

## Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Truth of Hermeneutic Experience

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In his now famous statement, John Caputo formulates the paradox at the heart of the notion of hermeneutic truth: “The cold, hermeneutic truth, is that there is no truth, no master name which holds things captive.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, by expressing the postmodern belief that objective truth does not exist, we are invited to hold to the idea that all truth claims are equal. In fact, hermeneutic truth is inseparable from the interpretive process and, as such, is not “objective” especially if we accept that the ideal of objectivity is one that is based on the concept of validity found in scientific method. Rather, hermeneutic truth is the integral aspects of the event of understanding.

Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutics contributes in an essential way to the understanding that truth cannot be adequately explained by scientific method. Hermeneutics then is not a method of interpretation, but is an investigation into the nature of understanding, which transcends the concept of method. The validity of scientific method is independent from the content of knowledge. The universal validity of scientific method cannot be applied to the experience of truth and understanding. In the “Introduction” to *Truth and Method*, Gadamer addresses the question of the autonomy and independence of the human sciences and the specific nature of truth and understanding:

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<sup>1</sup> John Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1987), 192. See also idem, *That’s Just Your Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

The following investigations start with the resistance in modern science itself to the universal claim of scientific method. They are concerned to seek the experience of truth that transcends the domain of scientific method wherever that experience is to be found, and to inquire into its legitimacy. Hence the human sciences are connected to modes of experience that lie outside science: with the experiences of philosophy, of art, and of history itself. These are all modes of experience in which a truth is communicated that cannot be verified by the methodological means proper to science.<sup>2</sup>

The phenomenon of understanding as a mode of being-in-the-world as well as the interpretation of what has been understood are oriented toward the whole of human life. In that respect hermeneutic understanding is much closer to basic human experience than the ideal of validity and certainty applied in the natural sciences. Understanding in the human sciences cannot be ruled by any specific methodology but needs to be confronted and verified in the hermeneutic horizon of the experience of life.<sup>3</sup> It is for this reason that Gadamer can say:

The understanding and the interpretation of texts is not merely a concern of science, but obviously belongs to human experience of the world in general. The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically not a problem of method at all. It is not concerned with a method of understanding by means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigation like all other objects of experience. It is not concerned primarily with amassing verified knowledge, such as would satisfy the methodological ideal of science—yet it too is concerned with knowledge and with truth. In understanding tradition not only are texts understood, but insights are acquired and truths known. But what kind of knowledge and what kind of truth?<sup>4</sup>

Gadamer argues that hermeneutics is not a method of determining truth, but a practice of reading texts while trying to understand the conditions which make

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<sup>2</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2006), xx–xxi.

<sup>3</sup> On the concepts of method and methodology see Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica, ed., *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), especially editor's introduction.

<sup>4</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xx.

truth possible.<sup>5</sup> The truth of the text is disclosed while discovering the conditions of understanding.<sup>6</sup> Truth is not something which may be defined by a particular technique or procedure of inquiry; truth transcends the limits of methodological reasoning.

Gadamer stresses the ontological significance of hermeneutics for the problem of understanding and interpretation in the human and social sciences. Following the basic hermeneutic assumption that human understanding is contingent upon historical and cultural conditions, we realize that every knowledge of the universal is acquired historically. The historicity of human experience and the historicity of understanding belong to the ontological conditions of human existence and points toward the very inseparability of the hermeneutic truth from the interpretive process. Interpretations are dependent upon the historical conditions in which they take place and on the particular context within which interpretation is happening. Since there is no absolute interpretation, different interpretations can remain justifiable by providing conclusive arguments for justifying one interpretation over another.

According to Gadamer, the role of hermeneutics in the human sciences is not the same as the role of methods of research in the natural sciences. Philosophical hermeneutics operates within a non-foundationalist and non-essentialist understanding of truth.<sup>7</sup> It discovers truths hidden from the logic of discovery. Gadamer offers a non-objectivistic view of interpretation in which understanding happens within a fusion of horizons of the text and its interpreter. Following Heidegger's account of historicity,<sup>8</sup> Gadamer elaborates on the implications of the historicity of understanding for textual understanding.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. James Risser, "The Imaging of Truth in Philosophical Hermeneutics," in Lenore Langsdorf, Stephen H. Watson, and E. Marya Bower, ed., *Phenomenology, Interpretation, and Community. Selected Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy*, vol. 19 (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), 159–174.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed analysis of hermeneutic understanding from the perspective of prejudices, see Lawrence K. Schmidt, *The Epistemology of Hans-Georg Gadamer: An Analysis of the Legitimization of "Vorurteile"* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jean Grondin, "Hermeneutic Truth and its Historical Presuppositions: A Possible Bridge between Analysis and Hermeneutics," in Evan Simpson, ed., *Anti-Foundationalism and Practical Reasoning* (Edmonton: Academic Printing and Publishing, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), section 74.

<sup>9</sup> James DiCenso puts Gadamer's historical hermeneutics in relation to Heidegger's ambivalence concerning the historicity of Being in his *Hermeneutics and the Disclosure of Truth* (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 79–83.

In the “Introduction” to *Truth and Method* Gadamer provides the hermeneutic analysis of understanding as the basic mode of human experience:

Understanding is never a subjective relation to a given “object” but to the history of its effect; in other words, understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood.<sup>10</sup>

Historically effected consciousness (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*) expresses our embodiment in the particular history and culture that shape us:

Our historical consciousness is always filled with a variety of voices in which the echo of the past is heard. Only in the multifariousness of such voices does it exist: this constitutes the nature of the tradition in which we want to share and have a part. Modern historical research itself is not only research, but the handing down of tradition. We do not see it only in terms of progress and verified results; in it we have, as it were, a new experience of history whenever the past resounds in a new voice.<sup>11</sup>

Understanding happens to us when we are confronted with the tradition, a tradition that is far beyond our individual control.<sup>12</sup>

Gadamer wants to examine the experience of truth which goes beyond the domain that is subject to the control of scientific methodology, and to look for its specific legitimization. This is the philosophical experience, the experience of art and of history itself. His inquiry focusses on the hermeneutic experience as an open process. The experience is, in fact, fulfilled in openness to the new experience: “The truth of experience always implies an orientation toward new experience ... The dialectic of experience has its proper fulfilment not in definitive knowledge but in the openness to experience that is made possible by

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<sup>10</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxviii.

<sup>11</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 285. See also *ibid.*, 303: “When our historical consciousness transposes itself into historical horizons, this does not entail passing into alien worlds unconnected in any way with our own; instead, they together constitute the one great horizon that moves from within and that, beyond the frontiers of the present, embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness. Everything contained in historical consciousness is in fact embraced by a single historical horizon. Our own past and that other past toward which our historical consciousness is directed help to shape this moving horizon out of which human life always lives and which determines it as heritage and tradition.”

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Andrzej Wiercinski, “Ermeneutica filosofica della tradizione,” *Ars Interpretandi: Annuario di ermeneutica giuridica* 8 (2003): 21–40.

experience itself.”<sup>13</sup> The experienced person is characterized not by a particular amount of experience but predominantly by openness to new experience (*Offenheit für Erfahrung*). This openness is a radically undogmatic approach of welcoming everything which wants to be understood. Every experience worthy of the name runs counter to our expectation. By emphasizing the significance of learning from a negative experience, Gadamer links the historical nature of man and elaborates the essential difference between experience and insight.<sup>14</sup>

Human understanding is fundamentally lingual. By learning a language we inherit a past that becomes our past, though it has not been temporally our past.<sup>15</sup> In Gadamer’s interpretation of Plato, the discourse must be written in the soul of the other. This discourse is a conversation that has a distinctly transformative character. By being written in the soul of the other it not only transmits the information to the other but challenges the other to a radical transformation. The power of words does not only transform the other but also transform the person initiating the dialogue.<sup>16</sup> We truthfully understand the other (a person—*der Andere* or a text *das Andere*) only when we accept the fact that this other makes a truth claim upon our very being. The application (*Anwendung*) of the understanding is an event that not only adds some new insights into the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us; it changes our mind.

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<sup>13</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 350. According to Gadamer, “completed experience is not the completion of knowledge, but rather the completed openness for new experience.” See Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Reply to My Critics,” in Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift, ed., *The Hermeneutical Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990), 290.

<sup>14</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 350.

<sup>15</sup> “Wenn wir nicht hermeneutische Tugend lernen, d.h. wenn wir nicht einsehen, es gilt erst einmal den Anderen zu verstehen, um zu sehen, ob nicht vielleicht doch am Ende so etwas wie Solidarität der Menschheit als ganzer auch im bezug auf ein Miteinander-Leben und Überleben möglich wird, dann werden wir wesentliche Menschheitsaufgaben im Kleinen wie im Groben nicht erfüllen können.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Vom Wort zum Begriff: Die Aufgabe der Hermeneutik als Philosophie” in Jean Grondin ed., *Gadamer Lesebuch* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1997), 109. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “From Word to Concept: The Task of Hermeneutics as Philosophy,” in Bruce Krajewski, ed., *Gadamer’s Repercussions: Reconsidering Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 1–12. See James Risser, “From Concept to Word: On the Radicality of Philosophical Hermeneutics,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 33 (2000): 309–325.

<sup>16</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Hermeneutics as a Theoretical and Practical Task,” in idem, *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Fred Lawrence (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981), 121; “Hermeneutik als theoretische und praktische Aufgabe,” in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke* Bd. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993): 306.

“Hermeneutic” philosophy ... does not understand itself as an “absolute” position but as a path of experiencing. Its modesty consists in the fact that for it there is no higher principle than this: holding oneself open to the conversation. This means, however, constantly recognizing in advance the possibility that your partner is right, even recognizing the possible superiority of your partner. Is this too little?<sup>17</sup>

We are thus requested to recognize the possible correctness, in some cases, even the superiority of the position of our partner.

In the “Foreword to the Second Edition” of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer describes the philosophical character of his inquiry into human understanding. He is concerned with clarifying the conditions in which understanding itself takes place:

I did not intend to produce a manual for guiding understanding in the manner of the earlier hermeneutics. I did not wish to elaborate a system of rules to describe, let alone direct, the methodical procedure of the human sciences. Nor was it my aim to investigate the theoretical foundation of work in these fields in order to put my findings to practical ends. If there is any practical consequence of the present investigation, it certainly has nothing to do with an unscientific “commitment;” instead, it is concerned with the “scientific” integrity of acknowledging the commitment involved in all understanding. My real concern was and is philosophic: not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing.<sup>18</sup>

*Truth and Method* is in its nature deeply phenomenological. Gadamer describes his approach by saying: “Fundamentally I am *not proposing a method*, but I am describing *what is the case*.”<sup>19</sup> Understanding happens then between description and interpretation. Understanding is not a mysterious communion of minds; it is an event (*Ereignis*). We want to grasp the character of the process of

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<sup>17</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Reflections on my Philosophical Journey,” trans. Richard E. Palmer in Lewis E. Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Chicago: Open Court, 1997), 36.

<sup>18</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxv–xxvi.

<sup>19</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 512.

understanding, to comprehend what happens when we understand something. Convincing and successful interpretation brings us to understanding.<sup>20</sup>

Understanding is a participation in meaning. As an historical event it is embedded in language. The true meaning of language transcends the limits of methodological interpretation. Language as the medium for history is itself a place of mediation. Human understanding is always interpretive. Hermeneutic truth acquires a unique density and fullness of meaning. Hermeneutic understanding is not a process of construing a self-identical meaning of a text, but a continuous dialogue in which a mediation of meaning takes place. Dialogue is the model of hermeneutic understanding. A meaning cannot be determined from the perspective of propositional logic.

Mediation in language happens through the lingual phenomenon of conversation, which is itself the living language. Gadamer's hermeneutics is a philosophy of conversation. The dialectic of question and answer applied to the interpretation of the texts requires addressing the question to which the text serves as an answer. This puts into question not only the text that needs to be understood, but also, and in fact primarily, the interpreting subject itself by confronting him or her with the truth claim of the text. The hermeneutician is not concerned with individuality and what it thinks but with the truth of what is said; a text is not understood as a mere expression of life but is taken seriously in its claim to truth.<sup>21</sup> Our pre-understanding and pre-judgment that conditions understanding are tested in this confrontation. Following Heidegger, Gadamer understands the text as a derivation of existence. Therefore, the understanding of the text must originate with the understanding of existence. Since the text has something to say, the interpreter, in order to understand what needs to be understood, has to include in the event of understanding this invisible existence suppressed by the text. Hermeneutic understanding happens as a fusion of horizons. Conscious of our own historicity we encounter a text from the past and confront ourselves in understanding the meaning of it.

Language and history condition the understanding. There is an inseparable connection between the understanding subject and that which needs

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<sup>20</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 111.

<sup>21</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 296.

to be understood.<sup>22</sup> Understanding is limited because it is conditioned by the historical situation of the human being: it is by nature temporal and finite.<sup>23</sup>

Consciousness of being affected by history (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*) is primarily consciousness of the hermeneutical situation. To acquire an awareness of a situation is, however, always a task of peculiar difficulty. The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it. We always find ourselves within a situation, and throwing light on it is a task that is never entirely finished. This is also true of the hermeneutic situation—i.e., the situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition that we are trying to understand. The illumination of this situation—reflection on effective history—can never be completely achieved; yet the fact that it cannot be completed is due not to a deficiency in reflection but to the essence of the historical being that we are. To be historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete.<sup>24</sup>

As historical beings we are subject to the effects of the *Wirkungsgeschichte*. According to Gadamer, “precisely through our finitude, the particularity of our being, which is evident even in the variety of languages, the infinite dialogue is opened in the direction of the truth that we are.”<sup>25</sup> Language

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<sup>22</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 299. Gadamer clarifies the epistemological conditions of historical knowledge by stressing the fact that it is difficult “to harmonize the historical knowledge that helps to shape our historical consciousness with this ideal and how difficult it is, for that reason, to comprehend its true nature on the basis of the modern conception of method. This is the place to turn those negative statements into positive ones. The concept of ‘prejudice’ is where we can start.” Ibid., 273. “The overcoming of all prejudices, this global demand of the Enlightenment, will itself prove to be a prejudice, and removing it opens the way to an appropriate understanding of the finitude which dominates not only our humanity but also our historical consciousness.” Ibid., 277.

<sup>23</sup> “What is at stake in the case of the structural identity of the narrative function as well as in that of the truth claim of every narrative work, is the temporal character of temporal experience. The world unfolded by every narrative work is always a temporal world ... Time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience.” Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3.

<sup>24</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301.

<sup>25</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 16.

is the medium of all hermeneutic experience. One of the most famous yet misunderstood of Gadamer's claims is "Being that can be understood is language."<sup>26</sup> It is not a metaphysical statement about Being's full lingual intelligibility. Human understanding is lingual; there is no discourse without words. In conversation an infinity of possible meanings are available to the concrete situation. Conversation mirrors the structure of factic life experience; it is an event in which the enactment of meaning takes place. "The principle of hermeneutics simply means that we should try to understand everything that can be understood."<sup>27</sup> The process of disclosing new layers of meaning is truly unending. Participating in the event of understanding, we testify to the ever new horizons for understanding that open up and disclose new possibilities of interpretation.<sup>28</sup>

Hermeneutic truth does not signify the correspondence of mental states to objective reality. It is not a matter of adequation between the cognizing subject and the object in-itself, according to the definition *adaequatio intellectus et rei*. For Gadamer, hermeneutic truth is a matter of mutual agreement between partners engaged in dialogue and seeking common understanding. It is far more existential, and in this respect an ethical aspect of being-in-the-world.

### The Truth of Art

*Truth and Method* begins with an analysis of the experience of the work of art as the authentic space for the experience of how truth occurs. The whole of Part One is devoted to the question of truth as it emerges in the experience of art. Gadamer

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<sup>26</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 470. In the "Forward to the Second Edition," Gadamer explains: "But I believe that I have shown correctly that what is so understood is not the Thou but the truth of what the Thou says to us. I mean specifically the truth that becomes visible to me only through the Thou, and only by my letting myself be told something by it. It is the same with historical tradition. It would not deserve the interest we take in it if it did not have something to teach us that we could not know by ourselves. It is in this sense that the statement "being that can be understood is language" is to be read. It does not mean that the one who understands has an absolute mastery over being but, on the contrary, that being is not experienced where something can be constructed by us and is to that extent conceived; it is experienced where what is happening can merely be understood." *Ibid.*, xxxii.

<sup>27</sup> Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 31.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Robert Bernasconi, "'You Don't Know What I'm Talking About': Alterity and the Hermeneutic Ideal," in Lawrence K. Schmidt, ed., *The Specter of Relativism: Truth, Dialogue, and Phronesis in Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995) 178–194.

is determined to do justice to the truth of aesthetic experience, overcome the radical subjectivization of the aesthetic and argue against reductionist philosophy in which truth can be found only in science. The truth of art is prior to its demonstration by interpretive methods. The work of art through indetermination open to mediation and interpretation includes its *Wirkungsgeschichte*.

Gadamer reads the truth of art in the context of play, symbol, and festival. Hermeneutic truth is inseparable from the play of understanding as a process of communication. In this sense it is not something to be discovered (in the sense of *re-presentatio*) but something that happens through the exercise of communicative rationality. Gadamer does not intend to prove that the work of art demonstrates its own truth but rather to make sense of the experience of art. This already requires the admission of the truth value of works of art because, despite the efforts to rationalize it away, in the work of art a truth is experienced in a way that cannot be constituted any other way. The beautiful imposes itself by the way in which it attracts us, the way it convinces us of its truth and justness. It emerges both in nature and in art, in such a way that it convinces us all and makes us recognize that, in fact, this is the truth.<sup>29</sup>

Gadamer argues that the community created by the work of art is a universal community that embraces the whole world.

In fact, all artistic creation challenges each of us to listen to the language in which the work of art speaks and to make it our own. It remains true in every case that a shared or potentially shared achievement is at issue. This remains true irrespective of whether the formation of a work of art is supported in advance by a shared view of the world that can be taken for granted, or whether we must first learn to “read” the language of the one who speaks in the creation before us.<sup>30</sup>

For Heidegger, the event of disclosure is the event of truth. Truth is understood in terms of the dialectic of concealment and unconcealment, an unconcealment that conceals while revealing. It is an endless interplay between closing off and opening up. What is most important here is the fact that those two aspects of disclosure belong together. The unconcealment of the world is

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<sup>29</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 9 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 19.

<sup>30</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 39.

grounded in the concealment of earth.<sup>31</sup> In the interplay of veiling and unveiling itself, the truth of art is an occurrence of meaning that is effected in its reception.<sup>32</sup> It captivates a human being and presents itself as a challenge to encompass truth itself. It is not a truth to be discovered but arises as a consequence of applying a practice.

For Gadamer, the artistic and poetic languages demonstrate a particular relationship to truth as an event (*Ereignis*). It has been proven by experience that the work of art has an important imprint on us, thus shaping the understanding we have of ourselves. In showing itself as what it is, the work of art captivates us and calls us to change our life. A strong bond connects the experience of truth and our self-understanding in the horizon of human finitude and incompleteness. Hermeneutic understanding of the human being concerns not only particular aspects of life as if the human being were only a thinking being. It is rather an attempt to understand the human being in its complexity and totality without ever losing the perspective of the essential fragmentarity and incompleteness of any human insight and cognition.

## Conclusion

For Gadamer, understanding is always interpretation. Gadamer's linguistically oriented hermeneutics situates itself between Aristotelian practical philosophy and Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity by focusing on the concept of *phronesis*. Gadamer's ethics is based on the hermeneutic experience and its corresponding practical truth. Hermeneutic truth is not an epistemological concept but a mode of being-in-the-world with its concrete existential and ethical implications. A hermeneutically informed notion of truth, liberated from its traditional epistemological paradigm,<sup>33</sup> helps us to understand that the experience

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<sup>31</sup> Gadamer describes his philosophical hermeneutics as an attempt to take up and elaborate the late Heidegger's way of thinking. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Reflections on My Philosophical Journey," in Lewis Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Chicago: Open Court, 1997), 47.

<sup>32</sup> Although Gadamer follows Heidegger's ontological emphasis in defining truth as *Unverborgenheit* and *Erschlossenheit*, the exact nature of their similarity is disputed. See, for example, Robert Dostal, "The Experience of Truth for Gadamer and Heidegger: Taking Time and Sudden Lightening," Hans-Georg Gadamer, "What is Truth?" James Risser, "The Remembrance of Truth: The Truth of Remembrance," in Brice Wachterhauser, ed., *Hermeneutics and Truth* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994).

<sup>33</sup> See Calvin O. Schrag, *Communicative Praxis and the Space of Subjectivity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 187.

of truth cannot be verified empirically. Due to the processual nature of hermeneutic truth and the temporality and finitude of human being, there is, and can be, no final or absolute truth; it is a matter of openness to the ever new experience. No absolute truth means for philosophical hermeneutics that it does not have the final word, because there will be no final word; understanding is a never-ending process. Hermeneutic truth is a lived experience of a merging of horizons enabling us to encounter the other and to reach a mutual understanding that can serve as a base for a creative *Mit-einander*. Gadamer's dialogical notion of understanding as a process of communication provides the model for a social order based not on domination (*Herrschaft*) but on the good will that seeks to understand the other. Hermeneutic truth is the horizon in which we live our historical existence.

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