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A DIALOGUE WITH HANS-GEORG GADAMER

The Contribution of Hermeneutics to Understanding
What a Person is Saying

by

Lynsey Frank Blakston (BA Hons)

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

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The assistance of Dr Irmline Veit-Brause in supervising the first four years of part-time research for this thesis and of Dr Ian Weeks in supervising the final year and a half is gratefully acknowledged by the author who accepts responsibility for the faults of the end product. The supervisors' capacity to encourage careful listening is only poorly conveyed in these pages.

Abbreviations of frequently used titles are signified in the manner below. Details of publications are given in the footnotes and bibliography.

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THESIS SUMMARY

This thesis reviews the development of philosophy of interpretation since the nineteenth century exemplified in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer. It recognizes Gadamer as the foremost philosopher of hermeneutics in the twentieth century, who draws together the contributions of his predecessors into a major new development. The theme upon which this thesis engages in dialogue with Gadamer is concentrated on the problem of making experience the sole object of hermeneutics to the exclusion of persons and what they say, considered objectively. The problem with this is to express the role of interpretative practices philosophically if non-objectifying thinking is normative for hermeneutics. A solution is found by following up Gadamer's insight into the influence of tradition on understanding. I show that tradition and its truth, as well as not being separable from the understanding subject's thinking, are also not detached from an author's intentions and are shared by human beings understanding one another. The transmissive nature of tradition discloses its own method for understanding what a person is saying and the ethical requirements of truth are forwarded by following that method.
Introduction

Does it matter if we have different views of something? For example, does it matter if the members of an art class sketch a model in many different ways because of their different views of a model's appearance? Or does it matter if all the members of a class in diagnostic medicine interpret one patient's symptoms in many different ways? Why is an art school which encourages diversity and individuality in drawing more likely than a medical school which will encourage the same amount of diversity in diagnosis? Professional ethics will be an obvious issue in the latter case, but not so obvious in the former. With the ethical aspects of interpretation in mind, this thesis seeks to explore anew the question of whether there is a 'right' interpretation in which hermeneutics may take a theoretical and practical interest with regard to understanding what a person is saying. If there can be a 'wrong' interpretation in medicine, its connection to the way a patient's symptoms are understood may serve the patient's wellbeing if incorporated into the diagnostic process so that treatment errors can be avoided.

This thesis deals with another area of interpretation, namely the interpretation of literary works. It investigates the connection between interpretation
processes and understanding what a person is saying to see how that connection relates to right action.

The question of the truth of art is the starting point for Hans-Georg Gadamer's work *Truth and Method*. Gadamer's interest in truth originated in a response to older discussions about proving whose interpretation was the right one. Gadamer departed from this approach to consider the truth of art in connection with the variety of meanings a painting may hold for people viewing it from various situations in life.

This thesis re-opens the question of the right interpretation, not to provide ways of proving any particular interpretations, but to re-awaken interest in the possibility of an interpretation being right. The example of diagnostic medicine was included in the previous paragraph because it presents the ethical aspects of right interpretation in a familiar practical setting. The place of a right interpretation in medicine has remained unchallenged in the time it has been practised, whereas in literature, as in art in general, right interpretation has come largely to be considered inappropriate to true understanding.

Gadamer draws his own parallel between interpretation in the arts and in other disciplines, using the

example of politics in the second part of his book to discuss the hermeneutic significance of Aristotle. This comes in a section of *Truth and Method* called 'The rediscovery of the fundamental hermeneutic problem' and concludes with an outline of the 'exemplary significance of legal hermeneutics.' In this connection I return to my initial line of questioning to ask if it matters that a panel of judges can read the decisions of a lower court and save a life or reputation by a majority decision of perhaps three to two, while the composition of a two-party parliament may make the numbers who vote there on the same person's reputation irrelevant. The history of hermeneutics developed in such a way that Gadamer did not feel a need for his book to relate truth to the method by which a matter might be interpreted so that there could be the greatest degree of agreement as to the rightness of its interpretation.

In my theological training I was introduced to hermeneutics as a science which studies and formulates rules for sound interpretation. As in medicine where interpretation put the patient's recovery at stake, or in legal processes where it could ruin individual's lives, interpretation in theology, according to the level of agreement sought, could either check sectarianism or create it. Part of the aim of this thesis is to describe my own way of understanding the development in hermeneutics which led away from a concern for such matters as accuracy and objectivity towards the hermeneutical
experience and the hermeneutical priority of the question, where concern for agreement in interpretation gives way to diversity in interpretation.

The other part of my aim is to provide some ideas to clarify the practice of philological interpretation since its processes have largely ceased being discussed in contemporary hermeneutics. The stimulus for this investigation has been my introduction to the work of H-G. Gadamer in which both the philosophical importance of hermeneutics and its practical connection to the interpretation of texts are demonstrated, yet without a full description of the connection.

Ten years after my introduction to hermeneutics, when I came to Gadamer's *Truth and Method* in my university studies, this question of whether it matters if we disagree on interpretations received new dimensions. I had appreciated already that interpretation was involved in more than theology and art, being in legal and all other opinions as well. What I had not appreciated was the question which Gadamer's book was asking, namely, whether it matters so much that we agree on what something is which is being spoken of, as much as being aware of what effect its being spoken of has on us.

To a degree I had been ready to suspend dogmatism to allow interpretation to have its own objectivity, as the scientific role of hermeneutics since Schleiermacher had required. Impressionism in art had made the point
clearly enough that a picture conveys truth apart from it being an exact reproduction of material objects. In a similar way the novel provided insights into truth by the creation of situations never experienced exactly as they were written.

A problem has arisen, however, in the separation of dogmatics from interpretation. Previously a dogmatic position was suspended to allow the progress of dogma under the influence of the ongoing work of objective interpretation, but the newer hermeneutics seems to be suspending dogma indefinitely. Gadamer's description of legal hermeneutics, for example, refers to a legal process which can never impose legal requirements on offenders directly from legal codes without consideration of contemporary attitudes to the law. The history of the application of the law needs to be understood as well as the written law itself. In this process, Gadamer says, the law is not understood as an object, but its significance is understood only when the traditions which mediate it are merged with the specific situation to which it is being applied.

This example is used by Gadamer to describe a fault he sees in the method of literary hermeneutics used by Schleiermacher. Where hermeneutics then had been a science with rules Gadamer saw a need for it to become a theory about experience to do justice to the changes in significance and application which take place with changes in
circumstances.

The comparison of literary and legal hermeneutics can be extended, as Gadamer has shown, to aesthetics and theological hermeneutics. The right interpretation then becomes one which is sensitive to the flow of traditions and experience, yet cannot be expressed with the dogmatism of the natural sciences.

In Gadamer’s analysis the facts in a piece of literature have a different function in interpretation to the facts in a medical case. In the time since *Truth and Method* appeared, effect became a greater preoccupation in the arts than accuracy. Then it became irrelevant if there was disagreement between interpretations; on the contrary, these differences were taken to enhance the varied effects of what they described.

The same development has occurred in theology, where ecumenical progress in the last twenty years has been achieved mainly through sharing common experiences rather than by agreeing on doctrinal matters over which there had been disagreement. Rescinding official interpretations over which there had been disagreement has not occurred, such pursuits being out of step with the spirit of ecumenism.

There cannot be any objection to sensitivity to the disclosure of truth through traditions and their impact on human spirit. It should be appropriate, however, to ask whether there is any way in which it matters if we dis-
agree on interpretations and if there is, how that disagreement may be overcome. This is the question at the centre of this thesis. It is a question which has been largely by-passed in modern hermeneutics.

Whether it matters if we disagree on interpretations is an ethical consideration which philosophers from ancient times have laboured over. Some of the early Greek philosophers engaged in discussions which appear to have had the reformation of opinion as one of their goals. The means of achieving this goal were not only the topics of the dialogues but were also the dialogues themselves through their influence in raising pertinent questions. We need to enquire as to what it is about dialogue which enables it to function in this way. That question has been brought up by Gadamer in the context of a theory of hermeneutical experience to be considered in this thesis.

We will notice a shift from theory of hermeneutics to theory of hermeneutical experience. Whereas rules for the practice of textual interpretation would have been the main hermeneutical consideration in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics in the nineteenth century, after Dilthey and Heidegger there was a turn to self-understanding as the key to understanding. According to Gadamer, one of the means to self-understanding is to appropriate and apply the traditions in which it is reflected. While this has considerable connections with the whole tradition of interpretation it is not the only theme in that tradition.
We will consider the validity of objectivity in interpretation or understanding which is not specifically self-understanding; understanding of an issue or person, that is, which comes along with self-understanding through engagement in dialogue.

This thesis looks for a philosophical approach to an ethics of understanding in connection with the idea that a shared understanding of what a person is saying is knowable and possible and in certain circumstances absolutely desirable. My research has been undertaken with the desire to appreciate the changes in understanding occurring with the appearance of the hermeneutical writing of H-G. Gadamer. It is because I believe dialogue with Gadamer by means of his work has given his readers more than self-understanding that I wish to reply in writing and clarify in the minds of others whether this is so.
CHAPTER 1

PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS

1.a. Description of Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's work

'These studies are concerned with the problem of hermeneutics' - so begins Hans-Georg Gadamer's Truth and Method, first published in German in 1960. The 'problem of hermeneutics', according to that book's introduction, is 'to understand what the human sciences truly are, beyond their methodological self-consciousness, and what connects them with the totality of our experience of the world.' To express the problem of hermeneutics this way forms a contrast to Schleiermacher's formulation of the problem which needs to be described as the background to a dialogue with H-G.Gadamer.

For Schleiermacher the problem of hermeneutics was to

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1 TM, p.xi.
2 TM, p.xiii.
formulate a method of understanding which could claim to be as effective in the human sciences as the methods of natural sciences were in their own fields. In seeking to go beyond method to understand the connection between the human sciences and the whole of experience Gadamer makes hermeneutics focus not on texts, statements or gestures, as Schleiermacher would, but on what happens when we make such things a focus of understanding.

Schleiermacher and Dilthey each produced pioneering studies in hermeneutics in the age of science, but in Gadamer's view never discovered the philosophical grounding of understanding. Gadamer saw a need for hermeneutics to go beyond method 'to understand the universe of understanding.' Because Schleiermacher's hermeneutics took as its object only part of another person's life, his achievement of 'something like complete understanding' was in fact, according to Gadamer, only 'a

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5 TM, p.xiv.

6 TM, p.168.
relative completeness of understanding."

By taking hermeneutics to be an exercise in historical analysis, Schleiermacher was basing it not on content, according to Gadamer, but on method. For Schleiermacher, meaning was grasped by a circular movement of understanding whereby meaning is anticipated and adjusted through viewing the whole and parts of a linguistic construction. What Gadamer believes is missing in Schleiermacher’s view of hermeneutics is an awareness that the ‘anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the communality that binds us to the tradition.’

For Schleiermacher the central process in hermeneutics was the interpreter’s analysis of the material to be understood. For Gadamer it is the process of ‘the coming into being of meaning, in which the significance of all statements – those of art and those of everything else that has been transmitted – is formed and made complete.’ The statements made by art are of particular interest to Gadamer because they clearly demonstrate a function of meaning which Schleiermacher omitted from his hermeneutical theory. Art shows how new meanings can come

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6 TM, p.168.
7 TM, p.261.
8 TM, p.146.
into being as it takes a person experiencing it 'out of the context of his life...and yet relates him back to the whole of his existence.' In Schleiermacher's view these new meanings are to be omitted in deference to the intention of the artist; in Gadamer they are the primary focus of interpretation.

The reason for no longer trying to reproduce in the understanding what was the original intent of the author is twofold in Gadamer's writing. The penetrating influence of the traditions which surround us is said, on the one hand, to render such a pure objective reconstruction impossible. On the other hand, historical distance only 10 'lets the true meaning of the object emerge fully' as part of an infinite process, never in a self-evident, completed interpretation. For Gadamer, meaning emerges as 'productive prejudices that make understanding possible' and those that 'hinder understanding and lead to misunderstandings' are allowed to remain in tension with the others as each age seeks to understand texts as expressions of itself.

Gadamer contrasts his view of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics with his view of Hegel. He sees Hegel rejecting an aesthetic understanding in which one is

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9 TM, p.63.  
10 TM, p.265.  
11 TM, p.263.
merely representing art within oneself, a view which he attributes to Schleiermacher. To place works of art in their historical context 'does not give one a living' relationship with them but rather one of mere imaginative representation.' On the other hand Gadamer sees Hegel's own aesthetic possessing a 'self-consciousness of spirit that...comprehends the truth of art within itself in a higher way,' and 'culminates in the absolute knowledge of philosophy.' In Gadamer's view it is here that 'Hegel states a definite truth, inasmuch as the essential nature of the historical spirit does not consist in the restoration of the past, but in thoughtful mediation with contemporary life;' a thoughtful mediation, that is, between the past and contemporary life through a thinking attitude toward the past.

This contrast which resists the possibility of understanding which is derived in any way from a restoration of past meaning, is central to the concerns of this thesis. It marks the rejection from hermeneutics of the possibility of understanding an author's meaning in terms of what was originally intended, relating properly understood meaning wholly to the activity of the self in its understanding.

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12 TM, p.149.
13 TM, p.150.
14 TM, p.150.
Gadamer certainly identified a fundamental problem in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics at the point where it suggested that the historical distance between the past and present can be overcome by the imagination. However, I believe we need to investigate whether the truth of art or of any other statements may be expressed solely in terms of a thinking attitude toward the past or whether an understanding of truth is also derived partly from an author's activities which have been designed to create effects on a responding subject's consciousness.

Alongside the orientation to self-consciousness introduced by Hegel remains the question of consciousness which is not self-consciousness. This question has been raised by Gadamer and others but not to the point where it is related to the form of objective understanding presented by Schleiermacher, as I am setting out to do.

Gadamer's ideas of effective-history and effective-historical consciousness, for example, need to be studied not just in relation to the hermeneutical situation as a situation of the thinking subject, but also in relation to the hermeneutical situation of the author, as Schleiermacher attempted to do. The concept of horizons of enquiry has been developed by Gadamer to explain how real understanding takes place in a fusion of past influences and present enquiry and not merely by naive assimilation of the past. Gadamer's development of the fusion of horizons goes back to his belief 'that understanding means,
primarily, to understand the content of what is said, and only secondarily to isolate and understand another's meaning as such.'

This contrast between 'the content of what is said' and 'another's meaning' represents the contrast between Gadamer's focus in hermeneutics and Schleiermacher's, but it needs to be explicated in terms of the development of philosophical hermeneutics if it is to be evaluated properly. That is, why should we accept the idea of 'effective-history' and not 'another's meaning', when both exist to some extent outside of self-consciousness? Why devise a way for the former to be tied to self-consciousness, but not the latter?

Gadamer's own assessment of the truth of Hegel led to his critical adoption of some of the developments proposed for hermeneutics by Dilthey and his rejection of some of Dilthey's other ideas. On the one hand he presents him as belonging with Schleiermacher and on the other hand as a model by which to measure *Truth and Method*. Gadamer arrives at this kind of judgment by a relation to the history of ideas and logic which involves an idea that the meaning of an individual's work is provided 'in the changing process of understanding, just as it is the same history whose meaning is constantly being further

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15 TM, p.262.
determined.' Within this process Gadamer believes it is evident that 'the breadth of the historical horizon in which Dilthey has placed all philosophising' is normative, while his 'entanglement in the impasse of historicism' is to be overcome.

Dilthey's virtue, according to Gadamer, is that he moves away from looking for similarities between a reader's experience and an author's as the basis for understanding. The hermeneutics he proposes is based instead on a continuing historical consciousness framed by a life-philosophy. In Gadamer's explanation this life-philosophy is 'like the continuity of a text' insofar as 'the structural continuity of life is determined by a relation between the whole and the parts.' Unlike Husserl's idea of a significance which results from logical structures, Dilthey understood significance as an expression of life. This is the main point which Gadamer has taken from Dilthey and adapted to his search for the way of understanding in the human sciences. 'Life interprets itself. It has itself a hermeneutical structure. This life,' Gadamer says, 'constitutes the real ground of the human sciences.'

16 TM, p.336.
17 TM, Section heading, p.192.
18 TM, p.197.
19 TM, p.199.
Dilthey's focus of hermeneutics on the continuity of life is combined by Gadamer with the speculative idealism of Hegel. Until Hegel's philosophy of mind, thought is seen by Gadamer to be trapped in statements and definitions, but Hegel enabled thought to be understood in its movement beyond the subject, so that 'speculative idealism offers greater possibilities for the fulfilment of our task than did Schleiermacher and the hermeneutics emanating from him.' One of the shifts taking place in this removal of the subject/object model of understanding is a splitting off of the human sciences from the natural sciences, the analytical methods of the latter being separated from hermeneutics, contrary to the intentions of Schleiermacher and Dilthey. For Gadamer to claim Dilthey as one who helped make the task of hermeneutics to describe 'more adequately the experience of the human sciences and the objectivity they are able to achieve' is therefore invalid, if it rests on the idea that Dilthey believed in an objectivity of the human sciences independent from or superior to objectivity in other science.

Gadamer's descriptions of the thought of Schleiermacher and Dilthey are part of an evolution in the theory concerning the process of understanding where selected issues are reinforced or dropped out according to their

20 TM, p.214.
21 TM, p.214.
relevance or otherwise to the theory in operation. Gadamer is pleading for movements of thought and changes in understanding to be recognised and normative for the self-understanding of understanding, which is his focus of hermeneutics. But the movements he selects do not exhaust all possible interpretations in the history of ideas.

An additional movement which could be traced in Schleiermacher’s thought is his own interest in universal spirit. If Schleiermacher believed ‘the pious man can detect the operation of the World-Spirit in all that belongs to human activity,’ what service is done to the self-understanding of understanding if the omission of this movement allows him to be presented as a model of mechanical understanding? The formulation of a role for absolute spirit in Hegel’s philosophical thought has the appearance of a development in the ‘universe of understanding’ such as Gadamer is looking for. Schleiermacher is seen only to use ‘the old hermeneutical principle of the whole and the parts’ to develop a sense of the infinite nature of understanding as a process, not as a principle of life.

Infinite principles of understanding are not foreign


\[23\] TM, p.xiv.

\[24\] TM, p.187.
to Schleiermacher. A hermeneutical problem which concerned him in this regard lies in evaluating competing claims of universality, namely the capacity of human thought for transcendence, and divine thought which is already and always transcendent. Schleiermacher's rebuke to religion's cultured despisers shows the respect he has for transcendental thinking. 'Having made a universe for yourselves,' he said, 'you are above the need of thinking of the Universe that made you.' Although he did not define the scope of hermeneutics in terms of the possibility of thought to extend its universe, Schleiermacher still believed that the universe of human culture is a truncated universe, an inadequate substitute for a higher one.

Both the human and global influences on us, which we are born into and are moulded by, are themselves proposing boundaries for our understanding. Whether Schleiermacher is referring to 'the way the thoughts in a conversation develop from our shared life...to understand a series of thoughts as a moment of life which is breaking forth,' or to the influence of the World-Spirit, it is simply a matter of which aspect of transcendence is being referred to. There is a principle of universal understanding to which Schleiermacher was open, and contrary to Gadamer's perception of his views, Schleiermacher did not perceive

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it to be a universe of his own creation.

Peter Szondi, who has drawn attention to the life-
scope represented in Schleiermacher’s reference to ‘a
moment of life which is breaking forth’, wrote that
twentieth century hermeneutics needs to reconsider
Schleiermacher’s stress on grammatical and psychological
interpretation to balance speculation as it did a century
ago. In the interval we have ‘tended increasingly to soar
into the realm of a philosophy of understanding, neg-
lecting to return to the earthly practice of interpret-
ation and to its methodology.’ Szondi further suggested
that it was not such a novelty for Dilthey to propose
Life-philosophy when he did because it came as an out-
working of influences in that direction from Schleier-
macher. A passage like the one above from the first
Academy address ‘clearly reveals the motivation behind
Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics as well as the attraction
that is was bound to exercise on Dilthey and on Lebens-
philosophie in the final years of the nineteenth
century.’

The historicity of understanding cannot be appealed

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28 Ibid., p. 99f.
to explain completely the differences between Szondi's and Gadamer's readings and conclusions in relation to Schleiermacher. Truth and method are at issue even after theoretical considerations have been pursued to the extent of Gadamer's magnum opus. Does discussion of what we understand in individual authors continue because how we understand has not been properly or adequately understood? Is it because how we understand is not properly applied to what we are seeking to understand, or because we are not seeking to understand the same things? What I see as the scope and limits of Gadamer's interests in these matters is considered in the next section's brief description of his hermeneutics.

1.b. Description of Gadamer's hermeneutics

This brief description begins with the thought of Gadamer's predecessors only to show the background to his hermeneutics. Issues raised in this development will be more fully described in later chapters. To begin describing Gadamer's hermeneutics in relation to the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and Dilthey is complicated by the different conceptions of hermeneutics which are involved. Consideration will be given in the final section of this chapter to the definitions of hermeneutics and the role of the term in the writings under review. The various uses of the term arise through different ways of pursuing certain problems which shaped the ambit of the discussion.
In Schleiermacher's study the problem for hermeneutics was to enable the understanding and interpretation of any document with general principles and procedures applicable to a variety of modes of expression. Although he understood philosophy of understanding to be involved in hermeneutics, Schleiermacher's primary orientation was to clarifying what he called the art or technique of understanding. This was, for him, hermeneutics. Kimmerle quotes from one of Schleiermacher's later works, the Brief Outline on the Study of Theology, showing Schleiermacher's view of the relation of thinking and text in hermeneutics:

The full understanding of a discourse or writing is an artistic achievement and this requires a doctrine of art or technique, which we designate by the term 'hermeneutics'...Such a doctrine of art only exists insofar as its rules form a system based directly on clear principles drawn from the nature of thinking and language.

For Dilthey the problem of adapting a technique to apply in interpreting all kinds of texts was not the main issue, although it was important to him to understand the products of various branches of the humanities. Dilthey's work shows a greater emphasis than Schleiermacher's on the philosophical justification for a unified approach to interpreting the materials of the human sciences. The problem for Dilthey was this:

What is the system of presuppositions which justifies the judgments of historians, the con-

\[29\] F.D.E.Schleiermacher, Hermeneutics, p.35.
\[30\] W.Dilthey, Selected Writings, p.35.
clusions of economists and the concepts of
lawyers and provides criteria for establishing
that they are true? Is this system based on
metaphysics? Is there a philosophy of history
or law of nature which is sustained by meta-
physical concepts? Where, if such ideas have to
be rejected, is there a firm foundation for the
system of presuppositions which interrelates
the individual disciplines and provides them with
certainty?

The 'system of presuppositions' sought by Dilthey would
provide a way to understand individual disciplines and
works because of an 'acquired structure of mental
life,' whose regularity and uniformity 'permits the same
order to apply to many people.' As 'the theory of
theories' philosophy makes the customs described in the
human studies comprehensible in terms of the structures
governing individuals and society.

Interest in the logical structures of understanding
is shared by Dilthey and Husserl. The transition from
Schleiermacher's practical orientation, through Dilthey's
philosophy of expression to a thoroughly logical orien-
tation of understanding without empirical consideration of
individual works is completed in Husserl's phenomenology.
Husserl's pursuit of the phenomena of understanding in
isolation from physical objects is taken over by Heidegger
with the orientation shifting from thought to existence.
Things are then as they are incorporated in the whole of

31 op.cit., p.93.
32 ibid., p.90.
33 ibid., p.125.
Being and known through the manifold experience of human being. At the end of the transition the reversal has become complete; the older hermeneutics was directed to the peculiarities of a particular work, to be understood by general rules, the newer hermeneutics is directed to the totality of Being as met in modes of human experience outside of science.

Against the background of Heidegger's analysis of Dasein (There-being), as Gadamer sees it, 'with all its far-reaching consequences for metaphysics, the problems of a hermeneutics of the human sciences suddenly look very different.' Truth and Method is 'devoted to this new aspect of the hermeneutical problem.' In Heidegger's writings, and in Gadamer's, interest in particular texts, which was suspended by Husserl, has re-emerged. But now it is on a different basis to that in Schleiermacher and Dilthey.

Because the 'historical preparation' for Truth and Method includes all of Schleiermacher, Ranke, Droysen, Dilthey, Husserl, Graf Yorck and Heidegger, who provide the 'foundations of a theory of hermeneutical experience' we can make the mistake of thinking that

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34 TM, p.230.
35 TM, p.230.
37 TM, Division heading, Second Part II, p.235.
technique for interpreting particular works has remained a central issue throughout. This is not the case. When Gadamer exegetes classical or contemporary texts we need to remember his warning that method is not the guarantor of truth, and in that he is not speaking about particular methods, but any method, method as such.

Rather than occurring as a product of methods of understanding, the coming of truth is understood as an event in which we participate 'when we are caught up in the game that is played with us, it is then, before we are aware of it, that we have joined in the continuing event of truth.' The orderly structure of life and thought, sought in the work of Dilthey and Husserl, is made present, according to Gadamer, in language. 'What comes into language in a poem moves, as it were, into relationships of order that support and guarantee the "truth" of what is said. All coming into language, and not just the poetic, has about it something of this attested quality.' Gadamer himself draws the lines of the historical reversal which we have outlined above when he states, 'Understanding, then, does not consist in a technical virtuosity of "understanding" everything written. Rather, it is a genuine experience, ie an encounter with something

that asserts itself as truth.'

Whereas Schleiermacher thought of understanding arising by the enquirer directing attention to objects to be interpreted, Gadamer’s attention is focussed on the effects of history whereby ‘it determines in advance both what seems to us worth enquiring about and what will appear as an object of investigation.’ These processes of effective-history need to be understood through ‘effective-historical consciousness’ for the hermeneutical situation to be understood, for the achievement of ‘the right horizon of enquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition.’

Gadamer is not alone in observing that understanding occurs within a lived tradition. His description of the process of understanding as one which involves a fusing of the horizon of understanding of a particular situation in the present with the effects of a situation from the past may not seem new at first glance. What is new is his critique of the efforts to overcome historical distance and his exploitation of tension between the text and the present as part of the process of hermeneutics. ‘The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension

40 ibid.
41 TM, p.267f.
42 TM, p.268.
43 TM, p.269.
by attempting a naive assimilation,' he says, 'but con- 

sciously bringing it out.'

Even though the horizons of separate historical 
situations are imaginary, this very fact attracted the 
scientific zeal of the older hermeneutics. What happens in 
scientific historical understanding, according to Gadamer, 
is the projection of a horizon of tradition distinct from 
that of the present. What distinguishes philosophical 
hermeneutics is that this fusion of horizons is part of a 
philosophical description, despite it having the semblance 
of a psychological description. It is the wider statement 
of the philosophical restructuring of hermeneutics which 
shows the extent of its difference from previous hermen-
neutics. The fusion of horizons which takes place in 
understanding is not a deliberate act of scientific 
control determining the truth of a statement from the 
past. It is rather what happens when projected historical 
horizons are constantly amended due to the shift which 
occurs when the historical horizon is overtaken by our 
present horizon of understanding.

The suspension of scientific dogmatism called for by 
Gadamer's analysis of effective-historical consciousness 
leads to the 'hermeneutical priority of the question.' 
Plato and Collingwood are the writers to whom the thrust 

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44 TM, p.273.  
45 TM, pp.325ff.
this move is attributed, but the role of questions in the philosophical framework which Gadamer is proposing comes also from the nihilist tradition of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, taken over by Heidegger and Bultmann.

Rather than defined meanings, the goal of the questions being asked here is 'the undetermined possibilities of a thing.' Even the task of hermeneutics, seen philosophically, turns into the asking of a question, rather than the providing of answers. It consists 'in asking what kind of understanding, what kind of science it is, that is itself changed by historical change.' The historical horizon has to be removed as it is presented by historical consciousness to allow the existential questions evoked by a work to make their full impact. Heidegger's warning having been heeded, that the science of how we know is out of place until the question of what is the Being of beings is understood, Gadamer seeks a philosophical description for the objects of interpretation as manifestations of universal givens distinct from their descriptions as expressions of local culture.

A further factor combined into the philosophical mix of Gadamer's hermeneutics is the contribution of Husserl's phenomenology. In seeking to understand what kind of science it is that is changed by historical change,

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46 TM, p.338.
47 TM, p.276.
Gadamer was drawn to an investigation of 'the intentionality of universal life.' Understanding, in the way Schleiermacher described it, was a kind of causal continuity, a pattern imposed on a chain of meaning adaptations from the past to the present. Gadamer noticed how Dilthey's efforts to separate 'the relationships of the historical world from the causal relationships of the natural order' were forwarded under the influence of Husserl's doctrine of intentionality. 'Dilthey's concept of the structural quality of the life of spirit corresponds to the theory of the intentionality of consciousness in that this is not merely a psychological fact but the phenomenological description of an essential determination of consciousness.' Preoccupation with psychological facts therefore gave way to discovering ways in which consciousness is determined by the logic of phenomena, that is, by intentionality.

Gadamer sees Husserl overcoming epistemology which asks the question, 'How can we transcend ourselves and make contact with the external world?' It was accomplished, he says, by Husserl demonstrating 'that conscious-

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48 TM, p.229f.
49 TM, p.198.
50 TM, p.198.
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ness is exactly intentionality, which means that we are in the matter and not simply enclosed in ourselves.' The experience of the intended meaning of things belongs then to the nature of things to give to the knowing subject, in the context of a universe of meaning. Yet notwithstanding this attribute assigned to things, and the focus of understanding shifting away from the subject's knowledge, there remains a focus on the subject's experience.

We recall Schleiermacher's idea that understanding of a given statement is conditioned by an understanding of human beings and human ideas. Since Husserl and Heidegger the analysis of understanding has changed from being oriented towards objects to be understood and turned towards the knower to whom understanding is given. Gadamer believes that the subject's place in history means that 'the same tradition must always be understood in a different way' by different people, meaning that the problem of hermeneutics is that of 'the relationship between the universal and the particular.' In Gadamer's use of the universal-particular schema the elements are not the construed universal meanings manifested in particular texts, as in the case of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. The 'universal' in Gadamer's use of the

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52 ibid.
53 TM, p.278.
54 ibid.
schema is tradition which must be applied to a particular situation for understanding to occur. In this view the interpreter 'seeks no more than to understand what this piece of tradition says, what constitutes the meaning and importance of the text.'

Such words about texts and tradition disclose a different understanding of their relation to that in the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher. Then texts were viewed as influenced by tradition, their particular meaning understood through a process of isolating an author's intention out of the cultural package in which it was transmitted. Gadamer, on the other hand, views the text as a universal thing, wider than the written words, a piece of tradition whose meaning has taken hold of the interpreter independently of any meaning intended for transmission by the author.

The introduction of Truth and Method speaks of the traditions of an individual and those of everyone in an alignment where consciousness 'takes the linguistic and thinking habits built up in the individual in his communication with his environment and places them before the forum of historical tradition to which we all belong.' Gadamer seeks the placing of our own prejudices before the forum of historical tradition for the purpose of being judged by it, rather than for us to judge the tradition.

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55 TM, p.289.
56 TM, p.xv.
That which is to be understood in the human sciences comes into the interpreter’s understanding in ‘an encounter with something that asserts itself as truth.’

Because we share fundamental prejudices with tradition we have a relationship to the object which comes into language. On the other hand we cannot presume our horizons to be the same just because we share a language. This ambivalence of strangeness and familiarity is a characteristic which a transmitted text has for us, Gadamer says, because it is situated in ‘that intermediate place between an historically intended separate object and being part of a tradition.’ He therefore concludes that the ‘true home of hermeneutics is in this intermediate area.’ It has become clear to Gadamer through following this route that the ‘real meaning’ of a text ‘does not depend on the contingencies of the author and whom he originally wrote for,’ thus arriving at a completely contrasted hermeneutics to Schleiermacher’s.

The truth of the text itself, as it appears to the reader, the message it brings to her or him, that is the real message of the text, Gadamer believes. It is the way truth is conveyed in a painting when its viewers share

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57 TM, p.445.
58 TM, p.262f
59 ibid.
60 TM, p.263.
with the work of art the drama presented in it. Time is only a barrier to enjoying a work of art when the aesthetic experience of the present is suspended. For Gadamer time is 'a gulf to be bridged, because it separates, but it is actually the supportive ground of process in which the present is rooted.'

As in play there is a flexibility to the role exercised by horizons of understanding. The play of meaning is such that there are not two separate horizons which the interpreter moves between in the event of understanding. Rather, 'the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion' and includes both the past towards which or historical consciousness is directed as well as our own past.

Understanding, then, is 'the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves.' Gadamer has described the 'conscious act of this fusion as the task of the effective-historical consciousness.' The interest of the historian who accepts this description should now be directed not to the 'historical' phenomena of the work as it has been handed down, but towards its effect in history

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61 TM, p.264.
62 TM, p.271.
63 TM, p.273.
64 TM, p.273f.
when interpreting a work of art or other manifestation of the tradition. By recalling how this relationship between the interpreter and the work has been described by phenomenology and affected the precedence of ontology over epistemology we will understand why Gadamer says that effective-historical consciousness is not 'a hermeneutical requirement in the sense of the traditional concept of hermeneutics,' that is, as a capacity which the interpreter can or should develop as a tool for understanding. This consciousness is an unavoidable part of what is happening when we try to understand historical phenomena.

A theory of understanding like Gadamer's, which sees tools for understanding as irrelevant to understanding the event of understanding, creates certain difficulties for itself, I believe, when it is tested against a close observation of the event of interpretation or explanation. When Gadamer himself comes to interpret texts and state their meaning he uses many of the tools used by Schleiermacher, while maintaining reservations about the latter's understanding of understanding. I wish to pursue the question of what it is that requires the use of tools of exegesis to be maintained in the practice of interpretation in the face of their supposed irrelevance according to the philosophy which sets out the way to understand the discipline itself.

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TM, p.267.
Later writers such as Derrida and Foucault have continued the revolution over meaning and carried it through more thoroughly. They, says David Hoy, 'seem to think the critique of humanism is not complete until the respect for the authority of meaning is seen through and perhaps abandoned.' Respect for the authority of meaning has waned in Gadamer with regard to making efforts at its discovery and use, but not abandoned. In Truth and Method the concern is philosophic, that is, 'not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting or doing."

Whether we set the focus of the discussion of understanding from the direction of what we are doing or what happens to us seems to me not to make much difference. The focus is at the place where understanding occurs. Something happens to us and it occurs when we do something. Gadamer has not established, in my view, why philosophic concern for what we are doing when understanding occurs should not help in understanding understanding. If we want to keep the terms of the discussion oriented to what happens to us, the point I am making can still be approached by asking what was happening to Gadamer when he was understanding and expounding Plato; what was happening


67 TM, p.xvi.
to Schleiermacher when he was understanding and expounding Plato; and by contrast what was happening when I was not understanding any of them? My thesis is that the actions of the interpreters in each case does have something to do with what happens, so that the sharp contrast in Gadamer's words in the last quotation above are too limiting.

The ethical consequences of interpretative action are a part of Gadamer's work which cannot easily be disregarded. In respect of this kind of action, Bubner says that without a concept of 'practice conceived of as the concrete realization of the good at any time... hermeneutics remains an understanding developed for dealing with texts and historical documents from which no practical conclusions are drawn.' Bubner's own conclusion about Gadamer is that 'hermeneutics, as Gadamer outlines it, does not have such a concept of action.' Certainly Gadamer wishes to avoid proposing any 'practice' as the 'realization of the good,' but Bubner's criticism falls short if it is meant to refer to persuasive arguments about the good in philosophical discourse, which Gadamer most certainly advances. Gadamer's own example in pursuit of this is clear and also his advocacy of the Platonic-Aristotelian method of philosophical discourse and its

69 ibid.
ethical connections.

My concern is to clarify and restore the relationship between philosophical and practical hermeneutics by showing the ethical implications, not of the results of interpretation, but primarily of its derivation through the use of tools in engagement with particular works. This investigation will of necessity include some philosophy, but also seek to discuss issues left standing concerning the relationship between Gadamer’s theoretical writing and his interpretative writing. The necessity for such a project lies partly in the lack of resolution of how we understand in relation to the peculiarities of a work.

This introductory chapter has sketched the development of Gadamer’s philosophical approach to a universal hermeneutics in which he has constructed a more thoroughly worked out base than that achieved by Schleiermacher and Dilthey. The particularities of authors and interpreters have been described by Gadamer as occupying their own historical horizons of consciousness which are fused together with the horizons of tradition, not in a naive assimilation but retaining the tension between the text and the present. This overcoming of temporal finitude is achieved by thinking about possible meanings since questions ‘bring out the undetermined possibilities of a thing;’ questions being the manifestation of ‘the most

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TM, p.338.
hidden and yet the most powerful foundation of our century...its scepticism over against all dogmatism, including the dogmatism of science.' The foundation of understanding in our century also excludes dogmatic interpretations and their methods, Gadamer is saying.

In opposition to my call for interpretative methods to be incorporated into philosophical hermeneutics, it may be said that the particularity aspect of the problem of 'the universal and the particular' is dealt with by Gadamer's proposals concerning application. However, even though he has written that application is 'the central problem of hermeneutics,' it occupies barely four pages of Truth and Method and is not pursued with vigour anywhere else in his works. This is because application, which had been a feature of Romantic hermeneutics whereby the significance of a legal or theological text was connected to a present situation, is included by Gadamer with understanding and interpretation as 'comprising one unified process'.

72 TM, p.273.
73 TM, p.274.
74 TM, p.275.
Hermeneutics which philosophises on all understanding must include how the truth of one text is understood in comparison to the truth of another text. Questions about whether this difference is related to a different manifestation of being will need to be considered. How prejudices are derived by thought, how affected by the will, and their effect on truth and human relationships are also questions which are involved. Truth and Method and this thesis deal only with the relation between understanding and language, yet even here the ethical aspects of hermeneutical thinking may become clearer by relating hermeneutic understanding to literary criticism in the context of the action of individual writers and interpreters.

Because Hans-Georg Gadamer’s work had already been enriched by his study of written works from wide historical and disciplinary horizons, Peter Szondi’s question is suitably directed to the author of Truth and Method, that is, 'Why has literary study, which should see its task in the "perfect understanding of a text," failed to develop further the theory that Schleiermacher called for and that he even sketched out in his theological lectures; indeed why has it virtually closed itself off entirely from the problems of hermen-
75 eutics?' Through concentrating on the logical aspects of the problems of hermeneutics, Gadamer's achievements in both his theoretical and interpretative writing are denied the full extent of conclusiveness which they deserve.

The achievements for the theory of the human sciences made by Heidegger, Ricoeur, Dilthey and Schleiermacher stand in the same need of being seen to contribute to a position which demonstrates the social importance of understanding what a person says. Two years after Truth and Method first appeared, Szondi was complaining of there being no guide to the study of German literature 'that attempts to acquaint the student with the theoretical questions involved in understanding a text. These questions are scarcely ever brought up in discussions among scholars, and it is seldom realised how often they 76 give rise to differences of opinion.' Schleiermacher's concern with mis-understanding has been bypassed while the practical and theoretical problems of misunderstanding remain almost thirty years after Szondi's complaint.

The aim of this present investigation is to provide a philosophical facility for understanding the things one person says to another and the acts of will involved in writing and reading truthfully. The social importance of

75 P. Szondi, 'On Textual Understanding', p.4. (Originally 'Über philologische Erkenntnis', pp.146-165 in Die Neue Rundschau, 73rd Year, No.1, 1962.)
76 ibid.
hermeneutics has been studied by Habermas among others from the perspective of its results in generating meaning. My focus is on the way of receiving what is meant in a work and on discussing that in the context of those ethical aspects of hermeneutics relating to the process.

1.c. Defining hermeneutics

In Gadamer’s works, definitions function differently in their context to the way definitions functioned in earlier hermeneutics where the scientific aspect of interpretation was emphasised. Technical works set out the ways in which terms are to be understood consistent with the aim and achievement of the project. In this manner Schleiermacher stated that ‘the rules for the art of interpretation must be developed from a positive formula, namely: "the historical and the divinatory, objective and subjective reconstruction of a given statement”,’ and then defines each term in the formula. This is done by stating, for example, ‘"Objective-historical" means to consider the statement in (its) relation to the language as a whole, and to consider the knowledge it contains as a product of the language,’ or, ‘"Subjective-historical" means to know how the statement as a fact in the person’s

78 F.D.E.Schleiermacher, Hermeneutics, p.111.
mind has emerged.'

Gadamer speaks differently about hermeneutics because he is not advocating a technique. He does not claim any authority to dictate the way terms should be understood by his readers but initiates a search for ways the matters described may be understood. Although his works do not contain many definitions used in the hope that they will be precise, fixed, and durable, there are informal definitions appearing as summary statements about hermeneutics. Technical writing uses definitions to limit what is to be understood by words and ideas as the scientific investigation proceeds. Philosophical hermeneutics on the other hand uses summary statements about hermeneutics to describe developments in thinking.

When Gadamer states that 'the classical discipline concerned with the art of understanding texts is hermeneutics,' he is describing a discipline he sees extending from the ancient Greeks through to the twentieth century in the sense that everything that is handed down 'depends, for its unlocking and communicating, on that spirit that we, like the Greeks name Hermes.' In the earlier years of the discipline the spirit of unlocked meanings was thought to dwell in the art of understanding. However, as the

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79 ibid., p.112.
80 TM, p.146.
81 TM, p.147.
discipline concerned with the art of understanding texts is traced by Gadamer through to the later years, the focus of attention is not on the art but the understanding. That is, hermeneutics is seen as the art which understanding itself is. Understanding is no longer seen as a product of hermeneutics but the field of its operation.

Kurt Mueller-Vollmer in a similar manner believes that 'hermeneutics is both a historical concept and the name for an ongoing concern in the human and social sciences.' The aim of his anthology, The Hermeneutics Reader, was to present texts demonstrating 'the hermeneutic enterprise' in its various aspects, because 'for the historical aspect of hermeneutics a simple definition will not do.' He is suggesting that a chronicle of the changing concept of hermeneutics will do, at least to some extent. A definition comprised of a chronicle in the manner of the Hermeneutics Reader contains many more words than a definition in a technical work, yet performs a similar function of enabling a researcher to indicate for the reader's agreement the scope of meaning in using the words at hand. Gadamer gathers references to historical developments in the discipline concerned with the art of understanding with a

83 ibid.
similar purpose to Mueller-Vollmer's.

I do not believe the chronicler of the history of understanding has avoided the difficulties involved in defining an historical enterprise, simply by avoiding technical definitions. Narratives of the history of understanding, such as set out by Gadamer and Mueller-Vollmer, face a similar challenge to that faced by the advocate of techniques of understanding when the topic of hermeneutics is being defined in relation to the particular effects of an object on understanding.

Changes in the understanding of 'meaning' and 'truth' have affected all definitions of hermeneutics, whether set out as axioms, as in the case of Schleiermacher, or as historical developments. For Schleiermacher, understanding the meaning of a text was closely identified with its author's intention; the formation of meaning according to Gadamer takes place in understanding, conceived as 'a part of the process of the coming into being of meaning.' For the later writers, the primary meaning of 'meaning' changed from something presented by authors to something presented by the understanding process, but in both methods a narrative of how meaning is presented at a particular time is used to define the field of investigation.

When Gadamer traces the hermeneutic discipline

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84 TM, p.146 (emphasis added).
through to the twentieth century one notices the search for meaning in some ages is said to be characterised by an application of technique and others by the recognition of occurrances of understanding. In Gadamer's analysis, the philosopher of understanding is looking for something which is 'primarily, to understand the content of what is said, and only secondarily to isolate and understand another's meaning as such.' For Gadamer, the work of hermeneutics does not refer to the second of these aspects of understanding, that is, its work is not 'to develop a procedure of understanding, but to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place.' Furthermore, the primary quality of understanding, the one with which hermeneutics is concerned, namely understanding the content of what is said has also been subject to reformulation. No longer can the 'content' of the text be assumed to be the author's meaning alone. There is an expectation present in reading a text which is also 'specific in content' in relation to the unity of a text's meaning and its relation to the truth, but this is not derived from understanding the author's meaning.

The contrast between hermeneutics concerned with method and hermeneutics concerned with theory of under-

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85 TM, p.262.
86 TM, p.263.
87 TM, p.261
standing is clearly drawn in Gadamer's foreword to the second edition of *Truth and Method*. There he was preserving the term 'hermeneutics' not in the sense of 'a methodological art, but as a theory of the real experience that thinking is.' Although the words of this definition are not proposed with the same lexical fixity as those of the earlier hermeneutics, they do call the reader to assimilate them as data which are determinative for the scope of the process being described in Gadamer's discourse. In other words, as I say below, the desire to bring out all possible meanings of a thing is never able to proceed in a completely undetermined way to enable the possibilities to remain undetermined when they are being spoken about.

To Gadamer's claim that philosophical hermeneutics is not 'a methodology of the human sciences, but an attempt to understand what the human sciences truly are...and what connects them with the totality of our experience of world' he adds another which claims to have shifted the location of meaning from within what an author says to within our reflective experience, to effectively make 'understanding the object of our reflection.' The answer to the question of whether these aims have been achieved

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88 TM, p.xxiv.
89 TM, p.xiii.
90 ibid.
any more truly by one line of enquiry or another remains to be seen and will not come about by an argument over definitions but of understanding their place in understanding.

Later discussions of hermeneutics have relied more on the descriptions 'hermeneutic' and 'hermeneutical' than on defining the field of hermeneutics as a scientific discipline. Hermeneutics as an art has been superceded by reflection on the hermeneutic situation or the hermeneutical experience, which is, according to Gadamer, a 'different task. For it is undoubtedly true that compared with the genuine hermeneutical experience that understands the meaning of the text, the reconstruction of what the author had in mind is a limited undertaking.'

But why should the late definitions of, say, Heidegger be normative and the limited undertaking of reconstructing what the author had in mind be excluded from the scope of hermeneutics? Such redefinition of hermeneutics seeks to be undefining in the sense of being unlimiting in respect of understanding, to address the meaning of all the questions raised by a text in accord with the way understanding is seen to operate. However, the very use to which these insights are put in Gadamer's writing remains definitional, that is, limiting in respect to which aspect of understanding should be thought of in a

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91 TM, p.336.
philosophy of understanding and interpretation.

Heidegger's derivation of the circular structure of understanding from the temporality of There-being is re-examined by Gadamer 'to use, for our own purpose, the new significance seen to be derived from it. Gadamer's philosophical purpose is quite distinct from the purpose of technical writing; but the development of logical structures in his writing is achieved by employing the philosophical insights and ideas of his predecessors in a similar way to the axioms of technical writing, insofar as they both delimit the area of the author's investigation and the terms under which the reader is invited to test it.

The above descriptions of hermeneutic projects have drawn attention to the influence any evaluative work has on the selection of definitions for hermeneutics. A fuller understanding of the processes of understanding and their value, cannot be obtained until Gadamer's achievements are considered in greater detail. The matter of definitions serves here as an introduction to further discussion of the relationship between hermeneutics and science and the specific concerns and corrections Gadamer has contributed to our understanding of that relationship. We are suggesting further in this section that Gadamer's distance from the methods of science may not be as great as he

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92 TM, p.235.
theoretically maintains when procedures of science, such as the use of axiomatic statements, are noticed in his writings.

The role of definitional statements in Gadamer's work may also suggest that while it must be acknowledged that the reconstruction of what 'the author had in mind' is a limited undertaking, it nevertheless remains an aspect of the process of understanding which should not be removed by redefining the task of hermeneutics. Gadamer’s compilation of insights from the past refers to 'Plato's intention', 'what Heidegger means' etc. He proposes that these be understood in reference to formations in the developing pattern of meaning rather than to a claim to understand the authors' particular meanings. Notwithstanding the absence of such a claim by Gadamer I believe there is a role given to authorial intent in Gadamer's understanding which needs to be included more specifically in the definition of the task of hermeneutics. In later chapters I indicate the direction this should take.

Gadamer's ideas on tradition and his interaction with other thinkers also rely for their form on his interpretation of the texts passed on to him. The result is that Gadamer's narrative of the history of understanding has a character of its own and not necessarily true or definitive for others. That is to say, as long as objectivity remains alienated from the hermeneutic process.
CHAPTER 2
SCIENCE AND HERMENEUTICS

2.a. Objectivity in interpretation

One of the difficulties inherent in historical understanding concerns interpreting things which are being experienced in a variety of different ways due to the passage of time. Members of an art class paint their model differently in changing light and changes of the artists' moods. The interpretations of the medical class may also vary, according to variations in the patient’s symptoms and according to the students' moods. In each case the way of dealing with the changing circumstances will provide for the employment of various techniques of interpretation.

In the case of the art class, variations in light and mood may contribute to variety of interpretation to the advancement of the discipline. In the case of the medical class the variations should be dealt with by the students in such a way that their diagnosis will remain uniform. Subjectivity and objectivity are managed in different ways by the interpreters in these two groups. In the case of the medical group the uniformity of diagnosis is ensured both by alertness to the effects the interpreting
subject's mood changes may have on diagnosis and by alertness to the effects of changes in the condition of the patient under examination. In this case the influence of subjective conditions on the results of interpretation is minimized and the influence of objective conditions maximized. In the art class the subjective condition of the artist is of interest to viewers of art if it can be expressed in terms of the variety of effects obtained in viewing an object. In this case objectivity, that is, the discovery of the originating cause of subjective impressions is minimized.

One of Gadamer's criticisms of the hermeneutics of the nineteenth century is that the 'naive belief in the objectivity of historical method was a delusion.' His concern with this naivety is that it seems to him to claim objectivity as the only way in which truth may be known and thus to place the interpreter in control of truth. Modern science, according to Gadamer, employs theories as a way to gather experiences together with 'a will to dominate what exists.' In his view the application of this approach to hermeneutics demonstrated a need 'to preserve the factuality of language...from the idea of


2 TM, p.412.
Closer examination shows that a will to power is not necessarily substituted for openness to truth whenever objectivity is sought in hermeneutics. Dilthey observed that throughout history the development of sciences of law, politics and economics has been influenced by contemporary literature and philosophy. It was his desire to monitor this influence. 'After many distractions due to our national development and to the application of a one-sided ideal of culture since Jacob Burkhardt,' he said, 'we are today filled with the desire to develop this objectivity of the human studies with an open mind, critically and stringently.' In Dilthey's view of science, the natural sciences' theories are detached from our practical contact with the external world, as esoteric 'productive achievements'. Among the objects with which the human sciences are concerned are gestures, facial expressions and words by which we communicate with each other. Dilthey sees human creations as permanent objectifications of the mind and human nature. Thus the detachment of the natural sciences is absent in the human sciences and 'a connection between life and science is retained so

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3 TM, p.413.
5 ibid., p.79.
that thought arising from life remains the foundation.'

Dilthey's founding of the human sciences on a rediscovery of a whole web of connections making up a mental state in its totality fits in with Schleiermacher's view of understanding in which the understanding of a particular is always conditioned by an understanding of the whole. Schleiermacher says, for example, that the understanding of a particular statement is always based on 'a preliminary knowledge of human beings, a preliminary knowledge of the subject matter.' For the human studies Dilthey noticed a potential conflict in the tension between 'the tendencies of life and the scientific goals of the human studies,' embodied in the ways the various human scientists want to influence life as they study it.

Dilthey proposed that the resolution of the conflict and the 'objectivity of the human studies' be developed through the construction of the human studies on the principle of understanding the historical world as a 'system of interactions centred on itself,' within which the value systems of various disciplines 'determined by their

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6 ibid., p.71.
7 F.D.E.Schleiermacher, Hermeneutics, p.59.
8 W.Dilthey, Pattern and Meaning in History, p.81.
9 ibid.
10 ibid., p.82.
horizon' are operating. Therefore 'each individual system of interactions contained in it has, through the positing of values and their realization, its centre within itself; but all are structurally linked into a whole in which, from the significance of the individual parts, the meaning of the whole context of the social-historical world arises.'

The concern for scientific understanding in the human sciences was based on an 'objectivity' which preferred historical experiences over metaphysical explanations. The corollary to this was a preference for understanding expressions of life in terms of experience of life. The natural sciences offered explanations, considered by Dilthey to be distinct from understanding. The latter is directed to the knowledge we have of ourselves and our experiences and thus more appropriate for the human sciences. This distinction, together with the view of the historical world as a system of interlinked horizons of understanding, changed the focus of objectivity from things themselves as known, to the process of understanding itself and marked the beginning of a transition from Schleiermacher's hermeneutics to Gadamer's.

Gadamer sees the universality of nineteenth century hermeneutics harmonising with 'the natural sciences' ideal

\[11\]
\[\text{ibid.}, \ p.81.\]
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\[\text{ibid.}, \ p.82.\]
of objectivity;' but it is achieved, he says, 'only by ignoring the concretion of historical consciousness in hermeneutical theory.' He draws attention to a decisive turning point introduced by Heidegger's 'existential account of the hermeneutic circle' which brought to light the synonymity of subject and object within the primordial unity of being at home in the world. In the nineteenth century this circular structure was within the formal relation of the part and the whole, 'the intuitive anticipation of the whole and its subsequent articulation in the parts.' In the new description the circle is 'neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter.'

Gadamer includes an author's intention as being among 'the world of objects' which is no longer the goal of knowledge in the human sciences. Instead, it is 'man's

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13 TM, p.260.
14 TM, p.260.
15 TM, p.261.
16 ibid.
17 ibid.
knowledge about himself and the world of his creations in which he has deposited this knowledge. ' To me this seems to attempt to divide ways of knowing which actually operate together. Knowledge of ourselves and our creations is knowledge of something. The creations in which self-knowledge is deposited continue to be objects of study in Gadamer's hermeneutics despite the problems for Heidegger's description of understanding to accommodate them. In the sense that he has made 'understanding the object' of his reflection Gadamer has not managed to escape the objective quality of knowledge by pursuing man's knowledge about himself and the world of his creations.

Distinctions between his and Dilthey's understanding of the concept of 'object' as suggested by the phrase 'the object of our reflection' are not further explicated by Gadamer as a major issue. What is assumed is that the phenomenological approach is suited to the human sciences to the exclusion of an empirical approach because the assumption of the latter, that things can or should be known, does not in itself provide understanding of the things themselves, but only as they are constituted by consciousness.

In Gadamer's analysis hermeneutics 'has never been

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19 ibid.
20 TM, p.xiii.
the organon of the study of things;' that place as the overall system of principles of investigation is occupied by dialectic. It is because what is to be understood is not 'thought as part of another's life,' as in Schleiermacher's view, but thought 'as a truth,' according to Gadamer, that he believes 'hermeneutics has an ancillary function' in dialectics, and 'remains part of the study of things' within 'the system of sciences.'

In this respect Gadamer is able to follow Schleiermacher and his limiting of hermeneutics to 'making intelligible what others have said in speech and text,' that is, in 'reference to the truth that lies hidden in the text and must be brought to light.' Gadamer interprets Schleiermacher's view of hermeneutics as a technique which focusses on the pre-eminence of language and 'sees the statement that a text presents as a free production, independent of its knowledge content.' By this he means

21 TM, p.183. (emphasis added)
22 ibid.
23 ibid.
24 ibid.
25 ibid. (emphasis added)
26 ibid.
27 ibid.
28 ibid.
29 ibid.

TM, p.172.
that Schleiermacher, 'sees texts, independently of their 30 claim to truth, as pure expressive phenomena,' whose being directs our attention, 'towards the Spirit that 31 playfully generates them.'

Having interpreted Schleiermacher to understand individual utterances as a 'manifestation of universal 32 life', Gadamer believes Schleiermacher's problem remains 'not historical obscurity, but the obscurity of the 33 "Thou".' He assumes the advance from positivism to phenomenology to have dealt with the questions of our knowledge of the external world. Dilthey's emphasis on understanding in the human studies being viewed in its context of life has led to life being taken up as the sole focus of understanding. Those things which Dilthey took as 'expressions of life', such as words and gestures, have been replaced as the objects of philosophy and hermeneutics by 'man's knowledge about himself and the world of 34 his creations.' That is, study of the expressions and creations of human beings has given way to study of our knowledge of them. This is the change undergone in what it is which is to be understood in the discipline of

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30 ibid.
31 ibid.
32 TM, p.166.
33 TM, p.168.
hermeneutics from the nineteenth century to Gadamer.

The preference for understanding our experience of
life over scientific explanation, which Gadamer has
accepted from Dilthey as the concern of hermeneutics is
based on a dual suspicion. Gadamer's suspicion of the
certainty sometimes attributed to the natural sciences
appears regularly in his discussion of the inappropriateness
of Schleiermacher's adoption of scientific methods.
Security through method and the technical mastery of
processes ought not to be an objective transferred from
the natural sciences to the human sciences, Gadamer
argues. Instead, the claims of science need to be demythologised by philosophy 'to join together science and man's
knowledge of himself in order to achieve a new self-understanding of humanity.' The social and ethical
problems associated with scientific assertion lead to
Gadamer's preference for self-knowledge as the only kind
of knowledge 'capable of saving a freedom threatened not
only by all rulers but much more by the domination and
dependence that issue from everything we think we
control.'

The other part of Gadamer's suspicion of science is
that the objects it seeks to understand are parts of 'the
whole' with which philosophy has to do, and 'the whole is

35 ibid., p.149.
36 ibid., p.150.
an idea that transcends every finite possibility of knowledge, and so it is nothing we could know in a scientific way.' By implication this throws into question the basis for speaking of natural and human science. Physical sciences often operate with some kind of universe in mind without it preventing empirical studies but in fact sustaining them. To dismiss the procedures of physical science because they do not view objects as modes of human existence excludes natural science from participation in philosophy as long as it retains those procedures. It may have been a meaningful insight by Heidegger, as Gadamer suggested, 'that the notion of scientific objectivity may be understood ontologically as a derivative mode of human Dasein and its way of being in reference to the world,' but, as Gadamer confesses, that also means 'that today not metaphysics but science is dogmatically abused.'

Gadamer wants not to abuse science, so phenomenology has been adopted as a rigorous science and the means to avoid that abuse. He wants to close the gap between


39 *ibid.*, p. 163.
practice and theory viewed as 'rote knowledge of something of which one has no experience whatsoever,' but he speaks in terms of an estrangement which is not always apparent in scientific practice, was not apparent in Schleiermacher and Dilthey and is not maintained in his own hermeneutical exercises in their philological and linguistic aspects.

Gadamer recognises that it was Dilthey's belief that whatever the doubts in his attempt to ground the human sciences, 'he expects the overcoming of the uncertainty and unsureness of life to come not so much from the stability that the experience of life provides, but from science.' With the aid of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics Dilthey succeeded in 'harmonising the mode of knowledge of the human sciences with the methodological criteria of the natural sciences,' even though, Gadamer says, 'he was unable to do it without neglecting the essential historicality of the human sciences.'

These qualities of the two divisions of science, the one in which truth is experienced, the other which judges the world by analytical methods, cannot be combined without the disciplines losing their identity, Gadamer is saying. Dilthey only achieves his harmonisation by 'con-

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41 TM, p.211.
42 TM, p.212.
cealing the difference between the historical nature of experience and science's mode of knowledge,' with the aid of romantic hermeneutics as his starting point. When Dilthey attributed to the human sciences 'the same objectivity as the natural sciences' he was overlooking the historical nature of experience, Gadamer says.

Romantic hermeneutics assumed that 'the object of understanding is the text that has to be deciphered,' understood that is, as 'an expression of mind.' Dilthey continued the attempted epistemological justification of the human sciences by 'conceiving the historical world as a text to be deciphered.' Even this fails, according to Gadamer, because the object of practical philosophy or the human sciences, is not 'enduring principles and axioms.' Its "object" is the constant change which underlies all human practice.' Because of this 'the knowledge of the human sciences is not that of the inductive sciences, but has

43 ibid.
44 ibid.
45 ibid.
46 ibid.
47 ibid.
48 ibid.
49 ibid.

quite a different kind of objectivity and is acquired in a quite different way.'

Gadamer develops his proposal for the nature of understanding in the human sciences around an idea of 'objectivity' defined in a certain way by means of a narrative of the history of objectivity. He sets out to 'describe more adequately the experience of the human sciences and the objectivity they are able to achieve,' by describing the achievements of Husserl's phenomenology.

Husserl's critique of 'objectivist psychology and of the objectivism of philosophy until then' rests on the idea that there is an a priori correlation of 'the object of experience and of modes of givenness' so that 'consciousness was already not an "object", but an essential coordination.' Gadamer believes this was the beginning of 'an overcoming of "objectivism", insofar as the meaning of words could no longer be confused with the actual psychic content of consciousness, eg the associative images that a word evokes.' The phenomeno-

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50 TM, p.213.
51 TM, p.214.
52 TM, p.215.
53 ibid.
54 ibid.
55 TM, p.216.
logical overcoming of the particularity of an experience by correlating meaning as intended and understood into a 'unity of meaning,' saw the new objectivity arise at the same time as the demise of the old.

The solution to the epistemological problem in the human sciences is thus sought in phenomenological research, whereas in the natural sciences, where the objects are thought to be fixed, the problem is perceived differently. Later in the thesis we will consider whether the constantly changing effects of time on consciousness do in fact render understanding less accessible to empirical study than the physical world which is equally subject to the effects of time and whether self-knowledge is less attainable through transmitted knowledge than through directly intuited knowledge.

I doubt that objections to dogmatic empiricism must apply to all empiricism and that objective knowledge is not suitable as a supplementary activity in the task of understanding. That the development of hermeneutics must stem from a desire for phenomenology to embrace all science, needs to be reviewed in the light of Gadamer's claim that philosophy can still be called scientific because 'in spite of every difference from the positive sciences, it still possesses a binding proximity to them that separates it from the realm of the world view based

56 ibid.
upon strictly subjective evidence.' What puts hermeneutics and philosophy closer to positive science and separates them from subjectivism needs to be made clear. This can be done partly through discussion of the claims of various disciplines and their self-definitions, such as we are attempting in the present chapter. As Gadamer's own method proposes, a greater degree of clarity can be obtained by reflecting on understanding at work when various ways of thinking are coming into play, for example in the work of interpreting a specific text. Later chapters will concentrate more on that.

2.b. Hermeneutics and the human sciences

Much of the discussion of natural science and human sciences takes place without a thorough answer of the question as to whether those engaged in the humanities wish their work to be considered a real part of the sciences, or in name only. Part of the problem for hermeneutics is that traditionally it has involved some of the investigative qualities and procedures of science such as may be found in archeology and linguistics for example. A question which needs to be dealt with in modern hermeneutics is whether these archeological and linguistic elements are part of hermeneutics or are auxiliaries or

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have nothing to do with hermeneutics, and hence by
Gadamer's definition, not a part of the human sciences.

Hermeneutics continues to be described as among the
Geisteswissenschaften, with the connotation of personal
knowledge associated with the word, even after Gadamer
dissociates it from the methodology of the natural
sciences. Where does knowledge fit in a scheme in which
understanding and explanation have been divided between
the Geisteswissenschaften as the province of the former,
and Naturwissenschaften for the latter? In Chapter 6 we
shall study the significance of words such as 'I do not
know what you mean' or 'I understand' used in connection
with the metaphor of 'tradition'. A study of tradition
following methods common to the human sciences will show
that knowledge is given and understanding takes place in
an event of transmission.

We have noted previously Gadamer's correlation
between meaning as intended and as understood in a 'unity
of meaning.' I am maintaining a basically traditional
viewpoint that this unity of meaning is not a correlation
between consciousness and universal mind or life or any
such transcendent 'whole' but a correlation between finite
consciousnesses, in the case of meaning in the human
sciences, and between finite consciousness and substance
in the case of meaning in the natural sciences. Further, I

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See p.13.
am maintaining that both of these correlations are in play in hermeneutics.

Gadamer describes Husserl's new philosophical foundation for science as a 'victorious reproof of psychologism,' 'psychologism' being Gadamer's way of describing that 'knowledge of the external world' which is based on the assumption that sensation exists as a real given in consciousness. Gadamer challenges the appropriateness of that assumption to be part of the basis for hermeneutics on the grounds that sensations depend on 'what consciousness itself intends and knows when one experiences something as given.' That is, we are prevented from assuming sensation to be given because whatever consciousness identifies as elements in a body of data are determined by itself rather than given to it.

Because of the connection between hermeneutics and the words of individuals we need to keep before us the question whether or not sensation is given to consciousness, especially whether other people and what they say can be known apart from what we already know of them from our own self-understanding. Is there a possibility that evidence of psychological factors may be given in an author's words about feelings? Is there any sense in which

60 ibid., p. 153.
61 ibid., p. 154.
sensations which provide recognition of different alphabets are essential to becoming conscious of messages through linguistic analysis? Certainly these objects rely on previously acquired information to be understood, but the degree to which prejudgment affects the understanding of truth should be decided also in conjunction with the effects of linguistic elements on consciousness. Gadamer, however, insists that empirical observation recognise its limitations in the task of understanding 'our life world as deposited in our language.' He believes the fluctuations constantly in play in a linguistically constituted order of life 'cannot be fully resolved by means of the possibilities of knowledge available to science,' whereas they can be comprehended within the ongoing work of philosophy.

Gadamer tries to guard against dogmatism in both philosophy and science in the sense of each one not encroaching on the other's areas of competence, but it seems to me to be a dogmatism of another kind to suggest that philosophy can fully resolve what science cannot, without resorting to some kind of theoretical constructions of its own to assist it in framing its insights in a way similar to the procedure of natural science.

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63 ibid.
One problem in interpreting a text as an object in the hope that of itself it will convey its own meaning objectively to the reader is that this expectation overlooks the influences of prior understanding from the perspective of which the interpreter necessarily views the text. Gadamer reads Schleiermacher to say that the influence of those prejudices constituted by narrowness of view is to be nullified by scientific method. This reduction is an impossibility and belief in it an example of scientific dogmatism according to Gadamer. No matter how open we are to a text's meaning we will always be 'placing the other meaning in a relationship with the whole of our own meanings or ourselves in a relation to it,' and so never purely free from prejudice in our understanding.

Gadamer rightly points out that the enlightenment 'prejudice against prejudice' deprives tradition of its power because its presence in 'legitimate prejudices' is denied along with the truth they convey. Instead of relying on previous ideas about a text's meaning or trying to ignore them, a hermeneutically trained mind must, in Gadamer's understanding, be sensitive to the text's quality of newness. 'The important thing', he says, 'is to

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64 TM, p.238.
65 TM, p.240.
66 TM, p.246.
be aware of one's own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings.' The awareness of bias referred to in this statement is not like Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's. However much they were seeking a general hermeneutics applicable to one's context in life, Schleiermacher and Dilthey were still measuring their success by a scientific certainty which expects to overcome doubt by refusing what can be doubted, as proposed by Descartes.

Gadamer believes that the human sciences based on Cartesian assumptions still needed to deal with a 'challenge to historical being and knowledge presented by the inadequacy of the concept of substance,' the basis of the epistemological problem. Gadamer believes that Heidegger demonstrated how Descartes' concept of consciousness and Hegel's concept of spirit were still influenced by 'Greek substance-ontology, which sees being in terms of what is present and actual.' Heidegger made this development intelligible by revealing 'the ontological premises of the concept of subjectivity.'

A scientific theme for hermeneutics is thus no longer

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67 TM, p.238.
68 TM, p.214.
69 TM, p.239.
70 ibid.
to be found, Gadamer says, in 'understanding' based on an object being known by pure reason unaffected by its temporal environment. It is found instead in the achievement of Heidegger having derived 'fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conceptions from the things themselves.' When Gadamer advocates awareness of bias to allow the text to assert its own truth it could appear as if the scientific approach of the nineteenth century is being continued, which is not so.

The view of fore-structure of understanding which Gadamer has adopted from Heidegger is not allowed to be that presented by 'popular conceptions' but must be derived from the things themselves. This discernment in turn must take into account the relationship between the projection of meaning by the person wanting to understand and what Heidegger called the 'thrownness' of understanding. The thrownness of a projected understanding is itself thrown since There-being understands itself out of its own being, not as self-projection, 'not master of itself and its own Dasein, but comes upon itself in the midst of beings and has to take itself over as it finds

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72 ibid.
73 itself.' Heidegger calls a mood which is there, in which one finds oneself, 'thrown' or 'delivered over.'

74 The structure of There-being as 'thrown projection' is based on the derivation of the circular structure of understanding from the temporality of There-being. Rather than a circle which is to be escaped before hermeneutics can become scientific, Heidegger saw a circle in which is hidden 'a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing.' Heidegger denied that the circularity of inquiring into being rendered the inquiry invalid, because 'the very asking of this question is an entity's mode of Being; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about - namely, Being. This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being,' he denotes by the term "Dasein" (There-being).

Does this hermeneutical circle make the scientific theme of Heidegger's and Gadamer's hermeneutics secure also in relation to the use of means of understanding which have been the traditional tools of hermeneutics? How does philology, for example, fit into the circle of an

74 BT, p. 174 (Ger. p. 135).
75 TM, p. 236.
76 BT, p. 27 (Ger. p. 7).
inquiry into Being if philological interpretation 'must have already understood what is to be interpreted'?

Heidegger believed that although we possess a science of language 'the Being of the entities which it has for its theme is obscure.' At the writing of Being and Time there was a need, Heidegger thought, 'of re-establishing the science of language on foundations which are ontologically more primordial' than the logic of grammar and categories of significance. Philosophical research instead must ask 'what kind of Being goes with language in general.' The disclosure of this Being should be gained by asking what state-of-mind is specific to language, wherein we find hidden 'a way in which the understanding of Dasein has been interpreted.' Such a way of speaking, according to Heidegger, will include the discovery of an understanding of the Dasein-with of Others, as well as any traditional interpretations of entities.

The close of the previous chapter showed how 'hermeneutics' has been redefined to exclude method and replace it with reflection on the hermeneutical experience. In this chapter we can see this is accompanied by a

77 BT, p.194 (Ger. p.152).
78 BT, p.209 (Ger. p.166).
79 BT, p.209 (Ger. p.165).
80 BT, p.209 (Ger. p.166).
81 BT, p.211 (Ger. p.167).
redefinition of science. In order to formulate a philosophy of Being which accords strictly with the limits and origins of human understanding of Being and beings, Heidegger proposed that the real progress of sciences comes not in research into their subject-matter but 'when their basic concepts undergo a more or less radical revision which is transparent to itself.' This project of radical concept revision has been taken over from Heidegger by Gadamer and applied to the former auxiliary disciplines of the older hermeneutics.

For example, in Gadamer's essay 'Semantics and Hermeneutics' the two disciplines are said to thematize 'the totality of our relationship to the world that finds its expression in language, and both do this by directing their investigations behind the plurality of natural languages.' The relationship is such that semantics 'appears to describe the range of linguistic facts externally' whereas hermeneutics, understood in its redefined sense, focuses 'on the internal process of speaking, which if viewed from the outside, appears as our use of the world of signs.' Gadamer has observed how

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82 BT, p.29 (Ger. p.9).
84 ibid., p.82.
85 ibid., p.82f.
semantics becomes something else other than a doctrine of signs when, for example, words are chosen for their effect in communication. Gadamer observes how care needs to be taken in such applications, however, when 'for the sake of presuppositionless knowledge and scientific objectivity the method of a proven science...is carried over into such other areas as that of social theory without methodological modification.'

The methodological modification which Gadamer imposes on semantics, as a typical science, in order to make it universally applicable, begins by confronting the refusal of the science to acknowledge whatever 'eludes its own methodology.' In the case of semantics in particular the doctrine of signs must be recognised in its purposive uses and also against the actual situations of language in life. Hermeneutical inquiry is able to show a wider direction of research into the unsaid or the lie, for example, than an examination of linguistic form can. Hermeneutics shows the relativity between these and the situation which fills the forms with changing content. It can do this in a way that the object-based sciences cannot do 'when it musters sufficient self-reflection to reflect simultaneously about its own critical endeavours, that is, about its own limitations and the relativity of its own

86 ibid., p.93.
87 ibid.
position.' 'Philosophy,' Gadamer says, '...is the actualization of such hermeneutics, which blends the total structures worked out in semantic analysis into the continuum of translating and comprehending within which we live and pass away.' Hermeneutical inquiry is then expected to progress through the understanding of linguistic expressions of life, and semantics to be advanced as a science through a radical revision of its basic concepts to remove the limitations of objectivism.

Gadamer believed that Heidegger was able, by a radical approach to the question of being, to 'move beyond the complications in which Dilthey's and Husserl's investigations into the fundamental concepts of the human sciences had become involved.' I am not so certain of those complications being overtaken. In my view there is a problem remaining as to whether understanding of the thing produced by a writer has been advanced after the claims of phenomenology to redefine science. Gadamer's new definition of hermeneutics may rely largely on Heidegger, but the understanding of science in connection with which Gadamer's hermeneutics assumes the role of its interpreter remains that of phenomenology and Husserl, with its attendant complications.

88 ibid.
89 ibid., p.94.
90 TM, p.229.
When Gadamer cites Heidegger as securing the scientific theme of interpretation by working out fore-structures 'in terms of the things themselves' he is pursuing a link between Husserl's investigations and the study of texts via Heidegger's inquiry into There-being. In Gadamer's thinking 'understanding what is there' depends on keeping one's gaze fixed on the things themselves, which 'in the case of the literary critic, are meaningful texts, which themselves are again concerned with objects.' Neither texts as things nor the objects they are concerned with are read or read about in phenomenology the same way they were read by Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher believed texts were read as things whereas phenomenology claims that was a mistaken belief, the texts really being read as projections. In phenomenology texts, as things, become known through the way they are read. In Husserl the gaze's object is experience, through which entrance may be made 'into the life of a primordial presence.' Gadamer's 'understanding what is

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91 TM, p.236.
92 ibid.
93 ibid.
there' clearly in his interpretive writing relies on keeping one's mental gaze fixed on the text while constantly revising the meaning one projects in terms of the meaning emerging from the text as truth concerning things.

What continues to shape Gadamer's hermeneutics is the belief that no reconciliation will ever be found between the ideal, on the one hand, of the intelligibility of a text's meaning, and the ideal he sees Ricoeur pursuing, namely, 'to unmask the pretensions hidden behind so-called objectivity.' I agree with Gadamer that the dichotomy will remain because it is based on a 'basic difference involving the whole philosophical role of hermeneutics.' But what is the point of difference which Gadamer sees between the philosophical role given to hermeneutics by Schleiermacher, for example, and Gadamer himself and others including Ricoeur, despite the latter's efforts to overcome the difference?

Despite all other practical interests and philosophical agenda the hermeneutics Gadamer pursues remains based on the philosophical approach of phenomenology. Having outlined his evaluation of the shortcomings of both Husserl and Heidegger in their pursuit of a foundation for

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95 TM, p.236.
97 ibid.
the human sciences, Gadamer remains convinced of the correctness of Husserl’s endeavour, on the basis of the givenness of the interpreted world, to 'rejoin and reconnect our efforts at rigorous science, with the historical conditions of our own place in the course of history.' His later writing discloses the methodological goal persisting in Gadamer's hermeneutics: 'exactly because we give up a special idea of foundation on principle, we become better phenomenologists, closer to the real givenness, and we are more aware of the reciprocity between our conceptual efforts and the concrete in life experiences.'

Because this goal of becoming better phenomenologists is guiding the development of Gadamer's hermeneutics and because the science of the older hermeneutics is said to be less rigorous and inappropriate for modern thought, our discussion of science and hermeneutics in this chapter will close with a closer analysis of the connection between philosophical reflection and rigorous science.

2.c. Philosophical reflection and scientific objectivity

Gadamer believes his criticism of objectivity in science has been validated by Husserl's findings regarding

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98 ibid., p. 65.
99 ibid.
the givenness of the interpreted world. Husserl's orientation towards experience is based on the belief that everything which is there for me in the world of things is on grounds of principle only a presumptive reality; that I myself, on the contrary, for whom it is there (excluding that which is imputed to the thing-world "by me"), I myself or my experience in its actuality am absolute reality (Wirklichkeit), given through a positing that is unconditioned and simply indissoluble.'

Husserl was seeking through the phenomenological grasp of essences to make psychology into an adequate empirical science with the forms of consciousness and its correlates providing, by means of intuition, 'the norms for determining the scientific sense and content proper to the concepts of any phenomena whatever.' Husserl believed 'every real theory of knowledge must necessarily be based on phenomenology, which thus constitutes the common foundation for every philosophy and psychology.'

While Gadamer's philosophy of understanding has consistently directed the orientation of understanding to consciousness, he still recognises the place of secondary disciplines in the human and natural sciences conditional upon the recognition of their limitations and avoidance of dogmatism. To understand this accomodation we need to con-

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102 *ibid.*, p. 120.
sider its background, especially in those philosophical developments related to the interpretation of texts as vehicles for self-understanding and to see what could enable human sciences to develop the idea that right understanding is acquired not through direct perception but in the fore-structure of understanding, and that this should be the governing methodology for all knowledge. For Gadamer this development also comes from Husserl. He writes,

...the more insight we gain into the slow growth of Husserl's ideas from working through the great edition of his works, the clearer it becomes that with intentionality we get a more and more radical critique of the 'objectivism' of philosophy hitherto, Dilthey included. This was to culminate in the claim 'that intentional phenomenology has made the mind, as mind, the field of systematic experience and science and thus totally transformed the task of knowledge...'

Husserl's claim for phenomenology to establish the mind as the field of science is based on his belief that while natural science may aim to know its data in an objectively valid and strictly scientific manner, 'a completely different critique of experience is still possible and indispensable, a critique that places in question all experience as such and the sort of thinking proper to empirical science.' Gadamer sees Dilthey's use of Husserl's critique as the way to approach the epistemo-

103 TM, p.215.
104 E. Husserl, ibid., p.87.
logical problems of the historical sciences, to be 'the beginnings of an overcoming of "objectivism", insofar as the meaning of words could no longer be confused with the actual psychic content of consciousness, eg the associative images that a word evokes.'

The need, according to Gadamer, was to grasp the mode of being of the flow of experience and hence 'to draw subjectivity into the intentional investigation of correlation.' This was a new dimension of investigation initiated by Husserl; to investigate the variety of modes in which the being of human subjectivity is given without positing its being; 'the exploration of the "I" as phenomenon...not the "inner perception" of a real "I".' The investigation of anything, according to Husserl, always hinges on the investigation of consciousness:

How can experience as consciousness give or contact an object?...Why are the playing rules, so to speak, of consciousness not irrelevant for things? How is natural science to be comprehensible in absolutely every case, to the extent that it pretends at every step to posit and to know a nature that is in itself - in itself in opposition to the subjective flow of consciousness? All these questions become riddles as soon as reflection on them becomes serious.

Believing that these riddles are inherent in principle in natural science Husserl turned for their solution to a

105 TM, p.216.
106 TM, p.215.
107 TM, p.216.
108 E.Husserl, ibid., p.87f.
'scientific essential knowledge of consciousness, toward that which consciousness itself "is" according to its essence in all its distinguishable forms,' as well as toward the different ways in which consciousness 'intends the objective.' In contrast to the simplified objectivity of the earlier hermeneutics, Husserl's attention focussed on consciousness itself in which everything which is to be 'the object of a rational proposition...must manifest itself.'

Husserl contended that the investigation of the relationship between consciousness and being must be directed toward a scientific essential knowledge of consciousness as it is and as it intends. For this, experience is apprehended reflectively in immanent as opposed to transcendental perception. The thing itself Husserl calls transcendent, an essence which is not part of experience and therefore above reflection. On the other hand reflective apprehension of the stream of experience containing things valued or enjoyed as such is, as self-evident immanent perception, a grasp on the flow of life: 'so soon as I glance towards the flowing life and into the real present it flows through, and in so doing grasp myself as the pure subject of this life...I say forthwith

109 ibid., p.89.
110 ibid.
111 ibid., p.90.
and because I must: I am, this life is, I live: cogito.’ Thus the way opened up for an attempt to constitute the human sciences in life with a subject about which historical questions can be asked.

Husserl’s method for the scientific knowledge of consciousness and hence of life forms the background to Gadamer’s philosophical reflection and shows its relation to a claim of scientific objectivity from the perspective of this particular understanding. In this way meaning in the human sciences is no longer limited to the ‘meaning’ of words, that is, the images which words evoke but extends to the meaning which belongs to the experience of life.

It is in a shared orientation to ‘life’ in both Dilthey and Husserl that Gadamer sees ‘a pointer to the subsequent strong tendency to study not only individual experiences of consciousness, but the concealed, anonymously implicit intentionalities of consciousness, and in this way to make the totality of all objective validity of being intelligible.’ In the light of Husserl’s holistic approach to a ‘life-world’ behind consciousness, a world in which we are immersed as the pre-given basis of all experience, the logic of Gadamer’s ‘not only’, by which individual experiences of conscious-

112 E. Husserl, Ideas, p. 130.
113 TM, p. 217. (emphasis added)
ness are recognised as once being valid study for understanding the totality of being, needs to be clarified. Are individual experiences still able to be understood and worthy of study? Has the meaning and purpose of linguistic and philological studies changed totally with the new orientation of hermeneutics or are the insights gained by these studies acceptable even if they are gained through typical scientific methods which Gadamer believes aim 'to so objectify experience that it no longer contains any historical element'?

Philosophically, Gadamer has changed the meaning and operation of language studies in his own hermeneutics. Gadamer defends the science of the life-world (die Wissenschaft von der Lebenswelt) as the science of an intuitively given world. The life-world of Husserl is contrasted by Gadamer to 'the world of science' which he says is constituted by an 'unquestioning recognition of the horizon of validity of objective science' and is 'the error that is uncovered only in the light of the life-world in which it is grounded.' Although the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity present in Husserl were not overcome until Heidegger's ontological critique, Husserl's own proposal of the life-world in itself contains,

114 TH, p.311.
according to Gadamer, a 'revolutionary power that explodes the framework of Husserl's transcendental thinking,' restoring scientific rigour to his phenomenology. Thus it is evident, Gadamer says, 'how the shake-up of fixed presuppositions promises scientific progress by making new questions possible.' The application of new questions arising in this manner 'in the history of artistic and literary styles' means that each world possible to consciousness may enter the horizon of understanding without depending on a dogmatically constructed transcendental subject nor similarly dogmatic scientific object.

Gadamer recognises that the 'life-world', that is, the infinite 'whole in which we live as historical creatures,' never becomes for us 'an object as such.' He keeps in view the question of whether Dilthey and Husserl 'do justice to the speculative demands contained in the concept of life,' and concludes that 'the speculative import of the concept of life remained

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116 ibid., p.196.
118 ibid.
119 TM, p.218.
120 ibid.
121 TM, p.221.
undevolved in both men.' Both Dilthey and Husserl sought to develop this question through an investigation of the reflectiveness inherent in life but failed on the point of the other 'I' to describe a connection between the concept of life and the subjectivity of the other person. I will indicate why Gadamer is right to focus on the question of the other 'I' and to what degree he has succeeded in describing the connection himself.

Gadamer’s solution follows his understanding of Count Paul Yorck von Wartenburg, whose correspondence with Dilthey had already been included in Heidegger’s discussion of the connection between historiography and historicality in Section 77 of Being and Time. Yorck’s place in Gadamer’s argument in Truth and Method concerning Heidegger’s achievements in Being and Time, has a significant but different function to Yorck’s place in Heidegger.

Heidegger quotes from Yorck’s letters to Dilthey to show how Yorck was concerned that Dilthey, in his conduct of investigations in the theory of science, in historical science, and in psychological hermeneutics, should put greater stress on differentiating 'generically between the ontical and the Historical.' Instead of maintaining the

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ibid.

123

'purely ocular ways of ascertaining' which belong to traditional historical research conducted as a kind of superficially affectations natural science, Yorck believed in 'communing with the spirit of history.' Yorck gained his 'clear insight into the basic character of history as "virtuality"," Heidegger says, 'from his knowledge of the character of the Being which human Dasein itself possesses, not from the Objects of historical study, as a theory of science would demand.' His insight into the historicality of Dasein is the basis of Yorck's statement that the 'entire psycho-physical datum is not one that is but one that lives.' Heidegger concludes: 'It is plain from Yorck's allusion to the kind of difficulty met with in such investigations, that he himself was already on the way to bringing within our grasp categorically the Historical as opposed to the ontical (ocular), and to raising up 'life' into the kind of scientific understanding that is appropriate to it.'

The radicalization of the question of how to get a philosophical grasp on historicality was accomplished by

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125 P. Yorck, _op.cit._, p. 133, (quoted in BT, p. 453 (Ger. p. 401)).
126 BT, p. 453 (Ger. p. 401).
127 P. Yorck, _op.cit._, p. 71, (quoted in BT, p. 453 (Ger. p. 401)).
128 BT, p. 454 (Ger. p. 402).
bringing both the ontical and the historical 'into a more primordial unity, so that they can be compared and distinguished.' Heidegger saw the possibility for this to rest in the idea of Being as a primordial unity notwithstanding its generic differentiation into the state of Being of historical entities in relation to historicality, and into the state of Being of entities other than Dasein in regard to the question of the ontical.

Gadamer uses a later publication of Yorck's writing for the quotations with which he puts together an interpretation with a different focus to that of Heidegger's. Where Heidegger is concerned to ground thought in Being, Gadamer seeks to orientate it in life. He sees Yorck presenting 'the structural correspondence between life and self-consciousness already developed in Hegel's Phenomenology,' taking Yorck's words about our thinking moving 'in the sphere of conscious results' to mean 'that the results of our thinking are results only because they have become detached from the life attitude and can be so detached.' 'From this,' Gadamer suggests, 'Graf Yorck concludes that philosophy must reverse this process of detachment. It must repeat the experiment of life in the

129 BT, p.455 (Ger. p.403).
130 TM, p.223.
132 TM, p.222f.
reverse direction, "in order to know the conditions which
govern the 'results of life'."

At this point in his descriptive evaluation Gadamer
finds that 'the bold and assured thinking of Graf Yorck
not only shows the common influence of Dilthey and
Husserl, but proves to be 'superior to them both.' Here
we see a development of thought at the level of the
identity philosophy of speculative idealism which 'reveals
the hidden origin of the concept of life at which Dilthey
and Husserl are aiming.' On what basis does the develop-
ment of Yorck's thought establish the superiority of his
thinking? What is so important about speculative idealism
and how does Gadamer know that thought developing at this
level reveals the origin of a concept at which others were
aiming? As we meet these questions arising from contro-
versy in which this thesis is engaged during its dialogue
with Gadamer, we need to remember also that they have
arisen without being expressed in a controversy implicit
in Gadamer's dialogue with earlier writers. Gadamer's
evaluation of superior thinking reflects the prejudice of
his own world of thought which cannot be escaped in
working towards a fusion of horizons of understanding. It
shows a shaping of this historical development in

133 TM, p.223 (quoting Yorck, op.cit., p.39).
134 TM, p.223.
135 ibid.
Gadamer's own horizon which, as he acknowledges, subjectively recognises the ideal of 'life' against which thinking about life is evaluated. In my opinion Gadamer's comparisons of persons' ideas also recognises their individuality as a contributing factor in this development.

Regardless of all speculation on the ideal whole by which thoughts of individuals are measured, the significance of those thoughts and words in themselves is still under threat of being obscured by making them fit the later writer's normative ideals however great the logical care with which the latter are derived. Gadamer has sought to escape the complications in which Husserl and Dilthey became entangled investigating the fundamental concepts of the human sciences by proposing understanding to be the 'original character of the being of human life itself.' Yet this proposal merely introduces us to a transcendentalism of a new kind. Even though it does not set out to go back beyond the facticity of one's own being as the case had been in Husserl's constitution research, Gadamer's outworking of hermeneutics, through opting to 'start by following Heidegger,' has been redirected from involvement solely with the phenomena of understanding to a concept of tradition extended to take in all being.

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136 TM, p.230.
137 TM, p.234.
Gadamer has focussed the discussion on certain features of 'tradition'. My aim at this point of the thesis is to elaborate on the way 'tradition' appears in his writing and how that connects with historical consciousness, historical understanding and understanding as a whole. In contrast to romantic hermeneutics being seen to take human nature as 'the unhistorical substratum of its theory of understanding,' Gadamer observes that the self-criticism of historical consciousness takes account of historical movement in understanding itself. From this observation he then draws the crucial conclusion, under the constraints of phenomenological rigour, that understanding 'is not to be thought of so much as an action of one's subjectivity, but as the placing of oneself within a process of tradition, in which past and present are constantly fused.' However, for all Gadamer's openness to incorporating horizons of consciousness in a philosophy of understanding this contrast remains, characteristically for Gadamer, less than absolute. An opening for the inductive processes of secondary disciplines may be found in the 'not so much' of subjectivity compared to placing oneself in a process of tradition. An opening at least has to be found there for whatever 'subjectivity' is involved in 'the placing of oneself' in the process of tradition.

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138 TM, p.258.
139 TM, p.258.
At the time of *Truth and Method* Gadamer saw a growing self-critical hermeneutical consciousness in classical studies. The 'real merit' of ancient classics is in their demonstration of a mode of being historical, 'the historical process of preservation that, through the constant proving of itself, sets before us something that is true.' This truth of the texts of classical antiquity lies in something about them which, independently from its genre and author, survives over the circumstances of time.

In Gadamer's definition the classical is not a descriptive concept for use by 'an objectivising historical consciousness,' but an 'historical reality to which historical consciousness belongs and is subordinate.' Gadamer observes an historical fusion of the past with the present in a direct approach to the meaning of the classical. In this fusion there is a consciousness of something enduring, 'a kind of timeless present that is contemporaneous with every other age,' in which 'this timelessness is a mode of historical being.' Hitherto, Gadamer believes, hermeneutical theory had been dominated by the idea of processes and looked for a method of under-

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140 TM, p.254.
141 TM, p.255.
142 TM, p.256.
143 TM, p.256.
144 TM, p.257.
standing based on the methods of natural science.

The reason why Gadamer sees hermeneutic thought applying to the human sciences and not to the natural sciences now becomes clear, and this time expressed in absolute terms. He recognises that elements of tradition can be active in the natural sciences. 'But scientific research as such derives the law of its development not from these circumstances, but from the law of the object that it is investigating.' In the human sciences 'the interest in tradition is motivated in a special way by the present and its interests. The theme and area of research are actually constituted by the motivation of the enquiry. Hence historical research is based on the historical movement in which life itself stands and cannot be understood teleologically in terms of the object into which it is enquiring.' Natural science is constituted by its objects; human science by the context in life in which it is conducted.

Gadamer built on the concept of reflection which is directed away from objects and stated that the object into which historical research is enquiring 'clearly does not exist at all in itself.' His reason for this particular denial is that whereas 'the object of the natural sciences

145 TM, p.252.
146 TM, p.253.
147 TM, p.253.
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.'

Two problems in Gadamer's theory emerge at this
point. One is that while a distinction between the natural
sciences and the human sciences may be made based on the
model of a human science completely and essentially
oriented to its own self-consciousness, the other 'I'
continues to interfere in this conception. Gadamer's
approach to this problem appears in his extension of
consciousness into openness to tradition. This openness is
developed in his concept of effective-historical con-
sciousness which is to have 'a real correspondence with
the experience of the "Thou".'

The other problem to be followed up is Gadamer's
determination to provide a philosophical ground for the
study of traditions and classical texts as historical and
material objects, taking into account the way they mani-
ifest peculiarities of their own age which could not have
originated in the reader's own understanding. Under-
standing the 'something enduring' of which one may become
conscious in the classical is a goal in Gadamer's
hermeneutics despite the prejudice he has accepted against
the object of historical research existing in itself.

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148 ibid.
149 TM, p.324.
Familiarity with the real historical context of classical texts remains such a prejudice in Gadamer’s thought that he has not limited himself to reflecting on his own consciousness, nor on historical consciousness only, but has allowed the classical authors to influence his understanding in ways peculiar to their thought. These two problems are related therefore by the presence of the 'Thou', not as Ur-Ich nor as part of There-being’s environment. Gadamer’s development of the themes of language and dialogue contain many insights into understanding another person, a parallel concern he introduced early in the second part of Truth and Method during the preliminary setting of his own foundations for hermeneutics on understanding in general. 'Our starting point,' he said, 'is the proposition that to understand means primarily for two people to understand one another. Understanding is primarily agreement or harmony with another person. Men generally understand each other directly, i.e. they are in dialogue until they reach agreement.'

Hermeneutical reflection guards against a dogmatic interpretation of what another person says by bringing out our prejudgments and allowing new understandings to be formed through experience. Gadamer has seen the need to guard against dogmatism on the part of philosophy as well as science and what he says about hermeneutical reflection

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150 TM, p.158.
and prejudgment can certainly benefit science. I believe Gadamer has driven a wedge between science and hermeneutical reflection which does not belong. It is the wedge of method. Not only does he want science to benefit from reflection, but believes it is rendered constitutionally defective without it because of method. 'The overall significance of hermeneutical reflection,' he says, '...is not exhausted by what it means for and in the sciences themselves. For all the modern sciences possess a deeply rooted alienation that they impose on the natural consciousness and of which we need to be aware. This alienation has already reached reflective awareness in the very beginning stages of modern science in the concept of method.' Hermeneutical reflection can serve science by saving it from abstraction and bringing to awareness the alienation which method creates between the scientist and the world to which he or she belongs.

In my view it is not method as such which alienates, but undisclosed method, as with undisclosed prejudgment. The processes of hermeneutical reflection are, after all, its own method, but not alienating when brought into awareness. The same applies to methods appropriate to other processes of understanding, for example by empirical means. Gadamer refers to translation to point to the fact that understanding between people is disrupted and remains

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so even after mediation by interpreters, who themselves do not really understand simply by speaking the same language. 'Thus the hermeneutical problem is not one of the correct mastery of language, but of the proper understanding of that which takes place through the medium of language.' Here is a demonstration of an alienation introduced by Gadamer himself in the name of hermeneutical reflection, between linguistics and philosophy of language, dividing up what should be a unified process of understanding in which various kinds of knowledge work together. Vocabulary and syntax cannot be set aside and understanding still proceed. Whether linguistics and semantics are described as secondary disciplines to hermeneutics or not, the act of translation shows that there are ways in which both reflection and linguistics need to be informed by one another if they are to function at all.

I believe this interaction is required by the fact that understanding is of something. A perceived object may not exist apart from our consciousness of it; our own view of it has to be compared with what is revealed about a thing in what others say. But in order to hear what someone else says, the text of their utterance will be as revealing as the context of our thinking. I do not believe Gadamer has demonstrated why interpretation should be more

152
TM, p.346f.
ultimate than translation, nor why reflection should be more universal than language structure.

The rest of the thesis will return to Gadamer's proposition, that for the hermeneutical experience 'all the meaning of what is handed down to us finds its concretion, in which it is understood, in its relation to the understanding "I" — and not in the reconstruction of an "I" of the original meaning.' This concentration of what happens in understanding in the one who understands is the outworking of hermeneutical reflection based on the judgement that 'what is true of every word in which thought is expressed, is true also of the interpreting word, namely that it is not as such, objective.'

This flight into the understanding consciousness as the sole source of truth deprives understanding of a twin source coupled to consciousness in the 'Thou' or tradition, which Gadamer himself has noticed, but, in the name of true scientific rigor, declined to call objective. To show the fruitfulness of the notion of objectivity we shall concentrate now on Gadamer's insights into the nature of dialogue and the relevance of the personal 'Thou' in addressing the problem of hermeneutics.

153 TM, p.430.
154 TM, p.431.
CHAPTER THREE
LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING

3.a. The place of language in hermeneutics

In the previous chapter we have seen how the goal of Gadamer's hermeneutics has developed into understanding what takes place through the medium of language. In contrast to a scientific mastery of language emphasised in the nineteenth century he emphasises a need to discover the way of understanding which is reflected in language.

Gadamer's consideration of language draws on the ideas of Plato and Aristotle as frequently as it draws on the ideas of Husserl and Heidegger. In fact he is aware of a connecting line from the Greek writers through Heidegger to himself traced by the foundational idea of language surrounding the Greek word logos. Gadamer has recognised in this a broader reference than to just the individual words forming the basis of language. In fact, logos could stand for either the matter referred to, the idea of it, or the reasoning process by which discoveries are made of the essentials of things. While the concept in Gadamer's understanding is of something wider than mere words, it
includes the reasoning process only as a secondary feature. Gadamer's essay, 'Man and Language' begins,

Aristotle established the classical definition of the nature of man, according to which man is the living being who has *logos*. In the tradition of the West, this definition became canonical in a form which stated that man is the *animal rationale*, the rational being, distinguished from all other animals by his capacity for thought. Thus it rendered the Greek word *logos* as reason or thought. In truth, however, the primary meaning of this word is language.

Gadamer's method for locating the 'primary' meaning of 'logos' will be considered later. It needs to be noted here how there is a choice of meaning being exercised and an accompanying criticism of those with a different understanding of the meaning of the word *λόγος*. What is the basis upon which such an evaluation is made by Gadamer? Is it derived from the ways Aristotle uses the word *λόγος*? Are Gadamer's and Aristotle's perceptions of the word's usage involved? How are the two connected to what Gadamer calls 'the meaning of this word' and to understanding? To deal with the problems of language and understanding there is a need for explication of the processes by which choices are made when understanding is gained by being confronted with words.

Having indicated his own choice of the meaning of *logos*, as indicated in the above quotation, Gadamer is then

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critical of those made by others in modern hermeneutics up to and including Dilthey. While Gadamer appreciates Dilthey's attempts to broaden the concept of language to 'expressions of life', he believes it is a mistake to orientate the study of language around the idea of a system of symbols or patterns. Gadamer's appeal to the ancient Greek writers against the scientific approach of later writers is not entirely successful in my view. The significance of patterns of spoken words is observed and articulated when a traditional understanding of language is received from classical times by later writers; the significance of these patterns plays a large part in Gadamer's own hermeneutics, yet his theoretical considerations neglect to assign a place to detailed analysis of the function of particular word patterns in particular contexts as part of hermeneutics.

For Gadamer the hermeneutical problem is not the problem of interpreting speech according to the way the speaker uses a system of words to speak about things, decoding the words according to the system used, as it were. For him, 'the heart of the hermeneutical problem is that the same tradition must always be understood in a different way,' because of the effect of time on consciousness. By defining the problem this way Gadamer finds

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2 TM, p.278.
that 'Aristotle is not concerned with the hermeneutical
problem,' thus contending that the historicity of under-
standing is a problem now to hermeneutics since Aristotle.
The hermeneutic relevance of Aristotle, according to
Gadamer, lies in his basing virtue, not on logos as the
written or spoken word as in the theories of Plato and
Socrates, but on practice and 'ethos' as the universal
context for language itself. 'For', he says,

the hermeneutical problem also is clearly a differ-
ent thing from a pure knowledge detached from any
particular kind of being. We spoke of the the links
between the interpreter and the tradition with
which he is concerned and saw in understanding
itself an element of historical process. The alien-
ation by the objectifying methods of modern
science, characteristic of the hermeneutics and
historical writing of the nineteenth century,
appeared as the consequence of a false objectific-
ation. The return to the example of Aristotelian
ethics is made to help us realise and avoid this.

Gadamer's solution to problems associated with sub-
jectivity and objectivity will be considered again later,
as will his interpretation and use of the idea of the
centrality of ethical knowledge in Aristotle's epistem-
ology, but we can see already something of Gadamer's
concern to link understanding to existence, that is, as an
element of historical process. He seeks not so much a
framework to connect words and so provide understanding
through communication. Rather he seeks to under-

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3 ibid.
4 TM, p.280.
stand a person's words through understanding life. A question we should address at this point is whether linguistic knowledge used in hermeneutics is also 'not the knowledge of science...a knowledge that depends on proof,' and that therefore, 'a hermeneutics of the human sciences could certainly learn nothing from the distinction between moral knowledge and this kind of mathematical knowledge.'

Gadamer observes that technical knowledge is applied to a physical problem in a different way to the application of a text's meaning to oneself. Borrowing from the idea of textual application in preaching, Gadamer focusses on the personal knowledge gained through interpretation of texts. In this case, 'to understand what this piece of tradition says, what constitutes the meaning and importance of the text,' the interpreter 'must not seek to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to this situation, if he wants to understand at all.'

These last words bring into focus the question we are dealing with here. Ignoring for the moment the importance of awareness of the hermeneutical situation and the application of a text to an interpreter's own life, is it

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5 TM, p.280.
6 ibid. (emphasis added).
7 TM, p.289 (emphasis added).
true to say that there is no understanding possible at all through objective linguistic technique, or that that kind of knowledge of language does not contribute anything at all to understanding? I do not consider the distinction to be so sharp, nor do I consider that an appeal to the classical writers conclusively establishes the claim that understanding only occurs when the interpreter is relating a text to his or her own particular hermeneutical situation.

Gadamer's reading of Greek classics needs to be placed alongside one which brings out their concern for the way in which words are placed in the context of a system of symbols. The reason for this is to clarify the extent of the influence of Gadamer's hermeneutics on the accepted meaning of texts. The formal aspects of language have been influential in the interpretation of texts from Socrates' time until the present and Gadamer's philosophical argument is a major source of comment on that procedure. Also, because formal aspects of language, especially associated with etymological references, play a large part in Gadamer's reading of texts we need to ask why this is so. Is it under the influence of hermeneutic theory, or the influence of language in its formal systems, that these references persist? If we find that consideration of language as a system has, to an extent, been an important aspect of hermeneutics throughout its history, along with the application of tradition to particular situations, we will need some philosophical
comprehension of the place of language systems in
hermeneutics.

In The Sophist, Plato raises the question of defining
the topic of the dialogue. He deals with the suggestion of
the Elatic philosopher to 'search out and make plain by
argument' (logos) what the sophist is. He says, 'For as
yet you and I have nothing in common about him but the
name; but as to the thing to which we give the name, we
may perhaps each have a conception of it in our own minds;
however, we ought always in every instance to come to
agreement about the thing itself by argument rather than
the mere name without argument.'

In this passage Plato is disputing the sophist's view
that words alone are the focus of argument. We see Plato's
concern for agreement on the matter under discussion
through the work of the logos both determining the
shape of the argument and being determined by it. Later in
the same dialogue the discussion turns to sentence
structure and the role of verbs and nouns. For example,
when someone says, 'a man learns',

he makes a statement about that which is or is
becoming or has become or is to be; he does not
merely give names, but he reaches a conclusion by

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8 Plato, The Sophist, 218C, in Loeb Classical Library,
Plato VII: Theaetetus, Sophist, trans. H.N.Fowler,
Heinemann, London 1921, p.270.
9 The Sophist, 262D, ibid., p.437.
combining verbs with nouns. That is why we said that he discourses and does not merely give names, and therefore we gave to this combination the name of discourse.

In this passage we can see that the systematic aspects of word usage are included in Plato's understanding of language. The split which Gadamer derives from Plato's view of virtue based on *logos* and Aristotle's based on *ethos* cannot be so easily applied to the development of traditional hermeneutics if Aristotle shares Plato's understanding of language's systematic aspects.

Aristotle's treatise on interpretation does not deal with rhetoric and poetics because in the pattern established by Hermes, the messenger of the gods, statements are the province of hermeneutics, and rhetoric and poetics are not for stating truth and falsehood but devices to move the hearer. Aristotle also distinguishes enunciation or interpretation from logic, which compares enunciated statements. Palmer summarizes Aristotle's view of *hermeneia* thus:

> It operates on the level of language, but is not yet logic; enunciation reaches into the truth of a thing and embodies it as statement. The *telos* of the process is not to move the emotions (poetics) or to bring about political action (rhetoric) but to bring understanding to statement.

Yet when Gadamer reads Aristotle, as we have said above, he is not looking at the way in which understanding is brought to statement through a systematic use of words.

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Rather he is looking at 'the relationship between the universal and the particular.' Considered this way, understanding becomes 'a particular case of the application of something universal to a particular situation.' Gadamer's interest is in the application of knowledge to a concrete situation - self-knowledge as distinct from technical knowledge.

In the tradition of interpretation reaching from Aristotle down to modern times we still may find a connection between universals and particulars with a more distinctly linguistic orientation than is brought out in Gadamer's section in *Truth and Method* on the hermeneutic relevance of Aristotle. By what means are things outside a person understood and argued about? In the ancient Greeks it is by means of the relationship of things to species and species to general concepts in the intellect. Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias* indicates that 'words spoken are symbols or signs of affections or impressions of the soul,' that is, they are symbols of species.

The usefulness of the concept of species was not maintained in Schleiermacher's hermeneutical studies; he did,

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11 TM, p.278
12 ibid.
however maintain the linguistic connection of universals and particulars. Because speaking was for Schleiermacher the medium for the 'communality of thought' and hermeneutics the art of grasping the thinking that underlies a given statement, 'understanding a speech always involves two moments.' These are: 'to understand what is said in the context of the language with its possibilities, and to understand it as a fact in the thinking of the speaker.' For Schleiermacher this means that each person gives language a particular shape which can nevertheless only be understood in the context of the use of the language as a whole.

That the ethical side of language should be considered is quite proper to the consideration of the systematic aspect of language. For instance, on the matter of deception, The Sophist identifies false discourse by its sentence formation having a particular combination of words which contradict each other. There the Eleatic stranger says,

Now when things are said about you, but things other are said as the same and things that are not as things that are, it appears that when such a combination is formed of verbs and nouns we have really and truly false discourse.

This characteristic of discourse has been observed in

14 Schleiermacher, Hermeneutics, p.98.
15 ibid.
16 ibid.
17 The Sophist 263D, op.cit., p.440.
Heidegger's description of *logos*. He explains it as such that when speaking truly the entities of which one is talking must be taken out of their hiddenness to let them be seen as something unseen. To be false, on the other hand, is to cover up and pass something off as something which it is not. Thus Heidegger understands Aristotle's use of *logos* in discourse to mean, 'to make manifest what one is "talking about" in one's discourse.'

The willingness of a speaker to let his or her ideas be seen thus involves the use of words in accordance with the being of the things being spoken about. Later in this thesis there will be discussion of the role of the will in interpretation. It will be seen that linking that theme to the classical view of language raises questions about Gadamer's interpretation of that view. His interpretation makes the power of the words themselves superior to the speaker's work in language, whereas in the older hermeneutics the activities of the two remained contingent. Aristotle's statement about man being the only creature to have language needs to be understood to mean 'having' in the ancient manner. That is, in the 'twofold sense that what he does and does not do are determined by the word or understanding, and that he himself speaks the word, 18

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18 BT, p.56. (Ger. p.32)
achieving understanding and speech.'

In his essay on Heraclitus, Heidegger exercises considerable care in drawing out the etymological significance of 'logos' and 'legein'. He then suggests that the logos 'by itself brings that which appears and comes forward in its lying before us to appearance - to its luminous self-showing.' We shall shortly show how Gadamer has made self-presentation fundamental in his description of the relation between being and language. In taking over this concept from Heidegger it has been overlooked that the logos cannot bring something to appearance 'by itself', if the assertion in Being and Time referred to above was correct. There we see that the word has to be the right word, if it is to bring to appearance; and that depends in part on the willingness of the speaker to use the right word ('one must let them be seen', not 'putting something in front of something'). Thus a speaker's deliberate effort at disclosure asserted itself as an important aspect of understanding truth until

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21 BT, p. 56. (Ger. p. 33.)

22 BT, p. 57. (Ger. p. 33.)
Heidegger, but has been neglected since. How this occurred can be understood by considering more directly the place of language in Gadamer's hermeneutics.

3.b. Gadamer's approach to language.

Gadamer's approach to language shifts the focus of understanding from an author's intended meaning to meaning received through openness to a text's implications for its reader's life. He believes the human sciences cannot be understood to operate on the same inductive principle of regularity present in the natural sciences. That appeal became the dominant theme of the human sciences after the seventeenth century, according to Gadamer, when the tradition of rhetorical and humanist culture was lost from the self-understanding of the sciences in general.

An important essay for understanding Gadamer's approach to language is 'Logos and Ergon in Plato's Lysis'. In this essay Gadamer couples the idea behind 'logos' to that behind the Greek word often translated 'work'. The work which Gadamer investigates in order to elucidate 'logos' is not associated with 'hermeneia', that is, translation or interpretation, but with what is

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involved when friendship is at work. The boys in the
dialogue are unable to understand friendship, not because
of lack of training in comprehension, but because of lack
of experience of friendship itself. 'Plainly the attempt
to get at friendship from outside the relationship itself,
i.e., starting from the particular existence of the
individual friends, must fail.' Gadamer sees the dialogue
taking the form of an analogy between Lysis's shyness in
the face of actual friendship and lack of understanding of
the meaning of the word. 'The *logos* here has not yet
revealed something in deed (*ergon*) to this boy, whose
experience still lags behind what Socrates has been
saying.'

Conflict between *logos* and *ergon* is typical of
sophism, according to Gadamer, whereas Socrates' doctrine
of harmony between the two gives the Platonic dialogues
their relevance to the present. Knowing what to do, rather
than merely knowing how to use words is the essential
ingredient for understanding, not only in the case of
friendship, but all of life. The harmony between word and
deed is such that the meaning of the word can only be
understood by one who experiences the constituents of the
deed, if one does not know how to act on the words or has
no lived experience of the dynamics of which they speak

24 *ibid.*, p.10f.
25 *ibid.*, p.20.
then one cannot really understand the words.

This approach to language is common to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in contrast to 'the shadow of 26 sophism' which, according to Gadamer, has always accompanied philosophy. In the Doric harmony between logos and ergon, according to Gadamer, there lies 'the most important reason that the Platonic dialogue, as opposed to every other philosophical text in our tradition, possesses and will always possess a relevance 27 to the present.' The harmony between word and work is demonstrated to be integral to life in the life and work of Socrates. On all matters, including his own destiny, he refused to make discussion easier simply for the sake of agreement, preferring to let the true being of the idea determine itself and let his dialogue partners experience its truth for themselves. In dialogue with such a person we may encounter 'in living reality how a person could steadfastly hold to what he viewed as right - unerringly, unconditionally, and in self-reliant independence from all external influences.'

Gadamer's exposition of Lysis refers to theological aspects of understanding through experience, but then never establishes how one may hold to what is right free

26 ibid., p. 3.
27 ibid.
28 ibid., p. 3.
from all external influences. On the contrary the influence of the gods remains a condition of understanding. What the boys in Lysis need is for 'the god', who has control of forces such as friendship, to make friendship present in their lives, and for them to be hoping to obtain that experience instead of portraying a sophistical knowledge in words only. The logical 'insufficiencies' of the dialogue are meant 'to be taken as insufficiencies in the concept of friendship which has prevailed up to this point.' On the other hand, 'if it is experienced positively, what we now have is the germination of a deeper insight into what friendship means.'

It is not quite clear in Gadamer's exposition of logos and ergon if and how the words work positively in Plato's understanding to deepen the boys' insight. Gadamer, however, does demonstrate his own sense of how language works in the dialogue. In a discussion of what makes a thing really dear to someone, or only dear because it is useful, Gadamer comments on the interchange of the Greek words δι' τι ('because of') and ἐνδικτια του ('for the sake of'), pointing out their similarity to the meanings of the German words wegen and umwillen. He concludes from this that 'means do present themselves as purposes, they are encountered in a context of getting to

29 ibid., p.15.  
30 ibid.
a goal. Thus we are not dealing here with a logical mistake, i.e., the confusion of a causal determination with a final determination, but with the intertwining of both determinations in human experience.'

Instead of seeing something set out logically and gaining understanding from following the logic, we are encouraged to experience what is being set out in the words, because 'language is never unknowing, and thus it is quite convincing here when it speaks this way.' By this personification Gadamer means to speak of coming to real understanding through actively entering into the dialogue with the aim of experiencing what it is about. For example, in 'explaining to oneself the fundamental difference between...two senses of dear and in experiencing their difference, one transcends everything conditional and rises to what is truly real, to ontos on.'

Gadamer does recognise that speakers also use language to say something. For example, he observes how 'Socrates uses oikeion and its semantic field to say that there is a need in me of das Zugehörige, a need of that which pertains to me.' Das Zugehörige, for Gadamer, means 'that which

31 'Logos and Ergon in Plato's Lysis', p.6f.
32 ibid., p.16.
33 ibid., p.17.
34 ibid., p.19.
answers to me and that to which I answer because it pertains to me.’ P.C. Smith’s translator’s note in the English edition refers to Heidegger’s influence in this stress on the element of ‘hearing’ in the German noun. But the link to the Greek noun hoi oikeioi, which according to Gadamer ‘is rendered as die Angehörigen’, is made fairly superficially. A larger question we shall consider is to what extent speakers ‘use’ language, as Gadamer says of Socrates, and to what extent Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics is more interested in language using speakers, as it were, and things using language to uncover being and say something.

What becomes clear in this rendering of Socratic use of language when read against the background of Truth and Method is the ontological impulse in Gadamer’s hermeneutics and its influence on his linguistic analysis. The linking of oikos, das Angehörige, and das Zugehörige leads to ‘that which is proper to the household, that which belongs to it,’ (a reference, incidentally, appropriate to the Greek use of ‘oikos’). However, it may well be that belonging arises in a household as a result of cohabitation that is, with the concrete thing having

35 ibid.
36 ibid.
37 ibid., p.18.
38 ibid., p.19.
existed first into which the individual is incorporated, whereas in the case of das Zugehörige the belonging is determined by the individual to whom it refers. The observation and use of these sorts of links will be among the points to be investigated further in the interest of knowing how we can know, for instance, if Socrates uses a semantic field to say something, and what is the extent of that semantic field. This will lead to a reevaluation of Gadamer's theory about classical texts disclosing a time-less truth on which to base his critique of method. The classical writers to which he refers present a tradition critical of dogmatic prejudgement; but they are also part of a tradition which uses language tools without necessarily promoting an uncritical objectivity.

Understanding that 'the possibilities of rational proof and instruction did not fully exhaust the sphere of knowledge', Gadamer has located a kind of knowledge 'that understands that something is so because it understands that it has so come about.' This is a kind of knowledge which has as its ideal 'to understand the phenomenon itself in its unique and historical concreteness.' In the first part of Truth and Method a line of tradition is

39 TM, p.23.
40 TM, p.6.
41 ibid.
traced from Aristotle's ethics through the Roman *sensus communis* to Vico, Shaftesbury and German pietist hermeneutics, until it was emptied and intellectualised by the German Enlightenment.

Gadamer says Vico's *sensus communis* is 'the sense of the right and the general good that is to be found in all men, moreover, a sense that is acquired through living in the community and is determined by its structures and aims.' Because the human sciences have as their object 'the moral and historical existence of man, as they take shape in his activities,' it is not sufficient to base literary and historical studies on reasoned proof; 'what is important is the circumstances.' Gadamer's understanding of this knowledge based on the sense of the community and its application to oneself is part of a wider context which he sees going right back to antiquity, the effect of which became the subject of *Truth and Method*. The application to oneself is seen by Gadamer to be more profound 'than all hermeneutical knowledge of rules.'

The balance between sense of community and sense of one's place is certainly a reflection of how Plato and Aristotle spoke of wisdom and good sense, which were their

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42 TM, p.22.
43 *ibid.*
44 TM, p.23.
45 TM, p.29.
goal of knowledge. The same balance is presented in the work of Hermes and the poets as they bring the messages of the gods into our world. About this connection Gadamer observes that the word hermeneutics 'points back...to the task of the interpreter, which is that of interpreting and communicating something that is unintelligible because it is spoken in a foreign language even if it is the language of the signs and symbols of the gods. The ability that has been applied to this task has always been the object of possible reflection and conscious training.'

In reflecting on the task of the interpreter, Gadamer thus describes the difficulty inherent in the inter-
pretation of writing:

Everything that is set down in writing is to some extent foreign and strange...The interpreter of what is written, like the interpreter of divine or human utterance, has the task of overcoming and removing the strangeness and making its assimilation possible.

This foreignness of writing is due to the effect of time on consciousness when 'the tradition that supports both the transmitted text and its interpreter has become fragile and gapped.' Because 'experience is experience of human finitude,' Gadamer believes it is an illusion to think that the effect of time on consciousness can be reversed

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46 TM, p.486.
47 TM, p.487.
48 TM, p.487.
49 TM, p.320.
by historical methodology as if the way something was
originally understood somehow returns. While agreeing with
that in the case of an exact reproduction of an original
experience, I am not convinced that an approximation to a
past understanding cannot be fostered by historical
methodology.

The hermeneutical experience is concerned with experi-
encing what has been transmitted in tradition. Gadamer
says that tradition is not 'simply a process that we learn
to know and be in command of through experience; it is
language, i.e. it expresses itself like a "Thou",' like a
voice, it seems, bringing meaning, albeit with no ties to
a meaning individual. Here is echoed a previous observ-
ation regarding Gadamer's view of the text as presenting
'something universal' for application to a particular
situation. To understand what such a piece of tradition
says, the interpreter must relate the text to his or her
own particular hermeneutical situation to understand at
all. Understanding the meaning of the text can only take
place apart from the reader's prior command of the
writer's meaning, allowing the tradition to address us
through a new interaction with the text.

The connection between language and thought is such

50
TM, p.321.
51
See p.97.
that knowledge of the truth of language lies in the exper-
ience of understanding. Gadamer interprets the use of des-
criptive language in this way - 'We seek for the right
word, ie the word that really belongs to the object, so
that in it the object comes into language.' In Gadamer's
understanding the term 'language' is used in a way which
distinguishes it from referring to spoken words. When he
writes, 'Being that can be understood is language' (ist
Sprache), he is referring to a phenomenon in which being
takes in the nature of what is understood by determining
it as language. This activity is as much a possession of
mute things as it is of people.

Gadamer has formulated a universal hermeneutics on
the basis of our relation to the world being fundamentally
linguistic. He has attempted to liberate the mode of being
of art from the ideal of scientific objectivity on the one
hand and metaphysics on the other. I agree that to avoid
the falsification of a text through either an idealistic-
ally objectivist or metaphysical interpretation is an
agreeable aim for human studies. Gadamer's willingness to
expose all such attempts however widely accepted and
esteemed they may be is intended to suit the realities of
our finite human nature. In the next section, which deals
with the way being draws understanding to itself through

52
TM, p.377.
53
TM, p.432.
language, we will be concerned to see whether a
metaphysics of language is retained in Gadamer's hermen-
eutics and for what reason. In later sections we will also
examine the objective use of language by persons to see if
a properly historical view of language can accommodate the
idea of spoken words being used by people to communicate
the nature of things to one another.

3.c. The reflective character of language.

In the final section of Truth and Method Gadamer
speaks of an ontological turn taken in his hermeneutical
enquiry. The basis of this emphasis is a connection he
proposes between what he calls 'the speculative character
of being' and 'speculative language.' Gadamer recalls
the use of the word 'speculative' by early nineteenth
century philosophers, when thought was considered
speculative because of its mirroring quality in belonging
to a given thing. This aspect of thought is distinguished
from that which seeks to unambiguously attribute
properties to a thing by an external judgement. By
contrast, speculative thought and what it reflects belong
to one another and influence one another.

Gadamer sees Hegel's development of dialectic as

54 TM, p.434.
55 ibid.
allowing thought to be 'the reflection of the object in itself.' However, the dialectic of both Hegel and Plato subordinated language to the statement, Gadamer says, 'in extreme contrast to the nature of the hermeneutical experience and the linguistic nature of human experience of the world.' Gadamer proposes a different kind of speculative quality belonging to language, 'as the realisation of meaning, as the event of speech, of communication, of understanding.' These events which Gadamer speaks about are constitutive of understanding and language. They make themselves appear and attract us to themselves, performing a similar function as the beautiful whereby it makes itself 'immediately apparent in its being' and has the distinctive mode of being that 'draws directly to itself the desire of the human soul.'

Common to these events marking the experience of language there is a gathering up, an analogical function, on the part of being. This contrasts with the presumptions of the scientist who gathers together samples and texts and meanings from common patterns of speech and turns those into attributes of being through linguistic

56 TM, p.425.
57 ibid.
58 TM, p.426.
59 TM, p.438.
60 TM, p.437.
research. What Gadamer proposes is a gathering in the opposite direction in which being draws understanding as it presents itself for understanding; thus providing the ontological orientation of philosophical hermeneutics. What Gadamer calls 'substance metaphysics as well as...the concepts of subjectivity and scientific objectivity' are transcended by 'this first and last insight', namely, 'that being is self-presentation and that all understanding is an event.'

There is more than similarity of function in the conjunction of these events in the experience of language since their significance is widely connected in Gadamer's work over the whole range of fields of aesthetics, understanding, and language, with which his own works deal. The events of realisation of meaning, understanding and speech are connected, he says, by a particular quality of being as it manifests itself in these three fields. The relationship between art, understanding and being is indicated in this way by Gadamer:

Self-presentation and being-understood belong together not only in that the one passes into the other, and the work of art is one with its effective-history, the tradition one with its present experience of being understood. Speculative language, distinguishing itself from itself,
presenting itself, language which expresses meaning, is not only art and history but everything insofar as it may be understood. The speculative character of being that is the ground of hermeneutics extends as universally as does reason and language.

In other words, understanding occurs because self-presentation and being understood are modes of one another. Rather than as a methodic activity of the subject, understanding is to be conceived as 'something that the thing itself does', a taking hold of a speaker which creates a subjective reflex in speech. What is this 'something' that the thing does, effective to a degree beyond all our listening and surrendering of prejudgets? It belongs; the thing, the world in fact, belongs to the speaker.

In the dialectic of classical Greek metaphysics Gadamer sees a movement not performed by thought, but by the expression of the logos which is 'the movement of the object itself that thought experiences.' He refers to this as 'the concept of the belongingness between subject and object.' In going beyond the idea of the object and the objectivity of understanding towards a coordination of subject and object, Gadamer seeks to enable understanding to occur without subjectively controlling what is understood. He also believes the being of that which is understand.

65 TM, p.431.
66 TM, p.418.
67 ibid.
stood is free to express itself in such a concept which is 'simply following an internal necessity of the thing itself.' This following is not a matter of a teleological relation of mind to being whereby progressive knowledge of what exists is obtained and arranged by the interpreter. Rather, Gadamer says, 'something is happening.'

What happens in the hermeneutical experience is that the word coming to us in tradition encounters us so that the concept of belongingness is determined in a new way in that we 'belong to elements in tradition that reach us.' Gadamer conceives of his own contribution to hermeneutics as based on the dual insight that being is self-presentation and all understanding is an event. Applying the ancient Greek dialectic to interpretation directly, with questions about understanding rather than about words and ideas, makes it possible, Gadamer says, 'for the thing itself - the meaning of the text - to assert itself.' Once again it should be noted that the event of understanding is seen to stem from that which is being understood, not from the understanding subject.

The self-presentation of being and the event of understanding are coordinated by the speculative quality

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68 ibid.
69 TM, p.419.
70 TM, p.420.
71 TM, p.422.
of language. By defining 'the real being of language' as 'that into which we are taken up when we hear it,' and referring to this as 'what is said,' we obtain an ontological base for a familiar experience of language. The dialogue situation which one enters allowing it to go its own way can develop so that it may be said that it is 'no longer the will of the individual person, holding itself back or exposing itself, that is determinative.' Instead, Gadamer sees at issue in the dialogue a law of the subject matter which 'elicits statement and counter-statement and in the end plays them into each other.'

When Gadamer speaks of determination by subject matter or being or things, a tension arises over the fact that these are never known in themselves. Not only are they never known uninterpreted, but Gadamer is unwilling to speak of them as objects separate from thought. The 'world' is always a construction, not only in its incomprehensibility, but also as an existing thing external to thought. So when Gadamer speaks of the self-presentation of being in language the fact that the original nature of what thus presents itself is unknown needs to be clearly

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73 ibid.
74 ibid.
75 ibid., p.66.
76 ibid.
kept in mind. We then see the need to further clarify the way in which the thing belongs in taking hold of the speaker. Is the belongingness between subject and object such that there is any way in which the world does not belong to the speaker? How do we know whether the speculative character of being, which Gadamer says is the ground of hermeneutics, belongs to being or to thought?

Rorty has said that phenomenological analysis is part of the effort by philosophy to inspect, repair and polish the mirror of the mind, by which it imagines more accurate representations on which to base knowledge may be obtained. His book Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature acknowledges that Heidegger enabled us to become aware of this 'mirror-imagery' though without a social perspective such as Dewey provided. Rorty sees Truth and Method as an attempt to 'place the classic picture within a larger one, and thus to "distance" the standard philosophical problematic rather than offer a set of solutions to it.' By this he means that Gadamer has followed Heidegger in distancing himself from 'the tradition', that is, traditional epistemology, in order to show how 'abnormal inquiry,' which does not aim to reach agreement on

78 R.Rorty, op.cit., p.358.
79 ibid., p.12.
80 ibid., p.363.
agreed-upon criteria, has a real function in edification and should not be viewed as suspicious 'solely because of its abnormality.'

Gadamer cannot be so easily dealt with as Heidegger on the question of ineffective distantiation because of his willingness to relate to the tradition’s formative influence in philosophical world-views, not so much to overcome that influence but merge it with one’s own horizon. However, Rorty’s use of the mirror-image theme does draw attention to a problem which remains in Gadamer’s hermeneutics if applied to his thinking on the speculative character of being, namely, defining the extent to which the character of being is socially constructed rather than phenomenologically understood.

In order to demonstrate the speculative character of being more clearly, and the universal aspect of hermeneutics, Gadamer turns to metaphysics, that is, 'the universal consideration of being', in particular to the 'concept of the beautiful' to show how 'this old idea of the beautiful can also be of service to a comprehensive hermeneutics, as the latter has emerged from the critique of the methodologism of the human sciences.' The

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81 ibid.
82 TM, p.434.
83 ibid.
84 ibid.
beautiful is chosen to illustrate the speculative
classical character of being because it clearly performs the
anagogical function whereby 'that which manifests itself
in perfect form draws towards it the longing of love
(and) directly disposes people towards it.' Instead of
this event being merely a peculiar consequence of beauty,
Gadamer says it belongs to the hermeneutic experience
wherever it occurs, that is, as 'an encounter with some-
thing that asserts itself as truth' whether in art or
poetry or whatever.

Gadamer has therefore sought to restore the meaning
of that which has meaning for us in a way consistent with
its own being and compelled by its own being rather than
by our judgement. The drawing power of the beautiful is
the same as that of language as it discloses the truth of
being. Gadamer points out the way language fills out the
realm of 'human being-together, the realm of common un-
standing' so that language becomes a central point where
the individual and the world meet or, rather, 'manifest
their original unity.' He thinks of the individual in
this original unity as the understanding 'I' in whom
handed down meaning becomes concrete. In the previous

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85 TM, p.437.
86 TM, p.445.
87 'Man and Language', PH, p.68.
88 TM, p.431.
section of *Truth and Method* he refers to Aristotle's and Plato's ideas and makes the same point about the connection between the thinking subject, the world of ideas, and being. The being of the soul is defined by Plato as belonging to the same sphere of being as the idea, and Aristotle says of the soul that it is, 'in a certain sense, everything that exists.' Gadamer then indicates the place these ideas have in his own thinking, where 'there is no question of a self-conscious spirit without world then having to find its way to worldly being; both belong originally to one another. The relationship is primary.'

As we saw above, it is the particular character of being to present itself for understanding with an analogical quality. This is the basis of the activity of the thing itself taking hold of the speaker and coming into language as meaning, since being, 'of itself...offers itself to be understood,' and spoken. The speculative quality of language is due to the fact that 'the way in which a thing presents itself is...part of its own being.' However, this particular phenomenon is part of an event in which the realisation of meaning in language

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89 TM, p.416.
90 ibid.
91 TM, p.432.
92 ibid.
occurs because 'the finite possibilities of the word are orientated towards the sense of the intended, as towards the infinite.' This orientation comes about because reflective speech holds together an infinity of what is not said with what is said. Words then do not reflect beings, 'but express a relation to the whole of being.'

This kind of speaking is found intensified in poetry. As in everyday speech which is speculative, 'the linguistic event of the poetic word expresses its own relationship to being.' What poetry conveys is not a previously existing reality, Gadamer says, nor the appearance of the essence of species, but 'the new sight of a new world' through the imaginative medium of poetic invention. Poetry shares the constitution of linguistic communication in general in that what it says to someone comes from the question to which it supplies an answer. This is what Gadamer calls 'the hermeneutic character of speech.'

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93 TM, p.426.
94 ibid.
95 TM, p.427.
96 TM, p.428.
The hermeneutic situation is a speculative situation in Gadamer's understanding. He acknowledges that the hermeneutic experience has a preliminary dialectic of question and answer, but because it assimilates tradition differently in each case it remains truly a mirror-image situation. What occurs in language normally is that the world-view we share is articulated in the exchange of words. It is the peculiar nature of the hermeneutic situation arising, say, when a poem speaks to us, that it stands over against the sharing of worlds through pre- judgment, 'like a mirror held up to it.' 'But what appears in the mirror,' Gadamer says, 'is not the world, nor this or that thing in the world, but rather this nearness or familiarity itself in which we stand for a while.' The variety in assimilation which occurs in the interplay between the word of the poet and the reader is due to the reader's understanding throwing back the image that is presented to it in infinite variety.

The doctrine of the self-presentation of being defines the hermeneutical experience in such a way, Gadamer says, that it 'totally contradicts the idea of scientific methodology.' In this structure, hermeneutics stands like theology and metaphysics which have been

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98 ibid., p.115.
99 ibid.
100 TM, p.420f.
demythologised in the service of 'a discipline of questioning and research, a discipline that guarantees truth.' The boldness of this claim is reduced when connected to Gadamer's and Heidegger's idea of truth as unconcealment of what is intended in a piece of writing. What writing intends is fulfilled by itself apart from any verification by the reader or the writer. When this intention is experienced in hermeneutic reflection there are, according to Gadamer, no other inhibitors to understanding its truth and it has been understood apart from method.

Concerning his own study of the metaphysics of the beautiful in the closing section of Truth and Method, Gadamer says that the truth of his words does not lie 'in the impotence of subjective particularity.' He claims that his use of sources in the questioning and etymological research done there fills out what is said to a totality of meaning to make what is said really said, and that this definition by situation and context 'is not something that pertains to the speaker, but to what is spoken.'

For these claims of guaranteed truth and the attainment of what is really said to have been fully examined, two aspects of the philosophical hermeneutics in which

101
TM, p.447.
102
TM, p.445.
103
ibid.
Gadamer has been engaged need to be pursued further. They are the focal events of disclosure and being understood to which he has drawn attention as the basis of the hermeneutical experience. They are also the events of which Gadamer has spoken in drawing the contrast between the focus of his own and the older hermeneutics most sharply.

The above quotation from the conclusion of Truth and Method relates to the use of particular pieces of writing to obtain a totality of meaning. It is said that this use does not pertain to the speaker, but to what is spoken. In the light of Gadamer's discovery of the relation of belonging and hearing we wish to question his contention that the use of sources pertains to what is spoken and not to the speaker. As he says, 'It is not just that he who hears is also addressed, but there is also the element that he who is addressed must hear.' This being so, the interpreter using sources should be bound to the self-presentation of being in a similar way to the speaker as they each listen to what is said in the words being addressed. Situation and context studies undertaken in this manner will then employ a dialogue which is as open to other expressions of a writer's insights because they are that person's. That person's whole hearing will of necessity be different to mine, but each part of it will also be a means for me to hear the meaning of things as

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104 TM, p.420.
the self-presentation of being is manifested in the
particularities of that person's insights.

In this connection I wish to expand on Gadamer's
idea, which comes from Aristotle, of the primacy of
hearing over seeing. Gadamer's focus on the concrete
presentation of being in visual art may have led to some
freedom being incorporated in his hermeneutical theory and
practice which would otherwise not be present. 'When you
look at something,' he says, 'you can also look away from
it, by looking in another direction, but you cannot hear
"away".' In this way Gadamer reminds us that tradition
is transmitted primarily through hearing and that everyone
who is in a tradition is invited to experience it
hermeneutically in that they must listen to what reaches
them from it. However, the 'mode of being of tradition is
not sensible immediacy,' Gadamer says, so that listening
to what is said in tradition operates in a different way
to listening to what another person says.

The question to which the thesis now turns is whether
listening to what tradition says is also separate from
listening to what another person says. I will show that
though different, they are not separate operations and
that the non-objectifying thinking of Gadamer's hermen-
eutics therefore gives an inadequate understanding of the

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105 TM, p.420.
106 ibid.
particular disclosure of tradition in one person's insights insofar as they are outside the scope of Gadamer's hermeneutical interest. The mode of being of tradition certainly needs to be understood more fully than Gadamer has demonstrated, particularly as to its sensibility. How the tradition is received needs to be investigated, especially what role is played by other people in that transmission, particularly in the face of the contention that tradition is neither sensible nor immediate in its mode of being.
CHAPTER 4
SPEECH AND PERSONS

4.a. Listener and speaker

At various times in his writing Gadamer refers to what it means to 'understand the other person.' For example, he says that listening to what another person is saying to us is analogous to an openness to tradition present in the highest type of hermeneutical experience. 'Without this kind of openness to one another,' Gadamer says, 'there is no genuine human relationship.' In this chapter we consider this phenomenon of 'openness to the other,...the parallel to the hermeneutical experience.' I believe there is more to this than a parallel between two events in separate spheres of activity, whereby openness to the other occurs in the sphere of human relationships, and the hermeneutical experience occurs somewhere else.

The fact that there is a more basic connection is

1 TM, p.322.
2 TM, p.324.
3 ibid.
indicated in Gadamer's idea that, 'Belonging together always also means being able to listen to one another.' We recall that Gadamer speaks of belongingness in relation to tradition to reinterpret the concept of the belongingness between subject and object so that it is 'determined in a new way.' In this chapter we will uncover the relationship between belonging together and listening to one another; that is, between an essential correspondence between people, and a sensory correspondence, apparently more everyday and mundane. My aim in this will be to seek answers to Schleiermacher's question concerning the connection between 'the practice of hermeneutics occurring in immediate communication in one's native language' and 'the procedure we use with books.' 'Should it be so different,' he asked, 'that it would depend on entirely different principles and be incapable of a comparably developed and orderly presentation?' There are indications in the use of conversation as a model of the hermeneutic experience that further investigation of its nature will extend our understanding of that experience.

We have already seen one claim which Gadamer makes

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4 ibid.
5 TM, p.420.
6 F.D.E. Schleiermacher, Hermeneutics, p.182.
7 ibid.
8 ibid.
for questioning and research. 'The art of questioning is that of being able to go on asking questions,' he says, 'i.e the art of thinking. It is called "dialectic", for it is the art of conducting a real conversation.' However, this question of what is a 'real' conversation and what is not is never fully discussed by Gadamer. Although conversations between people are not the field of his hermeneutics, they do provide an understanding of many of the features by which language, in the process of question and answer, giving and taking, talking at cross purposes and seeing each other's point, performs that communication of meaning which, with respect to the written tradition, is the task of hermeneutics.

There is an ambiguity here which we need to clear up. Obviously it is not language which is 'seeing each other's point', but the speakers. Are they then also involved in communicating meaning; how and to what extent?

What I am suggesting is that Gadamer has seen something in the event of conversation which is a real element in the hermeneutical experience because it is part of belonging together with one another and with the traditions under whose influence we live. But this insight has been reduced in its effectiveness because of a preoccupation with transcendental aspects of language and a

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9 See p.133 above.
10 TM, p.330.
11 TM, p.331.
corresponding alienation from concrete aspects of interpretation which have been associated more with technique.

What are a speaker and listener? There is a special relationship between a speaker and a listener reciprocating towards one another which does not exist anywhere else, a relationship which is different to that between a speaker and language or a listener and language.

Heidegger investigated the relationship between speech and understanding by using the idea of a speaker letting something be seen, on the suggestion of Aristotle that discourse has a function of *apophainesthai* (showing). However, Heidegger and Gadamer have emphasised this as a quality of discourse to the exclusion of discourse's interpersonal qualities. Heidegger, for example, writes, 'When fully concrete, discoursing (letting something be seen) has the character of speaking – vocal proclamation in words.' Thus speaking (Sprechens) is viewed as what Gadamer calls the coming of being into language, and the relationship between speaker and hearer becomes a function wholly of what is being said rather than of themselves. My question about this is: Can we understand what is being said better, or worse, from understanding what is happening in the concrete situation between speaker and hearer?

The activity between speaker and hearer often has some

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12 BT, p.56.
connection to the persons themselves which cannot be easily viewed as letting something other than them be seen. For example, when a baby cries it is letting its own needs be known without clear reference to anything else. Sighing, weeping, or shouts for joy may enable some circumstance of the person to be understood, but just as much express something about them. These expressions may not be called language in some definitions, but they are part of the activity between speaker and hearer which are peculiar to that relationship.

Both Heidegger and Gadamer have used the idea of hearing to speak about discourse becoming connected with understanding by the linguistic communication of tradition. Heidegger says that 'hearing constitutes the primary and authentic way in which Dasein is open for its ownmost potentiality-for-Being.' For Gadamer 'hearing is a way to the whole because it is able to listen to the logos.' This connection of the Greek idea of logos to hearing the meaning of being by-passes the existence of the first hearing, in the concrete situation, and its influence on the wider situation.

While both Heidegger and Gadamer refer to the concrete situation of persons speaking, neither of them expounds the concrete speaking/hearing relation as a model

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13 BT, p. 206.
14 TM, p. 420.
or source for understanding. In their appeal to the ancient Greeks there is a gap in their research which quickly turns from study of the *logos* in its concrete form to its connection to thought and understanding without consideration of the activity of hearing with the ears (ὰκουεῖν) and what is heard (ἀκοῇ). Heidegger observed a classical 'architectonic structure' in Aristotle's 'On Interpretation', 'in which language as speaking remains secure.' His translation of part of Aristotle reads in the English edition:

Now, what (takes place) in the making of vocal sounds is a show of what there is in the way of passions, and what is written is a show of the vocal sounds. And just as writing is not the same among all (men), so also the vocal sounds are not the same. On the other hand, those things of which these (sounds and writings) are a show in the first place, are among all (men) the same passions of the soul, and the matters of which these (the passions) give likening representations are also the same.

Heidegger sees the 'architectonic structure' as being held together by *showing*, as 'the letters show the sounds. The sounds show the passions in the soul, and the passions in the soul show the matters that arouse them.'

Heidegger's translation, which he admits is 'make-

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shift', indicates a haste to pass from consideration of the concrete situation and to pass from research of its phenomena into discussion of language as a whole. For example the Greek plurals in the previous quotation from Aristotle, namely ἱμπολα, ὁμετα, and ὄμοοματα, are rendered as singulars and translated the same as 'a show'. To proceed on the way to language as he sees it, Heidegger ignores speaking as vocalization and as a human activity. The aspect of speaking and listening in which he is interested is that in which it receives what is said in sayings of old and needing to be said again, so that 'in our speaking as a listening to language, we say again the Saying we have heard.'

I believe the lessons contained in language traditions are vital for understanding one another's speech, but I also think that passing over reference to the personal context in which those traditions are conveyed is a serious omission from the philosophy of understanding.

As we shall see below, the connection which Aristotle describes between 'the making of vocal sounds' and 'what

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18 ibid., p. 114.
19 ibid.
20 ibid., p. 124.
21 ibid., p. 114.
there is in the soul,' and between 'what is written' and the vocal sounds should be the object of any enquiry which is interested in understanding both the other person and the hermeneutic experience. Heidegger wished to pursue an ontological connection between speaking and language as a disclosure of being, and was content to believe that when we 'reflect on language qua language, we have abandoned the traditional procedure of language study.' However, just as the object of the traditional procedure of language study is approached profitably through hearing as much as through speech, hearing also provides an important vehicle for the pursuit of the object of the philosophical study of language.

A listener belongs to the elements in the tradition which is heard, which are also in the soul of another person by reason of them belonging to things they in turn have heard. The passage quoted from On Interpretation shows that Aristotle's understanding of what takes place in discourse is not focussed on the being of a transcendent language, but on the being of the passions in the soul (τὸν ἐν τῇ φύσιν παθημάτων). These are the things of which the vocal sounds are tokens (σύμβολα). The things that are written (γραφόμενα), are tokens of

22 ibid.
23 ibid.
24 ibid., p.119.
the things in the voice ( ἐν η Ἡ φωνῇ ). Sounds and writings are signs of other things besides giving likening representations of the passions of the soul. Aristotle has not repeated various words for disclosure in each of these relationships as in Heidegger's translation but has, by the genitive of articles and pronouns indicated a belongingness to be accounted for among various particulars.

I do not assume that this connection between things and words as they are used in concrete situations is fully accounted for by grammatical analysis, but it is as worthy of attention for ontology as the disclosure of universals has been. The fact that this relationship is expressed in grammar is due to the concrete activity between speaker and listener as well as to the architectonic structure of language; the various modes of language disclosing in their own modality things to which they belong.

Thus, without yet having considered meanings to be understood or knowledge of things spoken, we discover in the event of speaking and hearing or writing and reading the coming of being into language. The distinctions between these aspects is due partly to the manner of disclosure, that is, whether it be in writing or in voice only. However, an overall distinction of a particular coming of being into language is rendered through speech of a particular shape and texture being spoken allowing being to be detected by a listener.
4.b. The shape of a text and its context.

Ronald Bruzina has written on the place of metaphor in philosophy according to Heidegger. He suggests that 'Heidegger's call for serious consideration of the metaphor is a call for serious consideration of the character of the field of philosophic reason.' The basis of this call is the paradoxical nature of metaphor's role in discourse being too indirect for use in exact philosophical analysis and yet, at the same time, being the originating type of expression for characterization of basic elements.

Bruzina sees Heidegger trying to avoid basing rational enquiry on a transference of the sensible into the non-sensible 'as two self-subsisting domains.' Instead of maintaining the distinction of literal and metaphorical meaning in philosophic discourse, and with it a basic metaphysics, Heidegger was 'trying to realize a thinking that does not follow this schema of things, a radically "other" thinking which would nonetheless be genuine thinking.'

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26 ibid., p. 187.
27 ibid., p. 195.
The conclusion Bruzina draws in that essay is that 'Heidegger’s thinking, in its attempt to proceed otherwise, nonetheless always begins from within Western rationality, from within the distinctions and performances he wishes to negate.' It is because Heidegger offers nothing of literal explication that his thought therefore remains in the category of metaphorical, according to Bruzina. He proposes that rather than seek to denying metaphor as if tainted by metaphysics, we should recognise its role and allow it 'a kind of meaningfulness beyond that of literal expression,' according to which it functions 'deep within philosophy at the level of foundations or origins.'

The idea of meaningfulness beyond literal expression requires a meaning distinct from the meaning of literal statements to be created by metaphor or belief that the real meaning of literal statements and all language is metaphorical. However, to propose either of those roles for metaphor does not deal with the central problem of language and philosophy addressed by Heidegger, namely, the relationship between things, or issues, and thought. Bruzina’s essay concludes with words which are suggestive without offering a suggestion on what to me is one of the

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28 ibid., p.199.
29 ibid., p.193.
30 ibid., p.200.
most interesting aspects of the philosophical and ontic context of language:

The metaphor is not proper philosophic expression, yet the metaphor, inexplicably, generates philosophic expression. This, at least, is the lesson suggested in Heidegger's remarks with regard to language, thinking, and the metaphor.

This present study does not accept as final that the metaphor generates philosophic expression inexplicably, but seeks to understand how a philosopher's remarks on language, for example, provide knowledge of the role of metaphor in understanding. It seems to me that if such lessons are unavoidably part of speaking about language and thinking, they may as well be understood.

In his exposition of Heidegger, Bruzina explains that understanding language 'is not analyzing language and offering explanations in either new or old conceptualities.' This is the way Heidegger also speaks when he says that 'any attempt to form a notion of language... loses the possibility of grasping the simplicity of the essence of language thoughtfully.' The possibility of entering into the 'way-making movement' of language is to be preferred as a procedure 'instead of trying to form a

31 ibid., p.200.
32 ibid., p.197.
34 ibid., p.131.
notion of language'. If we think of the essence of language as uniform, undifferentiated and absorbed by osmosis, this alternative might be appropriate. But since all we know of language is understood through its differentiations we must consider that language itself invites analysis in order for it to be understood, and that its forms correspond in some ways to the way things are.

Various metaphors are used to describe the abilities of a listener and speaker to relate to one another in language. An investigation of these metaphors provides ways of thinking about the coming of being into language. In previous discussions of this question the description of concrete language situations has come to be regarded as irrelevant in the search for meaning. That which is to be understood in speech is considered to be detached from a speaker's intention construed from the way the speaker relates parts of speech to one another. This detachment has separated what is to be understood in speech from the way speech itself is described metaphorically. Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Derrida have all been concerned with leaping or not leaping to a transcendent meaning, suspending thought about the metaphors describing concrete speech and speech recognition, or deconstructing them.

In language there is a recognition of speech peculiarities which operates immediately in a concrete

ibid.
situation. These peculiarities attract metaphors which are extended from the concrete situation and applied to the transcendent situation as well. The metaphor of text and context indicates a web of language beginning as close as the words we speak and extending in a varied and connected manner to all which is to be understood. These metaphors are an important source to be studied for understanding, not to be bracketed or viewed as 'a search for presence and fulfilment which is interminably deferred.'

Instead of being deferred, the presence which language brings lies undetected in concrete speech even when it is imagined to be utterly distinct from the speaking person present with us. The distinction is not so great that we should look for a completely different meaning to that which is presented in the operation of the words between persons.

If metaphors are a source of information for our understanding of what we have in common, the metaphors in which speech itself is described are a source for understanding what is common to speech. If the metaphors of text and context indicate variations in the texture of speech and in humanity's shared experience, it may be possible through understanding the metaphors pertaining to speech at each of the levels of its operation to under-

stand particular experiences indicated in particular patterns of language.

What I am proposing is not a way to language, but a recognition of the way language is as part of human life. If we accept that the being of language is language in its concrete forms the problems of interpretation and understanding may be related to these particular phenomena without them being read as expressions of some other entity than the people who utter them.

We should be able also to consider what we mean by the coming of being into language. Language is not a higher or lower entity separable from things even though it is about things. Human being cannot come into language because it is already part of it as the realm of its existence.

The concrete phenomena of human speech are found in the context of being and distinguishable from other parts of that context by human hearing and understanding. By comparing our relation to language with our relation to the voices of other creatures we see that the way of language is something human beings are already on by nature.

Heidegger began to seek the way to language because he had given a priority to the logos in the function of discourse between people. By concentrating on the ontological connections of logos he led discussion away from the living being having discourse to 'those structures of Being which belong to the entities we encounter in
addressing ourselves to anything or speaking about it. Heidegger took this as a clue to look for an existentially valid doctrine of signification rooted in being rather than in logic. However, a logical investigation of the role of the metaphors of text and context applied to concrete speech will provide insight into the existential connections of language.

The metaphors of text and context originate in Latin, and the Greek idea of harmony is used to speak about the same phenomena. Words are metaphors, carriers with something. Carriers of what, with what? Heidegger sees them as metaphors of being and I think he is right.

Much has been made by Heidegger and Gadamer of the distinction between human beings and animals in regard to language. Gadamer recalls,

language is the real medium of human being, if we only see it in the realm that it alone fills out, the realm of human being-together, the realm of common understanding, of ever-replenished common agreement - a realm as indispensible to human life as the air we breathe. Aristotle said, man is truly the being who has language. For we should let everything human be spoken to us.

Heidegger and Gadamer are correct to see an encounter with an entity taking place when we speak about it. But the logos does not pertain to the structure of the being of those entities apart from their being spoken of. The structure of their being and the structure of language are part of the

37 BT, p.47.
38 H-G.Gadamer, 'Man and Language', PH, p.68.
same fabric, or, to use the Greek idea, are in harmony, and are composed of similarly shaped patterns. The tradition of metaphorical meaning suggests that we are able to speak of things because they carry identifying patterns of whichever origin which match patterns carried by words.

The passage in Aristotle which gave rise to the proposition that 'man is the being who has language' appears to be Politics, 7:13. In that passage it is quite likely Aristotle is emphasising the rational aspect of logos by which human beings are able to persuade one another to sometimes act contrary to custom and nature. 39 The translation of this idea into animal rationale has then been employed to reinforce the emphasis. However, the distinction of human beings from animals is not confined in Aristotle to reason alone. In Generation of Animals he discusses variations in the voice (φωνή) of animals and notices variations in pitch of voices, especially among human beings. 'Nature has given them this faculty in an exceptional degree,' he says, 'because they alone among the animals use the voice for rational speech (δῶα το λόγῳ), of which the voice is the "material" 40 (δόλη).' Aristotle's identification of voice variations

39 PH, p.59.
as the stuff of *logos* bears out the connection, made previously, between the particulars of speech and their context in concrete speech and the rest of being. It shows too that there should not be a separation of reason and speech attributed to Aristotle.

Heidegger and Gadamer have been forerunners in a tradition of modern purportedly non-technical interpretation. Their own interpretive work shows a great deal of skill and imagination in describing the literary and philosophical context of particular utterances though their theories seek to deny that the disclosure of truth comes through technique. 'Why did art bear the modest name *technē*?', Heidegger asked. His answer is that art does something, 'it was a revealing that brought forth and made present, and therefore belonged with *poiesis*.' I suggest that it was also because *technē* had to do with understanding stuff and shaping it, and that this skill was allied to what was called in Latin *textere*, to weave, and *textum*. What the poem does is related to what the poet does because the text is related to its context as variations in an overall pattern.

How a person distinguishes correspondences between what is said and what it is said about needs to be

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understood for an understanding of the art of interpretation which persists as a constitutive part of human life along with all other art. As Gadamer has rightly shown, human traditions, in their relation to human being and history, form the context within which the interpretation of textual material takes place, and inform it.

4.c. Human traditions, human being and history.

The scope of hermeneutical reflection is 'our entire understanding of the world' as it manifests itself in various forms, from interhuman communication to manipulation of society, and from religious, legal, aesthetic and philosophical tradition to revolutionary consciousness. Hermeneutics and language are both universal phenomena, 'not secondary in human existence.' In language we find ourselves engaged in the process of interpreting the world of which we are part. Language is 'being that can be understood,' because it is a mirror 'reflecting everything that is.' It is only through understanding the derivation of this universality in Gadamer's thought that it can be distinguished clearly from traditional hermen-

44 ibid., p.19.
45 ibid., p.31.
46 ibid., p.32.
eutics where all understanding is also conceived as a product of interpretation.

In his essay on the scope and function of reflection, as in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer is careful not to describe language as a mirror like some object, rather it is 'the living out of what it is with us' in the concrete and other relationships that comprise our world. Thus language is the field for hermeneutics both as the medium of our existence by which we are related to the world, and as the bearer of the marks of 'all the contexts that determine and condition the linguisticality of the human experience of the world.' It is not merely 'an object in our hands, it is the reservoir of tradition and the medium in and through which we exist and perceive our world.'

As part of this contextual linguistic medium, as we saw above, Gadamer recognises *interhuman communication*. I intend now to investigate this phenomenon which Gadamer describes as one form of our understanding of the world, and consider it as a constituent of the linguisticality of human experience of the world, rather than at a secondary level derived from 'hermeneutics' and 'language', as has occurred in Gadamer’s hermeneutics.

Gadamer’s emphasis on what is shared in language and

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47 ibid.
48 ibid., p.19.
49 ibid., p.29.
his perception of our historicality and prejudices as means to self-understanding, neglect the effect which individual differences in appropriation have on tradition. The possibility of understanding others having been left aside out of fear of naive objectivity, the structure of interhuman communication and its role in our understanding of the world has been overlooked.

Gadamer has followed Heidegger in conceiving the truth in a work of art through letting it serve its own purpose, opening up its own world. He refers to Heidegger's example of a Van Gogh painting of a pair of shoes. By bringing ourselves before the painting it can speak to us about the world of the shoes. 'What happens here?' Heidegger asks. 'What is at work in the work? Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, is in truth.' For this work to take place, Gadamer says, the work of art cannot be viewed as an object, worldless and homeless, so that it 'no longer fits into the fabric of its world.'

The picture's 'own world', in Heidegger's exposition, is disclosed as including the peasant woman's 'slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the


field swept by a raw wind.' My research seeks understanding of the connection of these 'ever-uniform furrows' to the fabric of the picture's world, and how that connection is disclosed.

Heidegger himself gives some clues. For example when we notice the worn insides of the shoes we may say the 'toilsome tread of the worker stares forth.' Then it is the 'stiffly rugged heaviness' of the shoes in which her slow trudge appears. In other words the disclosure of the world of the shoes takes place through the action of the symbols which the artist has incorporated in the picture. The 'ever-uniform furrows' trod by the shoes are part of this world insofar as Van Gogh's picture has awakened in Heidegger's imagination a picture of a countryside which is symbolic to him of hard work in a rural community.

Could the world of the shoes consist of the narrow winding cobbled streets trod by a weary street sweeper beneath Van Gogh's Montmartre window? How much of what happens in our imagination stirred by such a painting is due to our own context and how much to the painter's? It is clear from Van Gogh's letters that he wanted to suggest certain things by his paintings, certain things which had become important to him, things he wanted to say, said in

52 M.Heidegger, *ibid.*, p.34.
53 *ibid.*, p.34.
54 *ibid.*
such a way as to tell us something of his own way of thinking and feeling at the time. Whether he achieved this was to some extent dependent on the techniques by which the artist represented the fabric of his own lived context in the fabric of his paintings.

The picture of his room in Arles (1888, Paris, Louvre) is by its colour and grandeur of simplification, 'to be suggestive here,' the artist wrote, 'of rest or of sleep in general. In a word, to look at the picture ought to rest the brain or rather the imagination.' All kinds of things may happen when we look at a picture, but, according to Van Gogh, there are certain things which ought to happen if the artist's work is to be understood.

Certain things ought to happen because the creation of the work has taken place with that goal. From its origin in the emotional context of the artist the work develops not by impulse, 'but by a series of small things brought together. And great things are not something accidental, but most certainly willed. What is drawing? How does one learn it? It is working through an invisible iron wall that seems to stand between what one feels and what one can do.' In other words, when Van Gogh began to paint he was translating his feelings into actions, into

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works. Although the paintings may work all kinds of effects in their viewers, the paintings themselves remain Van Gogh's works, in which he wanted to give certain kinds of impressions to people who understand the pictures he made. His own way of living in the room at Arles, for example; or the way of living of the potato eaters (1885, Rijksmuseum Vincent Van Gogh, Amsterdam), 'a different way of living than that of us civilized people.'

By the example of the meaning of the pair of shoes I have been showing the direction which the hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer has taken away from the differences evident in individual expressions. This development has led interpretation to understand other possible worlds but it has also led away from understanding as much of the fabric of our world as may be communicated in those distinct shapes and sounds ignored because of their objectivity.

Palmer summarizes Gadamer's concern for hermeneutics to be that we might see that our presuppositions are the basis of our being able to understand history. Furthermore since they come from the tradition in which we stand, which is not an object of thought, 'but is the fabric of relations, the horizon, within which we do our thinking... the methods of an objectifying type of thought do not

57 ibid., p.10.
apply to it.' If the full scope of philosophical hermeneutics is to be attained, interhuman communication needs to more than a form of our self-understanding, whether as individuals or as a race. On the contrary, our self-understanding needs to be seen as one of the forms in which interhuman communication manifests itself.

It seems significant to me that the concept of person, not so much as a substance needing definition, but as a way of addressing the originator of a work of art, has not been found helpful by Gadamer to be included in his writing. The fabric of relations, of which Palmer speaks, has been studied by Gadamer in regard to our relation to ourselves, the world, and to things. For the well-being of hermeneutics it seems to me the problems and possibilities of understanding persons are evidently in need of study if the place of interhuman communication in the whole of our understanding is to be grasped.


It was suggested to a 1969 symposium that 'a very valuable clarification of the phenomenological concept of person' had been presented to it during a discussion arising out of a paper presented by Professor Manfred

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R. Palmer, op. cit., p. 182f.

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Frings. Some of the credit for this clarity should be attributed to the symposium having brought together representatives of British linguistic philosophy and of continental phenomenology to unify the two styles, for apart from such occasions the phenomenological concept of person was thought to be marked by its elusiveness.

The elusiveness of the 'person' is symptomatic of phenomenology since it sharply distinguishes the kind of experiences we have with persons from the experiences we have of things. The distinction is expressed by Frings in explanation of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Frings points out that 'the givenness of the other (*das* *Mitdasein*) is radically distinct from the givenness of things around me, of things ready-at-hand (*Zuhandenheit*), in that the other is met in terms of the self-value of his person, whereas things are not.' However, as Frings also notes, Heidegger does not take into account the value of the *person* in the world, and consequently does not distinguish between 'the value character of human togetherness on the one hand, and of things around us in their manipulability on the other.' Yet, although persons and things around us are valued alike, this is not to say that persons are things. They are valued alike because they are part of the world in which we are; but persons cannot be thought of as

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60 ibid., p.96.
61 ibid., p.96.
things since they are alive and changing in their responses to the world and its effects on them. The particularities of these responses and effects constitute what Frings means by the 'self-value' of the other person.

Frings was invited to suggest a phenomenologist's reply to Descartes' thought of the human person consisting of body and soul as individual substances. In line with Heidegger, he proposed that 'a person's individuality must be sought in his unique way of acting out his existence.' This is not to say that an interpersonal experience is identical with conscious reflection on a person's actions. Objectifying a person in such terms causes the person to withdraw into the background behind the observed data.

Frings' paper proposes instead that the person 'presences' in four given modes in which one is aware of one's 'Life-World' being shared in a co-experience with another. The first mode in which this lived co-experience can occur, according to Frings, is in moments of reciprocal awareness of depth, as in love at first sight, in which one experiences the value of a person directly.

Variations in human existence bring to light the distance between 'member-persons in the Life-World', but those variations extend to the existence of each

\[62\]
\textit{ibid.}, p.72.

\[63\]
\textit{ibid.}, p.76.
individual so that personal identity cannot be experienced in any fixed form, but only co-experienced as the second mode, namely, of the growth of a person.

As to the third mode, anonymity, Frings refers to Heidegger's 'They-around' (das Man) to whom belong the equipment we find at hand, but who are not part of it. They are not part of the 'equipmentality of things' because they form a field connected by shared experiences of things, even though experienced anonymously. Individual presencing appears from and disappears into this field of the anonymous 'they' or 'one' into which it is ontologically interwoven.

Even when the body and mind of a person are extinct the exemplarity of the person continues as the fourth mode by which personal being presences as a unity, in this case as a model of the ideal value of the self. In summary, Frings states, the unity of the person understood phenomenologically, is 'a dynamic unity of and in lived co-experience.'

Phenomenological description of the person confines itself to what is immediately intuited 'in a pre-logical and pre-theoretical way.' The honesty with which logically derived qualities are set aside in favour of

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64 ibid., p.78.
65 ibid., p.80.
66 ibid., p.70.
experiential qualities can be seen in the reservedness with which Frings opened up this investigation. His discussion of co-experience does open up a way to develop an understanding of the person within the restraints of everyday experience or 'the science of the life-world', yet without depending on a concept of a transcendental ego.

Not that all transcendent qualities need to be overcome. Transcendent qualities are retained among the attributes of language, common sense and the idea of the good, according to Gadamer and occupy the position of greatest influence in practical knowledge. What truth there is in these commonalities, while it may be clarified by logical constructions in whatever theoretical work they appear, will not originate in those constructions but in an aspect of our nature which enables us to compare and share experiences. Even the truth of things of a different nature, however it may be revealed to others, is revealed in human conduct to people who are able to recognise one another before pointing out the truth of other things.

Recognition of another comes about by means of the similarities we share and our differences. Animals and human beings are not distinguished by reason alone, but by their voices as well. One person's voice is distinguished from another's not by the peculiarities of their hearer's sense of hearing, but of the sounds coming through their mouth. The etymologies of personare (To sound through, as
through a mask) and πρόσωπον (face, mask, person) are so mixed up between Roman and Greek drama and culture for their connection to 'person' to be unclear at the present time, but they show that the interest of those cultures in the person was not entirely transcendental but also focussed on the concrete phenomena being presented to the senses.

Gadamer has drawn attention to the connection between translation and interpretation where the translator’s work involves 'finding a language which is not only his, but is also proportionate to the original.' This work is involved in a conversation also, Gadamer says, where a 'common object' unites the two partners. However, it is precisely at the point where Gadamer differentiates between interpreting texts and interpreting conversation that his work and the direction of this thesis diverge.

Following Droysen's definition of texts as 'permanently fixed expressions of life,' Gadamer determines that 'that means that one partner in the hermeneutical conversation, the text, is expressed only through the other partner, the interpreter. Only through him are the written marks changed back into meaning.'

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67 TM, p.349.
68 TM, ibid.
69 TM, ibid.
70 TM, ibid. (emphasis added)
But what exactly is being experienced in the interpretation of a text? Is it only a private experience of the interpreter which is to be brought into language, or is something to be expressed which is co-experienced with the author and who thereby contributes to the expression not only of the text but also of its interpretation? This thesis will show how the personalities of authors have been neglected in the use to which philosophical hermeneutics has put their words. I intend to show also how what writers have wanted to say about their experience of the world can be understood through a proper handling of tradition as that which has been handed over in the sphere of interpersonal dialogue. In order to do this we resume the dialogue which Gadamer has carried on with Plato and Aristotle, and retrace the dynamics of tradition already described by Gadamer, this time seeking to understand the role which the wills of the ancient writers has played in the formation and transmission of tradition.
CHAPTER 5
INTERPRETATION AND HUMAN WILL

5.a. *Plato* and *Aristotle* etc.

Gadamer set out in *Truth and Method* to investigate understanding and the interpretation of texts while seeking an experience of truth 'that transcends the sphere of the control of scientific method.' He sees the phenomenon of understanding as part of the experience of philosophy which, when we try to understand them, has its elementary expression in 'the classics of philosophical thought,' which 'posit, of themselves, a claim to truth that the contemporary consciousness can neither reject nor transcend.' Gadamer's introductory remarks in that place speak of Plato and Aristotle and their works as the stimulus for self-understanding through the assimilation of our philosophical heritage.

Within the hermeneutic phenomenon, as perceived by Gadamer, the understanding of tradition and texts is not concerned with method in the sense of satisfying the

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1 TM, p.xii.
2 TM, *ibid.*
'methodological ideal of science.' Rather, it is concerned with the experience of understanding the philosophical insights of Plato and Aristotle and others and with the understanding of 'the texts of these great thinkers' in which truth is communicated. My own research seeks to understand the nature of these experiences, having particular regard for the way authors' insights are understood in addition to their texts, and the way one author is experienced in distinction from another. Such particulars of understanding are required to understand the appearance on Gadamer's pages of the names 'Plato' and 'Aristotle' and the qualities attributed to them, apart from the conscious application of scientific method. I propose also that understanding an author's insights and will is an important consideration in the pursuit of truth in interpretation. This chapter continues to investigate the possibility of understanding a work better through understanding its author, an idea resisted by Gadamer even though his own work demonstrates the possibility.

My experience of 'Plato' in any section of Gadamer's work and the truth communicated in that experience is connected to the truth communicated in other sections dealing with 'Plato'. A connection is achieved through Gadamer using names like 'Plato' and 'Aristotle' to build

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3 TM, p.xi.
4 TM, p.xii.
up a picture for the reader of what Gadamer understands is thinking which belongs to these authors, which, in the context of the texts, posits the truth. The test of whether this is a true picture of their thinking is suggested by Gadamer to be whether the literary analysis of the works is coherently arranged around the names of the authors to whom they are attributed and whether the philosophical analysis likewise forms a unity attributable to the thinking of the person named.

When I have provided examples of Gadamer’s evaluation of a text’s literary and philosophical integrity I will consider in more detail Gadamer’s use of the names, keeping in mind his belief that the mind of an author ‘does not limit the horizon of understanding in which the interpreter has to move, indeed, in which he is necessarily moved, if, instead of merely repeating, he really wants to understand.’

Gadamer has compared his own understanding of a difficult part of Plato’s Timaeus to previous explanations. He finds that those previous explanations ‘fall short of reaching an accurate understanding of this text’ because they all fail to pay heed to an ‘abrupt

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change in the mode of discourse' (die Inkohärenz in der Erzählweise). To Gadamer it seems obvious that this section can only be 'coherently integrated into the whole' by following his particular interpretation. Appearing thus in Gadamer's writing in 1974 a continuing role is indicated for form analysis. However, what it is which establishes the coherence in Gadamer's understanding needs to be made clear. Another example of Gadamer's initiative in interpretation is his treatment of the excursus on insight in Plato's seventh letter. Commentaries which have interpreted the excursus as epistemological theory have lacked 'the proper hermeneutic principles' Gadamer says. He believes his interpretation will 'justify itself on the basis of the philosophic subject matter' and to a lesser extent on philological questions.

Without accusing Gadamer of historicism, what he avoids speaking of, and what is controlling his judgment in these matters is his view of the author of the texts being interpreted, although Gadamer himself never sees his

7 ibid.
8 ibid., p.176.
10 ibid., p.96, n.8.
view to be so directly associated with the person of the author. His interpretations contain conjecture about what "Plato certainly does not want to say" and "what he does want to say," but Gadamer intends for these phrases to be understood as code for the expression of an author's world view distinguishable by Gadamer himself in a certain corpus of literature.

Whether this practice of naming is part of philo-
sophy, philology or history does not alter the fact that Gadamer calls someone 'Plato' and describes what they want to say. This is in line with his own understanding of the connection between a word or name and the logos which bears and reveals the truth which is signified by means of the name. In Cratylus, Gadamer says, Socrates shows how 'the truth of objects resides in speech...in the content of a unified meaning concerning objects.' For example, 'to call someone "Socrates" means that "Socrates" is the name of this person.' We are as free to name 'Socrates' and 'Plato' as Adam was to name the animals.

If, as Gadamer believes, traditional ways of speaking reflect the activity of the logos which 'places being in a

12 TM, p.372.
13 TM, p.373.
relationship, assigning something to it,' the process of interpretation still revolves around an assumed being so named. Whom does Gadamer call 'Plato'?

'Plato' is the person to whom a particular dialectical world view is assigned distinguishable from the sophist's viewpoint. This world view is embodied in a particular group of writings. The exact extent of this body of writing is not easily defined, although the application of the less specific term 'Platonic' can be used to define the ideas which are represented in the group. The dialectical world view found in Plato's writing may be shared by other writers, Aristotle for example, and called 'Platonic-Aristotelian', yet with the possibility of distinctions being made between the two separate contributors to these ideas. Of what use for interpretation are these distinctions?

Gadamer believes that a linguistic constitution of the world by human beings enables us to speak about things and be understood in communication, every such world being always open for 'every expansion of its own world-picture, and accordingly available to others.' This variety of views of the world, while it may imply the existence of 'the world-in-itself', is the world as we know it,

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14 ibid.
15 TM, p.405.
according to Gadamer. When an individual speaks, Gadamer asks, is it not as 'the organ of language as well as of society, or rather of reason?'

On the other hand Gadamer recognises that there is an element of strangeness about individuality so that it is 'never completely reducible to the universality of the communal.' Gadamer explains that this strangeness is not removable because, and he uses Schleiermacher's words, "in his own individual being each is the not-being of the other". Thus,' Gadamer continues, 'the ethical-metaphysical tension of identity and individuality, as the opposition of language and free production of thought, lies at the basis of the problem of hermeneutic.'

It seems to me that Gadamer has not expressed the basis of the problem of hermeneutics in this way elsewhere nor explored it in terms of individuality and 'free production of thought'. Normally he has focussed on the methodological alienation of the knower's own historicity from the process of understanding, an alienation he has sought to prevent by a productive openness to prejudices. The dialectical relationship between language and individuality was recognised by Schleiermacher even though, as

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18 ibid., p. 73.
19 ibid.
Gadamer said, we have to ask ourselves 'whether the meshing of a schematizing process of induction and a rational process of deduction is able to give an adequate basis to the hermeneutical side of the problem of language.' An inadequate basis, but a necessary adjunct, I believe to a philosophy of hermeneutics which finds itself dealing with texts as distinct works of particular individuals to any extent whatsoever.

It should be no surprise to find Gadamer formulating the hermeneutical problem in terms of individuality and identity when he is responding to Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher, despite his fascination with scientific method and conjectural reconstructions of meaning, was also fascinated by the individuality of authors giving rise to particular meanings. Schleiermacher's method did not claim to be so assured that it produced immediate or final results, but envisaged an ongoing process within a dialectic which I consider shares much with Plato's. Plato's dialectical means of obtaining insight into a thing - name, explanation, example, knowledge - combine in a dialectical movement back and forth which 'perseveres in the single direction of what is meant, and which, for want of cogent deductive proofs, remains in proximity to what is sought without ever being able to reach it.'

20 ibid., p.75.
I am proposing that our only knowledge of the approximation of this dialectic to what is meant is based on knowledge of the individual whom we have tentatively identified, and the things of which that person speaks. This knowledge may only be partial and fallible, but more than what Gadamer sees displayed in Plato's Parmenides, 'unfolding provisional theses and countertheses without knowing the "what" of what is being talked about.'

The world-in-itself comprising people and things is not just an implication necessitated by views of the world, nor is it 'not different from the views in which it presents itself.' It differs from its approximations; it necessitates them rather than merely being implicated by them.

How then are we to understand Gadamer's axiom: 'What is fixed in writing has detached itself from the contingency of its origin and its author and made itself free for new relationships'? The detachment which Gadamer refers to is embodied in the logos as the true meaning of the text which is its fixed form. As the actual partner in a dialogue may be left behind in Platonic dialectic in the pursuit of the subject matter, so what is stated in a text must be detached from all contingent factors 'and grasped

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22 ibid. (emphasis added)
24 TM, p.357.
in its full ideality, in which alone it has validity.'
Here we see a fundamental contradiction in Gadamer's
hermeneutics arising out of his resolution of the tension
between language and individuality through the subordin-
ation of the latter to the former.

Gadamer's own works show that what is stated in texts
cannot be detached from dependence on their historical
authors. If Plato were not the author of a particular
text, a Platonic origin would be needed to provide mutual
links between the text and others in the corpus and
between ideas understood through their attachment to other
ideas in that context. The reason for this is that
language originates in a community of individuals.
Language learning takes place in a community where the
world is the common ground, 'recognised by all, uniting
all who speak with one another;' united, but not agreed
on the nature of what it is they recognise together. This
very disagreement, however, gives the knowledge of the
other person, the not-I, who is detached from me and yet
brought into proximity with me through language. Whenever
a child is learning a language it is learning the language
of the people around it and learning to understand those
other individuals. If they are part of another language
community and do not involve the child in that community

25 TM, p.356.
26 TM, p.404.
it will not know that language, nor the people using it, and be unaware of any agreement or disagreement with them. Being told about the world-view of aliens will not give us an understanding of it. Conversation which will give that understanding will be conversation with the people who belong to that community.

Gadamer has been unable to defend applying conversation as a model for understanding to the interpreter's understanding of a written text. In understanding texts and in understanding conversations the purpose is to bring about 'agreement concerning the object.' In the case of texts, however, Gadamer believes that it is no longer possible to conduct any type of conversation with the author on the basis of Droysen's conclusion that texts are 'permanently fixed expressions of life.' In relation to the exclusion of the author's influence on interpretation we can understand Gadamer's appeal to this maxim, but against the background of his preoccupation with fluidity of expression in regard to its meaning, we may believe that it is a case of special pleading to the detriment of the author, the text, and the interpretation.

In the final section of this chapter we will investigate the place of human will in interpretation, in speaking and writing firstly, but especially in listening.

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27 TM, p. 341.
28 TM, p. 349.
and reading. This issue arises when we consider the tasks upon which Gadamer and his interpreters are engaged, employing names of writers, understanding their ideas and assembling these in combinations with others and in contradistinctions from still more. In the last chapter we will consider ethical requirements dealing with ways in which tradition is handled. If 'normative concepts such as the author's meaning or the original reader's understanding represent in fact only an empty space that is filled from time to time in understanding,' what are the norms for using the names of 'Plato' and 'Aristotle'? If we are handling the traditions concerning these authors, detached from the persons themselves, what authority can be assigned to their context, either in the corpus or in tradition? Since much of the authority with which Gadamer invests his understanding rests on phenomenological precedents it will be appropriate to consider the will in phenomenology before attempting to evaluate Gadamer's will in interpretation and human will in interpretation in general.

5.b. Interpretation and the will of a text

Palmer's thirtieth thesis on interpretation indicates that the 'autonomy of the literary work of art' now means

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TM, p.357.
that 'to look in a work for the subjectivity of the author is rightly held as a fallacy (the intentional fallacy), and the testimony of the author as to his own intentions is correctly regarded as inadmissible evidence.' Palmer explains his interest to be in 'the "thing said" itself' and 'the possibilities resident in being,' and not in an author's 'intentions and personality.'

The substance of Palmer's thesis is supposed to be derived from the developments in hermeneutics brought about by Heidegger and Gadamer, and yet Gadamer's interpretative work shows a strong interest in an author's intentions. As we read the passages in which Gadamer shows this interest we need to ask whether Gadamer means the thoughts of the author or anonymous intentions of the text as proposed in phenomenology. Both of these aspects of intent are spoken of in Gadamer's interpretative writing without the former being rejected as providing inadmissible evidence in the work of interpretation.

Illustrations of the importance Gadamer places on authorial intent as a protection from anachronisms abound in his interpretations. Regarding Plato's Republic Gadamer believes the excessiveness of the exclusion of the poets 'should teach us the point of a reordering of education such as Plato had in mind' in which 'it is intended to

31 ibid., pp.246f.
disclose and awaken the powers themselves which form the
course of the state and from which the state as a whole derives.’ The
sequential logic of the Republic and the overall unity of
its development need to be followed ‘to illuminate thereby
the sense of the discussion as Plato intends us to under-
stand it.’ It is ‘methodologically warranted’ to go
beyond the testimony of the dialogues, Gadamer believes,
since ‘any interpretation of Plato’s thought true to his
intent must make use of what the dialogues only hint at
without actually stating.’

Gadamer accepts that there is something convincing in
a broad view of the axiom which makes what the author
meant our standard for understanding a text. That is, if
we understand by that, ‘what lay within his own individual
historical horizon.’ This hermeneutical axiom, Gadamer
recognises, ‘protects interpretation from anachronisms,
from arbitrary interpolations and illegitimate applica-

(Originally Plato und die Dichter, Vittorio Klosterman,
Frankfurt 1934.)
33 ‘Plato’s Educational State’, pp.73-92 in DD, here
p.77. (Originally ‘Platos Staat der Erziehung’, pp.207-220
in Platos dialektische Ethik, 1968.)
34 ‘Plato’s Unwritten Dialectic’, pp.124-155 in DD,
here p.140. (Originally ‘Platos ungeschriebene Dialektik’,
pp.27-29 in KS:III.)
35 ibid.
ations.' His main concern and critique of Schleiermacher rests on the fact that our experience and interpretation is obviously 'in no sense limited' by the mind of the author. That is, contrary to Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, Gadamer believes the meaning content of writing is more than the reconstructed thoughts of the author, yet that reconstruction is part of the procedure in Gadamer's practice of hermeneutics.

Palmer accepts Gadamer's designation of 'hermeneutics' as a philosophic concern for the basic movement of human existence. From passages in the foreword to the second edition of *Truth and Method* Palmer concludes that 'the decisive thing is neither the author's intention, nor the work as a thing in itself outside history, but the "what" that comes repeatedly to stand in historical encounters.' However, in the same foreword Gadamer expresses his objections to having had attributed to *Truth and Method* goals which he did not intend, wish, nor aim at, and sets out his real concern in writing the book, expressing the relevance of that concern even after it became an expression fixed in writing.

What has happened here is that Palmer has misunderstood the realm in which authorial intent is inadmissable.

37 *ibid.*
38 *ibid.*
in interpretation, according to Gadamer. It is not the whole realm of interpretation, but only that part which is involved with the philosophical description of the hermeneutic event. This limitation is illustrated by the expository sections of Gadamer's works where authors' intentions are frequently introduced as evidence of authenticity and historical accuracy.

I shall examine this persistent reference to authorial intent in the phenomena of interpretation in order to connect it with the process of understanding. Gadamer has seen that the meaning of a passage is more than its author's intention. He has also seen that interpreters cannot escape their horizon of understanding and expect to project themselves into the world of the author unaffected by the present and recover pure meaning from the past. However, even in the context of modern hermeneutical principles, understanding still occurs in connection with a reconstruction of an author's meaning. In Gadamer's study of Plato, the 'requirement that the content of the dialogues be understood as accurately as possible' was partially fulfilled by 'reconstructing Plato's oral teachings.' To achieve this, one important philological task involves separating that which may be attributed to Plato himself from that developed by his

40 'Plato's Unwritten Dialectic', DD, p.140.
41 ibid.
pupils.

The theoretical exclusion of authorial intent from the hermeneutic object in philosophical considerations of the hermeneutic task is due to a failure of Gadamer to have expanded the scope of his philosophical investigations beyond the parameters he inherited from Husserl. The same may be said of Heidegger. In fact the latter's exegetical writings display similar philological expertise without relating this to the philosophical issues the writings are seeking to investigate.

The practical inclusion of authorial intent in the hermeneutic object is an unspecified reason for the strength of Gadamer's literary criticism in Greek classics. The translator's introduction to Gadamer's The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy suggests that it is a hermeneutical technique of Gadamer to not even raise the question of the genuineness of Aristotle's three ethical treatises because 'the "mens auctoris" is of so little importance.' Yet in the section to which that statement refers Gadamer explains that the need to be involved in questions of authenticity is not so great because that has been reasonably established elsewhere in a way which deals with stylistic variations and supports 'the concordance of these three texts' which is

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'almost overwhelming.' The inclusion of Gadamer's own authorial intent in the hermeneutic object which is his understanding of Truth and Method is also, I believe, the real, though unacknowledged reason for Gadamer's objections to his critics' interpretations of the book.

Intention, intentionality, and intentional objects have received extensive treatment in Gadamer's development of his philosophical hermeneutics. Yet clarification is needed on the relation between the hermeneutic object and the intentional object. My thesis is particularly concerned with the philosophical recovery of an author's intention as a hermeneutical object. Gadamer's philosophy of understanding has fallen short of describing the nature of understanding another person. The concept of intent has been used as a metaphor for understanding truth, but because the constraints of the phenomenological task inherited from Husserl have not been challenged in relation to obvious hermeneutic activities which are not coterminous with phenomenological enquiry, personal intent has escaped philosophical description in the field of modern hermeneutics.

Gadamer has not recognised authors' intentions to be part of the object of hermeneutical reflection because he believes that understanding what an author wants to say is a different process to understanding what a text wants to

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43 ibid., p.126.
say. To protect interpretation from anachronisms is important to Gadamer in order 'to formulate the ethic of the historical consciousness, the conscientiousness of the historical mind.' Yet he has separated the will of the text from the will of the author without realizing the violation this permits to the ethic of listening.

Husserl argued that the idea of the whiteness of the page, as 'something that belongs inseparably to the essence of the concrete perception,' is the bearer of an intentionality, but not a consciousness of something. When consciousness of something grasps the idea of its pure essence we then see the basic character of intentionality. The unity of intentional experience is not found in sensory experience alone but relates also to experiencing a centaur, to learning of an opinion, all such matters in which the subject directs itself towards the intentional object. By whom is this object intended?

Gadamer followed through Husserl's research into both the 'primal-I' of intentionality and the horizon of intentionalities, 'the constantly cointended', enabling him to conceptually bypass both the knowing subject as the source of meaning, and the particular objects of the subjective act of meaning. By bringing these proposals together with Heidegger's suggestion of an ontological critique of

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44 'Heidegger and Marburg Theology', PH, p.209.
understanding presupposed by consciousness, Gadamer situated meaning with the inner structure of the thing, expressed in self-defining language. These themes in his theory of understanding, or hermeneutics, are drawn together in this way:

Self-presentation and being-understood belong together not only in that the one passes into the other, and the work of art is one with its effective-history, the tradition one with its present experience of being understood. Speculative language, distinguishing itself from itself, presenting itself, language which expresses meaning, is not only art and history but everything insofar as it may be understood. The speculative character of being that is the ground of hermeneutics extends as universally as does reason and language.

How do the activities of presentation and distinguishing emerge in being and language? After conducting a thorough investigation of the phenomenology of intuition, Husserl wrote towards the end of Ideas on the 'problem of the "origin of the presentation of space,"' the deepest phenomenological meaning whereof has never yet been grasped.' How is presentation generated? This question remained unanswered in Husserl even though it forms part of the ground of hermeneutics according to Gadamer. In

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47 TM, p. 434.

48 Ideas, p. 386.
relation to the use which Gadamer makes of Husserl's view of presentation it should be noted, however, that David Carr has distinguished in Husserl's Logical Investigations a recognition of the object which is intended on a given occasion and the object as it is intended. Although the intended object may never be a real object, it may, in the way in which it is intended, be analysed and described. This is not to say that Husserl was stating anything about the intended object being part of our experience of reality. As Carr says Husserl 'wants to consider the intentional object as a descriptive component of an experience without thereby collapsing the two as to make the object a real part of the experience.' Gadamer's merging of self-presentation into the experience of being-understood thus restores that which is experienced into the phenomena of hermeneutics from the neglect it would have suffered under Husserl's phenomenology.

In Truth and Method Gadamer addresses what he describes as 'Husserl's attempt to go back genetically to the origin of experience, and to overcome its idealization by science,' and then dismisses the attempt on the basis of the inability of reason to rise above the 'unruly and

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50 TM, p.311.
accidental way in which daily experience takes place.'

While I agree that the persistence of prejudice renders idealizations permanently suspect, I think that the treatment of reason in Gadamer's dismissal, on the other hand, overlooks the possibility of reason to order experience at the level of meaning-bestowal.

In respect of meaning, Levinas has recognised in Husserl a description of the place of will in intention at a fundamental level. Summarizing it he says,

Intentionality is thus an intention of the soul, a spontaneity, a willing, and the sense bestowed itself, in some way, what is willed: the way in which beings or their Being manifest themselves to thought in knowledge corresponds to the way in which consciousness 'wills' this manifestation through its own resolve or through the intention that animates this knowledge.

Consequently, Levinas says, the idea of truth as a grasp of things, 'though logically empty...never fails concretely to refer to whatever it is that the hand grasps and holds.' Gadamer's observations on language as the dialogue of the soul with itself, or of the community with itself, by themselves are not able to answer the question of the generation of meaning without falling to the charge of solipsism. Nor does the observation of a correspondence

51 TM, p.312.
53 Ibid., p.103.
between a thing and the idea or nature of such things, analogous to the correspondence between a word and language, answer the question of how things are presented for speech. Neither does the recognition that language is not divine but human and finite, nor that understanding is determined by the question asked by a text.

All of these are reflections on experience, in accordance with a phenomenological approach to understanding. The unity which Gadamer assumes between understanding and interpretation means that interpretation becomes self-interpretation, yet the need for interpretation arises from the difference between my understanding and that of another, the difference which becomes apparent not so much in intra-personal or intra-communal dialogue as between persons and communities.

Gadamer accepts that there is, in the generation of meaning, another power other than one's own. This is the power of language. Language, he says, 'speaks us'. Every word breaks forth from a whole and 'causes the whole of the language to which it belongs to resonate and the whole of the view of the world which lies behind it to appear.' 'There is converse between tradition and its interpreter,' Gadamer says. 'The fundamental thing here

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54 TM, p.421.
55 TM, p.416.
56 TM, p.419.
is that something is happening.' This event is 'the coming into language of that which has been said in the tradition,' 'the act of the thing itself,' an encounter with 'something that asserts itself as truth.'

The event character of consciousness has been extensively thought upon in connection with the study of history; there are still foundational matters in hermeneutics to be discovered in relation to what is happening in consciousness of language. What is this converse between tradition and its interpreter? What are its dynamics? If the word of tradition 'really encounters us' in an act of the thing itself, provoking questions about the possibilities of its significance, a general question arises as to the nature of things, especially as to the difference between the willing and acting of things and the willing of human beings. Gadamer thinks the difference is such that the nature and meaning of things may be wrongly conceived to be the same when thought in terms of the 'domineering character of the will' of the

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57 TM, p.419.
58 TM, p.421.
59 TM, p.421.
60 TM, p.445.
61 TM, p.419.
thinking subject. However, a true harmony of beings with the world disclosed by language, may be experienced, Gadamer says, in the correspondence between words and things, the language of things, 'which wants to be heard in the way in which things bring themselves to expression in language.'

Gadamer seeks to pursue 'the proper logic of the thing itself' without establishing whence it obtains this logic, and therefore whether it is the logic of the thing itself or the logic of the interpreter, whether they are the same, or confused.

5.c. Human will in interpretation

The previous section began with the assertion that Palmer's complete disinterest in authorial intent did not properly represent Gadamer's approach to interpretation. Gadamer's approach recognises an author's will as one of the issues in interpretation together with the interpreter's will, but asserts that these are not the main issue. In discussing hermeneutics as practical philosophy

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63 ibid., p. 81.
64 TM, p. 421.
Gadamer makes this contrast.

The description of the inner structure and coherence of a given text and the mere repetition of what the author says is not yet real understanding. One has to bring his speaking back to life again, and for this one has to become familiar with the realities about which the text speaks. To be sure, one has to master the grammatical rules, the stylistic devices, the art of composition upon which the text is based, if one wishes to understand what the author wanted to say in his text; but the main issue in all understanding concerns the meaningful relationship that exists between the statements of the text and our understanding of the reality under discussion.

There are two sides to this construction: understanding what the author wanted to say, and real understanding. Becoming familiar with the realities about which a text speaks is the way to real understanding, and that only occurs when the 'shared possession of meaning' common to the text and reader is regained. Gadamer believes the hermeneutic experience, this meaningful relationship supposedly devoid of the effects of human will, to be incapable of providing definite answers for understanding since the experience is constantly changing. This philosophic description of understanding is definite, but not the contents of understanding. In describing hermeneutics this way, Gadamer has tried to remove the threat of distortion imposed on

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66 ibid., p.109.
understanding by the prejudices of will.

The activities of philosopher and interpreter are intertwined. It is my intention to show that the will of the thinking subject is not ineffective in the hermeneutical experience and that the philosophical description of understanding what an author wanted to say is of vital importance in the interpretation of written texts. What an author wants to say and what an audience wants to hear are equally in need of philosophical investigation for the part they play in understanding.

In 'Aesthetics and Hermeneutics' Gadamer has investigated the 'language of the work of art.' During this investigation he reminded the reader that the hermeneutical perspective covers all understanding, and in his opinion is not properly concerned with the intentions of authors or the means by which they express themselves. Hermeneutics deals rather with the meaning of what is said, which 'transcends', Gadamer says, 'what is expressed by what is said.' This transcendent meaning derives from a symbolic relationship of all things whereby each being 'encounters man's understanding' as it 'points to another thing.'

68 ibid., p.101.
69 ibid., p.103.
In making his plea for openness to this manner of understanding, Gadamer uses an analogy of persons speaking face to face. For understanding to occur we need to anticipate being surprised by what is said and not 'try to intercept what someone wants to say to us by claiming we already know it.' Hermeneutics enables the apprehension of what is said to us, which is more than the comprehended meaning. It is the task of hermeneutics 'to let something be said to us even if we understand what is said right away.' In describing this analogy Gadamer introduces an idea which will become important in the final investigations of the present thesis. It is the idea of wanting to understand.

Transcending the language of art and written texts is a language of things which we cannot understand 'without wanting to understand, that is, without wanting to let something be said.' Although this something is distinguishable, in Gadamer's thought, from the author's intention, it is understood in a manner similar to the understanding obtained when what is presenting itself is 'what we want to say and what we will allow to be said to us.'

70 ibid., p.102.
71 ibid., p.101.
72 ibid., p.101.
73 ibid., p.102.
My plan in this thesis is now to investigate the phenomenon of will which has appeared in the above analogy. I believe that here Gadamer has touched on a fundamental issue which will help to clarify some aspects of the relationship between truth and method which are still in need of clarity.

Gadamer has continually directed hermeneutic consciousness away from the will of an author, apart from this merely illustrative remark in 'Aesthetics and Hermeneutics'. What is being said by this illustration however? What is the tradition behind 'wanting to understand' and a language of things which 'wants to be heard'? Reflection on this tradition shows that the analogy between human will for understanding and things which want to be heard is more than a mere illustration of convenience, but part of that 'universal relatedness of 74 being' waiting to be discovered by hermeneutics.

Plato's characters are preeminent in showing that understanding does not occur when we try to intercept what someone wants to say to us by claiming we already know it. Yet the same characters are made to disclose a tradition of human will and the will of things blending and working together in the discovery of truth through dialogue. Instead of intercepting what someone wants to say, Plato advocates facilitating the discovery of the meaning of

74 ibid., p.103.
words and ideas by partners in dialogue wanting to use speech to clarify what the language they use is wanting to say.

The desire of the Athenians to know more of the Christian message spoken by the apostle Paul was an inherited customary approach to language and ideas. Their words recorded in Acts 17:20 summarise the hermeneutical issues they faced related to the will of the hearers and the will of the text: 'We want to know what these things want to be.' This way of thinking about meaning as what words want to say extends back to Plato as shown, for example, in the Greek of Theaetetus (206C). Fowler's translation has Socrates asking the question, 'Now what are we intended to understand by "rational explanation"?', whereas the Greek uncovers the thought of what the word/statement/reason wants to signify to us.

Coupled with what words and ideas want to say to us is the thought of what a speaker wants to say to us. Whereas Gadamer has formulated the expression of meaning by language as the merging of self-presentation and being-understood, the traditional formulation in Platonic writing is not only a metaphor for understanding the language of things, but a factor in hearers discovering that which things are saying. In the dialogue Euthyphro

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75 θελετέω σών γινεμένα τίνα θέλει ταύτα εἶναι

(11C-D), Socrates suggests that Euthyphro is unwilling to disclose the being of piety and asks him not to conceal it any longer. Euthyphro pleads that he doesn’t know how to convey what he has in mind because whatever he puts forward is unwilling to stay where he laid it down. For his part, Socrates pleads innocence in the matter for he wants matters to remain and not move about.

Plato sees matters becoming clearer through the participants in a dialogue wanting them to be clearer. Negatively this occurs through not presuming to know ahead what the truth about things is nor what the other person means. Constructively, and this is where Gadamer is lacking, Plato’s dialogues do have a method of discovering the truth through the will of the participants meshing with what the words want to say. This does not occur through an abandonment of the speaker’s will or loss of interest in the will of the speaker or writer, but this interest is exercised in order to facilitate discovery of the truth.

Unlike the understanding of truth in Gadamer, for the Greeks truth was not necessarily the same as an individual response to the common understanding embodied in the tradition. What needs to be distinguished in the tradition is different shades of meaning with different uses and what use a person wants to put those to at any time. What Euthyphro was calling ‘care’ (ἐπίθετον, Euth.13A) could apply in common use to the care of horses’ needs and ail-
ments, but could not apply with the same sense to piety as the care of gods, as he was wanting to say. The nature of truth is not of immediate concern to us in this study, but rather its apprehension, which to Plato occurs through logic. What is of interest to us is that Plato represents Socrates as 'a man who debated with another while wanting to know that which the word is about' (Gorgias, 453B). This will to know speaks of openness to the logic of language, and in the tradition of the Greek classics it also speaks of the will of the speaker playing an important role in the discovery of what is being said.

Gadamer has been concerned not with what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us 'over and above our wanting and doing.' He seeks to confront the will of man 'with something from the truth of remembrance: with what is still and ever again real.' Plato has been concerned to engage the wills of his readers in the search for the real, holding out the hope that such cooperation of speakers, willing to search for the things their words say, will succeed. We must ask whether Gadamer's project of a separation from and confrontation with human will is in fact possible in regard to a description of what happens in understanding and wise in regard to a philosophy of understanding.

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77 TM, p.xvi.
78 TM, p.xxvi.
The will is to be understood in the final part of this thesis as a common thread in hearing and speaking and as an introduction to the ethical side of hermeneutics. Gadamer has suggested the ethics of understanding to be an important factor in appreciating the relevance or otherwise of method to truth, although his words above about not being concerned with what we ought to do indicate a need to clarify the matter.
CHAPTER 6
TRUE UNDERSTANDING

6.a. Truth between speakers

A large amount of Gadamer's work has been devoted to study of Aristotle's view of communal action in relation to understanding. Gadamer's hesitations regarding the impositions of method on understanding provide a useful check on the pretentions of scientific interpretation. However, they also prompt further investigation of the constitution of right action between people in regard to the act of dialogue and of speaking about things.

In the essay 'Hermeneutics as a Theoretical and Practical Task' Gadamer cites Plato and Aristotle as offering a proper model for our understanding of hermeneutics. Rather than being put in the position of a 'merely rule-governed technique,' rhetoric, and hence hermeneutics too, have to be drawn into practical reasonableness. The Platonic-Aristotelian standard of rhetoric requires of a speaker a knowledge of the good toward which people are to

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1 op.cit., pp.113-138 in RAS, here p.120. (Originally in Rechtstheorie, pp. 257-274, Vol.9, No.3; Duncker & Humboldt 1978.)
be persuaded and which also determines how one is to go about it; knowing how one is to go about speaking the appropriate thing at the right time cannot be learned by rules.

Gadamer has seen Aristotle’s categorising of understanding in ethics as a precursor to his own hermeneutics. Because the object of the human sciences is an active being who is always changing, the knowledge involved in the human sciences cannot be like mathematical knowledge. Gadamer says it must be like *phronesis* (insight) rather than *epistemē* (knowledge). Action which is governed by knowledge is usually connected to *techne* (skill), but in the case of moral knowledge the skill is not one we choose to acquire, but of self-knowledge. 'Moral knowledge', Gadamer says, can never be knowable in advance in the manner of knowledge that can be taught.'

Understanding (*sunesis*) as well as insight is within the context of ethics. As a modification of moral knowledge, understanding appears in concern about the other person. It arises 'when...we place ourselves in the concrete situation in which the other person has to act.' Understanding in Gadamer’s hermeneutics is not of some universal given which may be applied to the interpreter’s own situation afterwards. Attributed by Gadamer

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2 TM, p.286.
3 TM, p.288.
to Schleiermacher, this placing of ourselves in the position of the original reader, to transfer meaning from the past to the present, is 'something quite different from application', that is, as Gadamer understands application.

'All reading involves application,' Gadamer reminds us, but not just in the ordinary sense of it being a desirable goal. Rather, in Gadamer's view, the reader is part of the meaning of the text and belongs to it inasmuch as it constitutes understanding of the truth in its effect on our consciousness. 'Understanding', thus, 'proves to be a kind of effect and knows itself as such.' The effective-historical consciousness is particularly related to texts since it is in language that the world known to human beings is both known and constituted. Gadamer has developed this scheme to deal with the philosophical questions of human existence, taken to be the primary questions we can expect to arise in language and tradition. He has concentrated on 'the actual understanding of the universal itself that the given text constitutes for us,' assuming an ontological determination of particular utterances by the text as a whole, and of

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4 TM, p.298.
5 TM, p.304.
6 TM, p.305.
7 TM, p.305.
particular events by 'the great text' to which
the history of the world belongs. More detailed setting
out is required to say what happens between understanding
and 'history', what kind of effect is understanding, and
how it relates to things from which it is derived.

At this point we need to retrace the transmission of
the ethics of understanding from Plato and Aristotle to
Gadamer to enquire further into its practice and into
understanding itself. If understanding knows itself as an
effect, what is the role of other persons in that effect?
Gadamer has indicated the special meaning of having
language for human understanding of the world. What more
will consideration of the varieties in language mean for
variations in modes of human being and thereby human
community? Also, could it be that the truth of things
hinges on the variety of expressions concerning them, and
is recognised in the way the various expressions are
handled?

The variations between the language of Plato and
Aristotle and our own languages are manifold. In Gadamer's
approach to words the variations are no great disruption
to the progress of thought, since by the time of his
philosophical apprenticeship philosophy and philology
meant almost the same. Speaking of these two disciplines
he says, 'Whoever knows something of Greek language and

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TM, p. 305.
tradition hears immediately how close both concepts are to one another, or better, how they flow into one another and overflow both sides.' Furthermore the subject matter behind the literary forms is uncovered by giving philosophy and not philology 'methodological priority'.

This type of philology, in which a person's philosophy is able to give understanding of the subject matter, but a person's way of choosing words is not, recalls the very problem which Socrates is dealing with in the famous passage of Phaedo referred to by Gadamer in defining philology. In Phaedo we are presented with an understanding of philology through its opposite, 'word-hatred', which Gadamer says arises in the context of the failure of the search for truth when the love of words collapses in despair. It is that aspect of philology in which it is the love of thinking, showing its kinship to philosophy, which directs it to the beautiful and thus redeems it.

This making philosophy and philology synonymous by absorbing the one into the other tends to break the hermeneutical circle at the point of knowing the meaning of an author's words before we understand them. In the part of


Phaedo to which Gadamer refers, Plato is arguing not only for truth as a concept but also for truth as the proper action between speakers, a factor which disappears from hermeneutics if it is assumed that nothing can be known of the intention of the person whose words are coming to us.

The 'word-hatred' referred to in the Plato passage (Phaedo, 89D) is the great misfortune of 'developing a dislike for argument' and the danger of it arises from anxiety over the approaching death of Socrates which threatens to deflect the logic of the discussion in which he is engaged. The pursuit of truth on this occasion, as on every other, can only be advanced by accepting one's responsibility in the matter and lack of technical ability, rather than shift the blame from oneself to the arguments. 'On the contrary', Socrates says, 'we should recognize that we ourselves are still intellectual invalids; but that we must brace ourselves and do our best to become healthy - you and the others partly with a view to the rest of your lives, but I directly in view of my death; because at the moment I am in danger of regarding it not philosophically but self-assertively.'

The healthy attitude towards dialogue which Socrates desires necessitates that they all care (φροντίζοντες) for the facts of the case (περὶ ἄν ἄν ὁ λόγος); if

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12 ibid., p.146.
he seems to speak the truth, to confess it with him, and if not, to oppose him. We should notice how this care for the logos is not one which can be exercised independently from a context of caring for the persons with whom we are engaged in dialogue. They are conditions of dialogue which turn upon one another. They are also conditions of philosophy. Plato's dialogues reveal a primacy of philosophy, but not, I believe a primacy over philology as a searching for particular usages which reveal the mind of an author, as Gadamer has maintained. The danger of misology, which arises in the same way as misanthropy, is overcome not by attention to argument only in a sophistic manner, but, as in the analogy of human relations, by care for and critical understanding (technē) of the nature of argument.

Philosophy has nothing to fear from philology that it should try to remove its identity by consuming it. On the contrary, as the Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy shows, understanding the truth is tied to understanding persons, not as mythic beings upon whom we superimpose our own ideas, but persons as they are, speaking together about things. There has been a reversal proposed by Heidegger which I believe needs reconsideration in the light of another reading of Plato and Aristotle. Theodore Kisiel suggests that Heidegger achieved a reversal in the hermeneutical character of the mission and history of Being such that 'the medium of the hermeneutical process and of the transmission of tradition is and remains
language, but now it is no longer the articulate language of man but the silent language of Being, which speaks by a withdrawal that draws man forward to new possibilities."

Sharing this viewpoint Gadamer has seen understanding as an effect, but I doubt that it is really the effect of time apart from human will that things have changed so much in the relationship between philosophy and philology. Dialogue with Plato and Aristotle in the matter of true understanding will show that time is not able to reverse the relationship between the language of being and the language of men and women because they are not in such a side by side relationship, but are the same language. This in fact is what has produced Gadamer's insight of philosophy and philology flowing together.

However, if language as the language of being is to be heard fully, philosophy needs to recognise the importance of the question of care for the speaker's will. Gadamer continually reminds his readers that what a text says is more than what its author wants to say. But in Gadamer's theory the meaning of the text has received the attention of the reader's understanding to the neglect of the author's meaning. I am proposing that this is an imposed limitation on understanding which does not do justice to the truth of a text in its historical context,

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and that to abandon understanding an author as a concession to historical distance is not a requirement of time.

As Gadamer observes, when Aristotle speaks of understanding as an intellectual virtue toward others it is in an ethical context rather than in a merely neutral context. He also observes the same narrowing of *technē* and *phronēsis* when they are thought to be situated in a neutral context. *Phronēsis* is the focus for Gadamer's studies of Aristotelian moral reasonableness in the wider context. If it is an art, it is not one that depends on the guidance of a teacher. 'It can work out methods - they are more like rules of thumb than methods - and it can be elevated like an art that one possesses to the stage of genuine artistry.' The task chosen for insight (*phronēsis*) does not, according to Gadamer, come from the interpreter's view of the object to be interpreted; rather 'it is posed precisely in the way that the practice of one's living poses it.'

However, Gadamer should have suspected that Aristotle's problem with *epistēme*, the practical knowledge which may influence the agenda of insight by suppressing existential questions, may not have been the same as his own. Unaware of the modern domination of thinking by

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14 RAS, p.135.
15 *ibid.*
science, Aristotle limited *episteme* to 'universals and things that are of necessity.' In the *Nicomachean Ethics* he makes this distinction between *episteme*, *technē* and *phronēsis*: 'To be matter of Scientific Knowledge a truth must be demonstrated by deduction from other truths; while Art and Prudence are concerned only with things that admit of variation.' That is, *episteme* is thinking which relates to immutable things, in distinction from *sunesis* (understanding) which, like *technē* (art) and *phronēsis* (prudence), deals also with those things 'about which one may be in doubt and deliberate.' Gadamer distinguishes between *technē*, as belonging with technical knowledge, and *phronēsis*, which belongs with moral knowledge. The former is learnt from a teacher, the latter from experience, according to Gadamer; and the latter is the framework of hermeneutics. There is a *technē* which Gadamer recognises in application, but this is a special art learned from experience. Moral knowledge, which embraces 'both means and end and hence differs from technical knowledge,' is concerned only with its operation and not with 'right

17 ibid.
18 ibid., (VI.x.2), p. 359.
19 TM, p. 287.
living in general.'

This is a major division in kinds of knowledge in Gadamer's conceptual scheme. The kind of understanding which makes a text speak is not 'an arbitrary procedure that we undertake on our own initiative,' he says, but 'as a question, it is related to the answer that is expected in the text. The anticipation of an answer itself presumes that the person asking it is part of the tradition and regards himself as addressed by it.' This influence of the listener's own existential situation is not difficult to recognise in traditional hermeneutics, but the prejudice against procedural initiative is contrary to the tradition of understanding discernable in classical Greek philosophy through to Romantic hermeneutics.

By accepting Husserl's transformation of the task of knowledge, whereby intentional phenomenology made 'the mind, as mind, the field of systematic experience and science,' and Heidegger's transformation of articulate language into the silent language of Being, Gadamer based hermeneutic experience on moral knowledge requiring 'deliberation with oneself (euboulia) and not knowledge in the manner of a technē.' But this development to which

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20 TM, p.286.
22 TM, p.215.
23 TM, p.286.
Gadamer submits cannot be documented as having its roots in Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy in the same way that it stems from the later philosophers, despite Gadamer’s appeals for a linkage.

Euboulia in Aristotle is ‘correctness of deliberation as regards what is advantageous, arriving at the right conclusion on the right grounds at the right time.’ Boule and its verb are used by both Plato and Aristotle in connection with a will or wish. For example in Nichomachean Ethics III.ii.9, ‘we wish to be healthy...we wish to be happy’, and in Plato’s Euthyphro (10C) ‘what I wish to say’. This latter passage shows an affinity with ‘counsel’ in the words that follow as Socrates continues, saying, 'What I mean is this: that...’ Hence euboulia can be understood as ‘good counsel’ offered in dialogue concerning things which may be in doubt, which are nevertheless the concern of understanding (sunesis) and prudence (phronesis).

Consciousness in Aristotle has a similar beneficial orientation towards others as well as to oneself. Self-consciousness is a pleasant thing in itself for those who are good and pleased by what is good. Likewise the virtuous person feels the same way towards a friend’s life

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24 Nichomachean Ethics, (VI.ix.6), trans. H.Rackham, p.357.
25 Plato, Euthyphro, (10C), in The Last Days of Socrates, Trans. by H.Tredennick, p.32. (σουλομαί ὡς τοῦτο, ὡς...)
and shares the friend's self-consciousness, 'and this is attained by their living together and by conversing and communicating their thoughts to each other; for this is the meaning of living together as applied to human beings, it does not mean merely feeding in the same place as it does when applied to cattle.' The idea of understanding others in terms of an analogy to one's understanding of oneself is clearly part of Aristotle's counsel for practical philosophy. But this is 'attained', it can happen (ginoīt'), in living together and sharing words and thoughts. Gadamer may believe understanding becomes shared in the fusion of horizons in an encounter with tradition, Aristotle seems to be saying that it happens in a more directly shared consciousness.

**Performance of the truth** as an element of the good has largely disappeared from the modern consciousness. Truth now means 'revelation, unconcealedness of things' (Offenbarkeit, Unverborgenheit der Dinge). The philosophical problems of being and objectivity have thus become attached to hermeneutics through a particular view of the historical roots of the idea of truth. Aristotle's view, according to Gadamer, is that a sentence is true when, in a body, 'it lets be presented, what is also

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presented together in the thing,’ and false when it
presents in narrative what is not presented in the thing.
This is part of the classical Greek view, but there is
also another side of the older Greek view which needs to
be recalled. Gadamer himself acknowledges that the
boundary of the Greek idea is not marked by the concept of
revelation. He suggests ‘that the truth of a single
proposition...depends on the genuineness of its enrooted-
ness and bond with the person of the speaker in whom it
wins its truth potential, for the meaning of a statement
is not exhausted in what is stated.’ Yet it will be
noticed that this construction is still tied to the
revelatory aspect of truth, attempting to relate it to
human existence without the benefit of the meaning of
truth between speakers, which is an essential factor in
understanding the meaning and truth of tradition, that is,
that which is handed on.

Among the virtues (των ἀρχέων) discussed by
Aristotle in the Nichomachean Ethics there are certain
unnamed qualities; one of these belongs to people who do
the truth (των ἀληθευοντων). This is a quality
belonging to the lover of truth who keeps doing the truth

28 ibid., p.49. (’wenn es zusammen vorliegen läßt, was
in der Sache auch zusammen vorliegt’)

29 ’The Heritage of Hegel’, pp.38-68 in RAS, here
p.44. (Originally in H.-G.Gadamer and J.Habermas, Das
Erbe Hegels: Zwei Reden aus Anlass des Hegel-Preises,
Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 1979.)
'even when nothing depends on it,' and so 'will be truthful (ἀληθευσεῖ) when some interest is at stake.'

Hellenistic thinking after Aristotle isolated the virtue of doing truth from the tradition it received, and passed on only the idea of truth as ideal reality. In the passages from Aristotle he is not speaking of being truthful in matters of honesty and dishonesty nor, consequently, of degrees of agreement or disagreement with reality, but of an habitual sincerity of disposition showing itself in speech and conduct. We are struck here by the complementarity this presents to Gadamer's research on sunesis as 'being habitually understanding toward others.' Habitual virtue, according to Aristotle, is an intellectual function, oriented not only toward others but including 'a disposition of the mind in regard to choice.' It chooses in a deliberate way so as to attain truth in regard to action, that is, by choosing on the basis of true principle and right desire. Practical intelligence is the same as practical truth. It is traditionally understood as having had the truth by the right desire (ἡ ἀληθεύσα ὑμολογεῖ ἕχουσα τῇ ὀρεξείᾳ τῇ ὀρθῇ).

31 'Hermeneutics as a Theoretical and Practical Task, RAS, p.132f.
33 ibid., (1139a.31f), p.328.
This kind of truth is part of the method of living. It not conditioned by time as much as by will. It does not always consider time in its deliberations nor suffer distance from them because of it, but flows with time. It neither stops nor starts to examine an utterance, yet it does examine utterances of its own and others. It is the normal dialectic of speaking and hearing raised to the level of virtue by choice. How this occurs is the topic of the next section.

6.b. Truth and method

From the beginning of Truth and Method Gadamer's concern with a problem of method appears as a controlling influence on his view of hermeneutics and understanding. He questions the assumption made by Dilthey, for example, that the human sciences should follow the method of inductive logic typical of natural science. Gadamer goes beyond questioning the place of a method which looks for laws of regularity by which to predict individual phenomena in the human sciences. He proposes an alternative way of understanding based on experience and culture, 'not at all in the sense of a scientific method.'

In 1981 Gadamer was still writing in defense of

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34 TM, p.90.
adopting Vico’s rhetorical model for the human sciences against the critical model which stands with the new physics. He still saw these as 'two competing approaches'; rhetorica, based on common sense and arguments of persuasion, and critica, 'with its insistence on method.' It is my opinion that this analysis which places method in competition with the process of understanding in the human sciences has lost touch with the place of method in the history of understanding. When Gadamer asks 'the philosophical question of the whole procedure of the human sciences' with this competitive schema in mind it is not in fact their whole procedure with which he is dealing, neither therefore, is he able to discover 'what their mode of understanding in truth is.'

Gadamer believed that his philosophical question about the procedure of the human sciences was asked 'in the same way Heidegger asked it of metaphysics.' Ricoeur supports this claim from a different angle maintaining that Truth

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36 ibid.
37 TM, p. 90.
38 ibid.
39 ibid.
and Method develops 'anti-methodological' conclusions of Heideggerian philosophy. But there are significant differences between Gadamer's and Heidegger's views of method. By not questioning metaphysics from the point of view that method is part of a competing approach, Heidegger was able to see that the procedure of the human sciences is a method, and moreover that the method of thinking which is its own path comprehends both the human and natural sciences.

In 'What is Metaphysics?' Heidegger acknowledged a disinterest of science for what is beyond beings. But in the belief that no field of investigation takes precedence over another and 'no particular way of treating objects of inquiry dominates the others,' Heidegger relates the task of science to metaphysics. 'Only...on the base of metaphysics,' he writes, 'can it advance further in its essential task, which is not to amass and clarify bits of knowledge but to disclose in ever-renewed fashion the entire region of truth in nature and history.' The same essay contained a pointer to a whole area in the method-

40 P. Ricoeur, Main Trends in Philosophy, Holmes and Meier, New York, 1979, p. 268.
42 ibid., p. 111.
ology of philosophical investigation which Gadamer has failed to take over from Heidegger and develop, and as a result has fallen into that conflict with science. Enquiry into that which is or is not beyond nature, meta-physics, gets under way in philosophy; and philosophy 'gets under way,' in Heidegger's opinion, 'only by a peculiar insertion of our own existence into the fundamental possibilities of Dasein as a whole,' for which there are certain procedural steps of decisive importance.

Heidegger's image of ways and paths of understanding is not without its forerunners in classical Greek philosophy. Along with the image of the way (δρόμος) there is a similar concern to Heidegger's shared by Plato and Aristotle to trace these ways, not only in regard to what ideas they disclose, but also as to the making of the way. As we shall indicate below, it is not Heidegger from whom Gadamer received confirmation of his anti-methodological stance as much as from Hegel.

For the Greeks the way-making was methodos, the procedure accompanying the way (meta+hodos) consciously followed by dialogue partners as they trace out the path of thinking through to the truth. More particularly it is, by its to and fro way of speaking about matters in their parts and wholes, ἡ διαλεκτικὴ μέθοδος. In order to grasp the meaning of this expression and trace the changes

43 ibid., p.112.
in the way it has been thought of we may ask, What kind of dialectical method? Who are the speakers in the cross-speaking (διαλεγομένα) of the dialectics which Plato, Hegel, Heidegger and Gadamer have each proposed? Do the thinking persons play a part in the method, if so what part? What changes have taken place in the thoughts of the members of the cast of the play of thinking as their productions are offered and repeated?

Plato has Phaedrus agreeing with Socrates that it is quite right 'to give the name of dialectic to the method you have described,' that is, that a discussion should proceed by means of collecting particulars under generic terms then dividing them into species. The method proceeds, in Plato's dialogue with two individuals who share 'the ability to discuss unity and plurality as they exist in the nature of things,...dialecticians,' and it continues throughout the dialogues and Aristotle's works. This method of dialogue is not brought out in Gadamer's understanding of the Greeks since he insists that one who learns from the Greeks must have 'always first' learnt from Hegel. From reading what the Greeks say, it does not do justice to the dialectic to say, 'this expression of the logos, was not

45 *ibid.*, p.82.
46 *TM*, p.418.
for the Greeks a movement performed by thought, but the
movement of the object itself that thought experi-
ences.' For them thought was seeking to trace the move-
ment of things by moving itself. What I want to indicate
here is that the movement of thought in classical dia-
lectic was generated by people thinking together; not only
the contemporary dialogue partners but those entering into
dialogue with particular persons of previous generations,
Aristotle with Plato and Socrates, Plato with Socrates and
Parmenides.

For Heidegger the way to the logos is its own appro-
priating quality whereby a way is made which 'puts language
(the essence of language) as language (Saying) into language
(into the sounded word).’ This triple formulation of
language is an echo of the profound eloquence of a three
word sentence in Greek whose meaning could be interpreted to
say 'reason is language, logos,' bringing together the
manifold nature of language into a compact slogan.
Heidegger’s fascination with the transcendent and immanent
aspects of language, prompted such aphorisms as 'Language

47 ibid.
48 M.Heidegger, On The Way To Language, p.130.
(Originally 'Die Sprache' in Unterwegs zur Sprache)
(Quoted from J.G.Hamman,Schriften:VII, ed. F.Roth and G.A.Wiener, Reimer, Berlin 1821, pp.151ff.)
is language' and 'language speaks'. But it also drew him to the Greek tradition in a different way to Gadamer, insofar as Heidegger welcomed thought of the procedures and paths of thinking, language and speech in line with the agenda of the Greek dialogue, and not only in line with its metaphysical analogies.

It is true that Heidegger's dialectic is at times centered on a monologue by language; this is when he is thinking of language in its unuttered dimensions, that is, in reason and in language's appropriation of things into its meaning. Yet, in his dealings with the words of other thinkers, Heidegger has shown how the third aspect of language - the way in which it comes into the spoken word - operates. The foreword to his book which includes the essays on early Greek thinkers warns the reader that the path of thinking should not be considered as traced out already by the author. 'If everything turns out for the best, an author on paths of thinking can only point the way (weisen) without being himself a wise man (ein Weiser) in the sense of sophos.' What we notice is that notwithstanding the warning against 'technical-representational thinking' which 'forever wills to go forward and tears

50 ibid.
ahead of everything, paths which point out a way, occasionally do lead to a view of something, cleared in cooperation with an author who has pointed the way.

Hegel and Gadamer, on the other hand have cleared away the thoughts of others from involvement in the path, that is, from the method, of thought. The essence of dialectical speculation is seen by Hegel and Gadamer to be not in thought which reflects 'about something while going outside of its own content, but rather immerses itself in its own content, i.e., in that which the subject itself is.' Gadamer acknowledges that this is a different dialectic from that of the ancients and believes this is due to Hegel's different philosophical requirement in the face of modern problems. He agrees that Hegel's reliance upon the Greeks for a synthesis hidden in 'the logical instinct of language...is justified only in part, i.e., in reference to the content, but not to the method.'

In the light of my emphasis on the role of dialogue partners in the path of thought Hegel's method departs most significantly from the classical position in his 'questioning of the statement as a proper vehicle for

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52 ibid., p.5.
54 ibid., p.31.
expression of the speculative essence of philosophy.'

Gadamer has taken up Hegel's approach as the solution to the competition arising when objectifying thought subjects tradition to its own understanding. In his search for understanding which does not operate in definitive horizons, Gadamer seeks meaning which is the 'historical potentiality of what is understood' and which is not in any other way the thought of the speaker. In my opinion Gadamer is drawing an unnecessary either/or between method and application, and, in other ways, experience and method. Also, by emphasising the experience of language as tradition, in its orientation only to self-consciousness, the character of self-consciousness where it bears the imprint of relationships between the persons transmitting tradition is overlooked and the contents of self-consciousness to that extent misunderstood.

6.c. Tradition and its handling

Our attitudes to the past need to show a real distancing and freeing of ourselves from tradition; this is the assumed problem addressed by both the Enlightenment and Romanticism, according to Gadamer. Tradition, for Gadamer, is constituted by the multifariousness of the

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55 ibid., p.15.
56 TM, p.336.
voices echoing the past with which 'our historical consciousness is always filled.' 'We stand always within tradition,' he says. 'It is always part of us, a model or exemplar, a recognition of ourselves...’ In response to this cultural image, texts are then said to raise questions and form answers to them. In Gadamer’s hermeneutics understanding does not look for these answers in the form of statements recognizable from preconceptions, but assimilates the questions in a new relationship formed with them. In this way the reader’s experience allows the contemporary meaning of the text to be found and the reader to become 'the arbiter of its claim to truth.'

Gadamer does not expect truth to be measured by a predetermined continuity of tradition, and believes that subjective interpretation is prevented by joining the interpreter’s present relation to tradition with the horizons of the past. However, these ideas of tradition omit some elements of the process of handing over which have a close connection to the question of truth. To limit consideration of tradition to its environmental aspects and overlook the question of how the handing over takes place, neglects questions which arise in the tradition of the Greek classical period for example. In regard to how

57 TM, p.252.
58 TM, p.250.
59 TM, p.356.
they are handed over and how they are received, the actual handing over of ideas and stories impinges on their truth.

The question of truth in transmission is not just related to acknowledgement of what two people have in common in their cultural and intellectual viewpoints but also to their immediate manner of speaking and hearing. Where the view of tradition as a prejudicial authority has predominated, a way of linking present and past has had to be constructed. However, tradition in its earliest understood forms was always an event which in itself linked present and past. Furthermore, as long as this element of tradition is overlooked, together with the intentions of speakers and authors, the subjective consciousness will remain the measure of the past, despite claims to have achieved fusions of horizons. Tradition has been cited since the Enlightenment mainly from one aspect only, the environmental, that is, in the form determined by the prevailing culture. Gadamer's idea of seeing the horizon of the speaker and being open to its fusion with our own should be able to be worked out more fully when the tradition of tradition is listened to. Then a more complete hermeneutic self-understanding will be obtained, one which provides further clarity to the questions of truth and method. The tradition of tradition should mean seeing the elements of the metaphor of handing over, as applied to understanding, in the role given to it by users at either side of its transmission.
The early form of the tradition of tradition has sayings transmitted and received in a repeated action which provides continuity for the sayings through successive generations of people. In Plato's dialogues the metaphor of handing over is used in connection with an evaluation of the substance of what is said, and with a knowledge of the substance. Since that time philosophy has paid close attention to finding correlations between what was said and the being of things spoken about. However, the early tradition of tradition shows that the relation between language and being does not have to be solved before we can say what is understanding, since the nature of understanding does not depend on the nature of what is understood or spoken about. Investigation of the tradition of tradition enables us to understand something of what it is to understand, and thus, what it is to understand some things said.

Before considering the phenomena of the early tradition of tradition in detail, we may summarise it thus: Knowledge is given and received, and understanding takes place, when words produce a picture and the picture is handed over. This is not a view which was debated, but a part of Greek culture handed down by the time of Plato. It is largely incidental to any matters under discussion in Platonic dialogues; it discloses prejudices, to speak in Gadamer's terms, by which we may come under the influence of the horizon of Plato's thought.
Teaching and tradition are sometimes synonymous in Plato, indicating the active element of tradition which is emphasised in classical usage. The lawgiver should be concerned that the songs and dances composed by the ancients for worship are part of the culture of the state so Plato saw a need 'to discuss the question of the teaching and imparting of these subjects.' Teaching and learning on the one hand, and handing over and receiving on the other reflect the formal, institutional aspect of passing on knowledge as well as the informal aspect, which may occur in everyday communication between equals. Things which are considered to have been handed over vary; skills, stories, a way of life, - but not virtue, in Socrates' opinion. The dialectic method is included. Plato has Socrates express the belief that 'the ancients, who were better than we and lived nearer the gods, handed down the tradition that all the things which are ever said to exist are sprung from one and many and have inherent in them the finite and infinite...The gods then, as I said, handed down to us this mode of investigating, learning, and teaching one another.'

The metaphor of tradition (paradosis) is extended by


the use of reception as the corollary to handing over and various other words to do with handling. In Theaetetus, for example, there is a passage where there is an attempt to describe pieces of knowledge as birds in an aviary. Even though that attempt fails, the discussion indicates some of the agreed way of speaking about tradition. The one who has acquired the art of arithmetic has the sciences of numbers under control, literally under manipulation (μοιχαλούς), and also acquires the ability to hand them over to another. 'And we say,' says Socrates, 'that when anyone transmits them he teaches, and when anyone receives them he learns, and when anyone, by having acquired them, has them in that aviary of ours, he knows them.' The figure of the aviary did not live beyond this discussion, but associating teaching and learning with transmitting and receiving did.

Once the handing over aspect is established, the question arises as to what is metaphorically handed over in the traditional view of tradition. Although the dialectical method is not the only thing handed down, its elements do point to another aspect of the metaphor. The method is a mode of investigating, learning and teaching one another, as we saw in the quotation above from Philebus 16E. Learning and teaching refer to a cooperative

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action associated with the handling of matters transferred from one person to another. In addition there is a third element of the method which refers to sight (σωτελν) instead of handling.

Examination is an accompaniment of handling in the handing over process. When Socrates asks Euthyphro to teach him what is piety he is typically hesitant about one of Euthyphro’s definitions. Socrates says this particular hesitation concerns which alternative to choose between examining what he said or to ‘simply accept both our own and other people’s assumptions, taking the speaker’s mere word for the truth of what he says.’ According to Socrates’ question, they can either leave the new definition alone or examine it. But in what sense can they leave it alone (ἐωμεν) when it has just been uttered and heard? They can leave it alone by not thinking about it any further. At this point in the dialogue they believe that what a speaker says needs to be looked at (σκεπτεον). Not leaving the new definition alone means looking at it. A closely parallel passage is in Phaedrus where Socrates is not impressed with Phaedrus’ allusion to mythical explanation. Having left such things alone (ἐδοξασ, 230A) and being persuaded by the customary usages of them, Socrates looks not at these but at himself.

If learning is said to occur in connection with a handing over and examination of a matter, is anything said in connection with these metaphors as to the way understanding works? It is interesting in this connection that Wittgenstein has used the same metaphor of a picture for 'what really comes before our mind when we understand a word.' It is not within the scope of my thesis to prove the existence of mental pictures. What I wish to show is that there is a tradition concerning understanding which views understanding as being able to see what another person is saying. This is not a matter of reaching an agreement of a colluding kind but is conditional upon a transfer taking place in which the transmitter and receiver distinguish what is being transmitted in particular parts of their speaking and hearing. What we do see in the use of the metaphor in Wittgenstein is the persistence of this tradition.

Wittgenstein saw no problem with the existence of the picture, but saw its application as a problem. How is the picture used? 'A picture is conjured up which seems to fix the sense unambiguously. The actual use, compared with that suggested by the picture, seems like something muddied.' Wittgenstein saw the picture as seeming to spare us the work of exploring its use and thus under-

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65 ibid., p. 127.
standing the sense of what we are saying: 'it already points to a particular use. This is how it takes us in.' This suspicion does not do justice to the transmission of what is said, however, since the picture's particular use invites and facilitates exploration of the sense of what we are saying.

Plato gave some indications of how this may be done in *Philebus*. Two people in the countryside may see something in the distance and each wonder if it is a person or a statue. Until there is opportunity to discuss the matter, the words which occur to them and the image of it are like the contents of a book recorded within the persons. Socrates describes the experience this way: 'a man receives from sight or some other sense the opinions and utterances of the moment and afterwards beholds in his own mind the images of those opinions and utterances. That happens to us often enough doesn't it?' To which his dialogue partner agrees that it certainly does. Plato's understanding of the mental image is not that it deceives us, but depends for its usefulness on how it is handled. When the picture itself is clarified together with its likeness to things which are existing, then learning and understanding can accompany its use.

Socrates insisted that virtue cannot be taught in the

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66 ibid., p.184.
same way as a skill. One problem with virtue in *Meno* is to define it. Another is obtaining the required experience of life necessary before insight into the constituents of good and bad decisions can be acquired. But the search is not abandoned, the speakers being agreed on the duty of putting their hands to a joint enquiry (ἐπιχειροῦσον 68 κοινὴ εὑπερευ, 66C) into what they do not know, in this case, what virtue is (τὸ ποτ' ἔστιν ἄρετή ,100B). A similar investigation is undertaken in *Euthyphro* in regard to what piety is. There Socrates chides Euthyphro 69 for being 'unwilling to disclose its essence' to him, although it is more because of Socrates' ability to move the meanings of words around that Euthyphro feels he doesn't have the means to say to Socrates what he is thinking.

Whatever may be the full story regarding the way Plato thought of being, thought and understanding, it is clear that the model by which they were related in the tradition was as I have suggested; that is, that knowledge is given and received, and understanding takes place, when words produce a picture and the picture is handed over. Gadamer has described a process by which the horizon of the present reader's understanding fuses with that of the

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writer in the past. His treatment does not discuss difficulties involved in defining these horizons. One difficulty Plato sees in the handing over of knowledge and consequent coming of understanding is defining, or setting the horizon of the matters which have been taken in hand to discuss (ἐπικεφαλήσωμα διαλέγομαι διορισμένα, Gorgias, 457C) so that they may learn and teach them. The difficulty Plato mentions there is in defining to each other what they are discussing. Often he would mention the relation of terminology to reality, but the difficulties connected to taking in hand are centred here on the suspicions of jealousy and contentions occasioned by corrections or calls for clarification. Instead of making some exchange of instruction which will conclude the discussion, 'if they find that some point is in dispute between them, and one of them says that the other is speaking incorrectly or obscurely, they are annoyed and think the remark comes from jealousy of themselves, and in a spirit of contention rather than of inquiry into the matter proposed for discussion.' This aspect of the transmission of knowledge therefore also displays the ethical context, such as Gadamer observed in his interpretation of understanding as being habitually understanding toward one another in the context of prudence.

Plato says that if Socrates and Gorgias were not the kind of speakers who are just as glad to be refuted as to refute they would be better to drop the matter. The refutations from law court orators, Socrates argues, are 'quite worthless for getting at the truth.' This is not because the teachers of rhetoric hand over bad skills, but that the skills are used unfairly. The earlier tradition of tradition has a distinct sense of the philosophical possibility of the mishandling of tradition, in untrue speech and unwilling listening. What has happened to this possibility in the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer? It is not dealt with because it is considered to have been dropped from the tradition of tradition along with the preoccupations of the Enlightenment and Romanticism with overcoming temporal distance.

What are the processes by which part of what is transmitted is not received, or dropped? Unwillingness to learn was one part of the process as seen by Socrates and Gorgias. Unwillingness among philosophers is expressed in terms of a desire to be not untrue to the way things are or the way things should be. 'How is understanding possible?', Gadamer has been asking. He does not mean as one among others of a human being's processes, but how is it possible for understanding to be comprehensive and uni-

72 TM, p.xviii.
versal? Then when he answers that it is possible because understanding is determined at any time by the history of the influence of that which is understood, we are now asking why handing-over is received as part of the tradition of tradition but mis-handling is not.

The disappearance of mishandling from the philosophical hermeneutics has occurred because it escapes the immediate consciousness. Husserl and Gadamer have been limiting the scope of understanding to that which is intuited by consciousness as the key to things themselves. The hearing of whatever does not come to consciousness then becomes dropped from understanding and from 'tradition' as defined this way. The cause of this dropping itself needs to be understood because it defines understanding in its limiting processes. Schleiermacher's view of misunderstanding has been rejected by Gadamer, but there is another which should be understood, that is the misunderstanding which occurs when consciousness does not receive what has been handed over to it.

What has been offered for transmission may not be received because of unclear articulation due to whatever conditions surround the event. Yet there may remain something there to be understood, which may even be reflected in consciousness though with insufficient clarity to be understood. Thus even the pure intuition may include indications of the mis-take in its processes. In the background of the debate between Gadamer and his critics
is an interruption to the influence of 'the being of that which is understood,' where the being of Gadamer's own work was involved. The philosophy of understanding needs to describe what is happening in the process of mistakes and not just in unchallenged interpretations of texts. We should consider an unheard challenge to be coming from each author and the words he or she has spoken. If the processes of transmission are different when an author is alive these need to be described for the world of understanding to be fully understood.

In order to describe the process by which one part of what is handed over continues and another part discontinues an attempt must be made to go beyond what happens in the immediate consciousness. Fusion of horizons of understanding will only work with conscious horizons. Where something is offered for transmission but unclearly articulated and not understood we need to ask if it is possible to extend the horizon of consciousness, beside what takes place in the fusion of past influences and present enquiry. If it is not, then there is doubt thrown on the genuineness of the way what is in the consciousness has been determined, that is, whether it has been by the things themselves. The most scandalous result could be that prejudgement concerning the being of that which is understood becomes unalterable due to another set of

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TM, p.xix.
hidden prejudices.

If on the other hand it is possible to extend consciousness beyond its present content the world may still be known through its effects on consciousness, and the discontinuities which happen to those influences may be studied also. Specific elements of tradition are mentioned in *Truth and Method* in the course of Gadamer's argument. Some of these we could have investigated in detail as to their reception by Gadamer except that the broad question has been our present interest. One specific tradition which has been reflected on by Gadamer in *Truth and Method* can be taken to demonstrate the point of our discussion on identifying the integral tradition.

The doctrine of the word in Christian theology is used in Section 2 (b) of the Third Part where Gadamer treats that tradition in accordance with the goals of his own argument and his perspective on the history of thought. His purpose with the Christian doctrine of incarnation is to show how pure language of thought which is unexpressed can be the same word as that which is expressed. For Gadamer 'the inner unity of thought and speech' does not originate with the mind but with the intended object and commences when the intelligible object fills the mind. Furthermore this unity is accompanied by a multiplicity in a dialectical relationship to it, a

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74 TM, p.386.
multiplicity which means that 'it is one word that is constantly proclaimed anew in preaching.'

Although these ideas have been freely derived by Gadamer to say how he understands himself in the world, openness to the tradition in the way Gadamer pursues it has not solved the hermeneutical problem of prejudgment. The form of tradition under whose influence he gains understanding of the inner unity of unexpressed and expressed thought is one particular form which he has used as a vehicle for that reflection, but the tradition itself has been ineffective and what has been used is unhistorical.

When Gadamer calls the incarnation 'the most important element in christian thought,' he is appealing to a tradition which was important once but is discontinued for many Christian thinkers and its place in the tradition questioned. While seeking to check his own prejudice by the impact of a classic tradition, Gadamer has chosen to ignore the fact that, since 1941 according to Bultmann, 'the stories of Christ's descent and ascent are finished.' Without listening to the older Christian

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75 TM, p.386.
76 TM, p.379.
teachers as the real transmitters of what they are saying we have no access to their message from the present. As Bultmann says, regarding the older doctrine from the standpoint of Gadamer's time, 'we can represent this as the attitude of Christian faith only by making the Christian proclamation unintelligible and impossible for our contemporaries.' Thus the historic doctrine is out of reach to Gadamer's readers judged only by their present existence. If that is so then the tradition itself is not what is shaping the self-understanding of the present and its effectiveness actually denied.

I do not believe that we have to be denied access to past thought simply because of the passage of time and changes in thinking. Gadamer himself recognizes that consciousness is not a fixed deposit and he has understood that changes can occur under the influence of other horizons of understanding but has failed to show how that influence is to be a true effect of the tradition and not a deception perpetrated by one's own prejudices. The true experience of living tradition will, however, indicate three advantages of thinking of things said as objects bearing transmitted understanding and not only as phenomena of consciousness.

The first advantage is philosophical, that is, by understanding what happens in tradition we are able to

78 ibid., pp. 4f.
understand what happens to consciousness in understanding another person. Also what happens towards consciousness, what is happening to influence consciousness may be understood as to how it is given, not only how it is in consciousness. This being so, we are also able then to understand what was happening to others as they understood what they heard and passed on to us.

The second advantage in thinking of things said as matters for objective study is scientific. Mistakes in interpretation and misunderstanding show that the universe of understanding is not a complete unity. Along with whatever unities we may conceive there are also diversities. These cannot be understood from the contents of individual consciousness. The differences in understanding in relation to what a person is saying can be understood as a mishandling of what is given, and the differences between the findings of one science and another in regard to the same document can then be considered as diversity arising from the manner of handling the one object.

A basic premise in phenomenology is that givenness for understanding is the same as becoming aware. In the tradition of tradition something may be given for understanding, but not result in awareness, either not at all or not entirely, and without this giving and receiving nothing is understood. Traditions of knowledge may speak of understanding through ideas and concepts, but in isolation from understanding the transmission of under-
standing they lose their practical effect as well as becoming one-sided and mistaken.

Emmanuel Levinas has written about extending the attainment of meaning beyond intentionality. He sees a thesis being set out in all of Husserl's work, 'that every notion is to be carried back, while fully respecting the characteristics peculiar to its own level, to a restitution of the elementary conditions of its transcendentental genesis. The idea of truth as a grasp on things must necessarily have a non-metaphorical sense somewhere.'

We learn from tradition when we receive what is being given in it. The giving for understanding is not, in the tradition, 'one and the same thing' as becoming aware of it. Nor is learning from tradition the same as 'the placing of oneself within a process of tradition, in which past and present are constantly fused.' It includes that and is conditional upon it, but goes beyond placing oneself in a process of tradition. To place oneself in a process of tradition means not merely to translate the content of tradition into self-understanding. The relation between the inner word and the spoken word does not show only the way the mind structures the world. There is also

79 'Beyond Intentionality', Philosophy in France Today, p.103.
80 E. Husserl, Ideas, p. 45.
81 TM, p. 258.
a reverse process at work in learning from tradition, by which foreign beliefs and demands become understood through being given by aliens and received from them.

The third advantage in thinking of things said as the means whereby persons transmit understanding which they want to share is the ethical advantage of being able to seek the truth in a way which is true to others. When self-understanding is taken as the measure of understanding others, what they are saying is immediately done an injustice. This way of dealing with prejudice isolates it from the effects of what others are saying and does not reduce the distorting effects of what it attributes to tradition for its own preservation. When one wants to receive what a person is saying, prejudice is being allowed to be judged independently. When community members are wanting to receive what other community members are saying together, they are only able to do so by repeating the same willingness to listen to what is being said, as something which is at the same time familiar and strange and therefore knowable but only through being accorded respect.

The summons to hermeneutics is not merely a summons to an experience nor only to begin work. Hermes was given a message and an experience, initiating neither; the hermeneut remains such a lesser god though summoned to as impressive a responsibility of receiving and transmitting a message. Details of how one receives intact and
transmits a message intact are beyond the scope of this thesis. What has been shown is that what a person is saying can and should be understood. Gadamer's contribution to hermeneutics has been conveyed imperfectly to the reader of this thesis through a method which has been constantly adjusting to the demands of the task. Hopefully, enough of what he is saying has been conveyed to the reader to give a grasp of the importance of continuing the dialogue in order to clarify further the matters under discussion.
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