

Interactive comment on “Vollzug und Sprache Physischer Geographie und die Frage geographischen Takts” by B. Zahnen

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I am Professor for Hermeneutic Studies of the Natural Sciences, and this is the perspective from which Zahnen’s paper is evaluated in the present report.

The paper addresses a network of questions that are of prime importance for the conceptual convergence between Physical Geography and Social Geography. A hermeneutically designed methodology is regarded as a possible framework for achieving non-reductionist unity in the growing diversity of geographical theories. The author demonstrates quite successfully that the immanent methodological development of geography makes obsolete the dichotomy between nomothetic and idiographic construction of concepts. Against this background, she provides good arguments for applying such hermeneutic methods in geography which might surmount the older epistemolog-

ical dilemmas.

The author introduces two novel concepts – (a) the concept of tact as a specification of a conceptual apparatus that makes it relevant to a particular research situation; and (b) the concept of geographicity which refers to the constitution of meaning within the variety of research processes in geography.

This is the first paper (in my knowledge) devoted to the approach of double hermeneutics in the methodology of the sciences of earth. Several substantial conclusions concerning the dialogical contextualization in these sciences are drawn. The validity of the approach of double hermeneutics has been proven in many other scientific disciplines – the theory of enzyme kinetics, molecular biology, thermodynamics of non-linear chemical reactions, quantum electrodynamics, Artificial Intelligence. Zahner offers a succinct analysis of those epistemological issues (like objectivity, empirical adequacy, verifiability, conceptual simplicity, adjustment of mathematical formalisms to new cognitive structures, and so on) in contemporary Physical Geography which will undergo a substantial reformulation by applying a version of double hermeneutics based upon the concepts of tact, geographicity, and evolutive conduct. The author provides an excellent historical reconstruction of the problem-situation in Physical Geography that brings into being the need of double hermeneutics in this discipline. She also scrutinizes quite professionally central ideas of the hermeneutic tradition (such as Gadamer's ideas of hermeneutic experience and situated transcendence, and Heidegger's idea of world's disclosure).

The paper is distinguished by an optimal balance between the technical language of geographical theories and the post-metaphysical language of the hermeneutic tradition.

The paper is clearly written and powerfully argued. It is well-informed by the current debate, and makes relevant comments on different claims found in the literature. It will make an important contribution to the current debate about the integration of

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hermeneutic positions in Geography by providing a forceful statement of an important new approach to the methodological unity of the research domains in Geography. It is clearly of publishable quality in its current form, and should be accepted for publication.

Prof. Dimitri Ginev

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