A. Inquiry and self-constitution as reweaving of sentential attitudes

Think of inquiry not as relation of S and O but as constant stimulations to reweave caused by causal encounters and normative exchanges. The former are ones with ‘the world’ and the latter ones with ‘others’. The two sets of stimulations produce events like “He shouldn’t say that when we encounter this, so either I have a false view about this, or I don’t understand his language well enough, or he has a false belief...”

This is the sort of thing which G describes at p. 357 by saying “Real experience is that whereby man becomes aware of his finiteness” and “Genuine experience is experience of one’s own historicity”.

Dewey and Peirce put the same point as “we only think when we have a problem, when we are surprised, when something goes wrong”.

This is equivalent to saying “We don’t have a desire to know, or a love of truth, construed as a way to find out what objects really are. We only have a need to solve problems.”

G’s equivalent is “I

B. What holds G and D apart is the Diltheyan Geist-Natur distinction, which is also what holds analytic and Continental apart. Analytic has assimilated Kuhn on historicity of nat. sci., but G has not.

Pre-Kuhnian passage: bottom of p. 299 on “the true historical object is not an object at all” and, most important, top of p. 285:

“Such an ‘object in itself’ clearly does not exit at all. This is precisely what distinguishes the human sciences... Whereas the object of the natural sciences can be described idealiter as what would be known in the
perfect knowledge of nature, it is senseless to speak of a perfect knowledge of history”

G thinks that “objectivity” is not the point in the human sciences. Had he read Kuhn and Davidson, he would say “it is not the point anywhere. The point is to make the strange and unexpected familiar and predictable—both for electrons and for Greek texts.

A Kuhnized view of nat. sci. would have led G to say that the whole idea of ‘the object’ goes, and therefore the distinctiveness of hemeneutics goes.

G’s claim at p. 290 that “Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act that as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated” can be extended to Erklärung as well as Verstehen.

After Kuhn, we can extend the hermenteutic circle to electrons and kangaroos by saying “We go back and forth between giving a description of the thing’s behavior in familiar terms and a possible willingness to redescribe what the thing is”.

The analogue of “understanding the whole in the light of the part and part in the light of the whole” is “understanding the context in which we should put it on the basis of its behavior and redescribing its behavior by putting it in a new context”.

We develop a view of the text as a whole by adding up its parts, and then we change the view of the parts by changing the genre to which we now realize the text belongs. We develop a view of the object by listing what it does, and then we redescribe what it’s doing when we decide that it’s not that sort of object after all.

Example: we started by seeing the stars as exhibiting natural motion, and we then constructed a model of the heavens which led us eventually to decide that there motion was “forced” and then to decide that we did not need a natural-violent distinction after all.

Another example: we watch a bird and try to figure out which kind of seagull it’s behavior and coloring suggests it to be and then it suddenly swoops and we realize it’s a raptor and we change our questions and look for different things to figure out what kind of raptor it is
Also works for Rawlsian reflective equilibrium: we start from a theory and try to reconcile our intuitions with it, with either up for grabs.

The crucial move in seeing nat. sci. as like morals and hermeneutics is to say: observation, and intuition, is theory laden. No non-linguistic, non-historically-conditioned access, even in physics.

Thus at p. 293 G says of the hermeneutic circle

1. Gadamer and Davidson almost agree that knowledge is not knowledge of objects, but of the truth of sentences. “Being that can be understood is language”.

2. Inquiry and conversation are not to be conceived of as a subject getting into touch with object, or as subject getting in touch with subject, but as a reweaving of a web of belief and desire produced by stimuli which incite relatively incoherent new beliefs and desires in the organism.

3. The diff. Between the two men is that G has a fictitious theory of how things are in the natural sciences.

4. D and G can agree that “both the human and the natural sciences are to be understood as achievements of the intentionality of universal life—i.e., of absolute historicity”, if this means that there is no getting behind language to things as they are in themselves.
Quinean thesis that you can change either assignment of meanings or of beliefs, and that to assign changes of meaning is to change inferential relations between sentences.

Affirmed by G at p. 441, ando at p. 268 of T&M

To know what a speaker means by $S$ is to know what other sentences he will use to justify $S$ or how he will use $S$ to justify which other sentences. To know what he believes is to know the same thing.

That there is no such thing as a language means that one cannot say “Now I know his meanings, and am prepared to find out what his beliefs are”. Rather, one can only say “Now that I have overcome the initial phonetic obstacles to bickering, I can start finding out whether he has any beliefs differing from mine, whether I can learn anything from him.”