

Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer's Hermeneutics

Edited by
Lawrence K. Schmidt



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Abbreviations

- EN John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (Chicago: Open Court, 1925).
- GW Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1985-95):
 Bd. 1: *Hermeneutik I: Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (1960), 1986.
 Bd. 2: *Hermeneutik II: Wahrheit und Methode. Ergänzungen, Register*, 1986.
 Bd. 3: *Neuere Philosophie I: Hegel - Husserl - Heidegger*, 1987.
 Bd. 4: *Neuere Philosophie II: Probleme - Gestalten*, 1987.
 Bd. 5: *Griechische Philosophie I*, 1985.
 Bd. 6: *Griechische Philosophie II*, 1985.
 Bd. 7: *Griechische Philosophie III*, 1990.
 Bd. 8: *Ästhetik und Poetik I: Kunst als Aussage*, 1993.
 Bd. 9: *Ästhetik und Poetik II: Hermeneutik im Vollzug*, 1993.
 Bd. 10: *Hermeneutik im Rückblick*, 1995.
- HW Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Heidegger's Ways*, ed. Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1994).
- IRPT Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980).
- RB Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- TM Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall, 2nd revised edition (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

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Zum Andenken an den
hundertsten Geburtstag von

Prof. Dr. Hans-Georg Gadamer

Mit vorzüglicher Hochachtung
und voller lebensbestimmender Erinnerungen

On the Hermeneutic Understanding of Language: Word, Conversation, and Subject Matter

István M. Fehér

Translated by Lawrence K. Schmidt

Within the panorama of contemporary philosophies with their very different and differentiated tendencies, if there are topics that deserve particular attention, despite all the differences or even contradictions in their modes and paths of presentation, then certainly one of these, if not the first of these, is the topic of language.¹

In the essay "Die Vielfalt der Sprachen und das Verstehen der Welt,"² published in 1990, Hans-Georg Gadamer, reflecting on the philosophy of our century, stated in summary: "In this century, as is well known, we have completed a type of 'linguistic turn',³ a turn towards linguisticity." He then immediately adds: "A second, corresponding event occurred in our German tradition. I mean the transition from Neo-Kantianism to Phenomenology and especially the further development of Husserl's phenomenology to the hermeneutic turn that Heidegger introduced."⁴

Gadamer's own work counts as part of the "hermeneutic turn," mentioned here along with the "linguistic turn" as the "second, corresponding event." Gadamer's thinking essentially concerns the development of a "philosophical hermeneutics," following Heidegger's hermeneutic beginning.

In the following I wish to begin to examine the hermeneutic discussion of language. The examination proper will be preceded by a few short considerations concerning the philosophical discussion of language. I will then discuss the theme of language within hermeneutics from three different and complementing positions, namely in its relationship to understanding, with experience, and finally its proper position within philosophical hermeneutics. In this final section I

will examine somewhat more closely the relationships among the concepts mentioned in the title and offer an aside about Gadamer's disagreement with the history of the concept of language.

Pre-considerations Concerning the Philosophical Treatment of Language

If linguistic philosophy is understood as a philosophy of language, i.e., a philosophizing about language as the object of philosophical reflection, then hermeneutics certainly does not have a linguistic philosophy. For hermeneutics' essential relation to language, which is an exemplary one, does not permit the fulfilling of the preconditions under which language could become such an object. From the hermeneutic perspective, the whole human universe is linguistically constituted and communicated. Due to the linguistic constitution of all things, a philosophy, and even a philosophy of language, would never be able to take into consideration this constitution itself. In just this circumstance one can capture the meaning of Gadamer's famous (and, by the way, often misunderstood) thesis: "Being, that can be understood, is language," "What can be understood, is language."⁵ (The "Being, that . . ." can certainly be read as a limitation: "Being, in so far as it . . .")

The title, linguistic philosophy, came to be in the context and as a result of the "linguistic turn," because the mathematical-logical analysis of language became the medium of philosophy, and as such it should encompass its proper task, as well as its particular field of investigation and its object. The major presupposition was that the mathematically constituted, formal logic, as the "logic of language," should and could accomplish "what in Kant is the task of a "transcendental logic."⁶ Here language came into play under very specific presuppositions, and in such a way that it was mathematically-logically worked upon and comprehended so that the mathematically-logically constituted, i.e., analyzed, proposition was envisioned as one that could not be further broken down or it was, at least, taken without question as constituting the standard elementary form. It lay in the a priori of this program that the natural use of language and colloquial language were judged inadequate, and so they proceeded from their own, artificially constituted language and from this to examine the former.

This preliminary understanding of the conditions under which language became first a theme of a linguistic philosophy in our century belonging to the *linguistic turn*, is especially important because the hermeneutic contemplation of language brings forth just those dimensions that were rejected from the beginning by the main perspective of the *linguistic turn*. And they had to do this, if such a linguistic philosophy was to be constituted, that is, a philosophy about language as a specific object prepared for analysis by mathematical, logical means. The return from such a rejection or covering over was undertaken from the hermeneutic side and makes clear also why language cannot be completely thematized. For this reason it is better in relation to hermeneutics to speak not of

linguistic philosophy but rather of the apprehension or understanding of language, or to use other terms such as considerations concerning language or the thematization of language. From the hermeneutic perspective, as Gadamer has indicated, "the problem of language is seen right from the beginning not in the same sense as what linguistic philosophy asks about."⁷ The reason for this lies in the fact that "the theoretical proposition [is] only an extreme case of language, which Aristotle [had made] to be the only object of his 'hermeneutics'."⁸

Understanding and Language: The Linguisticity of Understanding

The considerations of language that Gadamer has pursued can be developed from different directions. It appears to be profitable to begin with the relationship between understanding and language or the linguisticity of understanding.

Due to the essential linguisticity of all understanding, as all thinking, it is important first to consider that, with the topic of language, language itself has already been included or initiated. For that reason one cannot at all approach this topic as if one were standing already in a, so to speak, language-free field. In this context Heidegger said, "When we question language, namely about its essence, then language must have already itself spoken to us. If we wish to question the essence, namely of language, we must have already been spoken to concerning what essence means."⁹ Just this was meant by our initial claim that, from the hermeneutic perspective, the whole human universe is linguistically constituted. "For," as Gadamer states, "there is no position outside the linguistic experience of the world, from which it would be possible to have this experience itself as an object."¹⁰ Therefore, when we approach the topic of language, we can at best return to it with a more careful examination, because it has always already surpassed us. It would be idiotic and shortsighted to believe that any explicit thematization could encompass, measure, or evaluate the whole breadth of the linguistic universe and bring it, as a whole, into our view. What was just said could be viewed as an attempt to explicate the following consideration of Gadamer: "What language is, is the most hidden of anything that humans can contemplate. Our thinking is so incredibly close to linguisticity, and in thinking it is made so little into an object, that it hides its own being by itself."¹¹

Since understanding from the point of view of philosophical hermeneutics is no longer a methodological concept, but rather a fundamental mode of being for humans, understanding is, on the other hand, always already related to, involved in, or "pre-cut" to a conceptuality or linguisticity. Understanding has "a fundamental relation to linguisticity."¹² "Understanding is bound to language."¹³ In this context Gadamer speaks of the "inner interwovenness of all understanding through conceptuality," an "essential relation between linguisticity and understanding," or also from the "linguisticity of all understanding."¹⁴ Concerning this Heidegger had already emphasized: Interpretation as appropriation of understanding orients itself in an anticipatory way (and "carefully") on a par-

ticular conceptuality and linguisticity.¹⁵ He understands language fundamentally as speaking, as *discoursing* about;¹⁶ this is always related to understanding,¹⁷ insofar as the understanding-feeling being-in-the-world expresses itself in discourse or as discourse.¹⁸ Heidegger's understanding of language as discourse certainly does not dispense with its dialogical character,¹⁹ which Gadamer, however, accents more strongly and (as will be examined in a moment) further characterizes as *conversation*. "Language exists, however, only in the with-one-another of conversation," as it appear to me, the main thesis can be concisely put.²⁰

To the extent that now "language (is) the universal medium, in which understanding is accomplished,"²¹ it is "not the copy of a fixed givenness, . . . but a coming-to-speak, in which a whole of meaning is said."²²

Experience and Language: The Linguisticity of Experience

Understanding is always based on experience and experience is just as much always connected to linguisticity. That human experience is already linguistic does not mean, however, "that the words for all experiences of entities already exist and come from outside to an already made experience. . . . Experience is not at first without word and is then made an object of reflection by being named, perhaps through subsumption under the universal of the word. Rather, it belongs to experience itself, that it seeks and finds the words that express it."²³

The concept of experience, understood in this way, has nothing more to do with the concept of experience belonging to empiricism. Heidegger had already emphasized and made clear that philosophy should certainly "hold to empirical experience," but this meant something in principle and did not imply "the limitation of philosophy's possible objects to 'experience' in the sense of empirical experience."²⁴ Empiricism has always presupposed concepts like "sense data" or "pure sound" to be the elementary forms of experience; these are, however, just not won from experience, but arise from a very artificial and theory-dependent attitude. If one proceeds hermeneutically neutral and unprejudiced enough, it becomes clear that one does not, and never does, see sense data or hear sounds. "At first we hear," as Heidegger says in a famous passage from *Being and Time*, "absolutely never sounds and complexes of sound, but rather a creaking wagon, a motorcycle. One hears the column on the march, the north wind, the knocking of the woodpecker, the crackling fire."²⁵ All seeing and hearing is already in itself understanding; understanding is always already at work in sensing.

The phenomenological, hermeneutic critique of the concept of experience concludes that this central concept of empiricism remains characteristically unthematized. Due to this, empiricism envisions a very specific concept of experience that is presupposed with an equally unquestioned self-evidence. Gadamer demonstrates conclusively that the particular concept of experience, used in the

empirical sciences and the philosophies modeled on them, is oriented to natural scientific experiment: this concept is artificially formed, repeatable, and therefore freed from the historicity of experience.²⁶

What has been just stated can be seen as a hermeneutic destruction of the concept of experience. This destruction is already articulated linguistically and is accomplished according to experience (created from experience). Already from this, i.e., from our activity, an essential relation is implied between experience and language, or also, among experience, language, and understanding.

The "Differentiation, that . . . should not be a differentiation": Language, Word, Conversation, and Subject Matter

It seems appropriate to first discuss the intended subject matter with the help of the fundamental or encompassing concept of hermeneutics, *belongingness*. If the interpreter, or the one who understands, *belongs* intimately to what is to be interpreted within the effective historical horizon that encompasses them both,²⁷ and if "the essence of inheritance is characterized by linguisticity,"²⁸ then it means that we *belong* just as originally to language. "The same is true for understanding as for language." Gadamer writes: "They are both not mere objects, but encompass all that can become an object."²⁹ Because the historical inheritance is linguistically constituted, belongingness to the tradition is also linguistic. The subject matter that is transferred in tradition always expresses itself linguistically. If the interpreter succeeds, the subject matter comes to speak in a new manner—and just this is the fusion of horizons, which is essential for hermeneutics, i.e., the fusion of two horizons otherwise separated temporally from one another.³⁰ In any case, it is the subject matter itself that comes to expression there.³¹

In this it is important to pay attention to a particular tension. On the one side, hermeneutics aims at the subject matter, following the essential anti-psychologism of Husserl's phenomenology. Understanding aims at the subject matter, i.e., its truth claim, not, for example, at the vision of the writer, his soul's state, or his intention.³² On the other side, it is just as true (it is equally essential to hermeneutics), that the actual subject matter is always already linguistically constituted or mediated. This produces a fruitful tension, a dialectical or speculative unity (as Gadamer terms it). Gadamer explains this as follows: "What comes to language is, certainly, different than the spoken word itself. However, the word is only word because something comes into language in it. It is only there in its sensible being in order to supercede itself in what is said. Also, from the other side, what comes into language is not a something presented without language, but rather receives in the word the determination of itself."³³ If language is not, as is stated, "a representation of a fixed given," "but a coming-into-language in which a whole of meaning is announced," then this means that language is determined from the beginning to disappear in the coming-into-language of the subject matter, and, in this manner, to complete its purpose.

What comes there into language, on the other side, was not there before, otherwise language would be just "the representation of a fixed givenness," that was there already before the representation. "To come into language does not mean to receive a second being. What something presents itself as, belongs much more to its own being. Everything that is language concerns a *speculative unity*, a differentiation in itself, *to be and to represent itself*, a differentiation, that nevertheless exactly should not be a differentiation."³⁴

The same situation holds in relation to the world. The world is linguistically constituted, and yet language claims for itself "not to be an independent being in relation to the world that comes into language through language. Not only is the world only a world insofar as it comes into language—language has its particular being only in representing the world in itself."³⁵

Since *language* and the *subject matter* belong together intimately in this way, that means, that language participates in some manner in the being of what comes to be in language, and that language receives a higher ontological value (Gadamer speaks of the "universal, ontological meaning"³⁶). "The word receives in a mysterious manner boundedness to the 'represented', belongingness to the being of the represented."³⁷ The higher ontological evaluation of language by hermeneutics is closely associated with the thesis about the essential "linguisticity of hermeneutic experience."³⁸ This points to the already briefly discussed thesis, which now should have become clearer from what has just been said: "Being, that can be understood, is language."

This speculative understanding of language results from Gadamer's disagreement with the history of the concept of language. To a certain extent, this concerns a degenerating history in the sense of Heidegger. From the point of view of hermeneutics, the doubtful tendency of the Western tradition of linguistic philosophy is just that it oriented itself one-sidedly on language, namely, "language" as such, i.e., according to its form and disregarding all content."³⁹ This process, on the other hand, made it possible that language "receive independent consideration."⁴⁰ Two things are characteristic for the position criticized here: first, it is characterized through a devaluation of language, and second, and in relation to the former, it is based upon an instrumentalized conception of language, a sign theory. Just the essence of a sign is that, instead of pointing to itself, "it points away from itself,"⁴¹ and so has no independent meaning. Gadamer's critique of modern, and especially contemporary, linguistic philosophy demonstrates, along with Heidegger, that for philosophical reflection language is understood only as an instrument. The equal value, the same essentiality, or as Gadamer said, the "inner unity of word and subject matter"⁴² was dissolved. This unity could not be done justice to in an instrumental or merely conventionalistic theory of language, because the word is considered as a mere tool and thereby introduces a devaluation of language.⁴³ The other ontological side of this devaluation of language presents a sphere of essences far from language or without language. This resulted as the consequence of Plato's *Cratylus*: "The critique of the correctness of names, that was accomplished in the *Cratylus*, presents . . . the first step in the direction that ends in the contemporary instrumental theory of language and the ideal of a sign system for reason. Caught between

picture and sign, the being of language could only be reduced to the pure being of a sign."⁴⁴

With such a high evaluation of language, it is more accurately understandable why, from the hermeneutic point of view, it cannot come to an independent linguistic philosophy. Insofar as a linguistic philosophy can only be constituted linguistically, it could not adequately present language in its all-encompassing character. It would even devalue language. To honor language, to be just to it, does not necessarily mean, one could say, to thematize it. To do justice, one should rather pay attention to the *subject matter*, which comes to language in language—as language brings it forth.⁴⁵ This subject matter is, however, essentially and at the same time, a subject matter for a communality, a community—and therefore, perhaps, also the subject matter for a community.⁴⁶ The truth of the *subject matter* should come to word in a *conversation* of many with one another. Language is present as the conversation in the communality of many.

"What language is," as I quoted Gadamer in the beginning, "is the most hidden of anything that humans can contemplate."⁴⁷ Now it is worthwhile to quote this thought further. Gadamer continues thusly: "From the conversation, we attempt . . . to come closer to the hiddenness of language. . . . In a successful *conversation* (the conversants) fall into the *truth of the subject matter*, that binds them into a new *commonality*. Communication in conversation is . . . a transformation into the *common*." In any case it is so that "*Language is in conversation* and only there can it be what it is." "The true conversation is a lived one with another."⁴⁸

From the viewpoint of philosophical hermeneutics, this would be one of the possible relationships mentioned in the title of my essay or its concepts: Language (word), conversation, and subject matter. Another possible relationship results from Gadamer's essays developing the thematic of his major work, especially that essay mentioned as the title for this conference: "Vom Wort zum Begriff." Concerning the idea of this title, one must notice that Gadamer's discussion in the first paragraph of the essay adds to this idea from the opposite direction and thereby makes it more precise: "Not only from word to concept but just as much from concept back into word." The first direction, "From Word to Concept," describes the path of Western culture, in which the creation of conceptual thinking helped mathematical science, and thereby also the empirical sciences as we know them today, become a continual, determining factor in the West. What is spoken of here as a concept—the concept at least as far as it is linguistically formulated—may be related, in my opinion, to the discussion of scientific terms in Gadamer's major work. There it says: The term is "a word whose meaning is unequivocally bounded. . . . In relation to the living meaning of a word in spoken language . . . the term is a rigid word and the terminological use of it is an act of violence perpetrated against language."⁴⁹ Gadamer wrote at the end of the 1995 essay, "The path goes 'from word to concept'—but we must go from concept to word, if we wish to reach the other. Only in this manner can we win the reasonable for one another."⁵⁰ Here the challenge is to take back the concept into the word, i.e., into communal, human life. The challenge is equal to

bringing forth again the rights and position of the life-world in opposition to its scientization.⁵¹

In this, it is important to notice that "word" is understood here as something that is "determined by being, . . . as the word in which truth occurs."⁵² It may appear to be a provocation that truth is granted to the word while, according to the leading epistemologically oriented conception, truth should first pertain to the proposition (truth should be understood primarily as propositional truth⁵³). The situation will become clearer, as soon as we consider that Gadamer's discussion of language, and so the essential points of his whole understanding of language, have been guided by literary works of art, especially poetry.⁵⁴ The reason is that the linguistic form is not external or secondary to the literary work of art; it is not something that has being only in its disappearing. We were concerned with a similar relation in his major work in the discussion of the difference between image and copy. The copy only has "a disappearing being," in that it fulfills its function in superceding itself in referring to the original, the original image (as, for example, in the passport picture). The copy disappears as a means when it fulfills its function. Opposed to the copy, the image is something whose characteristic is not and never can lie "in its own self-overcoming."⁵⁵ That this parallel lies completely in Gadamer's sense can be clearly seen from a passage in his major work. There it says: "*Word and image* are not merely additional *illustrations*, but allow what they represent to first be completely what they are."⁵⁶ Gadamer also confirmed this parallel himself in a latter remark. Since there is a chapter in the major work dedicated to "The ontological valence of the picture," which means that "the represented gains in being through being an image," just so could one "speak of the ontological valence of the word," as Gadamer says in his retrospective volume.⁵⁷ The exemplary characteristic of the language of poetry consists in this: "to allow something to be there through words," to create something unique through them that stands there itself "without anything being initiated through it"⁵⁸—without it depending upon, for example, explication or further examination. In this way, the word, in the literary work of art, attains just that "unbounded power and ideal perfection."⁵⁹ This concerns a "self-referentiality of the word" its "self-reference." "The poetic use of language" is, in this respect, less "the rule-bound application of words," but much more the authentic "becoming of language."⁶⁰ For what Gadamer wants to present here—"To allow something to be through nothing but words, clearly fulfills the ideal of creating"—he can enlist an expression used also in his major work, "transformation into picture,"⁶¹ which can also be called the transformation into the truth.⁶²

To conclude, truth occurs therefore in the "word" as the elementary form of language. If I said earlier that the truth of the subject matter should come to word in language as the conversation of many with one another, so it appears to me in the end that an addition is appropriate: The truth of the subject matter should come to word in language as the conversation of many with one another—and this as word; that is, as the word that is saying and that, as such, receives truth.⁶³

well as the subsection title, with which his recent study "Zur Phänomenologie von Ritual und Sprache" begins: "The concealed nature of language" (GW 8, 373).

16. For Gadamer's reference to Schelling's thinking of the immemorial, see GW 2, 103, 334; GW 3, 236; GW 8, 366; GW 10, 64. But it also concerns here a relatively late adaptation of the concept of the immemorial, which is missing in *Truth and Method* (concerning this see my essay on "Die späte Entdeckung Schellings in der Hermeneutik," in *Zeit und Freiheit: Schelling—Schopenhauer—Kierkegaard—Heidegger*, ed. I. M. Fehér and W. G. Jacobs, Akten der Fachtagung der Internationalen Schellinggesellschaft Budapest, 24-27 April 1997, Budapest: Ketef Bt., 1999, 65-72). In *Truth and Method* Gadamer spoke of the "substantiality," that lies behind every "subject." See the later exposition on the concept of substantiality in GW 8, 327: "Substance means here that supporting that does not come forth, that is not raised to the light of reflective consciousness, that never completely expresses itself, but that is yet necessary so that the light, consciousness, expression, communication, and the word that reaches can be. Substance is the 'spirit that may bind us together.' Rilke's phrase that I quote here indicates that spirit is more than each individual knows and knows of himself."

Chapter 5

István Fehér, On the Hermeneutic Understanding of Language

1. This paper was read at the symposium, "Vom Wort zum Begriff," held at the University of Heidelberg, July 10-12, 1998. "Sache" is translated throughout as "subject matter." [Tr.].

2. In GW 8, 339-49.

3. Original text in English [Tr.].

4. GW 8, 343. Compare "Zur Phänomenologie von Ritual und Sprache" (GW 8, 436). See further, *Hermeneutik im Rückblick*, GW 10, 1995: "On the European continent language moved to the center of philosophical questioning" (GW 10, 133).

5. GW 1, 478f. See also GW 2, 334f.

6. K. O. Apel: "Wittgenstein und Heidegger: Die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein und der Sinnlosigkeitsverdacht gegen alle Metaphysik," in *Heidegger. Perspektiven zur Deutung seines Werks*, ed. O. Pöggler (Köln-Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1969), 369.

7. GW 1, 406. The assertions and their fundamental horizon of thought that belong to the title linguistic philosophy stand critically opposed to Heidegger as well as Gadamer; see, for example, *Sein und Zeit*, 15th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1979), 166 (*Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson [New York: Harper and Row, 1962]) ("Philosophical research will have to dispense with the 'philosophy of language' if it is to inquire into 'the things themselves'"); also Gadamer, GW 1, 406f. A type of self-critique of linguistic philosophy's initial position in the linguistic turn occurs in the late work of Wittgenstein, through which parallels with the hermeneutic perspective result. Gadamer, for the most part, positively acknowledged this modification and saw it as a confirmation of his own hermeneutic stance. In the essay already quoted, he said retrospectively: "Language is the happening of language, is event. The word that is said to one is not presentable in conceptual symbols. The word is rather there as what reaches one. Expressions in Wittgenstein are very similar. He speaks of a linguistic pragmatics. That means, language belongs to praxis, in the human with one another and for one another" ("Die Vielfalt der Sprachen und das Verstehen der Welt," GW 8, 343).

8. GW 8, 414.

9. Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 7th ed. (Pfullingen: Neske 1982), 175.

10. GW 1, 456.

11. GW 1, 383.

12. GW 1, 399.

13. GW 2, 230.

14. GW 1, 407, 393, 400.

15. *Sein und Zeit*, 150.

16. *Sein und Zeit*, 160.

17. *Sein und Zeit*, 163.

18. *Sein und Zeit*, 161.

19. See *Sein und Zeit*, 162, and to this Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Subjekt und Dasein. Interpretationen zu Sein und Zeit*, second expanded edition, (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1985), 148.

20. GW 8, 404.

21. GW 1, 392.

22. GW 1, 478.

23. GW 1, 421.

24. Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 59: *Phänomenologie der Anschauung und des Ausdrucks* (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1993), 36f.

25. *Sein und Zeit*, 163.

26. GW 1, 352ff.

27. See, for example, GW 1, 268.

28. GW 1, 393.

29. GW 1, 408.

30. See GW 1, 311ff., see also 390, 393, 399ff.

31. See GW 1, 384: "The successful mode of understanding [is] the coming-to-language of the subject matter."

32. See, for example, "Understanding is not a psychic transposition" (GW 1, 398). "A text does not want to be understood as an expression of one's life, but by what it says" (GW 1, 396). "First the failure of the attempt to let what is said be true, leads to the attempt 'to understand' the text as the opinion of an other, either psychologically or historically. . . . Understanding means primarily to understand the subject matter, and only secondarily to extract and understand the opinion of an other." (GW 1, 299; see also 340f., 378, 384, 389, 392, etc.).

33. See GW 1, 479 for all citations in this paragraph.

34. GW 1, 479 (Italics added). See also GW 1, 470.

35. GW 1, 446f.

36. GW 1, 479.

37. GW 1, 420.

38. GW 1, 447.

39. See GW 1, 408.

40. See GW 1, 408.

41. GW 1, 157.

42. GW 1, 407, 409.

43. See GW 1, 407; TM 403: "It is obvious that an instrumentalist theory of signs which sees words and concepts as handy tools has missed the point of the hermeneutic phenomenon. . . . The interpreter does not use words and concepts like a craftsman who picks up his tools and then puts them away. Rather we must recognize that all understanding is interwoven with concepts and reject any theory that does not accept the intimate unity of word and subject matter."

44. GW 1, 422. See also GW 1, 418; TM 413-14: "The legitimate question whether the word is nothing but a 'pure sign' or instead something like a 'copy' or an 'image' is thoroughly discredited by the *Cratylus*. Since there the argument that the word is a copy is driven ad absurdum, the only alternative seems to be that it is a sign. . . . [I]n all discus-

sion of language since then the concept of the image has been replaced by that of the sign . . . [I]t expresses an epoch-making decision about thought concerning language. That the true being of things is to be investigated 'without names' means that there is no access to truth in the proper being of words as such—even though, of course, no questioning, answering, instructing and differentiating can take place without the help of language. . . . [T]he word is reduced to a wholly secondary relation to the thing. It is a mere instrument of communication, the bringing forth (*ekpherein*) and uttering (*logos prophorikos*) of what is meant in the medium of the voice. It follows that an ideal system of signs, whose sole purpose is to coordinate all signs in an unambiguous system, makes the power of words . . . —the range of variation of the contingent in the historical languages as they have actually developed—appear as a mere flaw in their utility. This is the ideal of a *characteristica universalis*."

45. "Language intends the others and the other and not itself. That means that the covering over of language as language has its foundation in language itself and human experience agrees in general with language" (GW 8, 432).

46. Concerning this see the following considerations: "When Aristotle says of sounds or written signs that they 'describe' when they become a *symbolon*, this means, certainly, that they do not exist naturally but by convention (*kata suntheke*). But his is not an instrumental theory of signs. Rather, the *convention* according to which the sounds of language or the signs of writing mean something is not an agreement on a means of understanding—that would already presuppose language; it is the *agreement* on which human community, its harmony with respect to what is good and proper, is founded" (GW 1, 435; TM 431, the last three italics added). See also GW 1, 450; TM 446: "All kinds of human community are kinds of linguistic community. In a real community of language . . . we do not first decide to agree but are always already in agreement." The always previous coming to agree—instead of first holding a meeting, agreeing, and coming to agree—concerning the meaning of words as the presupposition for human community, demonstrates clear parallels to the thought perspective of the later Wittgenstein, for example, in the thought according to which one "must recognize certain authorities in order to judge at all" (L. Wittgenstein, *Werkausgabe*, Vol. 8: *Über Gewißheit*, paragraph 493, [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984], 219).

47. See endnote 11 above.

48. GW 1, 383f. (Italics not in the original); GW 8, 434, 433. I attempted to further develop this aspect of hermeneutics in my essay "Verstehen, Verständigung, Argumentieren, Gemeinschaft: Zu den praktisch-politischen Aspekten der Hermeneutik Gadamer," *Existential VI-VII*, 1996-97, 65-78.

49. GW 1, 392.

50. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Vom Wort zum Begriff. Die Aufgabe der Hermeneutik als Philosophie" (1995), in *Gadamer Lesebuch*, ed. J. Grondin (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1997), 100-10, here 110.

51. Compare: "I say, hermeneutics is . . . not so much a methodology for the humanities. Hermeneutics is much more a fundamental insight into what thinking and knowing means for humans in their practical life." ("Vom Wort zum Begriff," *Gadamer Lesebuch*, 104; italics added).

52. GW 8, 40.

53. In criticizing Apel, Gadamer also demonstrated: "Truth is not only propositional truth" ("Zur Phänomenologie von Ritual und Sprache," GW 8, 437, fn. 23).

54. This is certainly connected with the fact that art plays a guiding role in Gadamer's whole hermeneutic understanding. Looking back, Gadamer states: "In my book, *Truth and Method*, I began my considerations at first with art and not science, also not with the humanities. For, in them it is again art that brings to experience the fundamental questions of human being." ("Vom Wort zum Begriff," *Gadamer Lesebuch*, 105). This sig-

nificant remark makes clear how decisive the understanding of art was for the whole new philosophical reconstitution of the humanities—to which his major work was primarily dedicated and to which it explicitly points as a task, in a certain sense, for itself. So it should not surprise one that his understanding of language is essentially influenced by the understanding of language as it functions in art. Two characteristic citations for this are: "What language is at all, . . . certainly holds true as well for the special case of language that is called poetry. I wish, however, to claim the opposite, namely that poetry is language in an eminent sense" (GW 8, 71). "What language is . . . is not graspable in such a manner that one proceeds from the so-called 'natural' forms of linguistic communication, rather and in the reverse direction, such forms of communication are graspable in their authentic possibilities from that poetic manner of speaking" (GW 8, 53).

55. GW 1, 143.

56. GW 1, 148 (Italics added).

57. GW 8, 54.

58. GW 8, 82f.

59. GW 8, 82.

60. GW 8, 53f. See "Text und Interpretation," GW 2, 352: "the self-presentation of the word," "self-presence."

61. "Von der Wahrheit des Wortes," GW 8, 53. See also GW 1, 116ff.

62. GW 1, 118.

63. To the poetic word accrues a "unity of meaning and tone," and just this constitutes the perfection of the word in poetry, its "saying being." This concept of the "unity of meaning and tone" demonstrates anew the already characteristic, central idea of his major work: In aesthetics one is truly concerned with knowledge and truth, and for that reason a properly understood aesthetic must be grasped, with reference to Hegel, as a metaphysics of the beautiful, in which the "beautiful" and the "shining" belong inseparably together. So a perfection of the word certainly does not occur in philosophy (GW 8, 253). The "proximity of philosophy and poetry" is at first an "extreme movement in opposite directions." "The language of philosophy continually surpasses itself—the language of poetry is unsurpassable and unique" (GW 8, 256). The "continual surpassing of all its concepts" is, for philosophy, not only not by chance but belongs to its very essence. "That is why there are actually no texts of philosophy, because, as Penelope, she continually undoes her weaving in order to prepare herself anew for the homecoming into truth" (ibid.). Philosophy is like a conversation that "is in continual self-overcoming through the answer of the other" (ibid.), and "thinking is this continual conversation of the soul with itself" (GW 8, 257). Philosophical texts are "only interruptions in the unending conversation of thought" (GW 10, 173), "interventions in a progressing dialogue into infinity" (GW 8, 256). Certainly related to this (although the context is different than the parallels of philosophy and poetry) is the idea that there is "no first word," "as there is no last word. As long as thinking and language accompany one another, we stand always in the middle of a conversation" (GW 8, 408).

Chapter 6 John Sallis, The Hermeneutics of Translation

1. Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, 16a.

2. "Der Übersetzer muß hier den zu verstehenden Sinn in den Zusammenhang hinübertragen, in dem der Partner des Gespräches lebt. Das heißt bekanntlich nicht, daß er den Sinn verfälschen darf, den der andere meinte. Der Sinn soll vielmehr erhalten bleiben, aber da er in einer neuen Sprachwelt verstanden werden soll, muß er in ihr auf neue