

## **Conferința**

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### **Explanation and Understanding: Science, Hermeneutics, Humanism**

#### **Abstract**

Are the criteria of scientificity identical for each and every science? Is there a common or universal method applicable to all sciences? Are the particular sciences branches or parts of the one unified science? – Questions of this sort have, in the past 200 years, often been asked, and are still being formulated, as some of the first and foremost problems any kind of a philosophy or theory of science is supposed to answer. A long and respectful tradition of German philosophy has, in the past 200 years, been suggesting to give a negative answer to these questions by drawing a clear distinction between natural sciences and human sciences. This distinction is also the one between „explanation” and „understanding” and can be epitomized by Wilhelm Dilthey’s saying „We explain nature, we understand spirit”. Unless we make this distinction, it is suggested, we cannot be good humanists, for we run the risk of objectifying the essence of humans; nor can we be good hermeneuticians, i.e., scholars engaged in pursuing the theory and methodology of interpretation, especially of scriptural texts. Human studies (*Geisteswissenschaften*) are intrinsically interpretive, that is, hermeneutical, and attempts at an autonomous elaboration of the *Geisteswissenschaften* and of hermeneutics represent an essential opposition to the positivist effort to reduce the essence of humans (inclusive of their freedom and their history) to the state of physical particles. The lecture proposes to explore the background and the validity of arguments put forward in this debate, in an effort to defend the scientificity of the human studies, on the one hand, and their autonomy, that is, irreducibility to procedures of the natural sciences, on the other.