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The Hermeneutics of Life History: Personal Achievement and History in Gadamer, Habermas and Erikson. Jerald Wallulis. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1991, 158 pages, \$29.95 hard.

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Psychohistory is a multidisciplinary field of interest to historians, biographers, clinicians, and those who dabble in psychoanalyzing culture. There are the classic studies (Freud's study of Leonardo da Vinci), mass market samples (the several studies of Nixon), and even some thorough and judicious examples (Hester's study of Hitler). This work focuses on the most widely known examples of psychohistory within scholarly circles, Erik Erikson's studies of Martin Luther and Mahatma Gandhi. Wallulis chose Erikson as an example of "hermeneutically situated and hermeneutically informed social science" (p. 96).

Most psychohistorical studies and commentaries on psychohistory have been directed toward historians. This book is written by a philosopher and written for philosophers. Indeed, it is part of a twenty book series on philosophy put out by Northwestern University Press. The reviewer is a psychologist who has written psychohistory, but is more specialized in clinical gerontology and selection of management personnel.

Wallulis' book is well organized, the writing is clear, and the summaries (at both the beginning and at the end of major points) are thorough. From the perspective of the reviewer, this book comes off as an overwritten journal article. The majority of it is a digression into philosophy, specifically hermeneutics and linguistics. The author moves with all the precision and thoroughness of a dissertation, charting the origin and nuances of meaning of German terms. If we eliminated the frequent summaries and digressions, and pruned the excess, we would be left with a tightly written article of 20-30 pages.

Wallulis' central point is an important one: what a child, adolescent, and adult seeks is a sense of personal achievement. "Rather than a consciousness of being an effect of history and tradition, it is . . . a consciousness of having been enabled to achieve" (p. 5). Wallulis describes this proactive view of history as being facilitated by the individual actor's "emancipatory self-reflection" (p. 8). Wallulis then brings in Geertz's anthropology, Ricoeur's philosophy, and even Bergman's film, *Wild Strawberries*. While this review must endorse the author's conclusion, "an important sense of enablement and its aspects of agency, will, and purpose has

to be acknowledged from within the context of philosophical hermeneutics” (p. 135), this same reviewer cannot concur with the blurb in the book’s advertising materials: “a work of broad scholarly appeal.”