



## FROM CIRCULAR FACTICITY TO HERMENEUTIC TIDINGS: ON HEIDEGGER'S CONTRIBUTION TO HERMENEUTICS

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ABSTRACT: Heidegger's perspective on hermeneutics is not uniform but is characterized by the overall move of his thought from his earliest writings to *Being and Time* and from there to the "turn." In all these transformations, Heidegger's major contribution to hermeneutics remains his constant and persistent contention, illustrated each time through different means and concepts, that understanding and interpretation constitute far broader phenomena than what was believed by the various historical manifestations of hermeneutics. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics has been initiated by this insight; but philosophical hermeneutics will bear and constructively convey Heidegger's legacy, only if it goes beyond the repetition of the transcendental question of the conditions of possibility of understanding, i.e., only if it transforms itself into a hermeneutic philosophy.

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he ambiguity and polysemy of the title may give rise to two questions. The first question asks: *which hermeneutics* are we referring to here? Is it the traditional "art of understanding," whose main objects and points of reference have been the Bible, the classical texts of antiquity, and legal texts? Are we referring to Schleiermacher's perception of hermeneutics as focusing on the historical reconstruction and representation of the conditions underlying the creation of an intellectual work of the past? Are we concerned with hermeneutics in the sense it acquires in Dilthey, who tries to describe understanding as the foundation of the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), offering the latter a method that would make them equal to the natural sciences? Or, finally, are we referring to philosophical hermeneutics as established and developed by

Hans-Georg Gadamer, who expanded the scope of understanding to embrace every human activity?

In approaching our subject, we will not take full account of the various modes and genres of hermeneutics; we will conventionally identify it as the *approach of understanding and interpretation in general*, without considering the nuances resulting from the use of the term in its various historical occurrences. It must be noted that Heidegger himself perceives hermeneutics in this conceptual broadness. This is precisely his main contribution to hermeneutics: his constant and persistent assertion (illustrated each time through different means and concepts) that understanding and interpretation constitute far broader phenomena than what was believed by the various historical manifestations of hermeneutics.

The second question asks: *which Heidegger* are we referring to here? Is it the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, i.e., the author of the work which, although incomplete and despite its fragmentary character, remains the most prominent philosophical “failure” of the twentieth century? Or, perhaps, the late Heidegger, who abandons not only the attempt to construct a “fundamental ontology,” but also the strictness of the philosophical conceptuality, searching now for the historical interplay between the revelation and concealment of truth in the fields of art, poetry, the tradition of metaphysics and modern technology? Or are we referring to the early Heidegger, who, as a young lecturer at the University of Freiburg, opened new philosophical horizons with his 1919–1923 lectures that attracted the most philosophically talented youth of that time?

Heidegger’s first period of intense philosophical investigation and creation, the Freiburg period, ended in 1923, the year of his appointment as Extraordinary Professor at the University of Marburg. This period was perhaps the most productive and authentically original of his life, containing *in vitro* almost the entirety of his philosophy that was to be developed in the writings to follow. The last lecture course of the period, entitled *Ontology: Hermeneutics of Facticity*, contains the most extensive and substantial development of Heidegger’s hermeneutics. Our attempt to clarify the question “which Heidegger?” will take this course as its point of departure (I). We shall then turn to *Being and Time* (II) and will conclude our attempt to arrive at an answer to this question through the examination of a later text, which bears the title, “A Dialogue From Within Language” (III). In this text, Heidegger, using his favourite method of nominalizing adjectives, will introduce “the Hermeneutic”<sup>1</sup>—a phrase which implies that Heidegger’s references to hermeneutics are not concerned with its particular historical manifestations but search for a deeper meaning of understanding and interpretation. Finally, the concluding part of this paper (IV) will attempt to detect the scope and the limits of Heidegger’s contribution to what is nowadays called hermeneutics.

## I. LIFE AS INTERPRETATION

“As far as I remember, I first used these words [“hermeneutics” and “hermeneutic”] in a . . . course of the Summer Semester of 1923.”<sup>2</sup> This recollection by the late Heidegger is not correct. One comes across “hermeneutics” in Heidegger’s very first course of 1919, where he describes an understanding of life in the mode of *Erlebnis*, distinguishes it from any “theoretic-objectifying or transcendent positing,” and calls it a “hermeneutical intuition” (*hermeneutische Intuition*).<sup>3</sup> In another course of 1919, Heidegger emphasizes the importance of historical retrospection and of “understanding the intellectual and historical factors,” not just for the purpose of “introducing” a philosophical issue, but as a necessary and irreplaceable part of the “preparation and activation of phenomenological criticism.” In his view, the “essence of the entire phenomenological hermeneutics” lies in a deep unity between historical and systematic philosophical research.<sup>4</sup> During the Winter Semester of 1919–1920, in an attempt to depict a relationship between science and life that will not suppress the distinctive features and the historicity of the latter, he refers to a “science of the origins” (*Ursprungswissenschaft*), which in the final analysis assumes the form of a “hermeneutic” science.<sup>5</sup>

These occasional references, however, do not sufficiently account for the “hermeneutic” disposition of Heidegger’s endeavour, about which the philosopher himself seems particularly uncertain. It is only in the lecture course of the Summer Semester of 1923 entitled *Ontology: Hermeneutics of Facticity* that the concept of hermeneutics moves to the centre of his inquiry.<sup>6</sup> This course completes the first Freiburg period, constituting the culmination of his philosophical and academic activities between 1919 and 1923, a period that can be considered on the whole as an effort to develop sufficiently a “hermeneutics of facticity.”<sup>7</sup> But what is the meaning of the concept of “facticity,” to which the early Heideggerian hermeneutics is attached?

Facticity (*Faktizität*)<sup>8</sup> denotes the ultimate, non-reducible reality of individual existence, which every authentic philosophy should acknowledge as its foundation and point of departure. The founding *factum* and the fundamental reality of life can never be ignored, it cannot be reduced to or deduced from anything else. Since, however, this *factum* is full of meanings, human beings incessantly perceive and understand these meanings produced by themselves by articulating and arranging them into a “factual life unity.”<sup>9</sup> In the 1923 course, which is our focus here, facticity is introduced as a “designation for the character of the Being of ‘our’ ‘own’ *Dasein*” (GA 63, 7/5). If “we take ‘life’ to be a mode of ‘Being,’ then ‘factual life’ means: our own *Dasein* which is ‘there’ [*da*]” (ibid.). One might assume that the “hermeneutics of facticity” is a distinct field of hermeneutics that deals with, analyzes, and interprets a specific object called “facticity.” However, it is precisely this assumption that Heidegger tries to oppose. Neither is hermeneutics perceived in

the ordinary sense of a doctrine of understanding nor is facticity perceived as an “object” of hermeneutics.

In a brief and rather encyclopaedic reference to the history of hermeneutics, Heidegger emphasizes the significant shift in the meaning of hermeneutics after the seventeenth century. As he points out, “hermeneutics is now no longer interpretation itself, but a doctrine about the conditions, the object, the means, the communication and the practical application of interpretation” (13/10). Later on, Schleiermacher and Dilthey would confirm this process, the former by confining the task of hermeneutics to an “art (technique) of understanding” of foreign speech, and the latter by establishing a “methodology for the human sciences [*Geisteswissenschaften*]” (13–14/10–11). Finally, the predominance of the technical and methodological dimension of hermeneutics resulted in the complete loss of a previously existing unity between interpretation and application and, along with that, the loss of the practical orientation still preserved in the original notion of hermeneutics.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Heidegger feels the need to clarify that in his text “hermeneutics is *not* being used in its modern meaning, and in no sense does it have the meaning of such a broadly conceived doctrine *about* interpretation. In connection to its original meaning, this term means, rather: a specific unity in the actualizing [*Vollzug*] of *hermeneuein* (of communicating), i.e., of the . . . interpreting of facticity” (14/11).

Nevertheless, Heidegger is not yet in a position to clarify this primordial meaning of the concept and its relationship to his own endeavour. He therefore confines himself to pointing out that “the word was chosen in its original meaning because, though basically inadequate, it nonetheless highlights in an indicative manner a few factors which are at work in the investigation of facticity” (14–15/11). This assertion makes it clear that Heidegger’s hermeneutics is not at all concerned with the interpretation of texts or foreign speech. His hermeneutics does not see in human existence just one issue among many others, but rather its *only* issue. Hermeneutics does not retrospectively turn to human existence as an already given reality nor does it view it as the object of a distanced intellectual activity, but rather it emerges from within existence itself, from life and “facticity.” A primordial and inherent feature of *Dasein* is its ability, tendency, and need to interpret itself, searching for its position in the surrounding world and placing itself within it.<sup>11</sup> Interpretation is not a secondary act, but an indispensable and inescapable condition of the human *Dasein*, which therefore exists as long as it interprets. *Interpreter ergo sum*.

Since hermeneutics is inherently present in facticity and structures the latter by interpreting it, it would be wrong to consider facticity as an “object” of hermeneutics. In an insightful comment, Gadamer once described the genitive in the phrase “hermeneutics of facticity” as *genetivus subjectivus* and not *objectivus*.<sup>12</sup> This means that facticity is not interpreted from the outside, as the passive object of a theoretical act, but it actively interprets itself and its

position in the world. This relation cannot be considered in the light of phenomenological “intentionality,” since it is not a relation-to but a mode of Dasein’s Being, which should rather be described as “the *wakefulness* of Dasein for itself” (15/12). Hermeneutics, but also philosophy as a whole, is thus characterized by a relentless self-reference. In Heidegger’s words, “the *hermeneutical engagement* . . . is not a ready-made possession but rather arises and develops out of a fundamental experience, and here this means a philosophical wakefulness, in which Dasein is encountering itself.<sup>13</sup> The wakefulness is philosophical—this means: it lives and is at work in a primordial self-interpretation which philosophy has given of itself” (18/14).

Heidegger’s invocation of hermeneutics is guided by a deeper intention: namely, the undermining and abolition of the traditional precedence of a theoretical and scientific approach to the world and human existence. Hermeneutics thus constitutes primarily a self-interpretation of facticity that structures existence and makes its unity possible. Existence, the Dasein, should not be abandoned and left to become the “object of indifferent theoretical beliefs” (3/2), but has to be entrusted to a hermeneutics born and emerging within the context of facticity. The “inception, execution, and appropriation” of this hermeneutics is “ontologically and factico-temporally prior to all accomplishments in the sciences” (15/12). Needless to say, the distrust towards science and theory does not lead to a renunciation of philosophy in general. On the contrary, Heidegger intends to free philosophy from the bonds of theory and to associate it with the living, endless “questionableness” (*Fraglichkeit*, 17/13) of human existence. Philosophy can be self-referential and oppose any kind of external imposition or encroachment; it can define itself as an activity performed simply *eautes heneka*, only because human life itself in its individuality constitutes an autonomous self-defined entity. Furthermore, the self-relationality of existence involved in interpretation cannot be perceived as reflection (*Reflexion*). Since interpretation belongs “to the Being of factual life itself” (15/12), since it is ontologically identical to life in general, it cannot be accomplished by keeping distant from its “object,” nor does it allow any sort of reflective mediation: it has to be accomplished in an *immediate* way.<sup>14</sup>

This concept of interpretation entails primarily a challenge to Hegelian dialectic. Later on in the course, Heidegger will attack dialectic explicitly (although unsuccessfully), accusing it of living “from the table of others” (45/36). In a note entitled “hermeneutics and dialectic” (107–108/83), he will point out that the latter “does not lead to and call for *direct* grasping and having,” while hermeneutics, by contrast, offers a “more radical possibility, a new conceptuality.” The immediacy claimed for hermeneutics, however, seems to invalidate any mediating function of hermeneutical *Logos*, and this constitutes the greatest gap in Heidegger’s approach. This gap probably leads to Heidegger’s inability to determine properly the precise character and function of hermeneutics and its relationship with what he calls “philosophy.” On

the one hand, the immediacy of hermeneutics enables it to remain at a pre-theoretical stage, constituting thus a direct manifestation of facticity: hermeneutics is not a matter for specialists, but rather an indispensable component of every individual existence, every Dasein. On the other hand, however, “hermeneutic understanding” proceeds to indicate some general formal characteristics of existence (*das Formale*, 18/14).<sup>15</sup> Although trying to be formalistic or “return back” to Dasein and avoid self-sufficiency (*ibid.*), Heidegger’s analysis does remain different from our active understanding carried out in the everyday activities of our individual existence: it is *theory*.<sup>16</sup>

Heidegger’s attraction to the older hermeneutics and its orientation towards practical applications has already been mentioned. Not only does he try to restore this applied dimension but he also promotes it to the only dimension possible. It is probably his refusal to accept the mediating and therefore theoretical character of hermeneutics and his persistence in relating the latter to common understanding as its immediate disclosure that prevents Heidegger from determining the status of hermeneutics in itself and in relation to philosophy in general. One would expect that a hermeneutics rooted in existence and returning to it cannot but constitute the only true philosophy. Therefore, the following awkward statement might evoke a feeling of surprise: “I think that hermeneutics is not philosophy at all, but in fact something preliminary which runs in advance of it and has its own reason for being: what is at issue in it, what it all comes to, is not to become finished with it as quickly as possible, but rather to hold out in it as long as possible” (20/15–16). Our puzzlement increases with another statement: “hermeneutics is itself not philosophy; it wishes only to place an object which has hitherto fallen into forgetfulness before today’s philosophers for their ‘well-disposed consideration’” (*ibid.*).

It seems that the treatment of this “object” called facticity cannot be philosophical, inasmuch as Heidegger perceives philosophy in the traditional sense of a theoretical, conceptual investigation. The opening section of the lecture<sup>17</sup> makes clear that hermeneutics is pursued in the service of philosophy qua ontology; its task is confined to a critical, preparatory function, aiming to point out the invalidity of two claims often raised in philosophy. The first demands that “everyone should avoid dwelling too much on presuppositions and look rather at the things themselves,” while the second insists that “presuppositions must be put before the public in generally understandable terms, i.e., in the least dangerous and most plausible fashion” (19/15). Both claims “surround themselves with the pretence of a purely objective, absolute philosophy”—a semblance to be cancelled by hermeneutics, together with the myth of a philosophy approaching things free of any presuppositions or predispositions.<sup>18</sup> Paving the way for Gadamer’s “rehabilitation of prejudice,”<sup>19</sup> Heidegger exposes the demand for an understanding and a philosophy free of any conditions, presuppositions, and particular viewpoints as the greatest and most dangerous prejudice. The claims of a “scientific” and “objective” philosophy

become only pretence for making the “lack of critique” the highest virtue and for unfolding a deep hermeneutic “blindness” (82/63). Instead of pleading for an (unfeasible) dissociation from our viewpoint, hermeneutics calls for its “explicit appropriation” in its historical dimension. The shape of the “hermeneutic circle” to be exposed in *Being and Time* is here at the stage of its genesis.

The main function of appropriating the horizon within which we approach life, “facticity” and the conditions of our philosophical positions consists in a *destruction* (*Abbau, Destruktion*) of the philosophical tradition. In contrast to his initial demand for an “immediate” perception of things, in the course of the lecture Heidegger acknowledges that “what shows itself from itself in a straightforward manner need not as yet be the subject matter itself” for which we are searching: “taking up the subject matter in a straightforward manner guarantees nothing at all” (75/59), since this supposedly immediate perception is immanently guided by tradition and the historically shaped modes of understanding. Tradition accumulates successive strata of “concealment,” which have to be excavated and removed in destruction, through a process of reverse historical course that would lead to the very essence of philosophical concepts and to their origins. In contrast to the “a-historicity of phenomenology,” which “naively believes that the subject matter will, no matter what the position of looking at it, be obtained in plain and simple evidence” (*ibid.*), hermeneutics is expected to consider the deeply historical character of our existence and facticity and, as a fundamental historical critique, to respect the historical ballast accumulated in concepts. In this sense, as a hand-written note by Heidegger confirms, “hermeneutics is destruction!” (105/81).<sup>20</sup>

To summarize, this early text defines understanding as an inherent, permanent, and substantial element pervasive in any aspect of human existence. Heidegger aims at a reversal of the process which, he believed, had taken place in the past three centuries, beginning with the seventeenth century Protestant manuals of hermeneutic rules. Viewing even Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics as a system of specific rules of understanding and Dilthey’s hermeneutics as a method for the human sciences, he attempts to overcome such conceptions and make hermeneutics identical with the very act of understanding itself. Heidegger’s hermeneutics of facticity is thus not an “art” or doctrine of understanding, but the significant self-interpretation of existence itself: a philosophical hermeneutics that keeps Dasein in wakefulness and reminds us of the historicity and the finitely determined and prismatic character of every philosophical notion. Nonetheless, this philosophical hermeneutics remains an *ancilla philosophiae*, it cannot be transformed into a hermeneutic philosophy.

It seems, however, that Gadamer’s understanding of the genitive in the phrase “hermeneutics of facticity” as a *genetivus subjectivus* should undergo a significant modification: the genitive is both *subjectivus* and *objectivus*. As *subjectivus*, it makes facticity the acting agent of hermeneutics and *praxis* the origin of facticity’s development. As *objectivus*, it approaches facticity as the



object of an analysis that, even if Heidegger wishes to avoid this, cannot but be called theoretical—although its legitimacy remains uncertain. This is an anticipation of the circle attempted in *Being and Time*, which will prove fatal to the success of the endeavour. The analysis of existence (*Daseinsanalytik*), which is called upon in order to reveal the “meaning of Being” and to found it in Dasein, will remain suspended and unable to confirm its origin in the practical, pre-theoretical activity of Dasein. Both the hermeneutics of facticity and *Being and Time* will constitute a theory that falsely and unsuccessfully feigns a pre- and non-theoretical stance.

## II. CIRCULAR UNDERSTANDING

As Heidegger admitted, his familiarity with the concept of hermeneutics was due to his studies in theology, as well as to his study of Dilthey’s theory of the historical *Geisteswissenschaften*.<sup>21</sup> In the 1923 lecture course, Heidegger has obvious difficulties with an accurate definition of the “hermeneutic” dimension of his thought. Nonetheless, he calls upon it in order to distance himself from Husserl’s phenomenology as “an unconditional” and “strict” science. However, when four years later he addresses a broader audience in *Being and Time*, he seems reluctant to abandon the term “phenomenology,” and hence clearly distance himself from Husserl. On the contrary, he continues to describe his ontological endeavour as phenomenological: “Ontology and phenomenology ...characterize philosophy itself with regard to its object and its way of treating that object [respectively].”<sup>22</sup>

Identifications of this kind express either a conceptual laxity or (more positively) the awareness that names, disciplines, and schools hamper rather than enhance philosophical understanding and thus have to be undermined in their one-sidedness. At any rate, in *Being and Time* Heidegger not only associates and strikes a balance between phenomenology and ontology, but also seems to renounce the opposition between hermeneutics and phenomenology. “The phenomenology of Dasein is *hermeneutics* in the primordial sense of this word, which concerns the task of interpreting” (37). In an attempt to clarify more precisely this “primordial sense” of hermeneutics, Heidegger distinguishes in the famous “methodological” section 7 of the work between three components of the “hermeneutic” nature of this phenomenology.

The first component refers to “the methodological meaning of phenomenological description,” which lies in “interpretation” (*Auslegung*). The *logos* of phenomenology assumes the character of *hermeneuein* in the sense of “transmitting, announcing” (*kundgeben*). The meaning of Being and the structures of Dasein to be “announced” are not rooted in the reflective acts of an intentional consciousness, but rather in the Dasein itself and the act of understanding as “thrown projection” (*geworfener Entwurf*). Heidegger obviously resorts to this hermeneutic dimension, to which he assigns an existential meaning, in

order to distinguish what he calls hermeneutic phenomenology from Husserl's phenomenology.<sup>23</sup> The second dimension of hermeneutics in *Being and Time* lies in its relevance for "working out the conditions of the possibility of any ontological investigation"—i.e., for an investigation aiming also at the Being of beings other than the Dasein (37). Since the Being of beings and its meaning emerges only through the understanding acts of Dasein, which acquires thus an "ontic-ontological priority" over other beings (13–14), the possibility of particular peripheral ontologies lies in a foremost hermeneutic disclosure of Dasein's structure and of the meaning that it understands. Finally, the third dimension of hermeneutics results from "Dasein's ontological priority," relates to an "interpretation of Dasein's Being," and aims at an "analytic of the existentiality of existence" (38). This dimension is described by Heidegger as the primary one, since the attempt to develop a fundamental ontology will begin and pass through this existential analytic of the Dasein.

These clarifications confirm Heidegger's perception of hermeneutics as it was outlined in the 1923 course, without marking any significant progress in the clarity of his concepts. The specific hermeneutic character of the "analytic of the existentiality of existence" does not visibly emerge and the reader can hardly discern its relation to what is called traditional hermeneutics; despite Heidegger's initial emphatic statements, in the course of *Being and Time* the concept of hermeneutics becomes "strangely pale."<sup>24</sup> However, this is not enough to invalidate the importance of the work for hermeneutics. Paragraphs 31 and 32, which focus on "Dasein as Understanding" and "Understanding and Interpretation" respectively, contain Heidegger's most significant contribution to the subject of hermeneutics and understanding.

Understanding in *Being and Time* does not constitute a means of knowledge and science, but a "fundamental Existential," a "basic mode of Dasein's Being" (143). This primordial understanding affects the entire relation of Dasein to the world which it discloses. The world is the first, indispensable and non-reducible reality of existence, an insurmountable *proteron* constituted as a totality of relations and meanings grounded on the "readiness-to-hand" (*Zuhandenheit*) of beings and on the position they take in the practical framework of each individual existence. Since the fundamental ontological category of existence is not actuality but possibility, understanding takes place in a primordial way only as a "projection" of Dasein onto its own possibilities. It is only this projection that makes possible an approach to and disclosure of the world. Even philosophy itself, as the mode of understanding *par excellence*, emerges as a specific form of possibility. Dasein on the whole exists as continuously projected onto its possibilities, which it either accepts or rejects. *I project myself therefore I am.*

Understanding is articulated and formulated as interpretation (*Auslegung*), in which "understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it" (148). Heideggerean interpretation is not a simple and superficial

acquiring of information, but rather the working-out of possibilities projected in the understanding, explicitly revealed and expressed in it. Interpretation is not primarily concerned with texts or foreign speech but with practical everyday life and the network of relationships that sustain each Dasein and constitute its "world." The primordial interpretation departs from the primary determination of being as "equipment" (*Zeug*) and explicitly expresses the understanding of the position of each being in this network on the basis of its readiness-to-hand and its "in-order-to" (*Um-Zu*), its purpose. This position becomes manifest through the understanding of "something *as* something." Primordial understanding does not understand beings as secluded and self-contained; instead, it situates them in the context of relationships and determinations known under the name of "world." An interpretation of something as something (a phenomenon that Heidegger calls the "As-structure" of interpretation) does not attribute this or that feature to a being a posteriori, but is incipiently present, inherent even in elementary sense perception, as well as in the modes of a presumably simple, pure and "neutral" vision. An understanding based on the manifestation of a being's position in the world produces "meaning" (*Sinn*). The meaning of this "meaning" is holistic *par excellence*, since it emerges from the integration of a piece of equipment into a world, of the part into the whole: "As the disclosedness of the 'There' [*Da*'], understanding always pertains to the whole of Being-in-the-world" (152).

The relation between part and whole constitutes one of the typical questions of hermeneutics,<sup>25</sup> an answer to which was provided by the scheme of a *hermeneutic circle*, which the interpreter traversed from the part to the whole and vice versa. The comprehension of a given text's meaning is illuminated by considering its position in the author's entire work, which in turn can be understood differently in light of the comprehension of a particular text. The same process takes place at a lower level between a text in its entirety and a particular expression in it, which mutually enable an understanding of each other. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger adopts the concept of the hermeneutic circle but decisively modifies it, assigning to it a more radical function and turning it against the traditional methodological self-consciousness of the historical, philological, or other disciplines. "Interpretation," he states, "is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something already fore-given to us. If a particular concrete interpretation, in the sense of exact textual interpretation, is willing to appeal to what 'stands there,' what first of all 'stands there' is nothing but the self-evident undiscussed assumption of the interpreter, necessarily lying in every interpretative approach as something that has been 'taken for granted' with the interpretation as such, i.e., as something fore-given in fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception" (150).

This triadic structure of *fore-understanding*<sup>26</sup> brings out different aspects of the dependence of each specific hermeneutic act on the pre-existing whole of relationships, conceptions, meanings and dependencies that make up the

interpreter's world. Each "understanding of the world" implies an "understanding of existence" and vice versa. At the same time, "every interpretation which is to contribute to understanding must already have understood what is to be interpreted" (152). The whole from which, in Heidegger's view, the understanding of the part begins is thus not the whole of a foreign text or a biography, but rather the whole of *our own Dasein*, as a sum of relationships to the world that leads every hermeneutic act: "This circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move; it is the expression of the existential *fore-structure* of Dasein itself" (153).

In contrast to the *Geisteswissenschaften* that, influenced by the scientific methodological ideal of "precision" and "unconditioned knowledge," would rather wish to avoid the cyclical nature of understanding, Heidegger refuses to see the hermeneutic circle as an unfortunate defect. It is neither a *circulus vitiosus* like those despised and condemned in logic, nor an inevitable imperfection that we have to tolerate (*ibid.*). On the contrary, it constitutes an inherent and indispensable element of every understanding and every relation to the world. In fact, even the so-called unconditioned and unprejudiced positive sciences are conditioned by the hermeneutic circle. Understanding is thus liberated from the false ideal of an absolute knowledge and truth and reconciles itself with its existential dimension, its finitude, and its disposition to be complete and yet not definite, holistic and at the same time prismatic. Understanding will never escape the horizon within which it takes place. The structure of fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception is a set of shadows that do not follow but lead it. The "situation," the *kairos*, is not a necessary evil but a condition of the possibility of every understanding.

In Heidegger's scheme, the beings to be understood (pieces of equipment, texts, utterances, situations, facts, intentions, existence, the Others) become evident only in the light of the conditions that have been laid down by the three-fold fore-understanding. An attempt on the part of the interpreter to annul any preheld views and approaches would not only be fruitless, but would also constitute an indication of serious hermeneutic blindness, leading away from the specifically hermeneutic desideratum: the constant awareness of the necessary presuppositions of understanding and interpretation. Nevertheless, the hermeneutic circle is authentic only when it transforms itself and the fore-understanding while being traversed. Heidegger, however, seems reluctant to draw and explicitly state the normative implications incipiently contained in the scheme of the hermeneutic circle.<sup>27</sup> He simply points out that "what is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way" (*ibid.*).

However, which is the "right way"? One would expect that it lies in the constant awareness of the cyclical nature of understanding and interpretation, in the knowledge that these are guided by specific presuppositions, and in the constant effort to lay them down as far as possible. In short, one would think that the correct traversing of the circle would be a traversing with critical

awareness, self-control and self-exposure. But Heidegger himself attaches a different meaning to the “right way”: he invites the interpreters not to obey passively the fore-understanding imposed on them by various “fancies and popular conceptions,” but to shape it “out of the things themselves” (*aus den Sachen selbst*) (153). This laconic appeal to “things themselves” gives rise to a number of questions. Does this appeal not lead to obscuring the real nature of understanding, to neglecting the significance of the interpreter’s role and, finally, to the illusion of an objective interpretation based on a fore-understanding arising out of “the things themselves”?

Promoting “things” to a regulative principle that exclusively leads interpretation seems to disrupt and revoke the very existence of a hermeneutic circle.<sup>28</sup> The irresolvable tension between the hermeneutic aspects of a text and a tacit foundationalist appeal appears here in the form of a tension between the fore-structure that is said to condition all understanding at the existential level and the things themselves as norms of interpretation. The “As-structure” of the interpretation and the fore-structure of understanding are Heidegger’s crucial and original contribution to the hermeneutic endeavour, revealing understanding and interpretation as existential characteristics with a range and significance much wider than what traditional hermeneutics would allow for. The conceptual lacunae already pointed out, the lack of sufficient clarification and the inability to indicate the specifically hermeneutic nature of the attempt are, at least in part, a result of the conditions under which *Being and Time* was written.<sup>29</sup> We will complete our discussion of this work with a consideration of the problem that arises when the scope of understanding and interpretation becomes so extended that it transcends and infringes upon the very limits of language.

From the very beginning, Heidegger had referred to a “mere pre-predicative seeing” of beings as a means of primordial understanding that interprets beings “as a table, a door, a carriage, or a bridge,” without having to be explicitly stated “in a determining *assertion*” (149). In the section devoted to “assertion as a derivative mode of interpretation” (section 33), Heidegger will contrast an assertion like “The hammer is heavy” with some “primordial carrying out of interpretation” of the type “too heavy” or “hand me over another hammer!” While an assertion expresses an attitude of existential neutrality and distanced theoretical (if not “logical”) perception, primordial understanding is carried out on the basis of a vital practical appropriation of beings. It is established in the everydayness of existence and understands them as ready-to-hand, integrating them “as” these or those in the whole of relations and practical references that make up my world. This “hermeneutic As,” the primary structure of familiarity with things and of their understanding, has to be distinguished from the “assertive As,” which constitutes a derivative form of “suppressing” the former (158).

Through the distinction between a hermeneutic and an assertive “as,” Heidegger attempts for the first (and possibly the last) time in the history of hermeneutics to dissociate it from language and assign a *pre- or non-linguistic* dimension to it. This distinction, however, seems impossible. The “pre-predicative simple seeing” that Heidegger invokes as a means of carrying out the primordial understanding of a non-linguistic “hermeneutic As” seems to assume the role of a quasi-intuitive knowledge, acquired in the context of everyday action. How is it possible, however, to make the simplicity and pre-predicative immediacy of this seeing compatible with the complexity of understanding, as an understanding of something *as* something? And what kind of “simple seeing” is this, when even the primary perception through the senses has been exposed as a composite hermeneutic act?

In a lecture course of the Winter Semester of 1925–1926, Heidegger characterized this “kind of Being of language” as “concealed up to our days” and as “ontologically totally enigmatic.”<sup>30</sup> In the few months between this and the writing of *Being and Time*, he does not appear to have made any decisive steps towards resolving this obscurity. It is not incidental that language and discourse (*Rede*) as its “existential-ontological foundation” upset the three-fold, “ecstatic time”-oriented structures worked out by Heidegger. Discourse initially appears as “equiprimordial with disposition (*Befindlichkeit*) and understanding (*Verstehen*)” (161). But in the alignment of these existential characteristics along the three time dimensions (section 68), whereas understanding is founded upon the future and disposition upon the past, discourse remains ignored and is substituted in its relation to the present by “falling” (*Verfallen*). This confusion is only exacerbated by the statement that, even though discourse “does not temporalize itself primarily in any definite ecstasis,” the present takes over to perform within it “a privileged constitutive function” (349). In the end, language will be related as “idle talk” (*Gerede*) to the non-authentic “falling,” and only silence will appear as its authentic form. What one can conclude with certainty is Heidegger’s embarrassment in the face of language, which is to take its revenge upon him by breaking down the confining models in which he is trying to subsume it.

### III. HERMENEUTIC TIDINGS

After the failure to complete *Being and Time*, Heidegger’s philosophical investigation turns to new directions. The 1929 lecture entitled *What is Metaphysics?* will illustrate the impasse of his thought in the late 1920s that was to lead him to the famous and spectacular “turn.” Despite Heidegger’s own belief, this turn *did* signal a shift of position, which in simple terms can be described as a resignation from the attempt to ground the meaning of Being in Dasein through an analytic of existence that leads to “fundamental ontology” and directs it. Since Dasein, individual existence, has proven unable to sustain

Heidegger's foundationalism, it is now emphatically transformed into a *Da-Sein*: into the Here (*Da*) of a Being (*Sein*), which no longer constitutes a projection (*Entwurf*) of existence, but a dynamic historical process of revelation and concealment of truth that transcends and over-determines human will and power.

The scope of the Heideggerean turn first becomes clear in philosophical circles in 1947, after the publication of the famous *Letter on Humanism*. Notably called "the house of Being,"<sup>31</sup> language emerges in this letter not as an existential of doubtful function, but as the main field of unfolding truth as strife between concealment and revelation. Language does not constitute a man's act, characteristic or creation, but rather a response to the "call" and the "voice of Being." Heidegger's next approach to language will take place in the text "A Dialogue From Within Language," written in 1953–1954 "on the occasion of a visit by Professor Tezuka of the Imperial University of Tokyo."<sup>32</sup> This text represents a stylistically unsound attempt to engage in a philosophical dialogue with the Japanese professor, an attempt which confirms that the philosophical dialogue not only was born but also probably died with Plato. This Heideggerean dialogue often comes close to bad taste and kitsch—as when, for example, the interlocutors discover the essence of language in *Koto ba*, where *ba* denotes leafage or flowers and *Koto* "the pure delight of the beckoning stillness" (142/45). The relevance and importance of the text become evident only after it is divested of this pseudo-dialogic character.

In this text, Heidegger is indeed "on the way to language," trying to escape the difficulties of his previous attempts to conceptualize and philosophically assess it. He is no longer satisfied with the characterization of language as the house of Being. This he considers a "clumsy" expression (90/5) that overlooks the multiplicity of languages and language families and fails to provide "a concept of the essence of language" (112/22). In searching for this essence in what he calls "the Hermeneutic" (*das Hermeneutische*), Heidegger rehabilitates the concept of hermeneutics abandoned long ago, and modifies it in a way compatible with his later thought. He is no longer interested in hermeneutics as an "art of understanding" (like the earlier philosophers), or as "interpretation as such" (as he initially was). He explores hermeneutics only in the context of an attempt to "determine the essence of interpretation through the Hermeneutic" (98/11)—which, however, "means not just the interpretation but, even before it, the bearing of message [*Botschaft*] and tidings [*Kunde*]" (122/29).

In a characteristic return to his philosophical origins, Heidegger alludes implicitly, but clearly, to the lecture of 1923.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, he exposes his earlier hermeneutic investigations to radical evaluation and modification. The hermeneutic task of human beings is no longer determined by the facticity of individual existence. It does not primarily consist of a self-referential understanding of human life and the world, but of "hearing" and then "bringing tidings," "preserving a message" (126/32). Understanding and interpretation thus contain two dimensions: the receiving and hearing of the message on the



one hand, and its preserving and transmission as tidings on the other. If we compare these dimensions to understanding's description in *Being and Time* as a "thrown project," we observe that the first dimension takes the place of throwing, while the second supersedes Dasein's projecting upon its future possibilities.<sup>34</sup> Understanding and interpretation continue to provide a dynamic association of something given and of a human contribution. The difference lies in the degree to which each participates in the overall combination: while in *Being and Time* Man receives his "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*) and directs it under the conditions of a free projection toward infinite future possibilities, in Heidegger's later philosophy the content of the human tidings is strongly determined by the message previously received.

This quasi-dialectical relationship between hearing and transmitting also leads to a revision of the concept of the hermeneutic circle, now defined by Heidegger as a circle of the "relationship between the message [*Botschaft*] and the bearing of it [*Botengang*]" : "The message-bearer [*Botengänger*] must come from the message. But before this he must also have gone toward it" (150/51). The interpreter, in Heidegger's sense of the term, is now expected to transmit and announce only what has been entrusted to him or her in the form of a message; in order to hear it, however, it is first necessary for him to turn to and approach it. Heidegger confirms the inescapable nature of this movement, but at the same time he expresses his reservations about the benefit of characterizing this movement as a circle: "This necessary acceptance of the hermeneutic circle does not mean that in the notion of circling we experience primordially the hermeneutic relation" (*ibid.*). He even certifies that he no longer supports his earlier view, since "that talk of a circle always remains superficial" (151/51).

*Being and Time*'s "fore-understanding" is thus replaced by participation in the "hermeneutic relationship" (*hermeneutischer Bezug*); Man is "called" by Being itself to become part of this relationship, which in turn means "the presence of present beings [*Anwesen des Anwesenden*]"—i.e., the twofold [*Zwiefalt*] of the two out of their oneness [*Einfalt*]" (122/30). The allusion to this "twofold" between presence and present beings signifies that, apart from the particular beings becoming present and accessible, there exists the fact of Being-present, the very presence itself, the revealedness of beings in general—truth as a strife between unveiling and concealment and as the condition of the possibility of every particular appearance and disappearance of a being. It is this very twofold that calls Man, who in turn is expected to "correspond to the call [*Zuspruch*] of the twofold and thus bear witness to its message" (*ibid.*).

The hermeneutic relationship—i.e., the relationship of Man to the twofold, is not determined by an inherent need of individual existence, but by language itself. In the field of language we could perhaps discern another twofold, homologous to that between "presence and present beings"—namely,



the twofold between language and particular utterances. The essence of language could be located precisely in this twofold: since language does not confine itself to particular statements, it is not even identified with the sum of possible phrases or articulations, but rather transcends them as an infinite source of new possibilities, as an incessant overflowing of meaning. Just as the twofold between presence and present beings emerged out of their oneness, the twofold between language and utterances equally emerges out of an analogous unity that guarantees the transmission of meaning, inasmuch as the utterances participate in the totality of language—the “relation of all relations” (215/107).

The hermeneutic relationship does not arise as a human product, nor does it take shape on the basis of human wishes and desires. In this relationship, Man is called to receive the message and transmit it further—after hearing it. The point of departure for this relationship rests outside, beyond and above Man, who is unable even to determine the exact sources of the messages. Such a determination is not feasible, because the origin of a message cannot be located in a particular being and cannot ever be fully revealed. It rather stems from that field of strife between truth and forgetfulness, revelation and concealment, that Heidegger now calls Being. The common denominator of Heidegger’s appeals to Being lies in the suggestion that truth is not confined to a subjective intellectual, logical, or linguistic human activity, but rather denotes a dynamic process originating outside the human being and leading beyond it. It is Man’s duty to be constantly prepared for receiving and protecting the signs of this strife and the revelations it permits. The hermeneutic relationship is a relationship of readiness for an “obedient” perception of the messages of this truth process.

It is evident that such a hermeneutic relationship, in which *Man is no longer the one who asks, but the one who is being asked*, has nothing in common with a hermeneutics up to then (including *Being and Time*) focusing on human questioning. This is obviously the reason why Heidegger in his “turn” abandons altogether the use of the concept of hermeneutics. The text “A Dialogue From Within Language” is the only exception, although its careful references to “the Hermeneutic” do not signify an attempt to restore or reintroduce the concept of hermeneutics as such. The acknowledgement of the existence of messages that are not products of a self-conceited human subjectivity but rather originate beyond and outside us, the insight that language is not a human tool or construction but rather (in a twofold to every utterance) an endless source and unexplored condition of the possibility of every statement which, as such, “is always ahead of us” (179/75), always above and beyond us—this is the legacy bequeathed by the later Heidegger.

#### IV. HEIDEGGER AND GADAMER: TOWARDS A HERMENEUTIC PHILOSOPHY

“The ‘hermeneutic philosophy’ is Gadamer’s own business.” Does this statement by Heidegger<sup>35</sup> justify the suspicion that his own use of the word “hermeneutic” has always been arbitrary,<sup>36</sup> so that every attempt to explore his relationship to hermeneutics heads in the wrong direction from the very beginning? I think that this suspicion is not valid, and that Heidegger’s contribution to hermeneutics remains unquestionable. He was the first to emancipate understanding from the (sometimes primary and sometimes parasitic) role attached to it by disciplines such as law, theology, and philology, as well as from the duty to assume the methodological equipment of the human sciences. He was the first to reveal its predominant position in the entirety of human existence, for he perceives understanding not as one among many other possibilities of existence but as a fundamental process, not only relating to text interpretation, but also actively present in the nucleus of every human experience and activity.

The universality of the hermeneutic phenomenon and the omnipresence of understanding, which Gadamer will later fervently support, are already clearly emerging in Heidegger’s work, who was the first to raise them to subjects of a philosophical rather than simply methodological treatment. Indeed, understanding and interpretation are not techniques, but rather prerequisites of every technique. They constitute elements of a “Truth” which is not contrary to “Method”<sup>37</sup> but a condition of the possibility of every method. Heidegger’s hermeneutics is no longer a methodology; it may be a method in the sense of Plato’s and Hegel’s dialectic, in that it is not applied to its object from the outside, but emerges from within the object itself and its “very nature” (inasmuch as understanding is an inherent element of the very subject-matter [*Sache*] of the sciences, as well as of existence in general).

This hermeneutic method does not aim at an unrestricted knowledge or a Hegelian absolute self-elucidation of the Spirit. Despite the spectacular shifts of position already mentioned, a permanent characteristic of Heidegger’s approach to the hermeneutic phenomenon is the awareness that light and darkness coexist and are present at every moment. The equi-primordial character and the permanent co-existence of authenticity and inauthenticity in *Being and Time*, as well as the subsequent interweaving of revelation and concealment, of “world” and “earth” within the truth process, are perfect examples of Heidegger’s persistence in reminding us of the limits of *Logos* and of human finitude.<sup>38</sup> As Gadamer was to point out later, “hermeneutics concentrates on something incomprehensible. This has always been the case for hermeneutics.”<sup>39</sup>

What, however, is the relationship between Heidegger’s approach to the hermeneutic phenomenon and what Gadamer later established and presented as *philosophical hermeneutics*? This question touches upon an issue which we

can only deal with in passing in this paper. Certainly, it is evident that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics would never have existed without Heidegger's work (a claim which, however, does not invalidate or undermine Gadamer's originality). It is equally clear, though, that Gadamer is called upon to fill gaps and answer questions that have remained unexplored (or have not even been raised at all) in Heidegger's work. The most important of them is the relation between interpretation(s) and hermeneutics. The latter could secure its autonomous and specific character only to the extent that it is distinguished from the sum of the pre- and non-theoretical interpretations involved in all our relations to the world and all practical acts. Heidegger was clearly unwilling to accept such a distinction or even focus on the way in which hermeneutics originates and emerges from factual interpretations. It is only Gadamer's *transcendental* approach to the hermeneutic question and its transformation into a question concerning the conditions of the possibility of understanding in general that will bring to light and guarantee hermeneutics' autonomy.

As compared to Heidegger's work, philosophical hermeneutics presents three major expansions, transitions, and transformations. The first concerns the fact that Gadamer, being not only Heidegger's son but also Hegel's offspring, places the finitude of human understanding in a wider historical context: in the domain of *tradition*, which constitutes a powerful field of movement and determining condition of the interpreter's fore-understanding. The particular facticity is thus disclosed in its inherently and primarily historical dimension, determined by a plurality of factors, which can only partially be distinguished and clarified. In addition to this affirmation of historicity, Gadamer is guided by a positive evaluation of history itself. History is not the process of expansion of the "forgetfulness of Being," of the accumulation of shades and continuous alienation from the primordial sense of philosophical concepts, but an endless source of new meaning. This new meaning is produced not only through new intellectual achievements, but also through the enrichment of the meaning of the old ones in every act of their understanding. If we were allowed to make a psychological observation, we would locate the main difference between Gadamer and Heidegger in the presence and absence of good faith respectively. When Heidegger suspects veiling, obscuring, and distortions, Gadamer expects an unceasing discovery and production of new meaning.

Apart from this diachronic expansion of the hermeneutic circle towards tradition and the past, Gadamer also undertakes an equally important synchronic expansion, aiming at the inter-subjective, *communicative* dimension of understanding.<sup>40</sup> Interpretation as an "actualizing" (*Vollzug*) is no longer confined to the self-referential field of facticity, Dasein or the interpreter who awaits the call of Being, but rather takes place as a dialogic act. The relation to the Other does not tend to "falling" (*Verfallen*) and the development of "idle talk" (*Gerede*), but awakens dialogue, which, due to its character as an actualization," is raised to an independent value per se.

The association of finitude with historicity as well as the perception of hermeneutics as interpersonal understanding are based on a third expansion of hermeneutics, which grounds the first two and pertains to the significance of language. As a historically growing totality, language constitutes the thread that connects us to the past manifestations of the Spirit, establishing the historicity of fore-understanding and every understanding whatsoever. As a communicative horizon, language constitutes the thread that links us to the Other's presence, establishing dialogue as the field of every understanding and interpreting. The universality of understanding is ultimately nothing but a sign of the only universality possible, the universality of language.<sup>41</sup> For Gadamer, language no longer constitutes the house of Being, but rather "Being that can be understood is language."<sup>42</sup> As a result, it is vain to search for a Being above and beyond language. Gadamer does seem to accept a distinction between language and utterances similar to the one described earlier.<sup>43</sup> Philosophical hermeneutics presents language as a "thing in itself" which, unlike the Kantian thing in itself, is not identified negatively as something beyond our experience, which resists our knowledge, but positively as a focal point of participation and constant source of new meaning.

The eminently philosophical character of philosophical hermeneutics lies in the explicit statement and treatment of the transcendental question of the conditions of the possibility of understanding in general. On the basis of what we have said so far, Heidegger's contribution to the preparation and revelation of this dimension must have become evident. What seems imperative for philosophical hermeneutics today, after forty years of contribution to philosophy, is to reflect on its present state and prospects. Here Heidegger again proves useful, mainly through his reflections on the status of hermeneutics put forth in the 1923 lecture course. We have seen that the doubts concerning the philosophical character of hermeneutics in this text resulted from Heidegger's inability to locate and conceptually determine the particularly hermeneutic dimension of his thought. Those views, however, when put forward in the present situation, become extremely timely.

In the last years of his life, Gadamer remarkably continued to produce important texts, often alternating between insightful observations concerning his previous work, on the one hand, and a slightly narcissistic affectation, on the other. His descendants, all those who more or less pose themselves within the hermeneutic tradition, should now more than ever reflect on the young Heidegger's words cited earlier: "Hermeneutics is not philosophy at all, but in fact something preliminary" (GA 63, 20/15). His paradoxical appeal to remain within this "provisional" stage "as long as possible" has clearly been fulfilled in the last few decades, in which hermeneutics indeed succeeded in "placing an object which has hitherto fallen into forgetfulness before today's philosophers for their 'well-disposed consideration.'" Posing the transcendental question about the conditions of the possibility of understanding has

attributed a philosophical character to hermeneutics, but is not sufficient to guarantee this character (not to mention the fact that the very notion of being-philosophical is deeply historical and thus prone to transformation). Philosophical hermeneutics at present is forced to make a choice. It will either—against the view espoused by Gadamer—become another philosophical “school,” entrenching itself behind the constant reproduction and restatement of that initial question, deviating from predominantly philosophical issues and drifting towards some self-referential investigation; or it will acknowledge that the new motivations in philosophy will not arise out of the mere enterprise to understand understanding, but, as has always been the case, out of the attempt to understand Man and world. In doing this, philosophical hermeneutics would transform itself into a hermeneutic philosophy.<sup>44</sup>

Although Heidegger was the first to recognize the full scope of the hermeneutic phenomenon, his contribution leaves open the crucial question of how to accomplish that transformation. This task is still pending. Certainly, such a process of transformation would not aim at creating yet another philosophical school. Transcending the limits of schools of thought, a hermeneutic philosophy will be aware of the historical dimension inherent to philosophical hermeneutics and of the relevance of this dimension to our own, present self-understanding—but it will *not* set historical questioning in opposition to transcendentalism, nor will it submit to the current “post-metaphysical” pleadings.<sup>45</sup> Following philosophical hermeneutics, it will reflect on “positionality,” on the prismatic and finite nature of each philosophical point of departure and each individual position. It will be aware of the historicity and situatedness of philosophy, the conditions and sources of the omnipresent historical and dialogic fore-understanding. It will acknowledge the multifaceted nature of understanding, the finitude of the spirit, the transformation of the Absolute into an absolute process, which is endless and at the same time complete within itself. It will realize that the partiality of every philosophical view does not undermine the truth claim present in it as in every articulation, nor does it lead to relativism or scepticism. It will be aware of the limits of Logos, but, in contrast to the parasitical negative hermeneutics of Deconstruction, will not obstinately adhere to these limits, but will rather proceed within the entire space signalled by them: the endless field of understanding. It will be continuously cautious against the absolute distinction between historical and systematic investigation, and will continue to search for the diachronic, historically developing truth contained in the texts of the past. Finally, it will continue to move in the realm of the interplay between identity and otherness, an interplay that emerges between what is to be understood and the multiplicity of understanding, actively mediating this relation. As heir of philosophical hermeneutics, this hermeneutic philosophy will be able to further utilize in the best way possible—that is constructively—Heidegger’s legacy.<sup>46</sup>

## ENDNOTES

1. "Das Hermeneutische," *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 6th ed. (henceforth *UzS*), (Pfullingen, 1979), 98/11. Our translations are based on the English translation by P. D. Hertz, *On the Way to Language*, (New York, 1971), 1–54; alterations are not pointed out. Page numbers refer both to the German original and the English translation. Hertz translates the title of the text, "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache," as "A dialogue on Language." Towards the end of the text, however, Heidegger makes clear that it is not a dialogue "on" (*über*) language, but rather a dialogue "from within" language and its essence (*von ihrem Wesen her*; 149–150/51).
2. *UzS*, 95/9.
3. See *Gesamtausgabe* (henceforth GA) (Frankfurt, 1975), 56/57, 117.
4. *Ibid.*, 131–132.
5. GA 58, 55. In the same lecture course (262–263), "diahermeneutics" is evoked as a substitute for "dialectic as a synthetic juxtaposition of notions."
6. *Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität)*, GA 63. Our translations are based on the English translation by J. van Buren, *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, (Indiana, 1999); alterations are not pointed out. Page numbers refer both to the German original and the English translation.
7. This is what Heidegger himself seemed to believe. In a footnote in *Being and Time* (72), he pointed out that "Dasein's 'Hermeneutics of Facticity' has been presented repeatedly in the lectures since the Winter Semester of 1919/20."
8. The noun *Faktizität* comes from the adjective *faktisch*, which denotes the real as a given, created, constructed "fact" (*Faktum*, lat. *factum, facio*). The term appears in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is used by Dilthey and established by the Neo-Kantians, who draw a distinction between *Faktizität* and *Logizität*. See T. Kisiel, "Das Entstehen des Begriffsfeldes 'Faktizität' im Frühwerk Heideggers," in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* 4 (1986–87): 91–120.
9. During the period 1919–1923, Heidegger uses the terms "life" (*Leben*), "existence" (*Existenz*), "facticity" (*Faktizität*), and "Dasein" as near synonyms. Towards the end of this period, due to the re-appearance and gradual predominance of the ontological inquiry, "existence" and "Dasein" conceptually substitute for the terms "life" and "facticity." However, it is only in *Being and Time* that Heidegger abandons the concept of "life" once and for all, calling it "ontologically undetermined" and thus distancing himself from Dilthey and his "philosophy of life" (see *Being and Time*, 49–50, 209, 246–247, 403, etc.).
10. For instance, in Patristic theology. These views are also shared by Gadamer, who, throughout *Truth and Method*, will extensively elaborate and firmly establish Heidegger's critique of Schleiermacher and Dilthey; see *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen, 1960); also in *Gesammelte Werke* 1, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall: *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (London, 1989).
11. See GA 63, 80/62: "Dasein (factual life) is Being in a world."
12. See "Der eine Weg Martin Heideggers," in *Gesammelte Werke* (henceforth GW) 3: 422; English translation: "Martin Heidegger's One Path," in *Reading Heidegger from the*

*Start*, ed. T. Kisiel and J. van Buren (New York, 1994), 19–34. The translation of *genetivus subjectivus* as “possessive” (24) is rather misleading.

13. Heidegger is here still under the influence of Dilthey and his famous dictum which defined understanding as “life capturing life itself”; see *Gesammelte Schriften* 7: 136.

14. See G. Figal, “Wie philosophisch zu verstehen ist. Zur Konzeption des Hermeneutischen bei Heidegger,” in *Siebzig Jahre “Sein und Zeit,”* ed. H. Vetter, Wiener Tagungen zur Phänomenologie (Frankfurt a.M., 1999), 138.

15. See also section 16, where “formal indication” is discussed; a more sustained treatment of “formal indication” can be found in the lecture of the Winter Semester of 1920/21 *Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*; see GA 60, 55–65. “Formal indication” functions as an equivalent to the “hermeneutical intuition” mentioned above; it indicates an attempt to develop concepts out of a pre-theoretical, historical understanding and “formalize” them in a way that retains their demonstrative sense as indications that point back to the facticity of their historical provenance and forward to their possible critical concretization in new historical contexts. We could describe this notion of the “formal” as a mode of conceptual/theoretical mediation that preserves the immediacy of factual existence. Nevertheless, Heidegger will never give a full and satisfactory account of this notion. In *Being and Time* he still promises to clarify the possibility of concept-formation in the third Division of the first Part, which has never been published (see a note on 349, deleted in the later editions, but retained in the English translation of Macquarrie, 401).

16. See Figal, *ibid.*, 139; and J. Grondin, “Die Hermeneutik der Faktizität als ontologische Destruktion und Ideologiekritik. Zur Aktualität der Hermeneutik in *Zur philosophischen Aktualität Heideggers* 2,” ed. D. Papenfuss and O. Pöggeler (Frankfurt a.M 1990), 171.

17. See section 1: “The title ‘Ontology.’” The preparatory and auxiliary role assigned to hermeneutics with respect to philosophy/ontology accounts to some extent for the title of the lecture.

18. Heidegger’s evident reservation towards an unconditional viewing and grasping of “things themselves” indicates the distance he had taken since 1923 from Husserl’s phenomenology. His references to phenomenology are positive only when he focuses on the concept of *phenomenon* as a being that manifests itself by itself” (section 14 et passim), or when he contrasts phenomenology to dialectic (section 9). The following surprising comment is noteworthy: “Göttingen 1913: for a whole semester Husserl’s students argued about how a mailbox looks. Using this kind of treatment, one then moves on to talk about religious experience as well. If that is philosophy, then I, too, am all for dialectic” (GA 63, 110/86). The correct word in the last phrase is most likely “phenomenology” rather than “philosophy.” This is probably one of many printing mistakes encountered in the *Gesamtausgabe*.

19. See *Wahrheit und Methode*, GW 1: 281–305.

20. The most significant illustration of the scope and function of Heidegger’s concept of destruction is found in an extremely important text of 1922 entitled *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation*. This text was first published in 1989 by H. U. Lessing in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* 6: 237–269. (English translation by M. Baur: “Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle. Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation,” in *Man and World* 25 (1992): 355–393).



21. See *UzS*, 96/10.

22. *Sein und Zeit*, 16th ed. (Tübingen 1986), 38. Our translations are based on the English translation by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson: *Being and Time*, (New York, 1962); references are made to the pagination of the German original, indicated also in the margins of the English edition.

23. See also F. W. v. Herrmann, *Weg und Methode. Zur hermeneutischen Phänomenologie des seinsgeschichtlichen Denkens* (Frankfurt a.M., 1990), 15–16.

24. Figal, *ibid.*, 137. A section of the second Division on “The hermeneutical situation at which we have arrived.” (section 63) does not add much to the elucidation of the concept of hermeneutics in *Being and Time*.

25. See Gadamer, *GW* 1: 296–300.

26. Here we are using a term not used by Heidegger himself, in order to draw attention to the unity of the three dimensions of what he calls “fore-structure of understanding” (*Vorstruktur des Verstehens*). Fore-understanding (*Vorverständnis*) as indicating this structure was mainly used by Bultmann, before it was established as a philosophical term through Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*.

27. Contrary to what G. Scholtz seems to believe (“Was ist und seit wann gibt es ‘Hermeneutische Philosophie’?” in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* 8 (1992/93): 104), the transcendental inquiry of a philosophical hermeneutics does not exclude, but rather involves and implies deontic issues and normative consequences.

28. Only Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, under the decisive influence of Hegel, will later develop and transform the hermeneutic circle so that it can be productively traversed. In this, the pole of the interpreter (i.e., of fore-understanding) is historically determined in terms of tradition and produced as a “history of effect” (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). The interpreter does not monotonously search for the chimera of “things themselves,” but rather produces and traverses a circle between history and the present, between the historically effected “whole” of the spirit and the “part” of a special individual creation.

29. The work was compiled in March 1926, under the pressure of the prospect of Heidegger’s appointment as Professor at the University of Marburg. Heidegger resorted to earlier notes, papers and lectures, often incorporating them unedited into his work, which at times seems quite unsystematic. Gadamer rightly characterizes the process of writing *Being and Time* as “the story of a true improvisation on the basis of excessive preparation.” “Erinnerungen an Heideggers Anfänge,” in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* 4 (1986/87): 17.

30. *GA* 21: 151.

31. *GA* 9: 333.

32. “Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache”; see also n. 1.

33. An important indication of this allusion is the renewed reference to Plato’s *Ion*, 534e. In the 1923 text, Heidegger translated the Platonic noun *hermeneus* as “speaker” (*Sprecher*) and the act of *hermeneuein* as “communicating, announcing” (*mitteilen, kundgeben*); the same is the case in the later text (see *GA* 63: 9/6, and *UzS*, 121–122/29).

34. See also Hermann, *ibid.*, 25–26.



35. From a letter to Otto Pöggeler, cited in O. Pöggeler, *Heidegger und die hermeneutische Philosophie* (Munich, 1983), 395.

36. See *UzS*, 98/11.

37. The title of Gadamer's work *Truth and Method* erroneously became the reason for taking his hermeneutic endeavor as an attempt to juxtapose truth to scientific method and reject the latter's claim to truth. Forty years after the publication of the work, this misinterpretation should have been resolved.

38. For the "interplay" between "world" and "earth," see "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes." *Holzwege*, GA 5: 1–74; English translation: "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings* (London, 1993), 139–212. See also my, "Art as Ontology. Heidegger on the *Origin of the Work of Art*," *Greek Philosophy and The Fine Arts*, ed. K. Boudouris, Athens 2000 II: 181–190. This Heideggerian redefinition of truth in the *Origin . . .* has been particularly important for Gadamer's hermeneutical defense of the human sciences as offering a different conception of truth, which is specific to them.

39. GW 10: 63.

40. It would be useful to further explore how Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action*. (*Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, trans. T. McCarthy, (Frankfurt, 1981)), 1984–87 is indebted to this description of understanding as the dialogic act *par excellence*.

41. See GW 1: 478–494.

42. *Ibid.*, 478.

43. At least this is what is indicated through his references to *verbum interius*. See the references to Augustine, *ibid.*, 422–431. On the basis of personal discussions with Gadamer, Jean Grondin considers Augustine's *verbum interius* the essence of the universality of Gadamer's hermeneutics: see J. Grondin, *Einführung in die Philosophische Hermeneutik* (Darmstadt, 1991), ix–xi.

44. This seems to be the opinion of G. Figal, when he states that "in hermeneutic philosophy the world is expressed conceptually." *Hermeneutik–hermeneutische Philosophie. Ein Problemaufriss*," in *Hermeneutische Wege. Hans-Georg Gadamer zum Hundertsten*, ed. G. Figal, J. Grondin, and D. J. Schmidt, 342. The distinction between philosophical hermeneutics and hermeneutic philosophy seems to be blurred, however, when Figal attaches to the latter the task of "giving direct expression to the scope of understanding": it "does not deal with understanding in the context of the world, but rather with the world of understanding" (*ibid.*). But the attempt to "comprehend how understanding takes place" ("begreifen, von woher das Verstehen geschieht," *ibid.*) is just what philosophical hermeneutics has always been doing. Why should it be assigned to hermeneutic philosophy?

45. As G. Scholtz seems to do. "Was ist und seit wann gibt es 'hermeneutische Philosophie'?" 93–119. Scholtz rightly emphasizes the importance of historical consciousness and the awareness of historicity for a hermeneutic philosophy. Nevertheless, in his attempt to set clear and narrowly defined limits for a hermeneutic philosophy, he juxtaposes the latter to "metaphysics, transcendentalism, and every philosophy of history." He thus describes it as a substitute for the disappearing metaphysics, overseeing in this way metaphysical projects such as Hegel's which also put emphasis on historicity. In addition, when Scholtz insists that "every knowledge is not based on transcendental but rather on historical and contingent presuppositions, which cannot be rationally reconstructed," he

seems to raise doubts about the very aim and task of philosophy: the rational and conceptual reconstruction of reality. The view of Scholtz takes account of an older attempt by O. F. Bollnow to distinguish between philosophical hermeneutics and hermeneutic philosophy: “The former consists in raising the method developed within the philological and historical sciences to a higher philosophical consciousness. The latter signals the attempt of philosophy to engage in hermeneutic activity in general, that is an activity interpreting the reality of life-world.” “Festrede zu Wilhelm Diltheys 150. Geburtstag,” *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* 2 (1984), 49–50. Such a broad “definition” of hermeneutic philosophy is probably sufficient, and certainly more adequate than that of Scholtz.

46. I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for this Journal, and my colleague and friend Dionysis Goutsos, for their valuable comments on this paper.