamer, all of them (implicitly or explicitly) elaborated the initial criticism raised by Herder, Jacobi, Hamann, Heidegger and Gadamer against Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* for neglecting *language*. After briefly referring to the connection between the linguistic turn and the idea of the meaningful construction of reality, the article ends with a concluding remark emphasizing the fact that no single concept-transcending usage of modal (aspectual) terms should be elevated above others or employed at the cost of other equally legitimate idea-statements.

1. Introductory remarks

The aim of this article is to investigate the historical roots and related systematic considerations elucidating the background of what became known as the *linguistic turn* and the *quest for meaning*. In order to accomplish this a number of historical perspectives as well as systematic distinctions will be considered first – in support of our main line of argumentation.

From a historical point of view modern philosophy initially moved between the extremes of *rationalism* (Descartes, Hobbes and Leibniz) and *empiricism* (Locke, Berkeley and Hume). Subsequently, during the past three centuries, distinct *epistemic ideals* dominated the scene of Western philosophy: (a) the ideal of *conceptual rationality* reigned during the *Enlightenment* of the 18th century; (b) historicism largely dominated the scene since the beginning of the 19th century; and (c) by the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century the well-known *linguistic turn* took shape, further developed in logical positivism and the hermeneutic tradition and eventually accompanied by a *quest for meaning*.

It will be argued that within these epistemic ideals one may discern important systematic issues co-determining the just-mentioned historical changes. The transition from *concept* to *history* and from *history* to *words* (language) is made possible by the *universality* of what will be designated as the *sign mode* of reality, embracing both the functioning of lingual subjects and lingual objects (i.e., the lingual subject-object relation). Acquiring always concepts involves the logical identification and distinguishing of *universal* features. Since concepts are *blind* towards what is individual, the rise of a historical consciousness during the early 19th century caused serious problems for the conceptual rationalism of the *Enlightenment*. The relationship between *universality* and *what is individual* also has implications for the difference between *order for* (law for) and *orderliness of* (lawfulness of). The implications of these distinctions for the human cognitive faculty in turn coheres with the fact that human knowledge is co-conditioned by the dimension of *modal aspects* (modes of being) and the dimension of *concrete* (natural and social) *entities functioning* within all these modes of reality – reflected in the inevitable use both of *function concepts* and *thing concepts*.¹

Closely related to these distinctions an account of two kinds of knowledge (implicitly) employed by humans is required, respectively designated as *conceptual knowledge* and *concept-transcending knowledge*. This distinction intends something else than what is present in an *analogy*. Furthermore, our analysis will be related to a new (and more articulate) understanding of the nature and difference between *rationalism* and *irrationalism*, based upon the difference of what is *universal* and what is *individual*, at once explaining the transition from concept, to history and from history to language.

What are the systematic distinctions needed for an understanding of what caused the linguistic turn?

2. Some basic assumptions of a non-reductionist ontology enabling an understanding of the linguistic turn and the quest for meaning

2.1 *The universal and individual sides of entities*

The first systematic distinction needed in this context is found in the difference between the *unspecified universality* of modal aspects (and their *modal laws*) and the *specificity* of various *kinds of entities*, determined by their *type laws*. Universality and what is individual are not concrete entities, they are *traits* of entities, normally reflected in the lingual practice of using the articles “this” and “a”: *this chair is a chair*. The “this chair” part refers to the *individual side* of a chair and the “a chair” part refers

¹ Consider function concepts (also known as relational concepts), such as mass, energy, entropy, growth (differentiation and integration), adaptation, sensitivity, politeness, frugality, equity, integrity, trustworthiness and so on, and thing concepts such as material entities (elementary particles, atoms, molecules, macro-molecules and macro-systems), living entities (plants, animals and human beings), cultural objects (test tubes, tools, books, money, art works, jails, wedding rings and church buildings).

to its *universal side*. In our everyday life we are used to employ both these forms of expression: *this person as a person, this car is a car, this tree is a tree, this atom is an atom*, and so on.

2.2 “Order for” and “orderliness of”

Implicit in this practice another distinction presents itself, namely that between *order for* and *orderliness of*. The *order for* (*law for*) anything concerns the conditions making its existence possible – and through their *orderliness* (*law-conformity*) concrete entities (in a universal way) show that they conform to these existential conditions. For example, in its *being an atom* this *individual* atom, in a *universal way*, shows that it conforms to the universal conditions (*law*) for being an atom.² Whereas classical Greek and Medieval philosophy mainly focused on entities as *substances*, the modern natural sciences since the Renaissance switched to an emphasis on *relational* concepts – which raises the question if we do not have to account both for functional relationships between entities (the *how* question) and for the entities involved in these relationships (the *what* question).

2.3 The multi-aspectual nature of entities

The question concerning the “what” is normally followed by “how” questions. Suppose we ask: “What is this?” and receive the response: “This is a human being” – then subsequently we may be concerned with “how” questions such as: (1) Is this person *alone*? (how *many* persons are there – one or more than one?); (2) How *large* is this person (size)?; (3) Is this person in *motion*?;³ (4) How *strong* is this person?; (5) How *healthy* is this person?; (6) How *sensitive* is this person?; (7) How *sharp* is this person?; (8) How *civil* is this person?; (9) How *articulate* is this person (in a lingual sense)?; (10) How *polite* (sociable) is this person?; (11) How *frugal* is this person?; (12) How *beautiful* is this person?; (13) How *just* is this person?; (14) How *loving* is this person?; and (15) How *reliable* (trustworthy) is this person?⁴

Human beings function *actively*, that is as *subjects*, within all these aspects, because each human person is one, is spatially extended, moves, acts, is alive, is sensitive, can identify and distinguish, can be culturally formative, speaks, can be thrifty, is beautiful (or ugly), can be just, loving and trusting. However, material things, such as a diamond, are only actively functioning within the first four aspects, for in all the others they function as objects (that it is to say, in them they have *object functions*): a diamond is not alive but may form part of the bio-milieu of living entities; it does not have sensory abilities but could be perceived by sentient creatures (such as animals and human beings); a diamond cannot logically discern, but human beings can identify it logically and distinguish it from non-diamonds; a diamond cannot be culturally active, but human beings can give a cultural form and shape to it; it cannot speak but has a name; it cannot socialize but a diamond ring may be a significant status symbol; it cannot buy and sell but is normally quite expensive; it is beautiful; belongs to some-

2 We already mentioned that there are two kinds of law, namely *modal laws* and *type laws*.

3 Einstein relativizes the classical opposition between ‘rest’ and ‘motion’. In a letter to Moritz Schlick (June 7, 1920) he writes: “Rest is a dynamic event in which the velocities are constantly zero, one that for our consideration is, in principle, equivalent to any other event of motion” (Einstein 2006:186).

4 Enumerating the fifteen aspects captured in the list of “how” questions provides us with the following *modes of being or aspects*: the numerical (the one and the many), spatial, the kinematic, physical, biotic, sensitive, logical-analytical, cultural-historical, sign-mode, the social, economic, aesthetic, jurial, moral and certitudinal aspects of reality.

one; could be an object of adoration; and once manufactured for a specific purpose could be trusted to perform this expected function reliably.

2.4 *Modal laws and type laws*

Modal (aspectual) laws are universal in that they hold for *all possible classes* of entities, whereas *type laws* display a *specified* universality in that they only hold for a *limited class* of entities. In his own way Immanuel Kant already distinguished between these two kinds of laws, namely “pure or general natural laws” and “empirical laws of nature” (Kant 1783:320; § 36). Stafleu explains:

Whereas typical laws can usually be found by induction and generalization of empirical facts or lower level law statements, modal laws are found by abstraction. Euclidean geometry, Galileo’s discovery of the laws of motion ..., and thermodynamic laws are all examples of laws found by abstraction. This state of affairs is reflected in the use of the term “rational mechanics,” in distinction from experimental physics (Stafleu 1980:11).

Modal universality is also acknowledged by the physicist Von Weizsäcker when he states that quantum theory, formulated in a sufficiently abstract manner, is a universal theory for all *Gegenstandsklassen* (classes of objects) (Von Weizsäcker 1993:128). In another context, he writes that the quantitative results of astronomy are based upon physical laws, and that we postulate, as a working hypothesis, a *universal validity* for these laws (Von Weizsäcker 1993:25).⁵

2.4 *Uniqueness and coherence*

The natural sciences and the humanities acquire access to a theoretical study of reality by exploring the various modes of being as *gateways*, as diverse, mutually irreducible *angles of approach*. The coherence between these multiple irreducible aspects of reality is accounted for by designating the interconnections between them as *modal analogies*.⁶ They may be pointing backwards (retroductory analogies) or forwards (anticipatory analogies), depending upon their relative position within the order of aspects. For example, the original numerical meaning of *succession* (one, another one and so on without an end, *endlessly*) is analogically reflected in the spatial meaning of continuity – evident in the *endless divisibility* of a continuous whole. By contrast, the configuration of *economic trust* highlights an anticipation from the economic to the certitudinal aspect.⁷

When we direct our theoretical attention toward the modal aspects or functions of reality – such as the spatial aspect, the physical facet or the social function – we are no longer involved in the classification of entities according to the kinds or types to which they belong, and therefore we are also not interested in the “kind laws” or “type laws” for entities. The mere distinction between economic and un-economic, for example, is not *specified* in any *typical* way. Both a state and a business can waste their

⁵ Likewise Von Weizsäcker also refers to the universality of the principle of relativity, also holding for electrodynamics (Von Weizsäcker 2002:260).

⁶ Note that an analogy is founded in similarities and differences, in the sense that two things or aspects are *similar* in that respect in which they *differ*. For example, mathematical space and physical space are *extended* (similarity), but whereas the former is both continuous and infinitely divisible, the latter is neither continuous nor infinitely divisible (see Hilbert 1925:164).

⁷ Derrida places *credit* against the background of acknowledging the universality of ‘faith’ (Derrida 1997:22) and then, on the next page, states that in credit [as economic trust – a fiduciary anticipation within the economic mode] we have “to do with faith, and the economists know that.”

money (and thus act un-economically) and both are supposed to act under the guidance of economic considerations of frugality. But it is only possible to phrase these perspectives when the economic aspect is understood in its *modal universality*, that is, when the typical nature of the business and the state is disregarded. For this reason we argued that modal laws hold universally without any specification – universities, businesses, states, families and sport clubs all have to observe the general meaning of (aspectual) economic norms. In his discussion of “theories about everything” Breuer approximates the idea of modal universality when he states that a theory is universally valid if it holds for the “entire material ‘world’,” that is, when “no part of the material world is excluded from its domain of validity” (Breuer 1997:2). However, he does not realize that the intended universality of a theory presupposes modal universality. The physicist Von Weizsäcker is therefore correct in his mentioned reference to the universal validity of (modal) physical laws.

3. Conceptual knowledge and concept-transcending knowledge

It will be argued below that a proper understanding of the linguistic turn and the quest for meaning crucially depends upon the distinction between conceptual knowledge and concept-transcending knowledge. In paragraph 2.4 we mentioned that the aspects of reality may also serve as *modes of explanation* for our understanding of reality. Physics, for example, is capable of investigating material things from the angle of approach of their *physical* aspect. Similarly, the science of biology investigates living entities from the angle of approach of the *biotic* aspect of reality.⁸

3.1 Modal immanence and modal transcendence

In connection with the linguistic turn and the quest for meaning the following two options present themselves. One can either look at the phenomena presenting themselves within the *lingual aspect (sign mode)* or one can take this aspect as *point of orientation* to refer to whatever *exceeds* (transcends) the boundaries of this aspect, even though the *terms* employed in such a “stretching beyond” or transcending are still derived from the sign mode.

Reminiscing a work of Viktor Frankl (1962) the consideration of his concern for the *meaning of life* may be illustrative of what is meant in this context. The two key terms in this concern are “life” and “meaning.” Of course the awareness that living entities display biotic qualities is universally acknowledged in all cultures. Yet when we speak of the *meaning of life* the biotic term “life” is stretched beyond merely referring to vital biotic functions of living entities, such as growth, adaptation, metabolism and so on. Moreover, the meaning of human life transcends the confines of merely functioning within the biotic function or vital aspect of reality. The next question is: what is the *meaning* of the term “meaning”?

We are accustomed to use the term “meaning” in connection with *lingual phenomena* such as *words, sentences* and paragraphs. When we are in doubt about what is said, we may ask: “What do you mean?” The answer is normally expressed in a *sentence*, employing multiple *words*, each with its *specific* connotations belonging to its semantic domain. In a lingual sense words and sentences *express* a lingual *meaning* by *referring* to what is *designated* or *signified*. All these terms are used in a *conceptual way* because they occur within the orbit of the sign mode.

⁸ Yet, when a special scientist looks at reality through the glasses of a particular aspects, they do not study these aspects themselves, but merely whatever *functions* within them, just like someone wearing glasses does not look *at* the glasses but rather through them at whatever could be seen.

It should be noted that analytical philosophers acknowledged the specific meaning attached by Gottlob Frege to the German words *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. Thürnaeu points out that the German word *Sinn* partially overlaps with what we currently call *meaning*, while the German word *Bedeutung* must be viewed as a transformation of what traditionally was indicated as *signification* (Thürnaeu 1995:807). Frege holds that within the context of an *identity relation* the lingual sign, in addition to *referring* to what is designated, at once also contains something about the way in which it is given (“Art des Gegebenseins”) (Frege 1892:41). His classical example concerns the identity of the *evening star* and the *morning star* (Venus – neither of which is ever in sight by *midnight*). Although the connotation of the *evening star* is different from the connotation of the *morning star*, these expressions have the same denotation, namely *Venus*.⁹

Since it is also said that a word *signifies* something the implication is that *meaning* and *signification* are intimately connected as well. In some cases the words *meaning* and *signification* may be exchanged, but in others it may not be possible. These subtle differences point in the direction of what we have in mind with the distinction between conceptual knowledge and concept-transcending knowledge (modal immanence and modal transcendence).

Although we are thus well acquainted with the *linguistic sense* in which the terms *meaning* and *signification* may be employed as well as the *biotic sense* in which the term “life” is used, both these terms may serve a more extended purpose. In other words, what is peculiar in the expression “the meaning of life” is that both terms employed in it are not simply used in a purely *biotic* or a purely *lingual* sense. In it the word *life* has a much broader scope, encompassing all facets of human existence and not merely its biotic functioning and likewise, the term *meaning* is also not restricted to *linguistic meaning* at all, for much rather it aims at encompassing the *fullness of human existence*. What they indeed capture is something *exceeding* or *transcending* the original context both of the lingual and biotic phenomena or of the terms derived from these two aspects of reality.

Does this mean that we can understand this expanded meaning (exceeding the biotic and lingual aspects) *apart from* or *in isolation from* what we know about biotic and lingual phenomena? In other words, are these two functional or aspectual domains *excluded* or, even stronger, *negated*, when we speak about the *meaning of life*? Apparently not, because the meaning of *meaning* as well as the meaning of *life* simply have been *stretched beyond* the confines of their familiar fields of application.

When terms derived from any modal aspect are used in a restricted or purely aspectual sense, we recognize a *conceptual* use of such terms, but when such terms are *stretched beyond* the limits of the aspect in which they primarily appear, a concept-transcending mode of knowledge is encountered. This distinction enables us to propose a new understanding of *rationalism* and *irrationalism*.

3.2 *Rationalism and irrationalism*

The long-standing *rationalistic* legacy of Western philosophy restricts knowledge to *conceptual knowledge*. It is still reflected in the *epistemic ideal* of the *Enlightenment*, which may be characterized as the overestimation of *conceptual knowledge*. Concepts are always constituted by the *identification* (that is, *logical objectification*) of *universal traits*, which means that concepts are blind towards what is *individual*. This explains why Plato, in his *Politeia*, restricts knowledge to *conceptual knowledge*, that is,

⁹ John Stuart Mill, continuing elements of medieval philosophy, took the *connotation* of a word to be the *content* of what it *means* (see Mill 2002, Book I, Chapter 2, §5).

to the universal, supra-sensory ontic forms or ideas¹⁰ and in a similar fashion Aristotle holds that “definition is of the universal and of the form” (*Metaph.* 1036 a 29; Aristotle, 2001:800). The neo-Platonic thinker, Plotinus, explicitly assigns ontic primacy to *universality* over what is individual (*Enneads* VI, 3, 9, 36 and VI, 2, 22). Much later Feuerbach still continues this legacy in his concern with what is “unconditionally necessary” [“unbedingt Notwendig”], while romanticism switched to an emphasis on what is individual – a tendency further explored by historicism,¹¹ existentialism, the neo-Marxism of Adorno and postmodernism. These trends oppose rationalism in that they focus on what is *unique*, *irrepeatable* and *individual*. This entails that they adhere to an *irrationalistic* perspective, overemphasizing concept-transcending knowledge. Concept-transcending knowledge can also be designated as *idea-knowledge*.

The mutual exclusivity of these isms (*rationalism* and *irrationalism*) illustrates that what is individual and what is universal are not opposites, but, as we noted in paragraph 2.1 above, mutually cohering *traits* of every concretely existing entity, process or societal entity. Moreover, the transition from rationalism to irrationalism is decisive for an understanding of the linguistic turn and the quest for meaning.

4. The transition from the 18th to the 19th century

The rise of historicism during the beginning of the 19th century represented a new tendency towards appreciating that which escapes the grasp of acquiring concepts and obtaining conceptual knowledge, namely *unique* and *contingent historical* events. However, this influential new orientation, in which knowledge is identified with conceptual knowledge, left historicism with an unsolvable problem: how can we obtain knowledge of unique (*individual*) historical events if the sole vehicle available is *conceptual knowledge*, based upon what is *universal*?

The authoritative scholar on the rise of historicism, Friedrich Meinecke, appreciates the contribution of Goethe in this regard with reference to the apparently opposing emphases present in the thought of Heraclitus and the Eleatic philosophers - *eternal becoming* versus *eternal being*. In line with his goal to eliminate all *mathematical elements* from his concept of law (see Meinecke 1965:504), Goethe soon shifted the focus of his thought away from *universality* towards *what is individual*.

Realizing that concepts always have a *universal* scope explains at once why we noted that concepts are blind to *what is individual*. Contemplate for a moment the historical eras known to us as the *Enlightenment* and *Romanticism*. Clearly, of each one of these historical epochs is *unique* – there are not many exemplars of the *Enlightenment* or the era of *Romanticism*. A remark by the German philosopher, Michael Landmann, illustrates this point with reference to the view of the well-known 19th century historian, Leopold von Ranke: “Consider Aristocracy according to all its hall-marks, and never one would have fathomed Sparta.”¹²

Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776–1831), who was the tutor of Leopold von Ranke, participated in the transition from the 18th to the 19th century and was influenced by the romantic movement. This movement included Goethe and Schiller (Germany), Bilderdijk and Da Costa (The Netherlands), and Shelley and Keats (Britain). From ro-

10 See *Politeia* VI 509 D-511 E and Cornford 1966:216-221.

11 B.G Niebuhr, for example, is convinced that only *historical change* provides genuine knowledge – cf. Cassirer 1957:237.

12 “Denke dir die Aristokratie nach allen ihren Prädikaten, niemals könntest du Sparta ahnen“ (Landmann 1973:81).

manticism Niebuhr obtained his positive assessment of mythical thought. Niebuhr explores Plato's classical allegory of the cave (Plato *Politeia* 514 A-521 B; Cornford 1966:222-230), by comparing the historian with someone whose eyes adapted effectively to the dark – such that, in opposition to Plato's intention, the “shadow-images” are seen in a positive light, while characterizing the work of the historian as “work done under the earth” (cf. Cassirer 1957:237). In a sense this is the opposite of what was held by the the general tendency of Greek philosophy. The question asked by the Greeks, according to Collingwood, is: “If everything in the world changes, they asked, what is there in such a world for the mind to be grasped?” This Greek view does not allow for a genuine science of history, owing to what Collingwood designates as its “rigorously anti-historical metaphysics” (Collingwood 1963:20).

4.1 *The impasse of historicism*

However, the growth of the historical consciousness during the 19th century increasingly required a solution to the seemingly unbridgeable epistemic gap between *universality* and *what is individual*. A theme that was already well-known during the Middle Ages once more surfaced in the 19th century: although human understanding, with its focus on *universal features*, is blind towards what is *individual*, the human *senses* do have access to what is individual. Since human language opens up a similar avenue, two alternatives presented themselves at this point, *positivism* and the *hermeneutical* trend.

Positivism (and neo-positivism) elevated *sensory experience* (“sense data”) to be the sole and ultimate source of human knowledge. Alongside this development the growing hermeneutical tradition opted for another alternative – it switched to an appreciation of the ability of language to (*deictically*) point at what is *unique* and *individual*.¹³ Within both these lines of development mention is made of a *linguistic turn*.

Dummett explains that “the fundamental principle of analytical philosophy is the priority, in the order of explanation, of language over thought: the only route to a philosophical account of thought is through an analysis of its expression in words or symbols” (Dummett 1995:17). According to him Frege was the first one to make the linguistic turn and he accomplished this by giving a *linguistic answer* to a *non-linguistic* question (Dummett 1995:112). In paragraph 62 of his *Grundlagen der Arithmetik* (1884) Frege asked the question how a number is given if it is impossible for us to have a representation or intuition of it? He states that only within the context of a sentence words mean something.¹⁴ Dummett is so impressed with this little paragraph that he declares that it is “arguably the most pregnant philosophical paragraph ever written” – to which he adds: “It does not merely introduce the important notion of a criterion of identity, considered as associated with any proper name or other singular term: it is the very first example of what became known as the ‘linguistic turn’ in philosophy. Frege's *Grundlagen* may justly be called the first work of analytical philosophy”

13 Whereas Boethius (480-525 AD) did not acknowledge the mode of being of what is *individual*, Ammonius Hermiae (about 440-520 AD), who was a pupil of Proclus in Athens, already related *deixis* with the reference to something *individual*. Kobusch connects this to the way in which what is substantially determined, shows itself by enabling a reference (*δειξις*) to it. Simplicius elaborated this idea of Ammonius by holding that not every *numerical one* is something *individual*, for solely what is one in a *substantial numerical sense* could be pointed at (shows itself) and is something *individual* (see Kobusch 1976:302).

14 “Nur im Zusammenhange eines Satzes bedeuten die Wörter etwas” (Frege 1884 §62). Frege also introduced a new view on *identity* in this paragraph.

(Dummett 1995:111) because it represents the shift from *thought* to *language*. Interestingly, neither Dummett nor Frege realized that the fact that concepts are 'blind' towards what is individual ultimately caused this shift from *thought* to *language*.

The historicism of the 19th century indeed did not succeed in bridging the gap between (universal) conceptual knowledge and what is unique and individual. Niebuhr simply replaced the primacy of universality by emphasizing what is (historically) unique and individual.

4.2 *The turn to language as new horizon*

Dilthey, who is known for his *Verstehen* (understanding) in opposition to *explanation*, also reflected on these issues. He also found himself confronted with the relation between what is *universal* and what is *individual*. Habermas explains the position taken by Dilthey with great lucidity. He mentions that Dilthey, analogous to Peirce, was confronted with the relationship of what is universal and what is particular in a simultaneous and shared historical and lingual structuration (Habermas 1970:200-201). He formulates the problem on a *logical* level: hermeneutical understanding must grasp an inexpressible *individual* meaning in unavoidably general categories (Habermas 1970:201).¹⁵ Something similar happens when Hans-Georg Gadamer dedicates a section of his work on *Truth and Method* to the connection between *concept* and *word* (*thought* and *language*). In this section one finds his assessment of the fact that any living language struggles to harmonize what is universal with the pragmatic meaning of language. He states: "But we can also say that the tendency toward conceptual universality and that toward pragmatic meaning are never completely harmonized in any living language" (Gadamer 1989:436).

Habermas relates this problem also to natural scientific thought: how is it possible that a finite number of established singular facts make possible the cognition of a universal relationship. The corresponding basic question facing the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*) is: how is it possible to understand and represent the meaning (*Sinn*) of an individualized coherence of life in unavoidably general categories.¹⁶ The hermeneutical reflection of Dilthey struggled with the basic problem of historicism, namely how to account for knowledge of unique, individual and unrepeatable historical events, when the way in which it is understood restricts it to *conceptual knowledge* which is blind towards what is individual.¹⁷ In passing we may note that Nicolai Hartmann actually turned the Platonic primacy given to what is universal upside down. Landmann explains: "With Nicolai Hartmann, in turning the Platonic hierarchy

15 "das hermeneutische Verstehen muß in *unvermeidlich allgemeinen* Kategorien einen unveräusserlich individuellen Sinn erfassen."

16 "wie der Sinn eines individuierten Lebenszusammenhangs in unvermeidlich allgemeinen Kategorien erfaßt und dargestellt werden kann" (Habermas 1970:203).

17 In his work on logic and epistemology De Vleeschauwer mentions the "individual delimitation" – and it is through this domain of the 'individual' that our intellectual capacities *must fail*. (Even Scholasticism was faithful to the conviction that whatever is individual is inexpressible - *omne individuum est ineffabile* – see Severijnen 1989.) The directedness of science towards what is universal encounters serious difficulties when it must express its equally basic inclination to know what is individual. As De Vleeschauwer asserts (while maintaining the identification of knowledge with conceptual knowledge), this problem arises from the fact that "knowledge of what is individual is simply impossible" (since its inception, according to him, philosophy had clarity about this insight – De Vleeschauwer 1952:213).

upside down, what is individual – also and precisely in its corruptibility, which is its criterion – is higher in rank than the unaltered-universal.”¹⁸

One way out of the *cul de sac* of universal conceptual knowledge, different from the above-mentioned escape route via sense data, is therefore to explore the *capacity of language* in bridging the gap between *universal* concepts and *individual* experiences. Habermas brings this to expression by pointing at the problem regarding the relationship between the general and particular as it is given in the challenge to harmonize singular experiences with abstract and general categories.¹⁹ The opposite direction is hermeneutically pursued when individual life experiences have to adapt to the *general categories* of language (compare what we have said about Dummett and Frege). Through an interpretation the language employed by a hermeneutic thinker adapts to the individual meaning (*Sinn*) in which life experiences are concentrated. “Everyday language clearly has a structure which factually permits it, in a dialogical relationship, to make what is individual understandable by means of universal categories”²⁰ Habermas states that hermeneutics only develops into an explicit procedure once it succeeds in employing everyday language in a way which is actually forbidden by the syntax of a pure language, namely to make communicable indirectly what is *inexpressibly individual*.²¹

What Dilthey has in mind is integrated life experiences converging in the unity of an *individual* life history. According to him this unity is anchored in the identity of an I and the articulation of a *meaning* or *signification* (“eines Sinnes oder einer Bedeutung”), as explained by Habermas (1970:193). Dilthey writes that the experienced coherence in its concrete reality lies in the category of meaning and that within these experiences this meaning is contained as constituting their coherence.²²

In the thought of Dilthey the German words *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* therefore clearly obtained a meaning *exceeding* the mere lingual sense of words and sentences. He does acknowledge that words have a *Bedeutung* and sentences a *Sinn* (Dilthey 1926:233), but then expands the use of these two words, often in connection with the distinction between a whole and its parts. Then *Bedeutung* turns into an encompassing category under which life becomes understandable.²³ He also speaks of grasping the meaning of the whole [“den Sinn des Ganzen”] (Dilthey 1926:227) and then he explicitly declares

18 “... in Umkerung der Platonischen Hierarchie das Individuelle [steht] – auch und gerade in seiner Vergänglichkeit, die sein Kriterium ist – ranghöher als das unveränderliche Allgemeine” (Landmann 1973:81).

19 “Das Problem des Verhältnisses von Allgemeinen und Besonderem besteht darin, daß die singulären Erfahrungen mit den abstrakt allgemeinen Kategorien in Übereinstimmung gebracht werden müssen” (Habermas 1970:205).

20 “Offensichtlich hat die Umgangssprache eine Struktur, die es tatsächlich erlaubt, im dialogischen Verhältnis Individuelles durch allgemeinen Kategorien verständlich zu machen” (Habermas 1970:206).

21 “Zu einer expliziten Verfahrensweise läßt sich freilich die Hermeneutik erst ausbilden, wenn es gelingt, die Struktur der Umgangssprache in der Hinsicht zu klären, in der sie erlaubt, was die Syntax einer reinen Sprache gerade verbietet: das unaussprechlich Individuelle wie immer auch indirekt mitteilbar zu machen” (Habermas 1970:206).

22 “Der Zusammenhang des Erlebens in seiner konkreten Wirklichkeit liegt in der Kategorie der Bedeutung. ... diese Bedeutung ist in diesen Erlebnissen als deren Zusammenhang konstituierend enthalten” (Habermas 1970:195; Dilthey 1926:237).

23 “Bedeutung ist die umfassende Kategorie, unter welcher das Leben auffaßbar wird” (Dilthey 1926:232).

that the category of *Bedeutung* clearly displays an intimate coherence with *Verstehen* (understanding – Dilthey 1926:234).

After the linguistic turn, Heidegger and Gadamer realized that language itself may be emphasized to escape from the relativism of historicism. Van Niekerk acknowledges this step when he points out that, according to Gadamer, the “world” should be recognized as a creation of language (Van Niekerk 1993:39). Heidegger also realized that a new universal was needed. In *Being and Time*, he focused on “there-being” as a “being-in-the-world” but he still concentrated on *historical* being (“geschichtliches Dasein”). However, Gadamer points out that Heidegger did not once more want to introduce something divine or essential with his notion of *Sein* (*Being*). His purpose was rather to introduce the space in which hermeneutics could become a new universal (“zum neuen Universale wird”) – without providing a final foundation. Gadamer explains that for Heidegger this space is the *dimension of language*.

4.3 *The transitional position of Dilthey in respect of the linguistic turn*

Dilthey’s indebtedness to *historicism* is obvious in his assertion that humans are *historical beings*.²⁴ Yet within the stream of life the human ability to conceive manifests the urge dominating all conceptual thinking, namely to lift out from the flow of events what is *firm* and *persistent*. In combination with the whole-parts relation he adds a remark which incorporates the relation between universality and what is individual – in the direction of what is one-time [*Einmalig* = unrepeatable] the method moves from the part to the whole and back to the part, and in the direction towards the the universal the same interactions exists between it and what is individual.²⁵

Dilthey realized that conceptual thinking does not merely dissect, set apart or analyze, because it also *combines* and *synthesizes* – and in all of this it combines a multiplicity into a unity (Dilthey 1926:300). This includes *comparing* what is *similar* and *different* while our attentive focus (*Aufmerksamkeit*) may, by considering a sequence of objects, natures or processes, be directed towards what they share, while disregarding the way in which they mutually differ.²⁶

According to Dilthey we are taken *beyond* the mere *lingual* employment of the terms *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* as soon as “das Verstehen” (*understanding*) leaves the sphere of *words* and their *meanings*, without looking any longer for the meaning of signs, but searching after the much deeper meaning of an expression of life.²⁷ The position which Dilthey here assumes is of crucial importance for a discussion of the quest for meaning. Initially he acknowledges that *words* and *sentences* have their respective *lingual* meanings. Then he proceeds by introducing the word *Bedeutung* as an *encompassing category* under which life becomes understandable - and later on he finally argues that when understanding departs from the sphere of *words* and their *meanings*, the focus is no longer on the meaning of signs because what is at stake is the *much deeper meaning* of an *expression* of life.

24 “Denn der Mensch ist ein geschichtliches (Wesen)” (Dilthey 1926:291).

25 “Die Begriffsbildung ... entsteht aus dem Zug, der alles begriffliche Denken beherrscht, das Feste, Dauernde aus dem Fluß des Verlaufes herauszuheben. ... In der Richtung auf das Einmalige geht sie vom Teil zum Ganzen und rückwärts von diesem zum Teil, und in der Richtung auf das Allgemeine besteht dieselbe Wechselwirkung zwischen diesem und dem Einzelnen” (Dilthey 1926:146).

26 “Die Aufmerksamkeit kann bei dem Durchlaufen einer Reihe von Sachen, Beschaffenheiten, Vorgängen auf das gerichtet sein, worin sie eins sind, und es wird dann vom dem absehen, worin sie von einander unterschieden ist” (Dilthey 1926:300-301).

27 “... sobald das Verstehen die Sphäre von Worten und dem Sinn derselben verläßt und nicht einen Sinn von Zeichen sucht, sondern den viel tieferen Sinn von Lebensäußerung” (Dilthey 1926:234).

Although Dilthey aims at *leaving* the lingual sphere, guided by the needs of understanding (*Verstehen*), he does not succeed in achieving this aim, because he sticks to the use of two key lingual terms: *meaning* (*Sinn*) and *expression* (*äußerung*). What happens *de facto*, therefore, is that he did two things at once: (i) he fully acknowledges the context of the lingual aspect where the meaning of words and sentences are found; (ii) he intends to *transcend* the lingual realm but does it inconsistently, because he continues to employ two *lingual* terms!

4.3.1 The sign mode

Instead of referring to the *semiotic* aspect (the norming requirement to *assign meaning*), the *semantic* aspect (the *meaning assigned*) or the *lingual* aspect (*structuring the assigned meaning*) one can employ the expression *sign-mode* encompassing the three just mentioned nuances. As a *modality* or *function* of reality, the sign-mode displays its own *universality* – in the sense that whatever exists either has a subject function or an object function within this aspect.²⁸ Highlighting the universality of the sign mode may create the mistaken impression that language embraces us in such a way that we have no access to reality *apart from language*. Is this not what is intended by Derrida in his statement: “There is nothing outside of the text [there is no outside-text; il n’y a pas de hors-texte]”? His own interpretation given to this statement in *Limited Inc* is that “[t]he phrase which for some has become a sort of slogan, in general so badly understood, of deconstruction (‘there is nothing outside the text’ [il n’y a pas de hors-texte]), means nothing else: there is nothing outside context” (Derrida 1977:136). However, interpreted from the perspective of the modal universality of the sign-mode, we may substitute the word “text” with “sign-mode” and then hold that the expression that nothing is “outside the text” actually captures the fact that everything in principle has a subject function or an object function (also) within the sign mode of reality. An understanding like this does not aim at the *reduction* of everything to the sign mode, such as found in the postmodern all-claim that “everything is interpretation,” for it simply asserts that everything has a latent or patent function within this aspect of reality.²⁹

Acknowledging the lingual aspect entails that we may use terms derived from the sign-mode to describe phenomena occurring within this aspect – terms such as *Sinn*, *Bedeutung* and *expression* – as it is done by Dilthey. When terms are employed in this way, namely to designate what presents itself to us within the boundaries of any aspect of reality, we suggested that they are used in a *conceptual* way. When I say that there is *something* out there then I am applying the numerical term *something* (*one*) in such a *conceptual* manner, for it merely and solely refers to the typical function of such a thing within the arithmetical aspect of reality.

²⁸ Humans function as *subjects* within the sign-mode, while everything non-human have latent *object functions* within the sign-mode. For example, when physical things, plants, animals as well as cultural objects are *named* by humans, their latent object functions within the sign-mode are made patent, manifest. One can also say that they are *objectified* within the sign-mode – remembering that *objectification* within the sign-mode is an act performed by a human (lingual) *subject*.

²⁹ The philosophical legacy of the West knows of many other one-sided emphases of reified aspects within the universe, such as “everything is number” (the Pythagoreans), “everything is matter” (materialism), “everything is alive” (vitalism), “feeling is everything” (Gefühl ist alles – Goethe), “everything is historical” (historicism), and so on.

4.3.2 Lingual terms employed in a sense transcending the sign-mode

In paragraph 3.1 a brief analysis was given of concept-transcending usages of the terms “life” and “meaning.” Of course this distinction applies to all aspects and not merely to the *biotic* and *sign*-modes. For example, one can also stretch the use of quantitative terms to apply *beyond* the boundaries of the numerical sphere, such as when the *uniqueness* of something is highlighted. The quantitative act of counting a number of entities remains restricted to the function of such entities within the arithmetical aspect. But as soon as we contemplate their *uniqueness*, their *distinctness*, we no longer merely capture numerical qualities, because the uniqueness of each distinct entity also encompasses the other aspects in which they have functional properties. When modal (aspectual) terms are stretched in this way they point beyond the boundaries of the aspect within which they are located. We suggested that these are instances in which such terms are used in *concept-transcending manner*.

The original (conceptual) awareness of the one and the many returns in the concept-transcending idea of the *unity and diversity* of the universe. With reference to Hegel’s awareness of the difference between a *continuous* magnitude (*wholeness*) and a *discrete* magnitude, Russell holds that the opposition of *identity* and *diversity* in a collection constitutes a fundamental problem of logic – perhaps even *the* fundamental problem of philosophy (Russell 1956:346). However, speaking of a “collection” (into a whole) already explores a basic spatial term, embedded in the relation between a whole and its parts. Russell, for that matter, holds that the “relation of whole and part is, it would seem, an indefinable and ultimate relation” (Russell 1956:138).

From these considerations it is clear that the context within which Dilthey related the whole-parts relation with what is individual and universal clearly also *exceeds* the boundaries of the spatial aspect as such. The terms whole (*holon*) and totality (*totum*) are inherited from the Greek and Latin. Speaking of a line-stretch as a whole (or in its totality) embodies a *conceptual* use of the term *wholeness*. But when something is said pertaining to all the facets of an entity while still holding on to a spatial term, we may refer to that entity in its *totality*. Clearly, in this context the term *totality* is does not merely point at the aspect of space, but indeed to *all* (the *totality* of) the other aspects in which something concretely exists – thus exceeding the point at the aspect of space.

In general we can therefore re-affirm what we established earlier. When terms are stretched beyond the limits of the modal aspect in which they are located, they are employed in a *concept-transcending* manner. This results in concept-transcending knowledge, i.e., *idea-knowledge*. Exploring the aspects of number, space, the kinematic aspect of movement as well as the physical aspect of dynamic changes in a concept-transcending way results in arguably the four most basic idea-statements a philosopher can articulate about the universe: (a) *everything is unique*; (b) *everything coheres with everything else*; (c) *everything is constant* (persists); and (d) *everything changes*.³⁰

³⁰ The unique meaning of each one of these aspects is primitive in the sense of indefinable. The term *coherence*, for example, is just a synonym for *being connected* and for *continuity*. Where Shapiro points out that “coherence is not a rigorously defined mathematical concept, and there is no noncircular way to characterize it” (Shapiro 1997:13), he actually enters this domain of *primitive terms*, i.e., terms related to the uniqueness and irreducibility of the various aspects of reality. Regarding the kinematic aspect we relate inertial (rectilinear) motion to *constancy* (*uniform motion* is also a well-known phrase).

4.4 *At once accepting and rejecting terms from the sign-mode?*

Returning to the view of Dilthey quoted above, we can now provide an alternative for his questionable appeal to and rejection of terms derived from (or found within) the sign-mode of reality.

His view was captured in two perspectives: (i) acknowledging the lingual aspect where one finds words and sentences; and (ii) aiming at (inconsistently) *transcending* the lingual realm because of the continued employment of two key *lingual* terms (*meaning* and *expression*). By contrast the distinction between conceptual knowledge and concept-transcending knowledge provides us with an alternative which resolves this problem straightaway.

The core meaning of the sign-mode and the corresponding terms coined to bring this core meaning to expression are intimately connected to what we identified as a conceptual use of modal terms. Yet at any time such terms may be explored in a concept-transcending way, for instance when Dilthey wants to focus on expressions of life having a *deeper meaning* than what is found when we are merely concerned with the meanings of words and sentences. As soon as this twofold use of modal terms is recognized, it is no longer necessary to aim at *leaving* the sphere of words and their meanings in the search for a much deeper sense of the lingual term *meaning*. It boils down to nothing more than establishing a *concept-transcending meaning* for the term *meaning*! The important point to note is that the term *meaning*, as it appears in Dilthey's expression "deeper meaning" ("tieferen Sinn"), continues to have an original meaning within the sign-mode of reality, co-constituted by the spatial term "deeper."

5. Articulating the quest for meaning

The preceding analysis reveals a key element in the quest for meaning. It is given in exploring the meaning of the sign-mode by stretching the lingual term *meaning* beyond its own confines, that is, by employing the term *meaning* in a concept-transcending way. Compared to the reigning power of the *organic* mode of thinking dominant during the 19th century, this is a significant shift in orientation. At the time it was second nature to speak of an *organic coherence*. By the end of the 19th century however, the emergence of hermeneutical considerations within the still dominant historicist *Zeitgeist* announced the linguistic turn which became apparent in different contexts and surfaced in the thought of diverse thinkers. It indeed became the new *horizon* within which otherwise mutually conflicting schools of thought were embedded. Consider for a moment a number of thinkers.

5.1 *Freud, Wittgenstein, Dilthey and Dooyeweerd*

Freud no longer restricted himself to conceptual knowledge as the epistemic ideal of the *Enlightenment*, for in publishing his work on dreams in 1900 he did not speak of an *analysis* of dreams, but of an *interpretation of dreams* – *Die Traumdeutung*. In his *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus* Wittgenstein also left the conceptual horizon behind, because his aim is no longer to set a limit to *thought* (a logical-analytical issue), but to the *expression* of thoughts (a linguistic concern) (see the *Preface* in Wittgenstein 1966:3). For this reason he claims that the "limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein 1966:5.6).

Initially Dilthey speaks of a "Bedeutungszusammenhang" which is equated by him with a "Zweckszusammenhang" (Dilthey 1926:272). One way to translate this idea of a "Bedeutungszusammenhang" into English would be to designate it as a *meaning co-*

herence. This entails a significant shift, because owing to the dominance of the organic mode of thinking during the 19th century the coherence within reality was preferably designated by using the term *organic* as qualifying adjective. The effect was that speaking of an *organic coherence* appeared to be natural and unproblematic. This mode of speech also influenced the thought of other 20th century thinkers, such as Dooyeweerd.

The initial development of his philosophy consistently used the 19th century expression of an *organic coherence*. However, when his *Magnum Opus* appeared in 1935-1936, an important shift took shape (one that already had been surfacing more explicitly in his 1931 work on the *Crisis in Humanistic Political Philosophy*). The Dutch term “zin” (*meaning*) largely replaced references to the *organic* coherence within reality. Dooyeweerd now preferably speaks of a *meaning coherence*.³¹ However, whereas “Sinn” in general acquired a *teleological* content, pointing at the *telos* (*goal or aim*) of life, Dooyeweerd introduced it to embrace both the origin (*archè*) and the *eschaton*. He distinguishes between the *being* of God and the *meaning* of creation because he aims at capturing the self-insufficient nature of reality within which everything coheres with everything else. In his *New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (Dooyeweerd 1997-II:221-225) he frequently employs the word *meaning* (and *signification*) in a *conceptual* way. But just after the paragraph heading: “Meaning as the mode of being of all that is created,” the first subsequent sentence reads:

This universal character of *referring* and *expressing*, which is proper of our entire created cosmos, stamps created reality as *meaning*, in accordance with its dependent non-self-sufficient nature (Dooyeweerd 1997-I:4).

Alleging that Dooyeweerd’s concept-transcending use of the word “zin” does not have anything to do with its lingual meaning is clearly mistaken, because the two (italized) key words in the just quoted sentence of Dooyeweerd exactly reflect what the lingual meaning of words and sentences are all about – in their *meaning* they, in the first place, *express* and *refer*! This fact simply underscores the above-mentioned claim, because Dooyeweerd’s use of these terms in connection with his encompassing idea of *meaning*, straightaway shows that these three lingual terms (*meaning*, *referring* and *expression*) are also used by him in a concept-transcending way. Therefore we may conclude that in his own peculiar way Dooyeweerd also participated in the “linguistic turn” and the “quest for meaning.”

5.2 *The importance of language: Kant, Herder, Heidegger and Gadamer*

Both Heidegger and Gadamer reverted to *language* in order to escape from the relativistic consequences of historicism. Van Niekerk explains that, according to Gadamer, the “world” should be recognized as a *creation of language* (Van Niekerk 1993:39). Heidegger also understood the need for a new *universal*. In *Being and Time* he focused on “there-being” as a “being-in-the-world” – although he still maintained his

³¹ The following composite phrases occur in *Crisis*: meaning-analogies; meaning-analysis; meaning-boundaries; meaning-character; meaning-clarity; meaning-coherence; meaning-criterion; meaning-elements; meaning-functions; meaning-individual; meaning-individuality; meaning-substrates; meaning-synthesis; meaning-functional; meaning-individual; meaning many-sidedness; meaning-side; meaning-structure; and meaning-systatic. These phrases cannot be reversed without losing the meaning intended by Dooyeweerd. For example, when the expression “*zin-functioneële* concept of law” is not translated as the “meaning-functional concept of law” but as “the functional meaning of law,” the original intention is lost. Dooyeweerd’s systematic preference is to employ the term ‘meaning’ consistently in a *qualifying* way.

focus on *historical being* (“geschichtliches Dasein”). As mentioned earlier, Gadamer nonetheless points out that Heidegger did not once again aimed at introducing something *essential* or *divine* with his notion of *Sein* (*Being*). His aim much rather was to introduce something like an event that can open the space in which hermeneutics could, without a final foundation, become a *new universal* (“zum neuen Universale wird”). *This space is the dimension of language*.³²

In these developments the circle appears to be completed: the emphasis on language as new horizon could be seen as a consequence of the criticism already raised by some of Kant’s contemporaries against his *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR). Jacobi, Hamann and Herder noticed that Kant neglected *language*. And it is significant that Herder already characterized the human being a *creation of language*.³³

5.3 The meaningful construction of social reality

Without the linguistic turn the quest for meaning would not have surfaced so prominently during the 20th century. It provided the background against which Victor Frankl wrote his well-known (above-mentioned) book, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (see Frankl 1962). Of course the negative effects of World War I and II opened an avenue for an opposite mood, particularly articulated within modern philosophy of existence (existentialism).

The combination of the idea of logical creation (Hobbes and Kant), eventually relativized by historicism and the linguistic turn, generated another significant conviction within the social sciences, embodied in the idea of the *meaningful* construction of social reality (see Schutz 1974 and Luckmann 1969).

6. Concluding remark

Acknowledging the deepening effect of employing aspectual terms in a concept-transcending way is opposed to the *closing effect* of reductionistic isms, such as physicalism, logicism, historicism or the post-modern claim that everything is interpretation. When modal terms are used in a concept-transcending manner, such as alluding to the *meaning of life*, none of the terms involved in statements like these should be appreciated as if they are the *only* ones that can guide our understanding of the universe in a concept-transcending way. For example, when Dummett appreciates a linguistic answer to a non-linguistic question (Frege), as mentioned earlier, as “arguably the most pregnant philosophical paragraph ever written,” then it borders upon an over-estimation of the primacy of language in our philosophical thinking. No single idea-use of modal terms should be elevated above other equally important modes of speech which enable equally fruitful concept-transcending usages of such terms.

The earlier mentioned four basic idea-statements – namely that everything is unique, coheres with everything else, is constant, and changes – do not preclude concept-transcending usages of terms derived from other modal aspects as well. Recollect for a moment the terms meaning and life employed in the sentence, regarding the *meaning of life*. It is indeed perfectly permissible to combine more than one concept-transcending expression, for instance when it is stated that the *meaning* of any aspect of reality only comes to *expression* in its *coherence* with all the other aspects.³⁴ Instead of embodying a reductionistic all-claim, this way of combining concept-transcending us-

32 “Dieser Raum ist die Dimension der Sprache” (Gadamer 1991:172).

33 “Der Mensch ist ein freidenkendes, tätiges Wesen, dessen Kräfte in Progression fortwirken; darum sei er ein Geschöpf der Sprache!” (Herder 1978:73).

34 Within the social sciences the core meaning of the economic and jural aspects is often captured in a concept-transcending way, for example when terms such as *stewardship* and *justice* are employed.

ages of modal terms expresses the relativity (not: relativism) of the diversity found within the universe – also enabling multiple (lingual and non-lingual) contexts for a concept-transcending use of modal terms.

The line of argumentation pursued in this article aimed at highlighting the remarkable coherence of various systematic distinctions with the historical transition from conceptual rationalism and historicism to the linguistic turn – particularly the difference between universality and what is individual, the connection with order and orderliness, the difference between modal laws and type laws, multi-aspectual functioning, the twofold use of modal terms (in a conceptual and concept-transcending way), and a new understanding of rationalism and irrationalism. Altogether these historical perspectives and systematic distinctions contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the *linguistic turn* and *quest for meaning*.

Literature

- Aristotle. 2001. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Edited by Richard McKeon with an Introduction by C.D.C. Reeve. (Originally published by Random House in 1941). New York: The Modern Library.
- Cassirer, E. 1957. *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag.
- Collingwood, R.G. 1963. *The Idea of History*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Cornford, F.M. 1966. *The Republic of Plato*. Translated with Introduction and Notes. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Derrida, J. & Searle, J.R. 1977. *Limited inc*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.
- Derrida, J. 1997. *Deconstruction in a Nutshell, A Conversation with Derrida*. Edited with a commentary by John D. Caputo (The Villanova Roundtable). New York: Fordham University Press.
- Dilthey, W. 1926. *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*. Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft (6th unaltered edition 1973. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).
- Dooyeweerd, H. 1935-1936. *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*. 3 Vols. Amsterdam: Paris.
- Dooyeweerd, H. 1997. *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, Collected Works of Herman Dooyeweerd, A Series Vols. I-IV, General Editor D.F.M. Strauss. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen.
- Einstein, A. 2006. *The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein*. Volume 10 (Translator: Ann Hentschel). Princeton: University Press.
- Frankl, V. 1962. *Man's search for meaning; an introduction to logotherapy*. Translated by Ilse Lasch, Preface by Gordon W. Allport. Newly revised and enlarged. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Frege, G. 1884. *Grundlagen der Arithmetik*. Breslau: Verlag M & H. Marcus (Unaltered reprint, 1934; Stuttgart: Reclam Edition 1987).

- Frege, G. 1892. Über Sin und Bedeutung [Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik, NF 100 pp. 25–50]; In: *Funktion, Begriff, Bedeutung*, Ed. G. Patzig (51:980, pp.40–66).
- Freud, S. 1900. *Die Traumdeutung*. Leipzig: Franz Deuticke.
- Gadamer, H-G. 1989. *Truth and Method*, Second Revised Edition (first translated edition 1975). New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Gadamer, H.-G. 1991. Die Hermeneutik und der Diltheyschule. In: *Philosophische Rundschau*, 38(3), (pp.161-177).
- Habermas, J. 1970. *Erkenntnis und Interesse*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Herder, J.G. 1778. *Johann Gottfried Herder, Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, Text, Materialien, Kommentar. Herausgeber Wolfgang Proß, München: Carl Hanser Verlag.
- Hilbert, D. 1925. Über das Unendliche, *Mathematische Annalen*, Vol.95, 1925: 161-190.
- Kobusch, Th. 1976. Individuum, Individualität. In: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Eds. J. Ritter, K. Gründer & G. Gabriel, Volume 4 (pp.299-304). Basel-Stuttgart: Schwabe & Co.
- Landmann, M. 1973. *Philosophie – ihr Auftrag und ihre Gebiete*. Darmstadt: Carl Habel Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Luckmann, T. & Berger, P.L. 1969. *The social construction of reality; a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*, London: Allen Lane.
- Meinecke, F. 1965. *Die Entstehung des Historismus*, Works Volume III, Editor Carl Hinrichs. München: R. Oldenburg Verlag.
- Mill, John Stuart, 2002. *A System of Logic*, University Press of the Pacific, Honolulu (this work originally appeared in 1843).
- Russell, B. 1956. *The Principles of Mathematics*. London: George Allen & Unwin. (First published in 1903, Second edition 1937, Seventh edition 1956).
- Schutz, H. 1974. *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt*, Springer Verlag 1932, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Severijnen, O.J.M. 1989. *Individuum est ineffabile: de modernistische autobiografie tussen Goethe en Leiris*. Nijmegen: University, Dissertation.
- Shapiro, S. 1997. *Philosophy of Mathematics, Structure and Ontology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stafleu, M.D. 1980. *Time and Again, A Systematic Analysis of the Foundations of Physics*. Toronto: Wedge.
- Thürnau, T. 1995. Sinn/Bedeutung. In: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Eds. J. Ritter, K. Gründer & G. Gabriel, Volume 9 (pp.807-815). Basel-Stuttgart: Schwabe & Co.
- Van Niekerk, A. 1993. *Rasionaliteit en Relativisme, Op soek na 'n rasionaliteitsmodel vir die menswetenskappe*, Studies in Research Methodology, edited by Johann Mouton, Pretoria: HSRC.

Von Weizsäcker, C.F. 1993. *Der Mensch in seiner Geschichte*. München: DTV.

Wittgenstein, L. 1966. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921). Third edition. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.