

EVENT HERMENEUTICS AND NARRATIVE:
TARRYING IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HANS-GEORG GADAMER

by

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Event Hermeneutics and Narrative: Tarrying in the Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this thesis is to elucidate a frequently misunderstood and undervalued content in the hermeneutical philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer, his characterization of a modality of being he calls tarrying (*Verweilen*) as a special temporality. The characteristics of this temporality specify and deepen what he means by “event-hermeneutics.” This time-concept is decisive for seeing the relevance of Gadamer’s philosophical project to, for example, a defense of the humanities, as well as to the struggle over a meaningful concept of spirit. In light of this primary aim, a second dimension of this thesis is to consider the temporal qualities of narrative thinking and narrative art, especially those qualities relating to the measurement and assemblage of time, since these qualities make narrative art conspicuously exemplary of the calculative and planning reason whose “onesidedness” Gadamer’s philosophical project opposes. Gadamer’s many passing references to narrative art express reservations about this art form. Taken together, these amount less to a critique of the temporality of narrative than to a radical reconception of narrative art consistent with his own time-concept of tarrying. However, a view of narrative art that holds to the normative view of time and the corresponding ontology can be found in the work of Paul Ricoeur. His work develops from precisely what is critiqued by Gadamer. I stress the importance of this contrast for correctly situating their respective hermeneutical philosophies. Gadamer’s alternative conception of time is much more radical than Ricoeur’s, but because Gadamer implies rather than thematizes a critique of narrative temporality, it is left to the attentive reader to work out. English readers, though, have been hampered by the unavailability, until recently, of Gadamer translations, some of which are here examined.

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Preface

In 1996, I published an essay on Gadamer and St. Augustine, entitled “Theology as Hermeneutical Stance: Gadamer and Self-Composure in St. Augustine’s *Confessions*.”¹ It was the fruit of my preoccupation with constructing a hermeneutical account of the insuperability of the distance between self and other. In the early stages of my doctoral work I thought I might continue this exploration by examining depictions of this dynamic in narratives, taking proper care to distinguish narratological questions from hermeneutical ones. In subsequent reading of Gadamer, however, I soon realized, firstly, that, contrary to what many appeals to Gadamer’s philosophical authority seemed to suggest, including mine in the published essay, the ‘appropriative’ versus the ‘open’ stance toward the other is far from the core of his own preoccupations. On the contrary, Gadamer struck a chord, my suspicion that the dichotomization of self and other, which enjoys such prestige in literary studies and other humanities fields, might be something of a fool’s game, a game without end and singularly unhelpful in terms of answering questions about belonging to and partaking in the world. It seemed to me fruitless to conceive of understanding in terms of such a separation or estrangement, or, worse, a “paradox.” It also became clear that narrative itself was problematic to Gadamer, problematic in a way somehow connected to forbidden questions about time. In this dissertation, these questions, the question of time, of participating in a world, and the question of narrative, intersect in ways that make them new.

My thesis attempts to present something about Gadamer that, I argue, has been largely overlooked – his efforts to concretize the *Ereignis* (event) of understanding by

¹ *Comitatus* 27 (1996), pp. 1-13.

giving very specific contours to it as an experience of “tarrying” (*Verweilen*), whose definitive quality is its temporality, so that we may further say that this other time is identical with the concrete core of Gadamer’s hermeneutics. In other words, the positive, anomalous, and autonomous character of the event of understanding is central to Gadamer’s philosophy:

When a work of art truly takes hold of us, it is not an object that stands opposite us which we look at in hope of seeing through it to an intended conceptual meaning. Just the reverse. The work is an *Ereignis* – an *event* that “appropriates us” into itself. It jolts us, it knocks us over, and sets up a world of its own, into which we are drawn, as it were.²

But it is a “world” which is given a further specifically *temporal* character: “The temporal dimension that is bound up with art is, in fact, fundamental...The Weile [the “while” in *Verweilen*, tarrying] has this very special temporal structure – a structure of being moved....³ Readers of Gadamer have given only passing mention to this further characterization of *Ereignis* as tarrying, and do not, I suggest, see either the uniqueness or the implications of its temporality.

Briefly, what is special about the temporality of tarrying is that, when tarrying, an awareness of time passing is *absent*, due to the intensity of phenomenological engrossment in the matter at hand. So the temporal aspect of tarrying is not, as is often assumed, merely the taking of one’s time to linger, as in a slackening or slowing down to contemplate, but rather, its temporal quality is a function of the fullness, the *intensity* of engrossment and attention. But neither is this temporality merely the absence of time.

² “Aesthetics,” in *Gadamer in Conversation*, ed. & trans. Richard Palmer (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 2001), pp. 61-77, p. 71.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-7 (parenthesis in original).

The critical point is that in Gadamer's characterization of the experience of tarrying, time takes on a positive character as an *antithesis* to normative, dimensional time-consciousness. This provides an important key to understanding what Gadamer means by an "ontological onesidedness." The, as it were, 'two sides,' are temporally distinguished, not as the absence/presence of time, but as two distinct kinds of time. As opposed to merely indicating time's absence from thought during tarrying, his suggestion of another kind of temporality allows him to formulate *a certain locus or site of thinking other than thinking oriented to or situated in dimensional time*. Therefore, abiding in inquiry itself stands as a form of resistance to this other way. In Chapter One, I lay this out; Gadamer's opposing temporalities delineate his account of, on the one hand, his account of participation in the world, and on the other, his account of what this experience stands opposed to: the perfectly planned and administered, technologized world on the other, which is defined, indeed facilitated, by a normative, utilitarian temporality. Tarrying is not a seclusive hiatus from life, but the site of intervention in this world, where one is confronted with the strange, or troubled by worldly questions of class, race, or gender. As Gadamer says in the 1992 *Wort und Bild* essay, "'Filled time' has no duration and does not pass away; yet every kind of thing happens there."⁴

Gadamer's continual effort to concretize the event of understanding, to which effort I argue the temporality of tarrying is central, is consistent with his continual, perhaps growing preoccupation with making philosophy more concrete. Jean Grondin mentions in the epilogue to his recent biography of Gadamer, for example, how Gadamer admonished participants at one of the last colloquiums Gadamer attended because "the

⁴ "*Wort und Bild – 'so wahr, so seiend,'*" trans. Richard E. Palmer, unpublished, pp. 1-50, p. 50 (forthcoming, Northwestern University Press, 2003). Prof. Palmer has kindly provided, and granted me permission to cite, this and other of his unpublished translations.

presentations were perhaps not *lebensweltlich* (close to the living world) or not “phenomenological” enough, that is, not grounded in a genuine experience of the things themselves.”⁵ Gadamer similarly laments the tendency of conceptual thinking toward abstract aridity in the very late “From Word to Concept: The Task of Hermeneutics as Philosophy,” where he looks at this problem of aridity as a historical development beginning with the Greeks, and begins his essay by revising his topic “to read ‘*not only from word to concept but likewise from concept to word.*’”⁶ He suggests the need to rescue philosophy from this continuing trend by reorienting conceptuality to the primordial experience of recognition wherein something is *addressing* us.

In this connection, to underscore my approach to Gadamer’s philosophy, it is perhaps a benefit rather than a hindrance that as a reader from a literary theory background I have no particular commitment to the conceptualizations of academic philosophy. I am a trained reader, trained as it were, to tarry, and trained on an enigma in the work of Gadamer that emerged while pursuing a question in the study of narrative, the problematic of self and other. For there appeared to be a disconnect between Gadamer’s dialogical model of understanding and what I noticed was his characterization of the event of understanding as a singular, autonomous tarrying, complete with qualities of rightness and even divinity. My literary orientation brought into focus what many readers of Gadamer conclude is a contradiction or somehow undefined. In my introductory chapter I show how it is possible to embrace Gadamer’s theory of the historically-affected consciousness and apply it to a theorization of dialogue as social

⁵ *Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 333. Grondin mentions the participants in question include Gianni Vattimo and Richard Rorty.

⁶ Trans. Richard E. Palmer, unpublished (forthcoming, Northwestern University Press, 2003), p. 1. See Introduction, below, note 1.

praxis *without taking the step to phenomenological concreteness*; in other words, without taking notice of what Gadamer says about the truth experience of art. Specifically, I show that an insistence on the self-other dynamic only betrays an abstraction from the concrete event of engrossment in a subject matter that stands at the heart of understanding for Gadamer. Put simply, one cannot at the same time be engrossed in a subject matter and simultaneously be aware of oneself in relation to an other, just as one cannot, say, read and watch how fast one reads at the same time. In other words, there is no disconnect, no contradiction, if one takes Gadamer's orientation to concrete experience seriously. I believe the specifically temporal significance of tarrying may have been overlooked by other scholars working with Gadamer because of a certain blindness to the question of time. And as a consequence, Gadamer's thought is frequently dismissed as problematic, while its actual radicality is overlooked. The Introduction surveys moments where a fuller consideration of the question of event, in particular of its temporal aspect, can resolve difficulties even prominent readers in the field of hermeneutics readers have had with Gadamer's hermeneutics. But as well as to dispel such reservations about Gadamer, the aim in the Introduction is to show how decisive Gadamer's orientation to event actually is.

The English reception of Gadamer may have been handicapped by the fact that many Gadamer texts have only recently become available in English. And because Gadamer was still writing philosophy until the mid-nineties, he is simply still in the process of being read, even in German. Such titles as *Praise of Theory* (1998), *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics* (1999), and *Gadamer in Conversation* (2001) reveal Gadamer in greater breadth than does *Truth and Method*, and perhaps instruct us in how

to read that work. After all, the later Gadamer makes clear that he was a philosopher who preferred speaking over writing, and the short essay over the book, which makes the project of understanding him more of a scholarly adventure of following clues, than the orderly study of a single treatise. Richard Palmer's forthcoming *Bouquet of the Later Gadamer: A Reader* (Northwestern UP, 2003) will do a great deal to expose English readers to Gadamer's most recent work. Of particular importance to a re-reading of Gadamer is the lengthy essay "*Wort und Bild*," which I treat at length in Chapter One because of its explicit, substantive discussion of the temporality of tarrying in relation to the experience of the work of art. Professor Palmer has been generous enough to provide me with his translation of this and with other new material.

Bringing to light the concrete core of Gadamer's hermeneutics means that narrative becomes significantly problematized, both as a literary genre (Chapter Two) and as an ontology, a way of being in the world (Chapter Three). Chapter Two considers the many passing references to narrative art in Gadamer's essays. It is quite clear that he regards narrative art not structurally but in terms of a language event. Gadamer associates narrative with *mythos*, with the ritualistic and conservative functioning of language that confirms one's home in the world. His discussion of narrative often functions to contrast the language event he considers exemplary, the language experience that is radically unsettling, and so enlarges, rather than confirms, one's home. Gadamer's primary interest is in the fundamental orality of language in these two kinds of language event, the conservative, or "ritualistic," and the transformative. Exemplary of the former, tarrying in narrative lacks the transformative character that other more radical language experiences occasion.

My conclusion discusses the ramifications of regarding narrative art as a language event rather than a structure. At the very least, a view of narrative as event cannot accommodate itself very well to literary analysis that wishes to adopt Gadamer's conversational model for an analysis of the problematic of self and other. In fact, regarding narrative as event poses a challenge to what prevails in many approaches to teaching narrative, the attempt to overcome the invisibility of the text with structural apparatuses of varying complexity, even though every reader intuitively knows *from her reading experience* that this very invisibility is where the affective power of narrative lies. The resistance to literature, for example at the college level where I teach, is in this sense justified, and exacerbates a belief that teaching literature is scandalous. But an event approach to literature does not overcome the text so much as develop an awareness of the dynamics of its hold over us. This is not necessarily to condemn of the kind of language event that reading narrative is. Rather, the point is that making such distinctions about the experience of language, whether narrative language or that of other literary works of art, allows the true participatory dimension of reading literature to stand out, whether ritualistic or otherwise. Reading literature comes to stand distinctly as actual social praxis, and thus has a self-evident and immediate educational value. I suggest that participation in this sense is Gadamer's answer to the question of the locus of human fulfillment, which is in part what is at issue in Gadamer's continuing concern with correcting an ontological "onesidedness." My argument is that the graspable, convincing account of human participation and fulfillment that event-hermeneutics provides, which is predicated on precise and readily discernible qualities of intellectual experience, completely reframes the studying of literature, and re-grounds intellectual life generally.

So, it is to the relevance of literary studies generally that his thinking applies. And while literary study suffers from both the common perception that what a text means is subjective and therefore scandalous to teach, the humanities in general suffer from the belief that they are in general irrelevant 'because they don't teach us how to do anything practical.'

However, the centrality of temporality to Gadamer's event hermeneutics has an additional relevance to the study of narrative, whether in the context of literary studies or cultural studies, because all forms of narrative have by definition a temporal logic: The cultural dominance of narrative generally (cinematic, written, etc.) comes into question in light of Gadamer's critique of the dominance of dimensionalized time over human thinking. Surely we notice how narrative art would seem to embody this? In the context of his distinction between temporalities, one must consider whether the cultural dominance of narrative art is perhaps more symptomatic than joyful, symptomatic of the alienation from the concrete life-world that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is attempting to redress. Gadamer, perhaps surprisingly, never takes up the question of narrative's inherent dimensionality, and how this feature of narrative contributes or determines its experience. This is the aspect of narrative that Chapter Three explores. There are clues, but largely it is something the reader is left to infer for herself from his discussions of temporality. It is admittedly difficult to take up this question without succumbing to the abstraction of narrative from concrete experience; in other words, it is the business of structuralism, not event hermeneutics to elucidate the dimensional character of narrative. It is in part to fully define the ontological oneness which Gadamer's philosophy attempts to address that Chapter Three focuses at length on the

work of one of the critics who I argue does not read Gadamer in a way that takes account of the centrality of event-hermeneutics, Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur is important because, while he is candid about a debt to Gadamer, he is nonetheless a philosopher with great literary influence who theorizes a way of being that builds from narrative time. He theorizes both a narrative way of being and a corresponding view of narrative art where time is the definitive feature. Chapter Three shows how Ricoeur takes up the question of time in such a way that he in fact theorizes precisely the normative temporality from which Gadamer sets his time of tarrying apart. I elucidate an encounter of Ricoeur with Gadamer on the subject of time, as well as provide an overview of Ricoeur's subsequent work on narrative, to establish the points of comparison critical to demonstrating this, I believe, critical tension between their respective lines of thought, whatever other compatibilities might be seen between them. Ricoeur's narratological structuralism is important to the dissertation not only strategically, that is, in order to allow the radicality of Gadamer to stand out more fully through the contrast, but because it is important to identify the limits of Ricoeur's influential account of narrative. Gadamer's work on time would suggest that Ricoeur's account is normative. It is also important to correct the too easily assumed belief that the hermeneutics of Gadamer and Ricoeur are essentially compatible. They may be compatible in many ways, of course, but this dissertation shows that Ricoeur, while he may claim a lineage from Gadamer, would take hermeneutics in the direction that Gadamer's event hermeneutics struggles against.

Introduction:

Brushes with Gadamer's Hermeneutics: The Defining question of Event and the Clues of Temporality

I believe it is important to become so absorbed in something that one forgets oneself in it.... Indeed, in the end this is one of the basic conditions for human beings to be able to live together at all in a human way.

- Gadamer, conclusion, "From Word to Concept"¹

The aim in this introductory discussion is to show how a tenacious orientation to the eventfulness of understanding can clarify and redefine some of the debates about philosophical hermeneutics in which Gadamer figures. Using examples of readers closely engaged with his thought, both critics and supporters, I illustrate that persistent reservations about Gadamer may be overcome by a re-reading of his thought that gives deeper consideration to this specifically experiential orientation, especially to what Gadamer has said to facilitate this radical orientation, namely the clues that his numerous

¹ "From Word to Concept: The Task of Hermeneutics as Philosophy," trans. Richard E. Palmer (unpublished), p. 17. The German essay, "Vom Wort zum Begriff: Die Aufgabe der Hermeneutik als Philosophie," appears in the *Gadamer Lesebuch*, ed. Jean Grondin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), pp. 100-110. In my correspondence with Richard Palmer, he indicated that the essay will be included in his *Bouquet of the Later Gadamer: A Reader* (forthcoming, Northwestern University Press, 2003), and was Gadamer's last major intellectual endeavor. The title suggests its historical theme, but another is the necessity of philosophical concepts to speak to people, i.e.: "from concept to word" (1), a theme seemingly borne out in Gadamer's own distillation here of a life-time of thought into a style which appeals for much of

mentions of temporality provide. This re-reading of Gadamer pauses at these moments, moments where other readers of Gadamer have not. The examples of reservations about Gadamer come from figures who have contributed to important hermeneutical debate, such as John Caputo and Richard Bernstein, indicating just how prevalent and normative these readings of Gadamer are. This re-reading of Gadamer counters such beliefs as that Gadamer, as Caputo puts it, hides an essentialism “attractive to theologians” or, as Richard Bernstein puts it, has a “conservative strain” that undermines his potential radicality.² The reading of Gadamer presented here in fact teases out a radicality, evident in his particular statements about tarrying and spirit, or *Geist*. This radicality concerning spirit is one that even Derrida appears not to have noted when he says in *Of Spirit* that “No one wants anything to do with [*Geist*] anymore, in the entire family of Heideggerians, be they the orthodox or the heretical, the neo-Heideggerians or the para-Heideggerians, the disciples or the experts.”³ In fact, the clues about the *Ereignis* (event) of understanding provided by Gadamer’s treatment of time afford an entry into just such a sub-text about spirit.

its authority not to the conversation of philosophy but to everyday experience, a direction, one might say, in which event-hermeneutics inevitably moves.

² John Caputo, “Gadamer’s Closet Essentialism: A Derridean Critique,” *Dialogue and Deconstruction*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder & Richard E. Palmer (New York: SUNY, 1989), p. 261; “What is the Difference that Makes a Difference?,” *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Brice R. Wachterhauser (New York: SUNY, 1986), p. 349.

³ Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 3. In fact, what Derrida concludes about Heidegger is not so far from what this dissertation concludes about Gadamer: “it is on the basis of a more originary thinking of time that we will open ourselves to a more appropriate thinking of spirit” (92). What is decisive in his examination are Heidegger’s statements that “*Der Geist ist das Flammende*” and “*Der Geist ist Flamme*,” which he translates as “Spirit is what inflames” and “Spirit is flame” (cited in Derrida, 84). For Derrida, the question of spirit in Heidegger comes down to a problematic slippage created by the grammatical categories of noun and verb, to a play of language wherein “spirit” becomes verb-like (see Derrida, Chap. IX). In contrast, Gadamer’s whole effort, one might say, is to show that it is not problematic to designate spirit as an event.

An important focus in this introduction is the distinction between formal and experiential accounts of the dynamic of understanding. While it is logical to describe understanding in terms of self and other from a formal point of view, from an *experiential* point of view – in other words, in terms of the living actuality of consciousness understanding something, it is very problematic. This is because, strictly speaking, an experience of understanding involves only an experience *of something to be understood*. One neither experiences one's self, nor experiences the other, per se. Moreover, a reader may feel a need to reconcile Gadamer's phenomenological insistence that one "doggedly pursues the logic of the subject matter itself," with his also insisting that "all understanding presupposes both historically and linguistically mediated preunderstanding."⁴ But this difficulty arises only when a subject matter is treated as separable from its being thought of, which attributes to it an objective as opposed to a hermeneutical reality. Gadamer never departs from this reasoning, and much follows from it, which subsequent chapters will explore. What I wish to show here, however, is how much doesn't follow for the reader of Gadamer who doesn't maintain the priority of this distinction. As we will see from the examples that follow, it is easy to lose sight of it when elaborating theoretical constructs about the nature of understanding.

Placing greater stress on this principle would resolve the difficulty that James DiCenso's has with Gadamer in his work, *Hermeneutics and the Disclosure of Truth: A Study of the Work of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur*, published in 1990.⁵ This is an attempt to refine and clarify Heidegger's notion of truth as "disclosure." DiCenso

⁴ Brice R. Wachterhauser, "Introduction," *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Brice R. Wachterhauser (New York: SUNY Press, 1986), p 34.

⁵ (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990).

explains that this notion of truth is distinct both from theological and metaphysical notions of truth as absolute, as well as distinct from the scientific or analytical notion of truth as something verifiable (xiii). This third sense of truth, truth-as-disclosure, is considered in terms of its being a *happening*, for example, where Heidegger asks in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” “How does truth happen?”⁶ But Heidegger does not mean, how does a thing come to be regarded as “true”; rather, he means what is a truth-happening? In other words, how does a happening come to have the *quality* of truth? Obviously, truth in this sense is inherently experiential; it is inherently what strikes an active consciousness. You might say it is about the striking of consciousness. It is truth in this sense, I am arguing, that Gadamer wishes to elucidate with his event-hermeneutics. DiCenso presents Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur in a progression where Gadamer is shown to refine Heidegger’s original insight, but who in turn is corrected by Ricoeur: Ricoeur “provides a corrective to the formulations that curtail the scope of Gadamer’s hermeneutics” (xvii). But a careful examination of the precise respects in which Gadamer is said to require correction reveals where DiCenso seems to have underestimated the reach that this third concept of truth actually has in Gadamer’s thought. The aim here is not to lay out the extent to which this affects DiCenso’s overall argument so much as to open with an illustration of a reading of Gadamer that seems to lose sight of the very orientation to event that is thought to go awry in Gadamer. The illustration is significant in two ways: first, what this amounts to is that DiCenso seems to adopt a form of analysis associated with one form of truth in order to describe another form supposedly at variance with it. Second is how apparently difficult it is to resist this

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row,

tendency when elucidating the notion of truth associated with the living actuality of the single experience of consciousness Heidegger calls ‘worlding.’

These observations emerge from DiCenso’s conclusion that there is a “contradiction inherent in Gadamer’s hermeneutics” between “a model [of understanding] based on disclosure and a model based on conversation’ (111). He states,

There is a contradiction inherent in Gadamer’s hermeneutics. He emphasizes that language transcends subjectivity, and yet he continues to view understanding through a model based on the conversational interaction of subjects. On the one hand Gadamer asserts that “in linguistic communications, ‘world’ is disclosed.” On the other hand he maintains “that language has its true being only in conversation, in the exercise of understanding between people.” The priority of the subject that derives from the latter formulation is incompatible with the disclosive transformation of the former, and this serves merely to highlight the nature of the problem. The disclosive model, which potentially can give expression to the historical, supraindividual, and critical nature of hermeneutics, becomes constrained and curtailed by a conversational model dependent upon the presence of individuals to one another. (111-12)

The question here is what would DiCenso have to think Gadamer means by language having its true being in conversation, in order for him to see this as contradicting the position that language discloses ‘world’? These positions are contradictory only if a reader sees the singularity of that-which-is-disclosed in opposition to the duality of two

subjects in conversation. DiCenso states that “disclosive capacity becomes distorted and curtailed by the model of understanding based upon the conversation between individuals” (111). His perception of a problem extends to Gadamer’s notion of the text, wherein Gadamer “relies upon a problematic notion of the text as a Thou” (113). This, to DiCenso, again points to two subjects rather than to something disclosed, except that here, he sees an additional problem with Gadamer’s notion of the thou-status of the text, which Dicenso says must entail its full “personification,” complete with “an independent source of volition and self-expression” (109-110). He explains that this means, in turn, there arises the problem of the “inequality” between the text and the interpreter:

The text does *not* possess the qualities of animation and direct responsiveness required to assert itself against the appropriations of the reader or to react spontaneously to the new interpretive contexts into which it is placed. (110)

On this point, however, we may read Gadamer quite differently. DiCenso’s preoccupation with the interlocutors, and therefore with the inequality that follows in the case of a living reader with an inanimate text, obscures the actual locus of understanding, which is not the relation of the interlocutors themselves, but their involvement in the *subject matter* of mutual concern, the subject of the dialogue between them. In an event of understanding, the participants have only the subject matter in mind, not themselves or the other *per se*: So given over are they to their subject that one might say that they *are* the subject matter at this moment, and it follows that each is free from precisely the concern with self-hood, as well as from the question of ‘who’ the other person might be. The relative role played by each in determining what is at issue is really a distinct question, peripheral to the hermeneutical centrality of the event itself, and to the

admissibility of this as a model of understanding. DiCenso's reading of Gadamer involves, it would seem, a conflation of the event of understanding with the conditions which give rise to it, but are not properly part of it. But moreover, the precise respect in which the self is not part of the event is very critical as far as the question of truth is concerned. For it follows from the reading of Gadamer offered here that an event of understanding cannot occur *except* when questions of self and other are temporarily expunged from consciousness by the pressing nature of the matter at hand. Quite obviously, disclosure cannot occur without the physical presence of an other, whether another person or a text, but Gadamer's hermeneutics concerns itself with what is disclosed to one consciousness via what another contributes to a subject matter of their mutual concern.

Gadamer has frequently expressed exasperation with those who focus on intersubjectivity, to the exclusion of *what it is they are in dialogue about*. An example of such exasperation is Gadamer's reaction to Carsten Dutt, who in an interview in *Gadamer in Conversation* (2001) asks him "...wouldn't you say that hermeneutical philosophy thematizes conversation as our capacity for rational intersubjectivity?"⁷ Gadamer's reply is, "Oh, please spare me that completely misleading concept of intersubjectivity, of a subjectivism doubled!" He explains, "a conversation is something one gets caught up in, in which one gets involved" (59). A critical point here is his insistence that this is in fact the "measure of a real conversation" (59); in other words, it is *the degree to which one is caught up in the subject matter that measures the value of dialogue* – let's say, measures its disclosive power. What needs to be recognized is that this is none other than the

happening of truth. In Gadamer's philosophy, as we shall see, it is the intensity and autonomy of this experience that the example of art is intended to isolate for our consideration, for the artwork is a "thou" as well. There is no contradiction at all between the disclosive and dialogical models of understanding, for disclosure is quite properly *what goes on in the event* of dialogue. Gadamer's point is that it can only happen here.

It is possible, however, that DiCenso's reading of Gadamer is influenced by his alignment with Paul Ricoeur. This is clear in his treatment of Gadamer on the topic of mimesis. Here too, Gadamer's orientation is to a working consciousness when discussing the nature of mimetic activity. Initially, DiCenso acknowledges Gadamer's understanding of mimesis to be "disclosive rather than reproductive":⁸

Within Gadamer's development of a historical and hermeneutical approach to truth there resides an understanding of mimesis that views it as disclosive rather than reproductive. Gadamer argues that "representation is an ontological event and belongs to the ontological level of what is represented. Through being represented it experiences, as it were, an increase in being." Representation is not simply "added on" to preexistent entities determinable as such but rather divulges aspects of things heretofore obscured. (Gadamer 122; DiCenso 121)

But he concludes that Gadamer's reconstruction of mimesis in accordance with disclosure is "not adequately developed":

The reconstruction of mimesis indicated by the passage quoted above, among others, is not adequately developed by Gadamer. The main problem requiring

⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer with Carsten Dutt, "Hermeneutics," in *Gadamer In Conversation; Reflections and Commentary*, ed. & trans. Richard E. Palmer (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001), p. 59.

analysis derives from the implications of the displacement of the notion of a fixed “original” for a theory of the relationship between world and representation (particularly representation in language). The original is not final or closed in its nature, for it continues to “become” through representation. (121)

It is first of all important to see that whereas Gadamer’s interest is primarily in the unity of world and representation in the event of understanding, and on elucidating the “measure” of the intensity of that event, as Gadamer suggests above, DiCenso’s focus here is on anatomizing the structure of the relationship between “world” and “representation.” Gadamer’s focus on degree places the emphasis on, and gives more definition to, the experiential value (an “increase in being,” as Gadamer says above) of getting caught up in a subject matter. Many of the essays in *The Relevance of the Beautiful* develop this interest of Gadamer’s, as the title might seem to announce, though DiCenso’s bibliography suggests he was perhaps unaware of this collection.⁹

Nevertheless, the whole thrust of the section from *Truth and Method* to which DiCenso refers is to give definition to mimesis conceived as embodying, rather than imitating, something:¹⁰ In “Play as the Clue to Ontological Explanation,” Gadamer seeks to establish that the actual experience of the artwork is, like aspects of play, more essentially autonomous than imitative, and in this sense it has a special *identity* (i.e., as itself, not with an antecedent original). Art, Gadamer argues, is thus experienced as “recognition,” not as imitation (115). In *Truth and Method*, where Gadamer goes from here is to the consequent *contemporaneity* of all art, no matter what its historical origin. His

⁸ DiCenso is using the 1975 edition, ed. & trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury).

⁹ Ed. Nicholas Walker, trans. Robert Bernasconi, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986).

discussion of mimesis prepares the way in *Truth and Method* for his inquiry into the temporality of art: “Thus we have the task of interpreting the work of art in terms of time,” reads the last sentence of the section in question (121). Gadamer in fact develops his alternative concept of mimesis by stressing precisely its eventfulness, which he gives definition to, finally, by describing it as a modality marked by a special temporal aspect.

It is important to consider the possibility that, because DiCenso seems to be looking for the sort of development compatible with objectivist thinking, he effectively strays from truth as disclosure and is not able to read Gadamer in a way that takes account of the orientation to event. The most important evidence of this occurs in his treatment of a passage from *Truth and Method*, where Gadamer mentions a “double representation” (in the 1989 revised edition, it is a “*double mimesis*”).¹¹ Gadamer is discussing the particular case of the actor, whose own interpretive activity places the written play at another remove from the interpretive activity of the audience, hence “double.” Gadamer’s point is that, even here, “this double mimesis is *one*” (117, italics in original). In other words, the drama is simply a particularly emphatic example of the *event-character of art* because even despite such a doubling of interpretation, “it achieves its full being only each time it is played” (117). So mimesis has to do with the presence of this fullness, not with the relationship of the performance to an original. But DiCenso wishes to compare this double-representation, in what is after all only an illustration in Gadamer’s discussion, to Ricoeur’s three-fold mimesis, unfortunately suggesting that the size of the affixed number somehow determines conceptual value. He sees Ricoeur’s three-fold

¹⁰ 2nd Revised ed., Crossroads Publishing, 1989.

¹¹ Ed. & trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (New York: Continuum, 1993), p. 117 (italics in original).

mimesis as “far more complex” than the notion of mimesis evident in Gadamer’s discussion (122). It is Ricoeur’s model, in fact, that provides the kind of analytical development DiCenso is seeking, but, again, it encompasses factors that are extraneous to the hold on one’s consciousness which a subject matter might have:

Ricoeur differentiates the functions of mimesis into the three-fold structure of mimesis₁, mimesis₂, and mimesis₃. The significance of this development should not be underestimated on account of its cumbersome appearance.

Threefold mimesis is far more complex than Gadamer’s extension of the mimetic process to cover different stages of artistic activity. Ricoeur provides a preliminary definition of the three dimensions of mimesis as “a reference back to the familiar pre-understandings we have of the order of action; an entry into the realm of poetic composition; and finally a new configuration by means of this poetic refiguring of the pre-understood order of action.” The central term in this triad, mimesis₂, indicates what is commonly understood as the representational arts per se. (122)

We immediately note a misunderstanding of Gadamer in DiCenso’s belief that Gadamer’s concept of mimesis covers “stages of artistic activity,” when it only refers to interpretive activity. Also, it must be stated that DiCenso’s mention of the arts “per se,” in the last sentence of his summary, suggests a referentiality that would seem wholly incompatible with disclosive truth.

Leaving aside the question of Ricoeur for the moment, the point here is how a reading of Gadamer that remains oriented to the priority that Gadamer gives to art’s experiential hold on consciousness resolves the difficulties raised by DiCenso. Ricoeur’s

development, as DiCenso presents it, would also seem to be the kind of development that is irrelevant to the re-reading of Gadamer presented here: it is not a question of defining the “stages” of the “mimetic process” to be included in the definition of mimesis, but of *how to talk about the experiential locus and experiential value of understanding art*. His point was never to do with artistic activity, but to do with the autonomy of its manifestation in interpretive activity. Though Gadamer might be challenged on his orientation to the event of understanding itself, he cannot be faulted for being consistent with it.

DiCenso’s comparison of Gadamer and Ricoeur brings us to consider an influential essay by Paul Ricoeur on Gadamer, “Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology,” originally published in French in 1973.¹² This is Ricoeur’s well-known account of the disagreement between Gadamer and Habermas concerning the universality of hermeneutics. At issue is the extent to which our interpretive condition, our position of situated finitude, is inescapable. The question of Ricoeur’s contribution to hermeneutics is treated more fully in Chapter Three of this dissertation, where I present how his objectivist orientation enables him to fill a certain poignant silence about narrative left by Gadamer. However, Ricoeur’s treatment of the Habermas-Gadamer debate is worth mentioning here because, just as Gadamer points out to Habermas that

¹² “Hermeneutique et critique des ideologies,” in *Demythization et Ideologie*, ed. Enrico Castelli (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1973), pp. 25-64. It appears in English in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. & trans. John B. Thomson (Cambridge UP, 1986), pp. 63-100, and in *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Brice R. Wachterhauser (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 300-39. The latter is the text referred to here, since this work also contains the principle exchange between Habermas and Gadamer to which Ricoeur refers. The essays comprising this exchange are Jürgen Habermas, “A Review of Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*,” trans. Fred Dallmayr and Thomas McCarthy, pp. 243-276; and Gadamer’s “On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection,” trans. G.B. Hess and R.E. Palmer, pp. 277-299. Gadamer’s essay has also been published under the title, “Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and

Habermas reverts to the very objectifying tendency that Gadamer is critiquing (the same tendency that created problems for DiCenso), so does Ricoeur, despite his stated aim to reconcile the two sides. This makes Ricoeur's account a problematic contribution to our understanding of Gadamer in the respect that Ricoeur's essay has been so widely read as a definitive overview of this well-known debate, and possibly accepted as a reconciliation of their differences. The result is a certain effacement of Gadamer's actual position.

One of the difficulties with Ricoeur's account is the degree to which it echoes a dominant theme in his earlier work, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, published in French several years previously.¹³ The overview of the Gadamer-Habermas debate is similarly presented in the language of a dialectic between humility and suspicious pride. He renders the debate, "reduced for the sake of clarity to a simple duel," in terms of an opposition between a hermeneutics of tradition (Gadamer), where finitude can only be "acknowledged" (300). In this respect consciousness carries the mark of "humility" before tradition (325). On the other side is an emancipatory consciousness (Habermas), where "suspicion" acts "against false consciousness" (300) and so carries the mark of "pride" (325). This is the same antimony that a number of the essays in the earlier work explore, and is an antimony that has endured through Ricoeur's career, the significance of which will be discussed further in Chapter Three, below. In other words, our understanding of the Gadamer-Habermas debate is first of all complicated by Ricoeur's account because the debate occasions his further exploration of this theological doubt-

Ideology Critique" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, and in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader*, eds. Walter Jost & Michael J. Hyde (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987).

¹³ *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde, trans. Willis Domingo et al. (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1974); *Le conflit des interpretations. Essais d'hermeneutique* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1969).

faith dialectic. Given he states here that, “it is the task of philosophical reflection to eliminate deceptive antinomies,” this appropriative strategy is somewhat perplexing, but in any case, this superimposition makes it difficult to determine the actual complexion of issues at play on each side (338).¹⁴ Specifically, our understanding is complicated by the fact that Ricoeur offers a bridge between the two sides he sets up in this somewhat questionable way: he will reconcile these two sides with a third alternative:

Would it not be appropriate to shift the initial locus of the hermeneutical question, to reformulate the question in such a way that a certain dialectic between the experience of belonging and alienating distanciation becomes the mainspring, the key to the inner life, of hermeneutics? (328)

Ricoeur is suggesting that rather than hermeneutics and ideology critique representing the irreconcilable concerns he has identified, specifically “the recollection of tradition” that confirms belonging versus “the anticipation of freedom” that entails alienation (337), hermeneutics might encompass a dialectic between these aims. Skeptical, defiant critique of ideology might be incorporated into humble, passive hermeneutics through a theory of the text that, because it has by definition an autonomy in being separated from the original context of the author’s utterance, is distanciated. This distanciation necessitates critique:

In thus reverting to the problematic of the text, to exegesis and philology, we appear at first sight to restrict the aim and the scope of hermeneutics. However, because any claim to universality is raised from somewhere, we may expect that the restoration of the link between hermeneutics and exegesis will reveal its own

¹⁴ It is perhaps worth comparing Ricoeur’s notion of freedom in “Freedom in the Light of Hope,” one of

universal features that, without contradicting Gadamer's hermeneutics, will rectify it in a manner decisive for the debate with the critique of ideology. (328)

But one may note in this passage a certain tension: he speaks in a language where categories such as "hermeneutics" are abstracted from experience, while his ostensible subject is the experiencing of meaning. Even if we allow that the dialectic he proposes comprises two ways to experience meaning, what we are now in a position to recognize right away is the irreconcilability of such an objectification of the text with Gadamer's orientation to *the event of the text*. The latter refers to the experience of the text's subject matter, while in the former, such an objectification of the text presumes that exactly this can be bracketed. For this reason, it is not logically possible for these to stand in any dialectical relation, a fact that Gadamer eventually pointed out to Ricoeur.¹⁵ For Gadamer, the universality of hermeneutics merely stems from its priority to analysis in this sense; analysis is *already* hermeneutical. One might also note the passive-active dichotomy implied by opposing humble hermeneutics and defiant critique, and how objectification therefore becomes the locus of activism. This is Habermas's position, which also insists on the requirement of objectification for such a locus.¹⁶

As mentioned, what is significant about Ricoeur's error is that Gadamer had observed the same error in Habermas and had discussed it at some length in the exchange. Briefly, what Habermas argues is this: If language is a "metainstitution" whose totality is

the essays in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, with his discussion of freedom here.

¹⁵ See pp. 140-42 below, for a discussion of Gadamer's exchange with Ricoeur, a dialogue about the thesis of Ricoeur's *The Conflict of Interpretations*, where Gadamer expresses the wish to "go behind the conflict of interpretations" formulated by Ricoeur.

¹⁶ This is now an old debate. Habermas has moved closer to Gadamer in adopting a theory of communicative action that is more closely connected to the concrete the event of dialogue. Jean Grondin states this about Habermas in his 2003 Biography of Gadamer: "Emancipatory utopia has been replaced by

unobjectifiable, and the language of oppression is part of this metainstitution, then it too, becomes unobjectifiable and so hermeneutics can offer no possibility for critiquing the authority of tradition: “Hermeneutics bangs helplessly, so to speak, from within against the walls of tradition.”¹⁷ In other words, he believes that escaping the authority of tradition cannot be accomplished without its objectification, and objectification is not possible according to Gadamer. But Gadamer replies to Habermas that Habermas reverts to the very “false objectification inherent in the idealist conception of reflection” [which] his hermeneutics is attempting to correct in the first place (291). Habermas, too, brackets experience to posit the ideal situation wherein the authority of tradition can be viewed from “an ‘outside’ that *does not enter* our world” (288, italics in orig.). Gadamer specifically refutes the suggestion that hermeneutics is impotent, what Ricoeur might term “passive,” in the face of the authority of tradition. Gadamer states, “it is an inadmissible imputation to hold that I somehow meant there is no decline of authority or no emancipating criticism of authority” (291). In his reply to Habermas, he himself clarifies at some length how hermeneutics can accommodate a critique of tradition, pointing out that emancipation does not require objectification, but rather can occur within the element of language, not language that objectifies, as Ricoeur says, but the language that we *inhabit*:

Language...is not the finally found anonymous subject of all social-historical processes and action, which presents the whole of its activities as objectifications to our observing gaze; rather, it is by itself the game of interpretations that we all are

a discourse ethics oriented to the hermeneutic model of coming to an understanding.” In *Hans-Georg Gadamer, A Biography* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 311.

engaged in every day. In this game nobody is above and before all the others; everybody is at the center, is “it” in this game. (289)

Ricoeur does not in fact offer a position that mediates between Habermas and Gadamer. Basically, he shares Habermas’ objectivist position. This is certainly allowed, but it is not consistent with Ricoeur’s stated aim, which was to present a mediating position. This is unfortunate for our understanding of Gadamer, for the effect is obfuscation rather than clarification of the radical core of Gadamer’s hermeneutical philosophy, the eventfulness of understanding. Ricoeur’s imposition of a passive-active antimony, which I suggest needs to be seen in the context of Ricoeur’s own preoccupations, has also helped create the impression that Gadamer is a giant of conservatism by placing him on the side of passivity and humble belonging.¹⁸ Ricoeur’s subsequent theorization of the ontology of

¹⁷ Gadamer, “On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection,” p. 288, note. 13, citing Habermas.

¹⁸ It is also noteworthy that in his synopsis of the debate, Ricoeur did not comment upon Habermas’ discussion of Danto and narrative, which is what leads Habermas to his conclusion about Gadamer’s “real achievement”: “I find Gadamer’s real achievement in the demonstration that hermeneutic understanding is linked with transcendental necessity to the articulation of an action orienting self understanding” (262). Habermas is referring to the unavoidable situation of the historian, who, Habermas says in a way that anticipates Ricoeur’s later preoccupation with narrative, “proceeds in the way that Danto wishes to forbid to the philosopher of history. From the viewpoint of practice he anticipates end-states from which the multiplicity of events coalesces smoothly into action orienting stories” (261). Habermas concludes that performing this objectifying operation is in fact “a necessary condition of possible knowledge,” and Gadamer’s critique, like Danto’s, demonstrates why knowledge is otherwise impossible” (262). That Ricoeur does not comment upon this is perhaps surprising given his developing interest in just this “action orienting” function of narrative. In his response to Habermas on this point, Gadamer refers to the objectification entailed in narrative knowledge-making, by distinguishing between the “thematic” reflection which it employs, and “effective” reflection:

...one must distinguish “effective reflection” (*die “effektive” Reflexion*), which is that in which the unfolding of language takes place, from expressive and thematic reflection, which is the type out of which Occidental linguistic history has been formed. Making everything an object and creating the conditions for science in the modern sense, this latter type of reflection establishes the grounds for the planetary civilization of tomorrow. (292)

Of course, as we have seen, Ricoeur’s strategy is to choose the linguistic model Gadamer here rejects, so that, says Ricoeur, “the problem of distanciation can be given a more positive significance than Gadamer suggests” (303). In other words, before an ontology of narrative similar to that suggested by Habermas might be defended, Ricoeur must, quite rightly, first legitimize the objectifying theory of language it presupposes. That Ricoeur, like Habermas, in this way effectively limits the universality of hermeneutics implied by Gadamer’s idea of “effective” reflection can be seen in his definition of this concept, Gadamer’s

narrative is quite significant in this connection, for the question that arises is whether it ever takes account of Gadamer's answer to Habermas. And Ricoeur's own ontological interest in concepts of temporality makes subsequent encounters with Gadamer all the more interesting and significant, as will be examined more closely in Chapter Three. There, I hope to show that a narrative conception of temporality is normative, because it is tied ineluctably to objectivist thinking, while event hermeneutics questions time, and develops another temporality that Gadamer calls the temporality of tarrying. Though Ricoeur's and Gadamer's hermeneutics are frequently seen as similar, my explication of Gadamer on temporality will reveal that in fact Ricoeur lays out its exact counterpoint: just as Gadamer attempts to articulate the temporal basis of a radical ontology, Ricoeur has given full and definitive articulation to the normative ontology that Gadamer's hermeneutics is attempting to counter-balance.

There is, in fact, another way of thinking about universality that may further develop event hermeneutics, a meaning for universality that includes caution toward idealistic or utopian claims. Besides referring to the situation of finitude which conditions every experience of understanding, there is another meaning of universality that aptly summons the association of the "worlding" that Heidegger speaks of in the event of truth. More than involving openness to world and world-building, though, universality may refer to a specific task entailed in understanding, namely, the recursive task of exposing the totality of one's already possessed understandings to a new orientation of thought. Aside from the question of hermeneutic appropriation, and aside

wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein. Ricoeur defines it as a "category of the awareness of history," specifically, of "the reflective consciousness of [historical] methodology" (310). Yet to limit it is to negate

from such a task's inherent mysteriousness, is the question of completion, of totality.

Universality concerns the extent of the specifically integrative effort which understanding entails. While it may be idealistic to posit the totality or completion of such a task, there nevertheless remains the question of extent.

For example, many readers of Gadamer other than Habermas accept his theory of the "historically effected consciousness," where, due to our deep submersion in history, we cannot step outside of its operation. Habermas' critique notwithstanding, this idea has been enormously influential. But fewer readers recognize that the necessary correlate of this is accepting a single instance understanding as an *event of consciousness, wherein, due to our deep submersion in a subject matter, we cannot step outside of its hold on us to consider who we are or are becoming*. This is actually just another way of expressing the historical concept. This example of disconnection in fact illustrates the difficulty of undertaking the task of logically extending an orientation to the *experience* of understanding. It is made more difficult by the depth of our reliance on formalizing and objectifying phenomenon, a form of analysis associated with scientific reasoning. How we posit "subject matter," for instance, is altered by Gadamer. What I am suggesting about many readings of Gadamer is that this task of thinking through event is handicapped in this way, and is often not complete. All the terms of hermeneutics need to be read in another way in Gadamer, terms such as "truth," "mimesis," "history," "poetry," "myth," and "language." It is perhaps the case that until Gadamer is allowed this, he cannot be fairly critiqued, and the real issues cannot be identified. Beyond defining universality as a recursion of mind that might range in difficulty from the

it, for, according to Gadamer, it is precisely to the impossibility of "awareness" or "consciousness" at the

reassuring to the radical, it is particularly significant that the completeness or totality implied would in fact seem to be itself an experiential attribute of truth. In other words, truth is universal by this definition, in the respect that its occurrence may be described as a particular instance of understanding something that has the character of completeness and unity – of “precision,” as Gadamer says.¹⁹ Say that, linguistically speaking, in dialogue one’s word-world undergoes, as it were, a kind of cosmic upheaval or shift, an unpredictable re-constellation. When we recall that this only occurs as an outcome of dialogue, and that it is only the subject matter of dialogue that may occasion this new world, still ‘whole’ but newly so, it is possible to see the bearing of this interlude about universality upon the question of the insurmountability of our interpretive condition, the subject of the debate between Habermas and Gadamer: applying the term “universality” in this other way helps develop a sense of the inherently transformative nature of the truth-event, which is what mitigates against the insurmountability that concerns Habermas.

The persistence of the perception that Gadamer is fundamentally conservative is evident in Richard Bernstein’s account of the debate in the Wachterhauser collection cited above. Placed immediately after Ricoeur’s account and thus inviting comparison on this point, Bernstein claims to have no philosophical agenda himself, but only a desire to weigh the significance of differences between Habermas and Gadamer – the title is, “What is the Difference that Makes a Difference?”²⁰ But he does go as far as to define the context in which the differing positions of Gadamer, Habermas, and also American

moment of one’s participation in history that effective reflection refers.

¹⁹ See Chapter One, below, p. 51.

²⁰ In *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy*, pp. 343-76.

pragmatist philosopher, Richard Rorty, should be seen, and this is the context of the postmodern “scandal” of philosophy, its absence of method (345). Bernstein offers the view that what is needed is “a form of philosophical therapy that will rid us of the illusion and the self-deception that philosophy is or can be such a foundational discipline” (344). He points out the limiting nature of the philosophical standoff between pro- and anti-deconstructive tendencies that tends to involve oppositions of a binary sort:

...we are increasingly coming to realize that these traditional dichotomies obscure more than they illuminate, and that they gain their power from an entire mode of thinking, acting, and feeling that is itself being called into question. There is an almost desperate attempt to break out of and move beyond the dichotomies that have characterized modern thought. (345)

The particular application of this statement to Ricoeur’s proposal of a dialectic involving just such a binary perhaps suggests a desire to correct Ricoeur, but in any case, against the backdrop of the desire to free ourselves of illusory dichotomies, he re-examines differences between the positions of Habermas, Gadamer, and Rorty to reveal that, despite them, these thinkers share a similar preoccupation with communicative praxis and practical philosophy, which is the dimension of their thinking that to Bernstein is most clearly anti-foundational. In other words, their differences don’t make any difference; he sees it as much more important to recognize that they hold in common this step beyond the “Cartesian anxiety” of modern and post-modern philosophy (344), calling their commonality a “nonfoundational pragmatic humanism” (370).

In the case of Habermas, for example, Bernstein acknowledges the legitimacy of the charge that Habermas is “the ‘last’ great rationalist” (345) who would solve the scandal of philosophy by developing a transcendental theory of communicative action:

Habermas is a victim of the illusion that has haunted modern thinkers – that they must dignify the contingent social practices that have been hammered out in the course of history with something that pretends to be more solid and substantial. (360).

But Bernstein would recommend overlooking the legitimacy of this criticism, and instead encourages “a reading of Habermas that stresses his pragmatic voice and his practice of interpretative dialectics” over against the dubious “transcendent” voice, alluded to above (358). However, Bernstein is less successful in identifying tensions in Gadamer that we might similarly overlook in favor of simply affirming the practical side of Gadamer’s philosophy. I will show that such tensions once again only arise if Gadamer is read in a certain way. Like DiCenso’s claim that Gadamer’s disclosive model of understanding contradicts his conversational model of understanding, Bernstein’s claim is that a “conservative strain” in Gadamer stands in contradiction to Gadamer’s model of understanding as conversation. Bernstein writes:

The fundamental thesis that I want to advance is that despite Gadamer’s manifest (and real) conservative strain, his fear of the “dogmatism” and potential “terror” of what he calls “planning reason,” there is a powerful latent radial strain in his thinking that is constantly pulling us in a different direction. Gadamer’s entire project of philosophical hermeneutics can be read as an attempt to recover what he takes to be the deepest and most pervasive theme in Western philosophy and

culture – that the quintessence of our being is to *be dialogical*.... It is this dialogical character of what we truly are that is deformed and threatened by modern technological society. (349)

Though Bernstein's reading of Gadamer's "entire project" sounds accurate, the contradiction he perceives needs to be read in another way. In order for Bernstein to identify "planning reason" as the antithesis of conservatism, as he does here, he must assume an opposition between the future-oriented direction of planning (i.e.: its so-called progressive nature), and the past-oriented upholding of tradition. This is a moment where a firmer grasp of the special *temporality* of event-hermeneutics may resolve what otherwise appears contradictory: "planning reason," in Gadamer, is not the antithesis to a nostalgic dwelling in the past, but, rather, is the antithesis to an ideal hermeneutical *experience* in which a modality of thinking prevails which, as it were, puts all plans up for grabs, just as it puts self and other in abeyance; "*Planning*" is the antithesis to *tarrying, not to upholding 'tradition.'* The distinction here depends upon a hiatus from a linear, dimensional view of time. I am arguing that elucidating this modality is the very heart of Gadamer's development of the experiential ground of hermeneutics. It is on the basis of this modality that Gadamer theorizes the possibility of emancipation from specious reasoning, theorizes the growth of consciousness, and theorizes the locus of human spirit.²¹ Therefore, Gadamer is not an advocate of upholding tradition, is not conservative in any normative sense. To Gadamer, the only way to speak of the effect of

²¹ In Jean Grondin's *Hans-Georg Gadamer, A Biography*, he seems to acknowledge that temporality is fundamental, but he sees it as distinctly linear. Human finitude is such that understanding "lags behind" or "never catches up" with the ground of understanding; Gadamer's "point about historically effected consciousness" is that "human self-knowing *never catches up with* what and how a person really is" (317-18, emphasis added).

tradition is in terms of its operation in this other modality of thinking he calls “tarrying,” which is the modality in which genuine dialogue occurs. So, again, there is no contradiction between the reading of Gadamer’s “entire project” as an attempt to rejuvenate our dialogical freedom, and Gadamer’s formulation of tradition. Bernstein, like DiCenso, is not oriented to the *temporality* of event-hermeneutics. With DiCenso, it was disclosure that was thought to be at odds with conversation; here it is tradition. But what is critical to realize is that tradition, just like disclosure, is what happens in the event of dialogue.

That Bernstein ascribes to Gadamer a more or less normative understanding of tradition is also evident when he makes the same criticism of Gadamer that Habermas had made, namely that the upshot of Gadamer’s hermeneutics is that while we obviously need, especially today, to gain the critical distance from tradition necessary to effect change in our social-political lives, Gadamer’s hermeneutics in effect tells us we cannot:

But however sympathetic one may be with Gadamer’s critique of objectivism, foundationalism, and the search for an Archimedian point that lies outside of our historicity, there is a question that he never adequately answers for us. All criticism presupposes some principles, standards, or criteria of criticism, no matter how open, tentative, and historical these may be. Tradition itself is not a seamless whole, and what is most characteristic of *our* hermeneutical situation is that there are *conflicting* traditions making conflicting claims upon us. We need to gain some clarity about what are and what ought to be the standards for a “critical challenge” to tradition. It may be true, but it certainly isn’t sufficient to tell us that there are no fixed rules or determinate universals that can serve as standards for

criticism. If reason is “social reason” – or is genuinely intersubjective – then we need to elucidate the intersubjective principles that can guide our individual criticisms and decisions. Furthermore, to insist, as Gadamer himself does, that the principles, laws, *nomoi* are themselves “handed down” to us from the tradition and demand concrete application does not help us to resolve questions concerning the *conflict* of these *nomoi*, or questions that arise when traditional *nomoi* no longer seem to “bind” us. (351)

We now know what Gadamer thinks about intersubjectivity, “that completely misleading concept” (see p. 13, above), but we might also point out that Bernstein’s attachment to “gaining critical distance” borders on the idealization of reflection that is aligned with objectivist methodology, and finally with foundationalism itself. At least, this is what Gadamer makes of Habermas’ complaint. His response to this criticism in Habermas was simple and clear: his philosophical hermeneutics is not a “method,” nor has it ever claimed to be (284). How we should view this attachment to gaining critical distance, however, is simply to recall that one cannot step outside one’s engrossment in a subject matter in order to reflect upon one’s process of thinking. To clarify this point, here is the passage from Gadamer’s response to Habermas:

My thesis is – and I think it is the necessary consequence of recognizing the operativeness of history in our conditionedness and finitude – that the thing that hermeneutics teaches us is to see through the dogmatism of asserting an opposition and separation between the ongoing, natural “tradition” and the reflective appropriation of it. For behind this assertion stands a dogmatic objectivism that distorts the very concept of hermeneutical reflection itself. In this

objectivism the understander is seen – even in the so-called sciences of understanding like history – not in relationship to the hermeneutical situation and the constant operativeness of history in his own consciousness, but in such a way as to imply that his own understanding does not enter into the event. (286)

Perhaps above all the point here is to see the degree to which objectivism is a stubborn affliction, since Bernstein, no less than Habermas, seems only partially to accept its critique, reserving a corner for objectivism, when the reality is either one accepts the universal priority of our hermeneutical situation, say as Gadamer describes it, or one brackets it completely. Objectification has its uses, obviously; in fact it is all about instrumentality as we shall later see; Gadamer's hope is only that it will no longer be employed naively.

What is emerging at this point is again the extent to which terms become radicalized in event-hermeneutics, for example, "truth," "text," and "tradition." As Gadamer indicates, it is a "necessary consequence" that these terms are each profoundly radicalized by the orientation to event, as are other terms, as we shall see, such as "ethics" and finally, "spirit." As stated, I believe that the question of the universality of event hermeneutics might also be understood in the context of fully extending this radicalization across the field of relevant terms. Certainly, one needs to understand the necessity of doing so for an understanding of Gadamer. For what I am trying to indicate here is that the reservations many thinkers have about Gadamer arise from not completing this task. It is ironic, of course, that one comes effectively to a halt at, say, "recognizing the operativeness of history," as Gadamer says above, by proceeding to objectify it, thereby at once rejecting in practice what is accepted in theory.

The question that may arise at this point is what exactly is gained by distinguishing Gadamer's notion of truth, by rejuvenating this notion of experiential truth and making all the consequent adjustments? One gain is an insight into what human occupation genuinely fulfills us, and, conversely, what makes us suffer. Specifically, what is at stake are elemental questions concerning what we ought to *do* with ourselves in order to affect well-being, the everyday question of occupation. These are questions of an ethical and spiritual nature.

The ethical dimension of human finitude is the concern of John Caputo in his recent (2000) *More Radical Hermeneutics; On Not Knowing Who We Are*.²² And it is the ethical significance of Gadamer's work that Caputo comments upon. To Caputo, human finitude as described by Heidegger is the unchallengeable universal which has to be taken to heart in order to truly belong to the league of non-essentialists, whose acceptance of our absolute unknowingness sets us apart from those who would be philosophers (or theologians). Caputo writes:

...my contention is that the more we learn about ourselves, about our several histories, traditions, languages, and cultures, about the multiple ways in which human lives are constituted, the more we will conclude that, in the face of such polymorphic, prolific, and positively dizzying diversity, our best bet is to put our shoulders to the cart of a kind of felicitous nominalism, a happy, anti-essentialist open-endedness. Our best bet is to say, yes, yes, and amen to the prudent wisdom of the absolute secret, to a happy minimalism about who we think we are, or who others are, or what history or nature or sexuality is, or who God is. (6)

²² (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana UP, 2000).

What Caputo suggest here is that the “absolute secret” of human finitude forces acknowledgment of the state of not-knowing. Gadamer, too, has said that “human wisdom” is “an awareness of not knowing,” and it is specifically related, as we have seen, not merely to “minimal” notions of identity, but to the very *suspension* of selfhood, of its totality and its unity, which occurs during the experience of truth.²³ This is in fact a more extreme version of Caputo’s “happy minimalism.” But to Caputo, Gadamer does not quite qualify as non-essentialist:

I am not interested in a wholesale critique of Gadamer, to whom I owe too much, but in pushing his hermeneutics a step further, into a more radical hermeneutics, and this by means of passing it though the passion for the impossible, the passion of the secret and of non-knowledge, that I take from Derrida.²⁴

Generally, he maintains that deconstruction must “hound and harass Gadamerian hermeneutics” to keep it faithful to Heideggerian finitude (2). He asks, “Does not deconstruction explore in ruthless detail the domain of finitude, a domain that has been marked out in advance by hermeneutics?”(2). Caputo’s complaint about Gadamer is that he undermines the subversiveness of Heidegger by appropriating finitude into a “metaphysics of infinity.” He examines Gadamer’s critique of the concept of experience in *Truth and Method*, concluding that a metaphysics of infinity is hidden in the belief that, summarizing Gadamer, experience “requires a continual openness to negativity, or readiness for it, *ad infinitum*. Experience means finitude *ad infinitum*” (46); one might

²³ “Reflections on my Philosophical Journey” in Lewis Edwin Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Chicago, Open Court: 1997), p. 33.

²⁴ (8). It is possible, of course, that Derrida himself does not move beyond the aporias of self and other, and can thus be regarded as fundamentally oriented to a formal as opposed to experiential view of understanding.

note that reversing this equation is a better summary of the true potential of Gadamer's hermeneutics: finitude always means experience; *the eventfulness of experience is always the substantive locus of finitude*. Caputo wishes to show that Gadamerian finitude is "infinite" in the respect that while "the act of understanding is always finite... what is understood -- the artwork, the historical event, the work of language -- has a certain infinity" (46) in the respect that, by virtue of the uniqueness of each act of interpreting, there must be a correlative "inexhaustible depth" of "material," whether historical or textual, in "that which is understood" (47). This is a perplexing account of the universality of finitude, because Caputo seems to merely split the finitude of experience back into subject and object again, now disguised as the "correlativity of noetic finitude and noematic infinity" (47). We have seen this before; he is treating the experience of finitude abstractly where Gadamer will only treat it substantially.²⁵ It is a cognitive move that would seem to go against Caputo's ethical stance of unknowingness. As support for this reading of Gadamer, Caputo cites the following passage from *Truth and Method*:

Similarly, the philologist (*Philologe*) dealing with poetic or philosophical texts knows that they are inexhaustible (*Unerschöpfbarkeit*): In both cases it is the course of events that brings out new aspect [sic] of meaning in historical material. By being re-actualized (*Aktualisierung*) in understanding, texts are drawn into a genuine course of events (*Geschehen*) in exactly the same way as are the events

²⁵ Interestingly, this single passage from *Truth and Method* said by Caputo to clearly indicate such a metaphysics is not a verbatim presentation of the English translation but is altered by Caputo, suggesting he has taken issue with the translation. Caputo's alternate reads, "Historical tradition can be understood only by being considered as something always in the process of being defined by the course of events..." (in Caputo, 47). The 2nd Revised Edition from which he quotes actually reads as follows: "Historical tradition can be understood only as something always in the process of being defined by the course of events" (373). The difference is subtle but significant; Caputo's addition of the words "by being considered" imputes a

(*Ereignisse*) themselves. This is what we described as the history of effect as an element in hermeneutical experience. Every actualization in understanding can be regarded as an historical potential (*Möglichkeit*) of what is understood. It is part of the historical finitude of our being that we are aware that others after us will understand in a different way. And yet it is equally indubitable that it remains the same work whose fullness of meaning (*Sinnfülle*) is realized in the changing process of understanding, just as it is the same history whose meaning is constantly in the process of being defined. (47)

This passage needs to be contextualized. Gadamer's point here is certainly not that there is a correlate to finitude. Obviously, there are texts and historical materials, but Gadamer is not attributing anything mysterious or omnipotent to their potential for meaning here. The context of the passage is Gadamer's elucidation of the dialogical nature of understanding. His immediate point is to distinguish the hermeneutical experience of the text from the naïve historical attempt to reconstruct what the author intended. This is clear in the next sentence, not included in Caputo's citation, which concludes the paragraph: "The hermeneutical reduction to the author's meaning is just as inappropriate as the reduction of historical events to the intentions of their protagonists" (373). But his larger point is that the text poses questions for us *before* any attempt might be made to reconstruct the question to which the text itself was an answer, which is hardly a point about the "infinite" potential inherent in things to be interpreted, but rather is a point that reinforces the supposition of human finitude. Caputo's observation that an infinite number of unique interpretations must correlate with an infinite potential for

greater degree of object-hood to tradition than had the original translators, who had placed the emphasis,

interpretation in the objects is beside the point; the “correlative” infinity that Caputo perceives is irrelevant to the condition of finitude itself.

However, the point where Caputo’s discussion could benefit the most from a re-reading of Gadamer occurs where he states that this metaphysics of infinity “reminds us of the theological excess, the infinity of the divine being vis-à-vis the finitude of the human intellect” (48). Caputo believes his view is “supported in an interesting way” by Gadamer’s work on art (48), where Gadamer often resorts to religious rhetoric to emphasize the significance of the experience of art. Here, Caputo carries over to Gadamer’s idealizing descriptions of the experience of art the same finite-infinite antimony he sees elsewhere, and in doing so once again falsely imputes an objective presence to what for Gadamer is an experiential presence, whose purely hermeneutical status is what the example of art is intended to show. Caputo writes,

All of this comes to a head when Gadamer speaks of the special “temporality” of the artwork, which is the temporality of making present again, of a sacramental repetition which Gadamer explicitly compares to the theology of the real (as opposed to the merely symbolic) presence of Christ in the Eucharist in Catholic theology. Indeed Gadamer’s is a deeply “eucharistic hermeneutics,” to borrow a phrase from Jean-Luc Marion, a good gift really present and made present again and again over the ages, in works of art, historical events, and literary and philosophical texts. In the temporality of the artwork we become contemporaneous with a meaning and truth which transcends time, which is omni-

with the word “as,” more on the eventfulness of the encounter with tradition.

temporal. Of this Gadamer writes, and here the Gadamerian cat leaps out of the bag:

When we dwell upon the [art]work, there is no tedium involved, for the longer we allow ourselves, the more it displays its manifold riches to us. The essence of our temporal experience of art is in learning how to tarry in this way. And perhaps it is the only way that is granted to us finite beings to relate to what we call eternity. (49, citing “The Relevance of the Beautiful, 45)

Using the concept of tarrying here, Gadamer is further qualifying and expanding upon, again, not the art object’s sacred potential, but upon the potential in our experience of it, specifically, by designating, with the concept of tarrying, the temporal aspect of this experience. But elucidating this temporal quality not only serves to heighten the priority of this experience over against the object in itself; it also distinguishes this mode of experience from other modes of experience. Tarrying is, as Gadamer says elsewhere in the essay, an “autonomous” time (42), to be distinguished from the ordinary time of planning and habitual deference to authority where the cultivation of human interpretive judgment does not occur. It is here that we see what I believe is the real ‘antimony’ in Gadamer: it is not one of finitude-infinity, as Caputo says, but a distinction between temporalities, between tarrying time and time ‘empty’ of self-altering thought. Put another way, it is an antimony of experiences.

It is important to recognize the fact that tarrying is the coefficient of truth correspondingly expressed as a function of experience. Tarrying is a state of being that allows truth to happen, which, to further specify the pertinent Gadamerian distinction,

stands in opposition to the other notion of given or scientific truth. Yet in Caputo's reading above, specifically, where he states "In the temporality of the artwork we become contemporaneous with a meaning and truth which transcends time, which is omni-temporal," he passes over the modal distinction Gadamer is trying to make, and instead reverts to a notion of truth-as-entity, as pre-existing and simply encountered by the interpreting mind, rather than the truth that, so to speak, occurs to one. Gadamer's use of religious idiom, such as above and in the single other example Caputo refers to – a mention of the "holy" in "The Relevance of the Beautiful"(50) – is indeed part of Gadamer's ethics; it is an attempt to distinguish and express reverence for, finally, the human value of such experiences, specifically to distinguish the value of these experiences from the human value of the other modality of experience in question. The "onesidedness" that Gadamer frequently refers to indicates the imbalance he finds here. This reading of Gadamer allows the ethical potential to stand out, qualifying him as the non-essentialist that Caputo would praise.

As we shall see in Chapter One, below, he views this imbalance as a prevalent ontological malady wherein we cultivate or practice this thinking experience too little while overvaluing objective truth. So as far as its value is concerned, it is certainly not the case that Gadamer is hinting at a religious or metaphysical explanation for such experiences of the "holy." If anything, it is rather the case that religion can be explained hermeneutically. Religion, it seems to me, greatly confuses the issue here.²⁶ Finally, in

²⁶ Gianni Vattimo's recent "Age of Interpretation" contains an excellent summation of the relation between non-foundationalism and Christianity, and specifically of how the subject-object split lies at the heart of an entanglement of Christian theology and hermeneutics. It is not altogether clear, however, whether Vattimo offers his proposal tongue in cheek or sincerely (in *Between the Human and the Divine: Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics*, ed., Andrzej Wiercinski, Toronto: The Hermeneutic Press,

this connection it is also very important to note that in *Truth and Method* it is the kinship of the divine and the beautiful in ancient Greek religion that informs Gadamer's model of experiential presence, not the Christian Eucharist.²⁷

Caputo's reading of the pertinent antimony in Gadamer's thought, a reading that recapitulates objectivist thinking, enables him to contrast Gadamer with a more radical Derrida:

[The artwork] is to be fitted together with its missing half, which is a perfect match for it, a token by which we can recognize infinity, the whole, the holy. The remain(s) in deconstruction are the loose remnants that clog the Hegelian system, the loose ends in the texture of its garment which keep coming undone, the jammed gears which grind the Hegelian machine to a halt, the cut-up pieces which can be glued together this way or that, the scrambled messages that get all

2002, pp. 24-29). Referring to Richard Rorty's sympathy for his idea of "the incarnation as God's renunciation to his own sovereign transcendence," Vattimo proposes a "more explicit appropriation of our Christian historicity" into a non-foundationalist philosophy (28, 29). But it is also the reverse: an appropriation of non-foundationalism into Christianity: "post-modern nihilism (the end of meta-narratives) constitutes the "truth of Christianity" (27). In fact, the reversible nature of the argument is perhaps its most striking feature. Presenting a kind of Kuhnian outline of the historical nature of philosophical discovery, he suggests that it is only because Christianity began by proposing absolute foundationalism that non-foundationalism is now possible: "[non-foundationalism] can be put forth as a reasonable thesis only because we are living in a civilization that has been deeply molded by the biblical, and specifically Christian, message" (28). Vattimo sees the self-fulfilling nature of this historical 'reality' as tantamount to the expression of the truth of Christian revelation, going so far as to suggest that a failure to accept non-foundationalism is only due to our being "not yet nihilistic enough, and therefore Christian" (28). The Christian message is nihilistic in the respect that "Christianity introduces the principle of interiority into the world, on the basis of which the determining weight of "objective" reality is gradually lost" (25). At the same time, "the ascent to Christ's teaching derives from the cogency of the message itself" (28, which suggests, of course, that the question to which it was an answer had *already* been asked). The message is the message of charity entailed in the hearing of messages, in hearing the voice of the other. For Vattimo, this points to another explanation for its lasting value: it has a cogency that derives from the fact that "it is not an experimental, logical or metaphysical statement" but instead is a "call to practice" (27). Whether hermeneutics explains Christianity or Christianity explains hermeneutics, what Vattimo does not entertain is how it may be possible to think beyond the entire antimony of objective metaphysics versus nihilism, which might be more simply expressed as the antimony of objective and subjective metaphysics taking the form of historical narrative and teleology. Vattimo explores these themes in greater depth in *After Christianity*, trans. Luca D'Isanto (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

gummed up in the postal works, the *symbolon* which was shattered too badly to ever be fitted together, indeed which never was a whole. (50)

But on another reading, the “perfection” to which Caputo refers is Gadamer’s idealization of the “negative” in our experience of the other. One has to recall that although the experience of the visual artwork is one of Gadamer’s illustrations of hermeneutical presence, his most extreme example, the highest art in this regard, is of the art with which we struggle intellectually the most -- poetry -- because our experience of poetry is a pure confrontation with what is our otherwise invisible collective element, language. In respect to struggle, the experience entails confronting pretty much the qualities that Caputo attributes to the Derridian remain(s). In terms of what Caputo values most, a passion for finitude and acceptance of not-knowing, I think it could be argued that Gadamer actually goes further than Derrida as Caputo reads him. For where his Derrida would stop at marveling at the silences and gaps, and would seem only to revel in astonishment before them, Gadamer affirms their potential: this negativity is the deficit we feel *compelled to address*, the *incentive* we feel to unsettle our dogmatic expectations and so enlarge ourselves, which is how it is that we are able contribute to the on-going vitality of the socio-political world in ways inherently unforeseen and unforeseeable.²⁸

So the fundamental openness that Gadamer speaks of is not simply a matter of attitude, of willful cultivation, of conscious, disciplined effort to bring this openness to bear upon our dealings with otherness in order to counter a perhaps more natural inclination toward

²⁷ Cf. *Truth and Method*, pp. 127-28 for Gadamer’s discussion of the “theological stamp” which Gadamer says Kierkegaard gives to this concept of presence.

²⁸ This is also the conclusion of John Sallis in his review of *Radical Hermeneutics* (1987) in *The Very Idea of Radical Hermeneutics*, who concludes that Caputo actually theorizes a “refusal of radicality” in the

righteous appropriation, an effort of self-surveillance, incidentally, which is suggested by Caputo's title, "How to Prepare for the Coming of the Other." Though this may certainly be polite, what the example of Caputo illustrates is that adopting such a resolve first of all does not necessarily entail thinking beyond the subject-object split. In fact, adopting this resolve tends to entrench it. Moreover, the point is that the fundamental condition of intellectual openness is not a matter of willed demeanor, but is *already* a natural part of the way we experience something; it is merely a part whose potential we need to recognize and esteem. That we already experience this way and always have is what Gadamer wishes to show with the example of art. As I will show in Chapter One, the ancient Greek identification of the beautiful with the divine is of interest to Gadamer because this identification seems to reveal a mind capable of an exaggerated kind of tarrying, capable of so intense an experience of truth that truth appears physically present. It is an exaggerated kind of tarrying no longer possible for us, but the Greek example is nevertheless highly instructive because it suggests the potential of event hermeneutics, and perhaps also a contemporary anti-foundationalist analogy to Greek religiosity.

Gerald Bruns defends Gadamer against Caputo in his essay "On the Radical Turn in Hermeneutics" (1997), and is one of the few critics of hermeneutics who is consistent in taking the experiential locus of Gadamer's hermeneutics as fundamental.²⁹ In this essay, Bruns rejects Caputo's view of Gadamer in *Radical Hermeneutics* (1987), a view

"breaking off of questioning" that his reductionist strategy amounts to. Ed. Roy Martinez (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997), p. 187, 189.

²⁹ In *The Very Idea of Radical Hermeneutics*, pp. 118-133. The essay was originally published as a chapter in Bruns, *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992), pp. 213-229.

obviously changed very little in *More Radical Hermeneutics*.³⁰ According to Bruns, in the earlier work Caputo sees Gadamer as offering a “postal-service theory of hermeneutics, the theory of pure traditionality in which something original or originary gets transmitted or reproduced” (119). As we have seen, in *More Radical Hermeneutics*, Caputo still suspects Gadamer of hiding a metaphysical correlate to finitude. About Caputo’s earlier formulation, though, Bruns states, “it is certainly false to say (as Caputo does) that with this theory one has got to the heart of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics” (121).

Bruns counters what he sees as the superficiality of Caputo’s assessment by stressing and elucidating aspects of both the basis of Gadamer’s hermeneutics in experience-as-event, and Gadamer’s affirmation and clarification of the negative element of experience, which is notable given Caputo’s own later focus on Gadamer’s negative. Bruns affirms the status of the negative of experience as definitive of the hermeneutical “scene.” He calls this orientation “satirical,” identifying it as common to “both philosophical and radical or deconstructive hermeneutics” (121). Both, he says, think of the hermeneutical situation as:

a scene of conflict and disruption, where experience means *Erfahrung*, that is, something that one undergoes, something overwhelming and uncanny that exacts a radical transformation that leaves everything otherwise, no longer recognizable in the sense of familiar or the same. (121)

³⁰*Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutics Project* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana U. P., 1987). In the Introduction to *More Radical Hermeneutics*, Caputo reiterates, “Think of radical hermeneutics as a kind of intellectual fire department that arrives on the scene to douse the flames of essentialism wherever they flare up and threaten to consume us” (3). See also Caputo’s essay “Gadamer’s Closet Essentialism,” in Palmer and Michelfelder, eds., *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), pp. 258-265.

This shared orientation stands opposed to another defining orientation, one which he terms “allegorical”: “Allegory is a form of understanding that does not try to conceal the forestructure or scene of its interpretations but rather asserts this structure by translating everything into it” (121). It is only this appropriative stance that can posit a “pure traditionality.” But within this orientation to the satirical, as opposed to the allegorical interpretive stance, Bruns also posits a gradation between “comedic” and “tragic” disruption. The comedic disruption is emancipatory in the sense of being a welcomed release from past understanding, while the tragic disruption entails something’s being experienced as “a refusal to function as a problem it might solve or as a condition it might transcend” (131). The latter is the only truly radical hermeneutical experience, argues Bruns, one which suggests that a programmatic attempt to radicalize hermeneutics would have to mean refusing philosophy itself, in recognition of the fact that the point of thinking can no longer be merely to solve problems with finality, but must now be something more (as opposed to there no longer being any point in solving problems). Yet, as Bruns shows, in *Radical Hermeneutics* Caputo wishes to protect the institution of philosophy from such a refusal, envisioning instead an institution of philosophy surviving the deconstructive critique “purged and sobered” (128).³¹ Bruns concludes that “the idea of [Caputo’s] radical hermeneutics, one might say, is to sustain the comedy of life in which the hope of the renewal (of philosophy, of science, the disciplines of reason) is never lost” (132).

³¹ Caputo’s protectiveness of philosophy has apparently eased since the earlier work, as the anti-philosophical stance evident in the passage cited on page 23 above suggests. He also states explicitly in the later work, in fact, that he would eschew philosophy in favour of “existence”: “Knowing full well that the crown of philosophical knowledge tends to rest upon the head of what does not exist, I will...take my stand on the dense plain of existence...” (4).

While Bruns has not taken pains to reconcile radical, tragic disruption with Gadamer's frequent references to the holy, Bruns' orientation to *Erfahrung* nevertheless at least makes this possible: as part of an event, Bruns' tragic disruption can easily be thought of, for example, in terms of a moment of acute absorption where one confronts and is shattered by the utter inadequacy of a previously held belief. Yet, it is disappointing that Bruns takes no particular account of the elevated way in which Gadamer emphasizes the singular, emotive dimension of the event of understanding. Bruns' spectrum of forms of understanding, ranging from allegorical conservatism to tragic radicality, is comprised of categories that are knowingly rhetorical, thereby stressing instead that the element of hermeneutics is human discourse, and, appropriately, suggesting that traditional rhetorical distinctions might be usefully re-thought to demarcate hermeneutical experiences. On this point, he is consistent with Gadamer in elucidating the linguistic experience of tragic radicality with the example of poetry. Summoning Heidegger, Bruns writes that, "...by exposing thinking (*Denken*) to the refusal of language, its resistance to conceptual control, poetry (*Dichten*) turns it away from philosophy, that is, sets it free – teaches it, one might say, the meaning of *Gelassenheit*, or the tricks of Hermes" (126). In other words, poetry exposes thinking to the stubbornness of language to cede to conceptual control, and so sets thinking free from this impulse and teaches it the lessons of hermeneutics.

Brun's "The Remembrance of Language: An Introduction to Gadamer's Poetics," which begins *Gadamer on Celan* (1997), is an excellent elucidation of this Gadamerian notion of poetry as emancipatory in this other way, and reflects at length on the experiential core of Gadamerian poetics, specifically on its inherent anti-objectivism. His

introduction, in the process of elucidating the affinities amongst Gadamer, Celan, and Heidegger, focuses on four tangents of this problematic of event-contra-objectivity: “The Corporeality of Language,” “The Aesthetics of Refusal,” “A Poetics of Intimacy,” and “*Actualität*,” translated into English “relevance,” as in the “The Relevance of the Beautiful.” But in this work by Bruns he only regards temporality as pivotal in terms of the profoundly contextualized nature of understanding, that is, its now-ness, the now-ness of the meaning of poetry in contradistinction from its having a meaning that transcends the present:

In “Phänomenologischer und semantischer Zugang zu Celan?” Gadamer speaks of reading as a “completion” of the poem. And he thinks of himself as seeking the “unity of meaning” in each poem. Obviously, neither of these statements makes sense from the standpoint of traditional aesthetics which sees the work of art as an autonomous and autotelic entity, a finished object even when, as in the case of Celan’s poetry, the work is formally and analytically a fragment. But Gadamer understands the work of art first of all in its temporality. This means not only that the work exists in time as a historical document; it also means that it is temporal in its very nature, which is to say that despite its formal character as a finished piece of work it is at the same time structured as an event, as something “at work” or “in play” and therefore also unfinished. Of course we can position ourselves outside the temporality of the work by adopting the attitude of disinterested analysis. We can hold to the principle of aesthetic distance that frames the work of art in a timeless domain of the spirit.... But in doing so we close ourselves off from the work. It cannot speak to us; we have, in so many

words, censored it. We miss the way the work draws time – its own as well as ours – into its play. For Gadamer, understanding is never an exercise of knowingness. (29-30)

What is curious here is that Bruns contrasts art distanced within “the timeless domain of the spirit” with Gadamer’s notion of art as an event, while Gadamer himself frequently uses the rhetoric of timelessness precisely to describe eventfulness, even here in his title essay on Celan. Timelessness and eventfulness can appear contradictory only if one does not take note of, first, the Gadamerian antagonism between the cognitive modalities of tarrying and planning, the former modality defined by the timelessness of absorption. Second, one would have to miss Gadamer’s association of spirit precisely with this state of thinking. To Bruns, the priority that Gadamer gives to the temporality of the work of art, which Bruns rightly turns to in his final section entitled “Actualität,” is connected, as the term “relevance” suggests, to the inescapable situatedness of the encounter: “As Gadamer says, the ‘I’ of the poem appropriates me, situates me in its time and space, but not as someone else whom I am to impersonate; on the contrary, the poem forces me to confront myself in its time” (34). In this last section, Bruns correctly discerns that temporality is finally the heart of the matter for Gadamer, but he only sees it in relation to the dualism of self and other: the other, in this case the language of poetry, is profoundly disruptive of the self, while the self, meanwhile, is itself profoundly situated. For Bruns, temporality pertains to the acute ephemerality of this encounter, and to the ceaselessly changing surroundings of context that mark the experience of meaning. Yet, profound situatedness and profound disruption *per se* are again not what the interpreter is experiencing. You might say that these are more or less causes and effects of the

experience itself. What is actually experienced is, once again, only ever the subject matter of the poem. What Gadamer seeks to elucidate through his emphasis on an anomalous temporality is the *singularity* of this experience in its autonomy from ordinary experience; this is what I argue is the core of Gadamer's event hermeneutics. A final comment about this particular passage from Bruns' "Introduction": His explanation of a challenge posed to traditional aesthetics by Gadamer's seeking to "complete" a poem while also seeking its "unity" does not seem sufficient. It is as if he cannot quite reconcile the 'oneness' of "unity" with the 'two-ness' of "completion." He explains how the eventfulness of meaning can explain the poem's character as "unfinished," and so forever in need of "completion" by a reader, but does not say how the eventfulness of meaning explains its "unity." Only an orientation to the singularity of the event can explain this.

The question of the singular nature of the event is further illuminated with a consideration of why the central essay in Gadamer's book on Celan should nevertheless suggest this very dualism in its title, "Who am I and Who are You?" This essay is a reading of a sequence of Celan's poems, "Breath-crystal," from the longer work, *Breath-Turn* (1965). The question "Who am I and who are you?" is actually the hermeneutic subject that Gadamer struggles to tease out of this "hermetic" sequence of poems. Specifically in answer to this question, Gadamer finally says that (Celan says that) "we do not need to ask ourselves: Who am I and who are You? The poem will say 'yes' to every answer" (118). Bruns, by representing this thesis in terms of a poetics of "intimacy" to capture the acute temporal immediacy of event, is clearly attempting to capture the breakdown of any meaningful distinction between the I and the You. But intimacy still implies a dualism, however entangled self and other may be. And there is a clue to what

seems still to elude Bruns in the Gadamer essay's opening sentence. Gadamer calls the sequence of poems an example of Celan's movement "toward the breathless stillness of muted silence in words which have become cryptic" (67). This enigmatic description of Celan, either of his life, his style in individual works, or of the fate of a reader's encounter with the poetry, is particular in its choice of language; it echoes the language in the poems themselves, and is somewhat a distillation of the hermeneutics which Gadamer says is the theme of the poems. That Gadamer conceives of the event of understanding differently than Bruns is especially evident in Gadamer's reading of the final two poems of "Breath-crystal" where Gadamer examines Celan's suggestion of the experience of poetry as *singularly vivid and timeless*. This is the "stillness" that Gadamer's opening sentence says that Celan moves toward. Gadamer is alluding to an image in Celan of a "path" that moves toward the stillness of a "time-crevice":

Only when the "wind of your language" rushes in with its radiating purity does the path to the poem begin, to the "breath-crystal".... But where does the path of this journey lead? Clearly not to a pilgrim's shrine, but to the glacier-world itself, where the bright, clear air accommodates the enduring pilgrim like an inn. This world of eternal ice is welcoming because only effort and perseverance led there, and as a result, the indiscriminate human snow-production no longer rules. The path of this journey is thus ultimately the path of the purification of the word which, in the practice of silence and circumspection, renounces all popular trends and language conventions. This journey in the heights of the uninhabited winter mountains leads to a hospitable place

What awaits one there still lies deeply hidden: deep in the time crevice.

This sounds like an unplumbable crevasse which has opened up in the glacial ice.

Yet it is a time-crevice, *a tear in the regular flow of time, at a location where time no longer flows because, like everything else, it also stands frozen in eternity.*

“By the honeycomb ice,” – the optical and acoustic vividness of this is also compelling, ice-built and layered like the honeycomb in a beehive is a construction that cannot be altered, *meaning that it is protected against the influences of “flowing time” – there, by this “ice,” the poem, the breath-crystal, “waits.”* (125, emphasis added)

In this passage one must be careful not to misconstrue the frozen quality referred to as meaning something like the absolute solidity of word meanings or their petrification.

Rather, it refers to the absolute poignancy, the *clarity*, of having one’s entire word-world undergo a cosmic shift (something like what is necessary in extending an orientation to the event of understanding across the field of relevant terms). Of Celan’s lines, “Etched away by the / ray-wind of your language / the garish chatter of the commonly- / experienced...,” Gadamer writes:

The talk of “ray-wind of your language” further develops the fundamental cosmic metaphor that animated the [earlier] poem “Word-deposit.” “Your” language is the language of the You which hurls the word-moon; thus it is not so much the language of a poet, or of this poet as such, but the appearance [*Erscheinung*] of language itself – true, luminous, and round language. It etches away all false witness, removes it so thoroughly that not a trace of it remains. In this way, “ray-wind” may invoke the cosmic dimensions of this eruption, but beyond anything

else, it certainly invokes the purity and radiating brilliance – the true spirituality – of language.... (124)

In his reading of Celan, Gadamer presents his account of a temporally defined antithesis in Celan between the everyday word-world and the word-worlding of poetry in a way that frankly and quite deliberately reflects his own philosophical preoccupations, and these passages from Gadamer's reading of Celan, who wrote that "attention is the natural prayer of the soul," in fact illustrate what Gadamer has in mind elsewhere when he speaks of the event of understanding in terms of a sacred temporality.³² Gadamer's stress upon the "optic and acoustic vividness" of this experience of "the true spirituality of language," helps to define the singularity of the event, such as in the "radiating purity" of poetry, and the "bright, clear air" of these "heights" of "effort and perseverance." It is the intense quality of the experience that Gadamer seeks to capture with these images, and that he says Celan is attempting to capture. Considering Gadamer's encounter with Celan's allegory of meaning-making as such an enactment of meaning-making itself, we see that it is a "completion" of Celan that frankly sounds like Gadamer. But this should neither be considered unsettlingly ironic nor, heaven forbid, paradoxical, but, rather, merely fitting. Gadamer's reading sounds not like a finished argument but like it is itself just an example of deep absorption in the workings of Celan's language. Gadamer's usual question-posing style is particularly appropriate here, which is perhaps the pertinent thing about his title; the question is the fundamental rhetorical device of Gadamer's own tarrying, and is the device apropos of exercising the limits of language.

³² Cited in Derrida, *Of Spirit*, p. 87.

Bruns is nevertheless a hermeneutical thinker who remains consistently trained on the experiential core of hermeneutics. In his most recent *Tragic Thoughts at the End of Philosophy*, he takes a further step in the orientation to the “intimacy” inherent in the eventfulness of understanding, developed in the earlier essays on the radical dimension of hermeneutics.³³ Though there is no mention of Gadamer in the introductory chapter of this book, “Theory, Practice, Proximity: A Short History of the End of Philosophy,” it takes this further step in characterizing the acuteness of intimacy which he had noted in Gadamer’s poetics, using Levinas’ notion of “proximity.” Proximity is a “condition,” he says, which “captures a conception of human finitude that cannot, on any argument I know of, be evaded” (17). Proximity is “relational,” he says, in that it refers to the relation of the subject to immediate context, a subject whose responsivity to an other is wholly unpredictable due to its ceaselessly changing nature. But proximity, stresses Bruns, “is an event as well as a relation. It has the anarchic character of an intervention in the order of things that I inhabit” (17). This description reiterates his earlier assessment of the radicality of Gadamer’s negative, where the focus was entirely on experience as event. However, he goes further here by focusing at the end of this introduction on the very “singularity” of absorption that Gadamer seeks to capture about eventfulness with his notion of tarrying. But Bruns captures this by appealing to Levinas, not Gadamer:

Levinas characterizes [proximity] as an “assignation,” being approached, called out, summoned, accused; but he also thinks of it in terms of obsession (the condition of being gripped, fascinated, haunted, pursued, persecuted). What is

³³ *Tragic Thoughts at the End of Philosophy; Language, Literature, and Ethical Theory* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1999).

overturned in proximity is my sovereignty, but not my responsibility, which is, so to speak, purified of every possibility of evasion. (17)

It is worth considering why Levinas and not Gadamer best articulates the singularity of the event of meaning for Bruns. Possibly, what Gadamer additionally captures about human finitude, namely, the specific fulfillment afforded by such experiences, points beyond Bruns' concern with the origin of the ethical in the social, to a new basis for the spiritual. This may be distracting to Bruns, whose ultimate concern here is with the (less suspicious) ethical dimension of this "being gripped." For Bruns, proximity is an "ethical concept" in the respect that one is ultimately "gripped" in this moment with responsibility, a responsibility born of freedom from dogmatism. But this same ethics is inherent in Gadamer's concept of the negative in experience. Gadamer frequently employs the language of the spiritual to stress the connection between this particular ethics -- the grip of responsibility within a release from dogma -- and the larger questions of human continuity and human well-being.

Nevertheless, Bruns is more faithful to Gadamerian hermeneutics than many working with Gadamer's thought, and continues in this book to look at the relation between philosophy and literature in order to develop the (ethical) idea of poetry as the refusal of philosophy. What is especially relevant to the subject of this dissertation is that one of Bruns' themes is the relative significance of poetry and narrative within this ethics of proximity. The various chapters seek to distinguish amongst ways in which literature has been of interest to ethical philosophers, and specifically asks what are the "Limits of Narrative" (his title for part III) with respect to the question of poetry as this refusal of philosophy. This is also the question this dissertation asks of Gadamer. In Bruns'

opening remarks, for instance, Bruns states his intent to reconsider traditional assumptions about the rule of rationality as it plays out in distinctions made between poetry and narrative, in the hope of liberating the concept of poetry from its traditional, Aristotelian “reduction to logical or narrative form”(2). He reflects on the identification of narrative, not with the stubbornness of language to cede to the conceptual control to which poetry exposes thinking, but with conceptual control itself, such as where it is the “linchpin” of the moral theory of Alistair MacIntyre (77):

The rationality of narratives consists not only in its power of contextualization, which rescues us from randomness and contingency, but also because it makes life responsive or responsible to interrogation in some fundamentally Socratic or philosophically satisfying way. (79)

To Bruns, MacIntyre exemplifies a recent “narrative turn,” a turn either concurrent with or reacting against the antithetical “radical turn” in hermeneutics whose basis is eventfulness and whose ethics follow from this, as though the two literary genres might be appropriated to two respective philosophical causes, one conservative and one radical. Among certain “literary people,” he says, “storytelling, just to put it dogmatically, is human life’s only mode of intelligibility. But for a certain kind of philosopher, and Gadamer would be such a philosopher, this assertion is controversial in a fundamental way” (71).

Bruno speaks of a “narrative turn” with reference to two developments: first, to current trends in many disciplines, even as remote from hermeneutics or literary studies as cognitive and neuro-psychology, to identify consciousness with narrative in the sense that it is thought to be “indispensable to having a self”; and second, to its central

importance to a certain “antifoundationalist” view, perhaps turning out only to be pseudo-antifoundationalist, that “things have histories rather than natures or essences” (94). He considers Rorty’s ideal where, akin to Caputo’s, instead of yielding to the impulse to control we dream up as many contextualizing narratives as we can “for the hell of it” (95). Both MacIntyre and Rorty assume a culture comprised of a “superfluity” of narratives, the only difference being that while this state of incoherence is to MacIntyre lamentable, to Rorty it is joyful. But Bruns wonders whether this turn isn’t fatally flawed in the respect that narrative art on another view is not reducible to the purely rational at all, citing, among alternative ways of talking about it, Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia and the centrifugal force of language (90-91). He speculates that it may also be the case that narratives are inherently fragmentary -- the modern narrative might be seen as merely exploiting this fact -- and so it might be in their nature “to produce such a culture [of ruling nothing out], and that a culture that tried to be philosophical would have a problem with this” (96). Bruns ends by considering that as far as models of selfhood go, it may be the case that, rather than a rational model of narrative being indispensable to having a self, the literary model for self is perhaps the Tristram Shandy-like text:

So the brain does not register or construct perceptions or world-pictures, as traditional empirical and transcendental models have it; it does not even produce narratives on the standard theory of narrative as higher-order integrative discourse. It produces texts. [Neurophilosopher Daniel Dennett] calls this his “multiple drafts theory,” which he opposes to what he calls the “Cartesian theatre” or spectator theory, and which is something like a Shandyist as against an Aristotelian-Kantian model of how the brain works – in the sense that what the

brain is said to produce resembles *Tristram Shandy* more than it does a conceptual fabric of propositions held together by inferential reasoning. (106)

Regardless of what kind of cognitive model narratives or texts, generally, provide for philosophers, however, what seems to be missing from this discussion is an articulation of the potential “proximity” of narrative language, because Bruns’ discussion of narrative does not take narrative up in any firmly hermeneutical way, that is, as something *experienced*. Specifically, in what kind of “grip,” to use Bruns’ term, in what kind of grip does the experience of narrative language place one, say in comparison to the grip of poetry? Is there no difference? It would also be germane to hear a little about how the above non-narrative cognitive model of the brain is ethical, in the sense of the “grip” of responsibility born of a release from dogmatic thought.

Brun’s title chapter, “Tragic Thoughts at the End of Philosophy,” ends the section on narrative, and functions as somewhat of a prologue to Part III, “Poetry and Philosophy inside the Everyday World.” “Tragic Thoughts” reiterates and develops the ethical concept of experience in relation to tragic radicality that was treated in the earlier essay, “On the Radical Turn in Hermeneutics,” discussed above. As in “Radical Turn,” in “Tragic Thoughts,” Gadamer’s concept of experience as event is pivotal. But this chapter on the tragic, surprisingly, does not take up narrative in terms of a specifically experiential hermeneutics. As though it were sufficient to say that literature bears the mark of poetry not narrative, that because narrative needn’t be identified with rationality and control it can be called poetry after all, Bruns’ book returns to the idea of the poetic whose inherent radicality constitutes its refusal of philosophy. In this respect his book is arguably Gadamerian through and through, yet not on the most enigmatic aspects of

Gadamer. These have to do, I believe, with Gadamer's view of narrative in light of his view of time.

Chapter One:

“Blessing Muses”: Art-Truth-Spirit in the Temporality of Tarrying³⁴

*Are there not quite different forms of precision, forms that do not consist in the application of rules or in the use of an apparatus, but rather in a grasp of what is right that goes far beyond this?*³⁵

This chapter will demonstrate in detail Gadamer’s continual preoccupation with what I argue is the theoretical core of his event-hermeneutics, the concept of tarrying (*Verweilen*), in particular, the “time-structure of tarrying (*die Zeitstruktur des Verweilens*”). This is how he phrases it in his late essay on art, “Word and Picture: ‘So True, So Vibrant,’” which this chapter will examine in detail.³⁶ By “the time-structure of tarrying,” Gadamer does not simply refer to the tranquility of contemplation. We find him using this term in reference to a particular, anomalous temporality, which I shall characterize here as “a standing still of time” or as in a sense “the absence of time.” The specifically temporal properties of the modality of tarrying is most frequently referred to in his accounts of the experience of art, where he repeatedly stresses the fundamental

³⁴ “Blessing muses” is the last line of Martin Heidegger’s “The Thinker as Poet,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 14. In the German, the line reads, “*Segen sinnt.*” I cite the line because it imbues to the static noun “blessing” the quality of event, just as to static substance in “Mist diffuses” (“*Regen rinnt,*”) in line 4, or “Springs well” (“*Brunnen quellen,*”) in line 6. It also strongly suggests Gadamer’s idea that the doing of meaning-making is the essence of the spiritual.

³⁵ “From Word to Concept: The Task of Hermeneutics as Philosophy,” trans. Richard E. Palmer (unpublished), p. 7.

³⁶ “Word and Picture: ‘So True, So Vibrant,’” trans. Richard E. Palmer (unpublished) p. 41. The German essay, “*Wort und Bild -- ‘so wahr, so seiend,*” appears for the first time in Gadamer’s *Gesammelte Werke* 8 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), pp. 373-99.

importance, not just of tarrying, but of its special temporality, as he does here, in the recently (2001) translated *In Conversation*:

The temporal dimension that is bound up with art is, in fact, fundamental. In this tarrying the contrast with the merely pragmatic realms of understanding becomes clear. The *Weile* [the “while” in *Verweilen*, tarrying] has this very special temporal structure – a temporal structure of being moved, which one nevertheless cannot describe merely as duration, because duration means only further movement in a single direction.³⁷

As this statement suggests, the significance of the temporality of tarrying goes beyond its importance to the experience of art. Indeed, the experience of art in this statement stands in contrast with “the merely pragmatic realms of thought.” This reading of Gadamer will show, not only that this contrast is much deeper than the simple autonomy of art from pragmatic concerns, but also that it is the temporality of art is what makes it so. Time stands at the core of the exemplary nature of art. It is in fact the concrete core of the *Ereignis* (event) of understanding in Gadamer’s philosophy.

Tarrying, involving the “temporal structure of being moved,” and occasioning an anomalous “durationless” time, connects two directions in Gadamer’s thought.³⁸ First, in

³⁷ “Aesthetics,” in *Gadamer in Conversation*, ed. & trans. Richard Palmer (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 2001), pp. 61-77, p. 76-77, parenthesis in original.

³⁸ The development of this concept is latent even in the early work on Plato that constituted Gadamer’s *Habilitationsschrift* of 1928, published in English under the title, *Plato’s Dialectical Ethics* in 1991 (New Haven and London: Yale UP). In this early application of Husserlian phenomenological principles to Plato, Gadamer is under the inspiration of Heidegger’s radical initiative to recover Being from Western metaphysics, and, in a revisionist reading of Plato, sees the aim of Plato’s dialogues not to arrive at truth, but rather to abide in inquiry. It is this modality of abiding that the notion of tarrying subsequently elucidates. In the Preface to a 1982 German reprint (included in 1991 English trans.), Gadamer writes, “I felt like a first reader of Plato, one who sought to try out on a classical text the new immediacy of thinking access ‘to the things (the facts of the matter) themselves,’ which was the watchword of Husserl’s phenomenology. The fact that I dared, then, to do this was due, above all, to the deep and decisive

such an experience Gadamer sees the coming forth of true being, which I believe he would like to reintroduce as something like a contemporary analogy to the Greek concept of the divine.³⁹ It is this direction in Gadamer's thought, a direction concerning spirit, that is now much more salient with the appearance of the recent essay "Word and Picture," and for this reason, this is an important essay for Gadamer studies. The focal importance of tarrying in this argument, and the detailed account its special temporality, more detailed than Gadamer presents elsewhere, emphasizes the link between time and spirit. "*Wort und Bild, 'so wahr, so seiend'*" was one of two essays written in 1992 for volume eight of *Gesammelte Werke: Ästhetik und Poetik I: Kunst als Aussage (Art as Assertion)*.⁴⁰ It is also, therefore, one of the most recent writings by Gadamer.

influence that Martin Heidegger's teaching during his years in Marburg had on me.... Should it not be possible for me too to see Greek philosophy, Aristotle, and Plato, with new eyes -- Just as Heidegger was able in his lectures on Aristotle to present a completely uncustomary Aristotle, one in whom one rediscovered one's own, present-day questions in startlingly concrete form? (xxxii). In fact, an early (1922), unpublished essay of Heidegger's on Aristotle, shown to Gadamer then and inspiring him to study under Heidegger, contained a discussion of tarrying (*Verweilen*). This essay by Heidegger, "*Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation*," was not published until 1989 (in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Geschichte*, vol. 6, pp. 237-254) after Gadamer rediscovered it in his papers. The Heidegger essay was published with an introduction by Gadamer, "*Heidegger's 'theologische' Jugendschrift*" (Ibid.), pp. 228-234. Gadamer stated, "The most important Heideggerian text to have appeared posthumously is this earliest work of his." Cited in Robert J. Dostal, "Gadamer's Relation to Heidegger and Phenomenology," *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), pp. 247-266, note 10, p 264. See also Alfons Greider, "On Phenomenology" a conversation with Gadamer in *Gadamer In Conversation*, trans. A. Greider (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001, pp. 103-14), p. 104.

³⁹ This is, of course, a Heideggerian initiative, specifically, a direction in Gadamer that recalls Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 17-87). As Gadamer says: "My philosophical hermeneutics seeks precisely to adhere to the line of questioning of this essay *and the later Heidegger* and to make it accessible in a new way" ("Reflections on My Philosophical Journey," p. 47, italics in original). In Gadamer's Introduction to the 1960 Reclam edition of Heidegger's essay on art, he states, with Heidegger, "A work of art does not 'mean' something or function as a sign that refers to a meaning; rather, it presents itself in its own Being, so that the beholder must tarry by it." See "The Truth of the Work of Art" in *Heidegger's Ways*, trans. John W. Stanley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 104.

⁴⁰ (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1993), pp. 373-99. The title *Kunst als Aussage* is important to note; *Art as Assertion* encapsulates Gadamer's thesis that art asserts a particular form of truth, which needs to be distinguished from scientific truth. The two articles referred to above, "*Wort und Bild*," and "*Zur Phänomenologie der Ritual und Sprache*," comprise the final section of volume 8, entitled, "*Auf dem Wege zur hermeneutischen Philosophie*" ("On the Way to Philosophical Hermeneutics," my trans.). Only "*Wort*

Second, tarrying is a critical concept for Gadamer's antithesis to, and antidote for, the malaise of calculative thinking that the ontology of scientific objectivism has bequeathed, and which has culminated, for example, in the current obsession with and deference to technology. This refutation of calculative thinking is more generally understood with reference to what Gadamer says in *Truth and Method* distinguishing two notions of experience, experience as a possession, "referring to the lasting meaning that an experience has for the person who has it" -- *Erlebnis*; and experience as something ongoing, as a transformative event -- *Erfahrung*.⁴¹ But instead, I will focus on three relatively early essays which Gadamer wrote explicitly on the subject of time. "The Continuity of History and the Existential Moment" (1972, 1965 in German);⁴² "Concerning Empty and Full Time" (1970, 1969 in German);⁴³ and "The Western View of the Inner Experience of Time and the Limits of Thought" (1977, 1977 in German).⁴⁴ I show how this now familiar opposition between experience as possession and experience as event, each with their corresponding notions of truth, can be expressed in terms of the temporal modality that prevails in each case. The articles each maintain -- with different emphases and for slightly different purposes -- that asking the question,

und Bild" will appear in Richard Palmer's forthcoming Gadamer reader. It is included in *Gadamer Lesbuch*, Ed. Jean Grondin (Tubingen: Mohr, 1997).

⁴¹ *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1993), p 66-67. For a discussion of *Erfahrung*, see pp. 356 & ff. In my essay, "Theology as Hermeneutical Stance," I argued that one's hermeneutical stance can be characterized as either appropriative or open, and that these corresponded, respectively, to the categories of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. In *Comitatus* 27 (1996), pp. 1-13. I no longer regard this distinction as a fruitful entry into Gadamer's thought.

⁴² *Philosophy Today* 16 (Fall 1972), pp. 230-49. None of the three essays on time (see notes 36, 37) have been reprinted, except in the *Gesammelte Werke*.

⁴³ *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 8 (Winter 1970), pp.341-353, originally an address delivered in June, 1969 on the occasion of Heidegger's 80th birthday (editor's note).

⁴⁴ In *Time and the Philosophies*, Paris: Unesco (1977), pp. 33-48. There is no editor or translator identified. Paul Ricoeur wrote the Introduction wherein he summarizes Gadamer's essay, giving special attention to points that he will elaborate in *Time and Narrative* (see below, Chap. 3).

“what is time?” has revealed more about the hubris of philosophy and its naive trust in the self-evidentness of concepts than it might about the nature of temporality. The decisive significance of tarrying for both these directions in Gadamer’s thought, the rejuvenation of spirit and the critique of calculative thinking, is the focus of this chapter. But while I demonstrate the importance of the idea of tarrying for these directions in Gadamer primarily with the texts mentioned, it needs to be said that the thematics of time, and specifically its connection to spirit, are subtly present in many other essays. They, too, are important to note, and provide an apt preliminary to a discussion of “Word and Picture.”

Recuperating the Beautiful, Recuperating the Divine

A statement from the comprehensive autobiography “Reflections on My Philosophical Journey” (1997) alludes to what Gadamer mentions in “Aesthetics” is so fundamental to art, the “temporal structure of being moved.” It is a statement that is a particularly significant confirmation of the continued, or possibly increasing importance to Gadamer of the concept of tarrying because it is offered in a retrospective assessment of his hermeneutics. In a reconsideration of *Truth and Method*, he explains he “needed to unite the game of language more closely with the game art plays, which I designated as the model for hermeneutics.”⁴⁵ The game art plays goes together with playing the “language-game” and “world-game,” he says, because of their common attribute of dialectical question and answer, “in which answers strike back as questions and provide

⁴⁵ “Reflections on My Philosophical Journey,” p. 42.

new answers” (44). Maintaining his orientation to the event of a consciousness at work, Gadamer states that such dialectical involvement “is what moves us to tarry with a work of art, of whatever kind it may be. To be tarrying [*Verweilen*] is clearly the distinguishing mark of the experience of art”(44). This is a statement that equates the act of tarrying with the dialectical involvement at the heart of the event of understanding. Being moved to tarry, in other words, is what unites the world game, language game and the art game. Their commonality as events of understanding, however, is not that they are all games, but has to do with their special temporality, the “temporal structure of being moved.” In retrospect, Gadamer would have placed more emphasis on the eventfulness of tarrying. This is what unites art, language, and world.

Gadamer’s most developed discussions of the temporality of tarrying occur after *Truth and Method*, most notably in “The Relevance of the Beautiful; Art as Play, Symbol, and Festival”(1977) which sifts out and elaborates the discussions of play, symbol and festival in *Truth and Method* in order to demonstrate the special autonomy of art.⁴⁶ In this essay he explains that art has an autonomy from pragmatic concerns like that of the game or of play, and that it is symbolic, not in the representational sense, but in a sense involving recognition. The third analogy, art as festival, concerns temporality: Both are a hiatus from pragmatic concerns, but it is the *temporality* of this hiatus that is special: “It is in the nature of the festival that it should proffer time, arresting it and allowing it to tarry. That is what festive celebration means. The calculating way in which we normally manage and dispose of our time is, as it were, brought to a standstill” (42). He explains that the temporality of this hiatus is such that a cessation of our normal experience of time

occurs. And, suggesting that this temporality has a greater degree of authenticity than our normal experience of time, he proposes to call it “‘fulfilled’ or ‘autonomous’ time” (42).

This suggests a further reverence for this notion of time, which is indicated in the summation of his discussion of the temporality of the festival: “the essence of our temporal experience of art is learning how to tarry in this way. *And perhaps it is the only way that is granted to us finite beings to relate to what we call eternity*” (45, my emphasis). The mention of “eternity” here is striking, yet should not be associated with religious transcendence and metaphysics. For if we recall the opening of “The Relevance of the Beautiful,” it becomes evident that “eternity” is a temporal term belonging to an idiom of spirit which is radically de-Christianized.⁴⁷ In the opening of the essay, quite a different concern with spirit is evident. Gadamer’s point of departure in attempting to determine what makes art art is Hegel’s observation that with Christianity art became a thing of the past: “When Hegel spoke of art as a thing of the past he meant that art was no longer understood as a presentation of the divine in the self-evident and unproblematic way in which it had been understood in the Greek world” (6). Then Gadamer adds, “For us, the work of art is no longer the presence of the divine that we revere” (6). Gadamer’s interest here is in a particular loss, a loss concerning the capacity to regard divinity as something present before us, as opposed to something left behind in the past.

⁴⁶ For these discussions in *Truth and Method*, see especially “The Temporality of the Aesthetic,” pp. 121-29.

⁴⁷ See also James Risser’s discussion, “Poetic Dwelling,” in *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other; Rereading Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York, 1997), pp. 199-206. Risser attempts to account for Gadamer’s use, when discussing tarrying, of such references to divinity, spirit, and eternity, but he only terms this “most curious,” and does not see a possible analogy between the phenomenology of art and the Greek presence of being. Risser’s focus on “poetic dwelling” also does not regard its special temporality as central in any way. Consequently, it would be difficult for him to speculate on Gadamer’s efforts to restore the spiritual, or see this as an urgent question for Gadamer.

In his essay “The Verse and the Whole,” where his question is how the art of poetry (“the verse”) has come to be irrelevant in our world (“the whole”), this loss is referred to again, as a passing away of “the unity of sensible appearance and the reality of the divine” which was “unquestionably present in classical Greek culture.”⁴⁸ Here, he stresses once more that the issue is not the passing away of the significance of particular works of art, but, rather, the loss of an ontology that art happened once to attend:

...everything which has come together in the magnificent humanistic-Christian unity, which we call the Western tradition of our culture, presents a type of first pastness measured against the unity of the classical....What has passed away is not art but rather its religious immediacy. It is experienced as ‘art’ precisely because it lost its religious immediacy.... (87)

The affinity of such an interest with his basic orientation to the event of understanding is clear: the question concerns a capacity, not divinity per se. Tarrying distinguishes the experience of art, of conversation, of philosophy, in that it is the modality that in each case allows something to be *analogously present*, with the result that something alienated becomes immediate once more. Other statements from Gadamer go further in suggesting that there is in fact something analogously present for us in our experience of the work of art, in effect introducing an ontology that rejuvenates divinity, replacing it in both the

⁴⁸ In *Education, Poetry, and History*, ed. Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson, trans. Lawrence Schmidt and Monica Reuss (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 87. It is worth noting that Heidegger refers to this observation of Hegel’s in the Epilogue to “The Origin of the Work of Art” (80). He states, “behind [Hegel’s] verdict there stands Western thought since the Greeks” (80). It should also be noted that Gadamer in 1985 and 1986 published two essays on Hegel’s idea of the pastness of art, “*Ende der Kunst? Von Hegel’s Lehre vom Vergangenheitcharacter der Kunst bis zur Anti-kunst von Heute*” (The End of Art? On Hegel’s Essay on the Pastness of Art and the Anti-art of Today,” my trans.), and *Die Stellung der Poesie im system der Hegelschen Asthetik und de Frage des Vergangenheitcharacter der Kunst* (The Place of Poetry in the Hegelian System of Aesthetics and the Question of the Pastness of the

sense of restoring and substituting. I believe this is, if not one of Gadamer's most radical preoccupations, then at least a conspicuous potential of his philosophy.

Conversely, in Gadamer we often see that the term, "spirit" has explicitly temporal nuances. For instance, in "The Relevance of the Beautiful" he states, "The essence of what is called spirit lies in the ability to move within the horizon of an open future and an unrepeatable past. Mnemosyne, the muse of memory and recollective appropriation, rules here as the muse of spiritual freedom" (10). Here again, spirit has to do with an "ability" rather than an entity, a distinction that alludes to the hermeneutic *comportment* of openness that tarrying entails. To see this ability as specifically a question of temporality, we must emphasize that the religious "immediacy" mentioned above -- "what has passed away is [art's] religious immediacy"-- is experiential: it designates the degree to which only the present fills our experience.

"The Relevance of the Beautiful" does not refer, as *Truth and Method* does, to the Greek concept of *theoria* to help elucidate the particular spiritual quality of participation-with-the-other. In *Truth and Method*, the discussion of the festival occurs in the context of the inadequacy of the concept of subjectivity when accounting for the truth of aesthetic experience, rather than in the context of the autonomy of art. Here, he uses the Greek concept of *theoria* to show, not how in the experience of art something comes to be "analogously present," as I say above, but a corollary of this: in the experience of the festival one is in the modality of being "outside oneself":

[In understanding festival participation] we can recall the concept of sacral communion that lies behind the original concept of *theoria*. *Theoros* means

Work of Art," my trans.). These appear in volume 8 of the complete works under the heading, *Vom*

someone who takes part in a delegation to a festival.... But theoria is not to be conceived primarily as subjective conduct, as a self-determination of the subject, but in terms of what it is contemplating. Theoria is a true participation, not something active but something passive (pathos), namely being totally involved in and carried away by what one sees. (124-25)

By “passive,” Gadamer refers to the extent to which one is so totally given over to something that a particular forgetting of oneself occurs:

Considered as a subjective accomplishment in human conduct, being present has the character of being outside oneself.... In fact, being outside oneself is the positive possibility of being wholly with something else. This kind of being present is a self-forgetfulness to what one is watching. Here self-forgetfulness is anything but a privative condition, for it arises from devoting one’s full attention to the matter at hand, and this is the spectator’s own positive accomplishment. (125-26).

Here, we see a more explicit description of the intellectual comportment that is operative in tarrying in the mention of “devoting one’s full attention to the matter at hand.” We see that it is this hermeneutic stance that has the effect of creating a sense of phenomenological presence. This is a critical point. For self-consciousness in the ordinary sense becomes in Gadamer something that precludes the occurrence of the “spiritual” experience.

The Greek meaning of *theoria* as a kind of participation of engrossment is expanded upon by Gadamer in the essay “Praise of Theory,” written in 1980.⁴⁹ Here the Greek meaning is again applied outside the realm of art, summoned to shed light on problems arising from the extreme pragmatism of the “scientifically shaped cultural consciousness of modernity” (27). He seeks to revive the Greek concept of theory as an autonomous *form of practice* rather than something increasingly subordinate to “social utilitarianism” (26). The essay contains another clue to the ontological significance of tarrying to Gadamer. With regard to this engrossment, he stresses that for the Greeks, “the divine consisted in precisely the lasting present of this intensification” (35). Then he adds a statement that reveals the depth to him of the specifically hermeneutic value of this: “Disregarding oneself, regarding what is: that is the behavior of a cultivated, I might almost say divine, consciousness” (35).

We may now note an interesting correspondence: as we observed above, in “The Relevance of the Beautiful” Gadamer remarks that *mnemosyne*, or remembrance, rules spirit, while, as we have just seen, self-forgetting is required for something to become ‘divinely’ present. What accounts for this apparent contradiction? It must be that the self-forgetting that occurs in tarrying itself occasions a kind of remembrance; it must be that tarrying affords another kind of remembering. As the self is forgotten, some other remembering takes place, as though of another order. This remembering has the immediacy of filling the present moment to the extent that the effect is of something being immanent. In being fully present, this remembrance instills the sense of being fully

⁴⁹ In *Praise of Theory*, trans. Chris Dawson (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1998), pp. 16-36. Gadamer speaks here of a gathering conceptualization that theory is somehow subordinate to practice. It is an example of Gadamer’s concept-history approach to illuminating contemporary problems.

human, as in a “sacral communion.” Mnemosyne is the muse of the spirit, then, because it is the reawakened past that comes forth at such a time, or more to the point, comes forth *in* such a temporal mode.

What is coming into view here is the aspect of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics that is most widely known, his theory of the historically effective consciousness (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*), wherein our belongingness to history is never something that we can wholly grasp because we belong so completely to it. What is important is that only in the experience of tarrying does an historical unconcealment take place. However, and this is a critical point, so concealed from us is the extent of our historicity that the experience of tarrying is precisely *without* the character of remembrance. Rather, it has the character of an encounter with the ‘truth’ about whatever matter is at hand (*Sache*). The encountering of truth, then, its newness, depth and profundity, is determined hermeneutically by the degree of absorption which causes the dissipating of anything external to it. That is its special temporality.

Gadamer wishes to legitimize this experience as the proper way to understand what ‘history’ is. And this experience is also the way one has to understand what Gadamer means by ‘tradition.’ In such a statement as “tradition is a continual reawakening and reappropriating,” we understand “tradition” as *the event of engagement* *in* this “reawakening” of history, this “reappropriating” of it in light of the claims which the present situation makes upon us. Similarly, in the statement, “what occurs in human being through the event of tradition is a continual reacquisition,” we might note how “being” is said to be *that in which occurs* the “reacquisition” of history. Gadamer alludes here to the conditions under which being is most authentic. Finally, this statement about

art: “Mnemosyne is...the mother of all the muses and so the patron of art. Art -- whether picture, word, sound, song, or whatever its origin was or its present social function may be -- means in the final analysis, a way of confronting ourselves in which we become mindful of ourselves.” Here, Gadamer does not wish his reader to think this “being mindful” is about self-surveillance but, rather, about recognition.⁵⁰ Mnemosyne rules the spirit such that divinity is something like the degree or quality of remembrance of something forgotten: “Mnemosyne remains the mother of the muses. The presence of the past belongs to the essence of spirit.”⁵¹

It is with those words that Gadamer ends the very recent essay, “Word and Picture” (1992) whose principle focus is this particular dimension of the experience of tarrying in art -- that is, of the event-nature of the truth which thereby comes forth. The essay, “*Wort und Bild, ‘so wahr, so seiend.’*” (“Word and Picture, ‘So True, So Vibrant’”), was written for volume eight of *Gesammelte Werke: Ästhetik und Poetik I: Kunst als Aussage (Art as Assertion)*.⁵² According to Richard Palmer, who summarizes the contents of this essay in English as part of his contribution to *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, the essay “Word and Picture -- ‘So True, so Vibrant!’” is “quite possibly the most exciting and impressive of Gadamer’s essays on art, surpassing even ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ in its scope, originality, density of thought, and

⁵⁰ “The Verse and the Whole,” (pp. 88, 90).

⁵¹ The German is, “*Mnemosyne bleibt die Mutter der Musen. Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit gehört zum Wesen des Geistes*” (“*Wort und Bild*,” p. 399). This is my translation. Palmer’s translation reads, “The present of the past belongs as art to the very nature of spirit” (59). It is difficult to see how his addition of the restrictive phrase, “as art,” is required. That is, Palmer seems to have limited the extent of the statement’s applicability to art, when art is not actually referred to in the German sentence. He therefore does not seem to read the statement as having universal application.

⁵² (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1993), pp. 373-99.

significance.”⁵³ He explains that “Gadamer’s lifelong goal of defending the truth of art philosophically here attains its final realization” (547).

The phrase in the essay’s title, “*so wahr, so seiend*,” which Gadamer reports Goethe to have said when a particular work of art made an “overwhelming impression” on him (35), alludes to the quality of the truth that shines forth in the artwork, the identification of this with its seeming “rightness,” and in turn this identification of truth and rightness with the presence of being/be-ing (there is a play in the participle, “*seiend*,” that suggests the event-character of art.).⁵⁴ Gadamer’s point of departure in the essay is his view that “it is the arts, taken as a whole, that together reign over the metaphysical heritage of our Western tradition” (20). More emphatically than in *Truth and Method*, he presents the importance for philosophical hermeneutics of the proximity between truth and beauty in Greek thinking (31). And more emphatically than in “The Relevance of the Beautiful,” he identifies the commonality of all art as its special temporality. Indeed, the essay builds to an account of tarrying more detailed than Gadamer has elsewhere given.

Perhaps it is important to show first, however, that the theme of spirit is very much present in this essay. The question of spirit provides, early in the essay, the context for his focus on the temporality of art. He mentions a “great task facing humanity” concerning “the characteristic of every religion that it is convinced of the absoluteness of its own truth” (24). This religious righteousness creates a divisiveness amongst social solidarities, he explains, one that is further complicated by the solidarity of atheism. He points out, however, that the experience of art has its particular “absoluteness,” too, one

⁵³ “Ritual, Rightness and Truth in Two Late Works of Hans-Georg Gadamer,” pp. 529-47, p. 536.

⁵⁴ Palmer notes the difficulty in translating “*seiend*” (19). He variously translated it as “existent” and “so full of being” before settling on “vibrant” here.

that, by contrast, “is able to throw forth bridges that reach beyond all enclosures, all limits” (25). This, he says, “can give us renewed courage” (25). He then explains that the absoluteness of art is born of its special contemporaneousness, wherein art, even art as ancient as cave paintings, still appears, as it were, absolutely complete and “right” to us today, no matter what its age. So Gadamer is saying that a new sense of the absolute, something that he suggests we seem irresistibly to esteem, is born of a consideration of art’s special temporality. It is within this broader radicalization of the absolute, then, that he poses the question, “What is “time” [Zeit] in this contemporaneousness?” (24). This is refined to the question, “What is the basis for this claim of art, with its superiority over time [Zeitüberlegenheit], to defy all enclosing limits?” (26). The question finally takes the form, “What is it that makes a picture or a poem a work of art, such that it has such an absolute presentness?” (27).

In his exploration of the beautiful here, Gadamer is deepening the idea of the phenomenological presence of art by looking further to Greek ontology where the beautiful, the good, the true, and the divine had a close interchangeability. As Palmer points out in his 1997 summary, this is a refinement of the discussion in the culminating section of *Truth and Method* (esp. “The Universal Aspect of Hermeneutics,” pp. 474-91), where Gadamer looks to the Greek concept of the beautiful (*to kalon*) for analogies with the hermeneutics of experience.⁵⁵ In “Word and Picture,” he deepens this examination of Greek thought by further explicating this nexus of Greek concepts, in order to answer the

⁵⁵ In concluding this final section in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer writes, “That being is self-presentation and that all understanding is an event, this first and last insight transcends the horizon of substance metaphysics as well as the metamorphosis of the concept of substance into the concepts of subjectivity and scientific objectivity. Thus the metaphysics of the beautiful has implications for our inquiry” (484).

specific question of temporality. The discussion further reveals the elevated nature of the Greek experience of the beautiful wherein the divine appears as sensibly present.

He begins by stating once more that the “authentic distinguishing mark of the beautiful” is that it has no use: “One never asks what the beautiful is good for” (30). It is to this mark of art that the concept of play also refers in “The Relevance of the Beautiful.” It is this freedom of human reason from use that is common to both “gazing at the beautiful and knowing the true,” and is the precedent for the proximity of art and metaphysics (30). Similarly, his point in *Truth and Method* was that “Everything that is not part of the necessities of life but is concerned with the ‘how,’ the *eu zen* -- i.e., everything that the Greeks reckon part of *paideia* -- is called *kalon*. Beautiful things are those whose value is of itself evident,” and in this way the beautiful is connected to the “entire teleological order of being” (477-78). This is because, explains Gadamer in *Truth and Method*, according to the “Pythagorean and the Platonic concept of measure,” appropriateness and right proportion are esteemed as an extension of the self-evident harmony of the heavens; accordingly, goodness and truth *show themselves* in beauty (479). In “Word and Picture: ‘So True, So Vibrant,’” Gadamer gives much more attention to this notion of rightness and proportion, situating Plato more carefully in relation to concepts of measure that influenced him, and Aristotle in turn. Here he wishes to show that in Plato’s later thought, the kind of rightness Plato had in mind had less to do with the exact mathematical measurement of Pythagorus than appropriateness to a given situation. This is a development in Plato that amounted to a turn toward “the unity of becoming and being” (38):

...from [the *Republic*] on he seems everywhere to aim at showing that what one finds in the very structure of the world as well as in the praxis of living is a *mixture -- das Gemischte*, the mixed -- and it is in this mixture that the “exact” must be sought for and achieved....Becoming is no longer seen merely as non-being, that is to say, as a becoming something else [*Anderswerden*]; rather, it means *Werden zum Sein* -- “becoming that moves towards being.”...Being comes forth, emerges from becoming.

This is a turn -- *eine Wendung* -- in Plato that it would be worthwhile to ponder. In it we recognize the basic experience we have when we encounter a work of art and say: “*So ist es*’ -- *so ist es ‘richtig*’” -- “That’s the way it is! -- it is just ‘right’ as it is. (39)

Gadamer sees this as a critical turn in Plato because it suggests an identification of the experience of rightness with the emergence of being. Aside from making a significant observation about Plato’s thought, this prepares his discussion of Aristotle, who then “had only to take one further step beyond Plato” when he developed the idea of the “being of becoming” (39). Gadamer shows how Aristotle introduced the concept of *energeia* in order to develop the particular event-character of becoming. He states that Aristotle newly coins the word *energeia* in order to clarify aspects of becoming. Specifically, Aristotle “undertakes to define the word by analogy with “*dynamis*,” which Plato had already transferred from the common usage over into philosophical

discussion.... Indeed the concept of *energeia* shifts back and forth in its meaning between actuality, reality, and activity..." (39-40).⁵⁶

With Aristotle's concept of *energeia*, he says, a new "problem-horizon is opened up which may cast new light on the way of being of the artwork" (40), and with this discussion Gadamer goes beyond *Truth and Method*. His aim is to give still more definition, through the rich hermeneutic suggestiveness of Greek thinking, first, to the idea that the truth-character of art is inherent in its unified and autonomous sense of completeness -- its absoluteness. Second, he wishes to elucidate further how its event-character is inherent in the acuity with which the sense of this absoluteness is present; Aristotle's conceptualization allows Gadamer to bring out much more emphatically the special vitality and autonomy that marks this truth-event, which, as we will see, is one with its special temporality. Gadamer writes that there is an element of "simultaneity" to *energeia* such that in the emergence of being from becoming:

seeing and having-seen [are] simultaneous, and likewise thinking something over and having thought over something. Both of these mean a "tarrying" in something held in common, as, for example, when we are "being totally involved" in a topic; in German we refer to this as "*bei der Sache sein*." Now in my view, the reason Aristotle described *energeia* with the word *hama* -- meaning *Zugleich* -- "at the same time" was in order to designate the immanent simultaneity -- the

Gleichzeitigkeit of duration: Not a one-after-another kind of duration but an at-the-

⁵⁶ See "On the Divine in Early Greek Thought" in *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1999), pp. 37-57 for a discussion of the development of the concept of being in Greek philosophy. Gadamer's central question here is, in the thinking of Plato and Aristotle, how "can being be understood such that its having life and spirit can be presumed obvious" (42). What he tries to show here is that despite the efforts of Plato and Aristotle to think beyond the

same-timeness of that which possesses the time structure of tarrying -- *die*

Zeitstruktur des Verweilens. (40-41)

Here, the event has a unity that is clearly determined by the quality of its duration, though this term might easily mislead. For this duration is not one that is sequential but, rather, is “simultaneous.” As Gadamer continues to expand upon this, he comes to emphasize not the phenomenological, but rather the specifically hermeneutical nature of the event and its attendant temporality:

It is not a being-directed-toward this and that, first this and then that, rather it is a whole that is present in the seeing, or the thinking-something-over, or the gazing-at-something, in which one is immersed. Or even better, we can listen to the wisdom of languages and say: “in der man aufgeht” -- “in which you are absorbed.” Aristotle also adds to these examples the example of “living.” In German one also says one “am Leben ist” -- “is engaged in living.” So long as you are “engaged in living,” you, your past, and your future, are one. (41)

With this reduction of the phenomenological to the hermeneutical, Gadamer recalls once again the Greek concept of *theoria*, associated, as we saw above, with Greek festival. He dwells on its spiritual associations at length: it is an absorption that is “a highest form of activity and a highest reality,” and goes so far as to consider the God of Aristotelian metaphysics hermeneutically -- as one who “leads such a life of pure *energeia*, which means of uninterrupted pure looking” (44). In this connection, Gadamer stops to consider the meaning of the German term “*Geistesgegenwart*,” commonly understood to mean something like ‘presence of mind,’ suggesting it might instead mean a “presentness

anthropomorphism of the mythic tradition, “the primordial intuition of the Eleatics -- that ‘thinking’ and

of spirit” where “*one does not mean something determinate of which one is aware and to which one reacts. Rather, one means that one is awake and present to all that may come forward*” (44, my emphasis). With such considerations in mind, tarrying with the work of art is finally designated as “*der Vollzug*,” as a “carrying out” of interpretation in the midst of which time has a fullness: time “has no duration and does not pass away’ yet every kind of thing happens there” (50). The German term carries the associations of fullness (*voll*), of course, but this carrying out of something also has the sense of completion (*vollzählig*), and even perfection (*vollkommen*). There is also the German expression, “*voll dabei sein*,” meaning to “be totally involved” in something. Thus, the cognates summon many of the exemplary attributes of the truth-experience of art. These are the associations that Gadamer sees in the Goethe exclamation: “In just such a way the work of art is there and is, to use Goethe’s phrase, “*So wahr, so seiend*” (“so true, so full of being,” 45). What these particular cognates also suggest, as does the essay as a whole, is that which the truth-experience of art is exemplary of: it does not merely exemplify what is general to the hermeneutic event, but exemplifies the optimal experience Gadamer associates with *being divine*. Such “uninterrupted pure looking,” is a statement about spirituality that is bound to, or at least ought to confound theological interest in Gadamer, for there is no justification for taking the step of attaching metaphysical significance to what is, par excellence, a human experience. It is rather a defense of the human, and of a specific human activity, “pure looking.” Moreover, it is not an exclusive or elitist activity, but is literally something anyone can do. But a recognition of this requires a recognition of the centrality of the time-concept of tarrying to Gadamer’s

‘being’ belong together -- is of fundamental significance for Attic philosophy” (56-57).

philosophy; it is a concept without which his philosophy cannot, in my view, be unified. This concept is thoroughly developed in “Word and Picture,” making it impossible to appropriate his thought into any teleological, or eschatological scheme that depends upon a linear-dimensional view of time. This new essay makes the Greek precedent for Gadamer’s hermeneutics of “pure looking” indisputable.⁵⁷

Dispelling and Assembling Time

Gadamer proposes a hermeneutic antithesis between the intensity of the Greek absorption in/with being in the world and our contemporary alienation from it. In other words, our contemporary alienation is viewed as a hermeneutical problem. This brings us to the other direction in Gadamer’s thought, having to do with the one-sidedness of calculative thinking which is a dominant theme in *Truth and Method*. A central

⁵⁷ Considering Richard Palmer’s assessment in 1997 that this is one of Gadamer’s most impressive and significant essays, an essay where the Greek precedent for Gadamer’s hermeneutics is unmistakable, he might have referred to its authority in a recent essay, “Heideggerian Ontology and Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics,” (2002), where he closes by briefly considering the link between Gadamer’s Heideggerian impetus and his interest in Greek Philosophy. Instead of referring to the definitive “Word and Picture,” he refers to the appropriate section of *Truth and Method*, and to another less authoritative and less recent essay he is translating along with “Wort und Bild” for the forthcoming Gadamer Reader. He states, “A final benefit of Gadamer’s deep knowledge of ancient and medieval philosophy for philosophical hermeneutics is a tantalizing linking of hermeneutics with the beautiful and with truth that is taken up at the end of *Truth and Method* and, a decade later, also in his essay, “Von der Wahrheit des Wortes...” (In *Between the Human and the Divine*, pp 113-21, p. 120. “On the Truth of Words” is also translated by Lawrence K. Schmidt and Monika Reuss for *The Spectre of Relativism*, ed. Lawrence K. Schmidt, Evanston: 1995, pp. 135-55). However, that he regards this link enigmatically, as “tantalizing,” is instructive in that it suggests an assessment still in progress; Palmer may yet be undecided on the significance of “Word and Picture.” There is also the larger context of Palmer’s comments to consider – the essay was delivered at a theologically oriented conference on hermeneutics, whose proceedings are titled *Between the Human and the Divine: Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics*. Elsewhere in the essay, for example, he details the relevance of *Truth and Method* “for Catholic educators who want to restore respect for medieval thought” (119). In such a context the radically anti-metaphysical potential of Gadamer may not be happily received from such a preeminent English translator of Gadamer’s work and historian of hermeneutics. Yet Palmer’s final remarks would appear to contrast with the argument presented in this dissertation, for he states that such a linkage indicates “Gadamer wants to have it both ways. He wants the Heideggerian hermeneutics of facticity with all its benefits”, but he also wants the benefits of “ancient Greek” metaphysics of the beautiful as well as “medieval Christian” theology (121). I argue that the latter metaphysics are reducible in Gadamer’s thought to the temporality of the hermeneutical event.

occupation of Gadamer's since *Truth and Method* has been to apply the insights there to our contemporary situation in an effort to make the issues treated there arise as authentic questions for thinking people outside the discipline of philosophy. This is the case, for instance, in the essay "Science as an Instrument of the Enlightenment," written in 1972 for a symposium on the history of science.⁵⁸ Perhaps even more relevant now than it was in 1972, the essay views our "prepossession with the technological dream" as *the* prejudice of our time from which we most need to free ourselves (79). He writes:

The ideal of managing the world through technology still forms man in its image and makes him into a technical administrator who adequately fulfills this prescribed function without worrying about other people. This more than anywhere else, I think, is the bottleneck in our civilization, and this, more than anything else, calls for enlightenment. (83)

It is because this deference to technology obviates the need to practice and thus cultivate inquiry that it is the antithesis to Gadamer's hermeneutics, which views such activity as a form of life -- a way of being -- that occasions authentic human fulfillment. Another much more recent indication of the danger that concerns Gadamer occurs in his 1995 essay "From Word to Concept," where the emphasis is more on contrasting the actual practices of thinking and knowing associated with each form of being.⁵⁹

In the natural sciences one speaks of the "precision" of mathematizing. But is the precision attained by the application of mathematics to living situations ever as great as precision attained by the ear of the musician who in tuning his or her instrument finally reaches a point of satisfaction? Are there not quite different

⁵⁸ In *Praise of Theory*, pp. 71-83.

forms of precision, forms that do not consist in the application of rules or in the use of an apparatus, but rather in a grasp of what is right that goes far beyond this? I could go into endless examples to make plausible what I mean when I say that hermeneutics is not a doctrine of methods for the humanities and social sciences [*Geisteswissenschaften*] but rather a basic insight into what thinking and knowing mean for human beings in their practical life, even if one makes use of scientific methods. (7)

In this unpublished essay, the application of rules to make things available for use is contrasted with the kind of measurement, discussed above in relation to Plato, having to do with rightness in this other sense. In the example of musical harmony where the ear ‘knows,’ or “in the harmonious feeling of well-being we call ‘health’” Gadamer is attempting to “register a clear contrast to the ideal of scientific governance and control” by showing that in such instances of the application of human judgement, “we are dealing with a knowing [*Wissen*] that does not simply rule over and control objects” (8-9).⁶⁰ This theme of “balance” dominates this late essay, culminating in a wish that, ultimately, “a balance between both forms of knowledge is attainable” (11).

Just as Gadamer has fully worked out the special temporality of tarrying, so too has he fully articulated the time-concept at work in this prejudice, the temporality of this dream from which we must awaken. In fact, a blindness to the fact that time is a concept at all is complicit in how, in the dull dream of technology, a civilization might fall away from the acuity of thinking. The specifically temporal nature of these two antithetical

⁵⁹ See note 1.

⁶⁰ Gadamer states here that his book *The Enigma of Health* “elucidates this distinction” (8). Trans. Jason Gaiger and Nicholas Walker (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1996).

modalities is elucidated in three articles which Gadamer published explicitly on the subject of time: “The Continuity of History and the Existential Moment”(1965, 1972 in English);⁶¹ “Concerning Empty and Ful-Filled Time” (1969, 1970 in English);⁶² and “The Western View of the Inner Experience of Time and the Limits of Thought” (1977, English and German).⁶³ None of these articles has yet been republished in a collection of Gadamer essays in English. The articles each maintain – with different emphases and for slightly different purposes -- that asking the question, “what is time?” has revealed more about the hubris of philosophy and its naive trust in the self-evidentness of concepts than it might about the nature of temporality. The question of time, he says, reveals the perpetual battle of philosophy with the self-evident. The opening of “Concerning Empty and Ful-Filled Time” is a succinct discussion of this definitive movement in philosophy. He begins by alluding to Augustine’s “famous description of the problem of time” to indicate the general nature of philosophical problems, which is that a philosophical problem concerns a “question which one does not know how to ‘raise’” (341). Inquiries into time exemplify especially how “self-concealment in the thoughtlessness of what is self-evident is like a great resistance,” making the challenge not to elaborate what we already think about time, but to “conceive what is self-evident” (341). Augustine’s famous perplexity about time begins in Book XI of the *Confessions*, where he states,

What then, is time?’ There can be no quick and easy answer, for it is no simple matter even to understand what it is, let alone find words to explain it. Yet, in our

⁶¹ *Philosophy Today* 16 (Fall 1972), pp. 230-49.

⁶² *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 8 (Winter 1970), pp.341-353, originally an address delivered in June, 1969 on the occasion of Heidegger’s 80th birthday (editor’s note).

conversation, no word is more familiarly used or more easily recognized than ‘time.’⁶⁴

Augustine’s point of departure is to observe the discrepancy between our naturalized use of the word and our inability, meanwhile, to define it. Citing Augustine’s point in full, Gadamer makes the point again in “The Western View of Time and the Limits of Thought,” wondering whether Augustine is referring not to the “special mystery of time” so much as to a “universal experience in philosophical thinking, the gap between practical, pre-reflexive use of our concepts and our inability to define them” (35). This essay presents a history of the concept of time, but the essay is also a commentary on the way of the concept. Gadamer here ranges from the earliest known answers to the question of time in Greek thought, to Heidegger, who, in attempting to posit another way of construing the reality of time, was also, of course, the figure who came to pose the question of conceptuality itself. But Gadamer’s point is that the problem of time does not simply exemplify the hubris of concepts, but in fact is “the prototype of all philosophical perplexity” (“Empty and Full-Filled,” 341). That it is “prototypical” can be explained by reminding ourselves that the solidification of thinking into self-evidently universal concepts has once again to do with what is *true*. We have been examining an antithetical model of truth, an experiential one rather than one where truth is a *given*, and this is a difference which becomes particularly poignant when we notice the contrast between truth that is self-evident to the point of being inconceivable, and truth that is *energeia*, fully present to mind. When Gadamer says that the concept of time is a “proto-type” of

⁶³ In *Time and the Philosophies*, Paris: Unesco (1977), pp. 33-48. There is no editor or translator identified. Paul Ricoeur wrote the Introduction wherein he summarizes Gadamer’s essay, giving special attention to points that he himself will elaborate in *Time and Narrative*.

philosophical perplexity, he is alluding to the fundamental entanglement of concepts of truth with concepts of temporality.

The conceptualization of time that has become so deeply sedimented as to seem self-evident, and which again and again has given rise to perplexity in the traditions of philosophy and theology, is *time-as-dimensionality*, which, as Gadamer explains in the opening discussion of “Concerning Empty and Ful-Filled Time,” dooms us to conceive of the ‘present’ as a paradox because of the impossibility of fixing what is ‘now.’ The ‘present’ is impossible to fix because ‘past’ and ‘future’ are so infinitely close as to continually impinge on the present. Yet, only with reference to the ‘present’ moment can past and future be distinguished at all. Augustine’s particular contribution, Gadamer explains, was in “sharpening” this problem of the present.⁶⁵ Having just examined the temporality of tarrying, we note straight away the disjunction between ‘the present’ posited as abstract entity, and the present as *that which is fully here for us, as a matter about which we have presence of mind*. This is the distinction that Gadamer alludes to with the title “Concerning Empty and Ful-filled Time.”

But he does not approach the problem by summoning the Greek ontology of the beautiful. What he says instead is only that, in considering this legacy of perplexity concerning time as an entity, it seems evident that it is not time’s dimensional character that can provide us with a satisfactory understanding of it, particularly of the present. He states, “The dimensionality of time does not seem to be master of the concept of the being of the present...” (“Empty and Ful-Filled” 341). The designation “empty time” is

⁶⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin, 1961), p. 263-64.

how Gadamer terms time conceived of as the constant, flowing succession of ‘nows’ coming from a future and receding into the past. This is time subjugated to quantitative measurement. It is “empty” because measuring time requires a separation of the temporal units which measure from that which is measured; to separate time from its contents is to “empty” it. To Gadamer, this is the requirement of science, and we will see later how this requirement is treated in *Truth and Method*. But in “Empty and Ful-Filled,” what Gadamer suggests is that dimensional time is therefore “non-primordial” (343) in the sense that its contents (that which it measures) must precede it. It is in fact the *utility* function of measured time – time made available for use -- which Gadamer says is at the root of this emptying and which is sedimented within the concept of dimensional time. And this utility function belongs to nothing other than the human attribute of “seeing anticipatorially,” of having “foresight”:

The view to purposeful action functions as a measure and everything that is not commensurate with it is overshadowed by the anticipated present of the decisive action. The penumbral character of everything else which imposes itself as alluring and attractive permits time itself to appear as something of which man can dispose -- for the purpose of purposeful action. Time is made free for this purposiveness, and in this light it may be considered empty: when it is viewed in relation to what fills it. (343).

What interests Gadamer here is the possibility of a temporality that eludes utility and foresight. We have already seen that in tarrying, one enters into an authentic

⁶⁵ He says that “Augustine’s great achievement was precisely to sharpen this perplexity of thought and then with his own spiritual depth of experience to show that a mode of reflexive human experience is reflected in the dimensionality of time” (342).

engagement with tradition, a special remembrance that is not regarded as such, but rather entails a certain self-forgetfulness, and we now understand from Gadamer's comments on time that there is something about utility and foresight that would prevent this tarrying experience from occurring.

Gadamer contrasts this kind of 'forgetful' remembering that occurs in tarrying with what we usually conceive of as 'history' in the earliest essay of the three, "The Continuity of History and the Existential Moment," published in German in 1965. His aim here is to distinguish the normative notion of history from his notion of historicity as this experience of engagement, or engrossment. He states, "The concept of historicity expresses nothing about the relationship of events -- that it really was so -- but rather states something about the mode of being of man who is in history and whose existence can be understood fundamentally *only* through the concept of historicity" (232, my emphasis). Whereas "Empty and Full-Filled" contrasts the emptiness of dimensionalized time with the experience of presence as a "fullness," this article explains how the sedimented conception of time-as-dimensionality expresses itself as "history" in the naive sense. Here, a critique of time-as-dimensionality is part of his critique of the apparent fulfillment of historical consciousness in the realization that all definitions of history are relativist and arbitrary. As he did in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer stresses how this realization falsely constitutes the pinnacle of historical consciousness. The realization that any attempt to identify the structure of history depends upon the position of the observer still presupposes history as objectifiable, as unending flow of events. His point is that this new historical consciousness still presupposes the same sedimented conception of time.

In fact, corresponding exactly to the statement Gadamer makes in “Empty and Ful-Filled,” that dimensionality does not seem to rule the concept of the present, is the statement in “The Existential Moment” that “it may well be that the experience of continuity is grounded in something quite other than the unending flow of time” (233). The statement that continuity is accomplished outside dimensional time affirms the decisiveness of Gadamer’s reconceptualization of temporality for his theory of the historically effective consciousness. He states,

What I wish to express through this somewhat ambiguous expression [of the historically effected consciousness] is primarily that we cannot raise ourselves above the course of events and as it were confront it in such a way that the past turns into an object. To think this way would be to miss catching even a glimpse of the authentic experience of history. (237-38)

Here, we might note the stress placed upon what is obscured by such objectification of history: that which would otherwise be ‘glimpsed’ is the rule of *mnemosyne*, remembrance as something that strikes you as the true. So to understand how historical continuity occurs, we refer not to some logic of sequence or connectivity between ‘events’ which positioned one after another amount to a ‘history,’ but refer instead to the participatory, or dialogical experience in which one is struck with the truth of something - continuity is found in this coming forth of the past, not beckoned as such, but rather as something occurring to one as the truth, shining forth in phenomenological intensity. This is, again, a kind of remembering that is a forgetting of self: one’s “ecstatic self-forgetfulness corresponds to his continuity with himself. Precisely that in which one

loses oneself ... demands that one grasp the continuity of meaning.”⁶⁶ Historical continuity is achieved through participation. As such, it is synonymous with practical philosophy.

But as mentioned, in these essays Gadamer does not refer to the intensity of the Greek experience of beauty and the shining forth of being that it affords. In order to explain the time-concept tarrying that stands in defiance of the conceptualization of emptied time which foresight and utility presuppose, he elucidates a temporality whose emptying has been reversed, a temporality restored with its content, “ful-filled.” In “Empty and Ful-Filled,” Gadamer discusses the nature of this fulfillment of time in a way that reveals in more detail the particular continuity that ensues, and how this contrasts with the linear (can we say narrative?) sense of continuity. Specifically, this fulfillment occurs in coming to a realization that the content of time -- in other words, experience -- is *discontinuous*, or “epochal”:

The experience of time which is here transpiring is that of becoming something else -- not as something which has changed on a constant substratum, but rather in the immediacy of having become something else. A living creature enters a particular age and leaves another age behind. Its temporality has a discontinuity of a peculiar kind, upon which Heraclitus had apparently already reflected when he conceived as the secret truth of Being the sudden change, the abrupt appearance of what is new and the sinking of what is old: “Children throw away their toys when they grow up.” (“Empty and Ful-Filled,” 348)

⁶⁶ *Truth and Method*, p. 128.

A break occurs, such that we have a ‘that was then, this is now’ understanding of our experiences, for instance, a realization that our youth is over. The old time was disrupted by experience that negated it. So it is not the causal relation between “epochs” that establishes continuity; the point is the recognition of epochs as such. But most important is that this temporality is only ‘known’ to the extent that experience is *disruptive*, namely, when there occurs “a cessation in the midst of incessant change” (“Existential Moment,” 234). In terms analogous to the standing still of time in tarrying, he here calls this a “transitional” experience (“*Übergang*,” “*Im-Übergang-Sein*”). He points out that it is not to be confused with a present that is a mere waiting time between the past and the future (which in the absence of some use to which time might now be put betrays time conceived of dimensionally once more). Rather, he writes,

The transition of which we speak is not the same as the ‘now’ that couples together what has preceded and what is to come, while it itself does not endure. It is in another sense that being-in-transition in a strange way simultaneously causes separation and conjunction: transition appears as the true being of time in the sense that everything is in it at the same time such that past and future are together. Whereas the uniform passing of time is a constant flux, it is clear that the experience of transition does not mean such a simple passing of time. It means rather a definite-indefinite being, which in the experiences of departing and beginning *brings the flow of time to a standstill*. (350, my emphasis)

A description of time that once again radicalizes the concept of the “eternal,” we note that Gadamer’s mention of simultaneity here also anticipates the very recent passage discussed above from “*Wort und Bild*,” where he suggests that Aristotle intended a kind

of simultaneity to be designated with the term, *energeia* (see p. 73). With the term “transition,” Gadamer is careful to similarly designate the temporal properties of a certain hermeneutic event. Whereas here he states that in this event of “transition” we find “the true being of time,” in the 1992 essay and elsewhere he views the temporality of tarrying as not authentic time but authentic being, spirit. But it is important to see that this doesn’t suggest the intractable opacity of the matter, but, again, the *inseparability of the questions of truth and temporality*.

There is, however, a need to reconcile the description of the shining forth of truth in the experience of art, which makes use of an analogy with Greek ontology, with the description of the experience of transition as a “definite-indefinite being,” an experience when “an indefinite future begins, which fills man with fear of the unknown” (350). For the former experience seems effortless, even miraculous, while the latter appears a struggle. To reconcile this, it is necessary to detail more closely the hermeneutics of event-truth that Gadamer presents in these articles on time. In “Empty and Full-filled,” Gadamer stresses that above all, in speaking of this other temporality we are dealing with a particular quality of *insight*:

The decisive point ... is that insight into the necessity of this downfall gives its own existence to ... what is past in the recollection of the dissolution and to the new, which is supposed to follow what is past. And further, the point is that in this insight, time itself is experienced. (351)

In other words, when “time itself” is experienced, an insight is occurring wherein an engagement with the otherness of the other gives rise to the new thought which marks off in one’s self-understanding the pastness of the past. It is, as the earlier discussion of

subjectivity made clear, none other than all self that is held in suspension in such a moment of cognition. Gadamer concludes:

If what I have attempted to show is right, viz., that transition is always a strained position between departure and opening into something indeterminately new, then the possibility of something indeterminately new is dependent upon the force with which we are able to bid farewell. But that means, dependent upon the force with which we know. (353)

This passage is especially illuminated with our recollection that it is the *intensity of absorption in the matter at hand* that defines the comportment of tarrying. The “force with which we know” refers to this intensity, and by “bidding farewell,” Gadamer refers to a willingness, a necessity, perhaps, to let go of convictions in the coming to terms with what is compelling. To do this is to allow the claim of the other. The “strain” is that of listening, straining to hear what the other means. And certain claims are more difficult to hear. It might be that in reconstructing the intensity of the Greek absorption with or in being, Gadamer idealizes the seeming ease with which the Greeks could ‘hear,’ an ease that we might only re-approach through the practice and cultivation of tarrying.⁶⁷

In any case, the critical point is that in the undimensionalized temporality called tarrying, the knowing subject’s uncertainty and infinity of possibility appear only while utility and foresight do not rule.⁶⁸ It is this quality of the indefinite that is critical to the

⁶⁷ More light may be shed on this point in our consideration of the orality of Greek culture in Chapter Two. This seeming ease may turn out to be a particular naiveté, but this doesn’t lessen the strength of the hermeneutic analogy itself that Greek ontology provides.

⁶⁸ It is Gadamer’s contention that the proper way to understand Plato’s doctrine of ideas is in terms of this distinction between use and good-in-itself. Sophistry represents thinking that is motivated by the former. For a discussion of this, see, “*Logos and Ergon in Plato’s Lysis.*” In *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1980), pp. 1-20. This essay originally appeared in the early seventies.

hermeneutics of tarrying. This is what Gadamer means when he says human wisdom is “the awareness of not-knowing”⁶⁹; he is referring to the “definite-indefinite” experience described here. And in addition to suggesting that this special humility rules the ethical, the special value of the experience of the definite-indefinite also tells us that the nature of historical continuity is such that it is directed, not by human will so much as by what arrests it. What results is a growing familiarity with, or recognition of, what we are as a whole. Continuity is this process.

The “definite-indefinite” aspect of epochal time corresponds with Gadamer’s critique of experience in *Truth and Method* in the section titled “The Concept of Experience (*Erfahrung*) and the Essence of the Hermeneutic Experience.”⁷⁰ While the essays on time present and critique the “one-sided way of experiencing time” (“Western View,” 42), in *Truth and Method* it is the concept of experience itself that is correspondingly vexed. He begins by saying it is “one of the most obscure [concepts] we have” (346). Here, he characterizes the concept of experience as also “one-sided,” explaining that this one-sidedness is a feature evident in the methodology of modern science insofar as the latter has overvalued the element of experience that is “not contradicted by new experience” (349-50).⁷¹ This is the limitation of scientific method, where what counts as knowledge depends upon the degree to which this contradiction is absent. An experience only serves as an instance of a universal; it verifies something

⁶⁹ “Reflections on my Philosophical Journey,” p.33.

⁷⁰ *Truth and Method*, pp. 346-62.

⁷¹ The term “one-sided” is frequently used by Gadamer in summary statements of his philosophical project. For instance, to conclude the Foreword to the Second Edition of *Truth and Method*, he states, “It seems to me... that the one-sidedness of hermeneutic universalism has the truth of a corrective. It enlightens the modern viewpoint based on making, producing and constructing” (xxxviii). In what is a very recent, substantial essay, the 1997 autobiographical essay “Reflections on My Philosophical Journey,” he indicates

already known. Herein lies the antithetical notion of continuity, established through such verification. This is experience in the sense of something possessed, what Gadamer calls *Erlebnis*. We might also recognize the kinship between this universalizing tendency, wherein the already known is verified, and 'foreknowledge,' the, so to speak, co-operator of utility, foresight. If foresight is a capacity for planning for the future requiring the dimensionalizing of time, then foreknowledge simply expresses the pre-condition for doing so. Gadamer's argument here is that, in giving priority to that which is not contradicted, that is, to that which is repeated again and again, we "regard experience in terms of its result" and "have ignored the fact that experience is a process" (353). He explains that, as a process, the dynamism of experience is "essentially negative"(353), which is exactly the definite-indefinite quality of insight dissipating the dimensionality of time that is discussed above. He says:

[Experience] cannot be described simply as the unbroken generation of typical universals. Rather, this generation takes place as false generalizations are continually refuted in experience and what was regarded as typical is shown not to be so. Language shows this when we use the word "experience" in two different senses: the experiences that conform to our expectation and confirm it and the new experiences that occur to us. This latter -- "experience" in the genuine sense -- is always negative. If a new experience of an object occurs to us, this means that hitherto we have not seen the thing correctly and now know it better. Thus the negativity of experience has a curiously productive meaning. It is not simply that we see through a deception and hence make a correction, but we acquire a

what is the "other side," that in all great efforts to think, the concepts in which it is formulated "work in a

comprehensive knowledge.... *The negation by means of which it achieves this is a determinate negation.* (353, my emphasis)

This discussion in *Truth and Method* makes it clear that a “determinate negation” is in fact a potential quality of the general nature of experience, which would differ only in degree from the “definite-indefinite” which marks the more acute “transitional,” “epochal,” or “existential” experience of tarrying.

Gadamer’s discussion of *Erfahrung* in *Truth and Method* correlates most strongly with that of the dissolution and uncertainty characteristic of tarrying where he posits a one-sided subjectivity that sees experience only in the calculative way discussed above. It becomes clear here that Gadamer’s orientation to a certain comportment, an openness to the new, is reducible to the temporality of tarrying. The hermeneutic stance he theorizes opposes -- in the sense of balancing -- that of the appropriative subject who looks for sameness in the other, who wants the new to conform to some prior experience rather than to engage newness as such:

The truth of experience always implies an orientation toward new experience. That is why a person who is called experienced has become so not only *through* experiences but is also open *to* new experiences. The consummation of his experience, the perfection that we call “being experienced,” does not consist in the fact that someone already knows everything and knows better than anyone else. Rather, the experienced person proves to be, on the contrary, someone who is radically undogmatic; who because of the many experiences he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them is particularly well equipped to have new

one-sided way, predetermining and prejudging” (35-36).

experiences and to learn from them. The dialectic of experience has its proper fulfillment not in definitive knowledge but in the openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself. (355)

This notion of being “radically undogmatic” is the ethico-political, instead of the temporal, expression of the hermeneutic experience which Gadamer esteems. Being radically undogmatic is one of the major themes in his lectures and writing. It is stated more unequivocally in a 1969 piece on Heidegger, “The Thinker Martin Heidegger.”⁷²

Here he says that

one must recognize that thinking is always selfless in a deep and final sense -- not only in the sense that thinking cannot be guided by a particular interest in an individual or societal gain. It is more that the actual self of whoever is thinking, *that individual's personal and historical determinedness, is extinguished.* (65, my emphasis).

Gadamer explains that being radically undogmatic means thinking at the expense of the self, a thinking which, he says, “does not acknowledge its own convictions” (65). He specifically adds that this disposition is at odds with an attempt “to know oneself better and better,” in the sense of a self as an object of knowledge which thinking is intended to confirm somehow (65). The latter keeps the new at bay in order to continue with the old. Being radically undogmatic corresponds with the “strained position” during the transitional experience of tarrying.

In Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics temporality is therefore a decisive issue.

We have observed how the temporality of tarrying squares off against an antithetical

temporality that is correspondingly decisive in the one-sided ontology of calculative objectivism. The latter conception of time, time-as-dimensionality is deeply naturalized, and attends the mode of subjectivity which aims to reach goals and makes plans, entails the objectification of the subject itself as the agent of such goals and plans, but which is a mode of subjectivity that is therefore alienated from spirit, from the experience of human belonging and fulfillment, which for Gadamer in turn establishes human continuity.

Taking up the question of time represents, methodologically speaking, something of an analytical seduction. Perhaps this is why Gadamer wrote so little directly on the subject of temporality besides the four essays discussed here, three from the seventies and one very recent.⁷³ Even in these essays the question of time is yoked with other questions rather than constituting a singular focus. Elsewhere, as I have shown, Gadamer's references to time often occur as asides. But we must note that this aversion is consistent with the inherently tangential nature of tarrying, in the sense that it is occurring only when something else is occurring; to write about time itself would be to separate it from that which fills it. Given the fittingness of eschewing such a seduction, discerning the temporal theme in Gadamer's philosophy becomes, therefore, precisely a matter of hermeneutic application. This deference to interpretation is perhaps most fitting of all. His philosophy contains an unmistakable subtext, one that the attentive reader would not be expected to miss.

⁷² *Heidegger's Ways*, trans. J. W. Stanley (Albany: State University of New York, 1984), pp .61-7, p. 55.

⁷³ Temporality is by no means a conspicuous theme in *Truth and Method*.

Chapter Two:

Mythos: Gadamer on Narrative and the Poles of Ritual and Conversation

It is to the antithesis between time-concepts running through Gadamer's thought that narrativity must be reconciled. The bearing Gadamer's hermeneutics has on narrative, both as a general modality of thought -- an ontology, even, and as a particular art-experience, would seem to be a critical issue, since a time-logic is a definitive feature in both instances. Moreover, narrative art is arguably the prevailing art form today and enjoys a givenness that would seem indicative of the larger ontological dominance Gadamer refers to. Gerald Bruns' identification of a "narrative turn" in academic disciplines outside literary studies, which, for example, regard narrative as "indispensable to having a self," indicates this dominance.⁷⁴ An understanding of the significance of tarrying in Gadamer's hermeneutics would seem to offer in turn a way of understanding this central cultural phenomenon. The question that may now be posed after elucidating the temporality of tarrying is whether the inherently temporal content of narrative art makes it an experience that has a natural resistance to the spirituality of tarrying. Do the dimensional categories that define narrative content at all mitigate the reading or listening subject's uncertainty and infinity of possibility in experiencing this art? What kind of presence does an event of reading produce, say, which is, to be sure, an event of tarrying in art, but whose subject matter is itself a measuring and assembling of time? What kind of engrossment is this?

⁷⁴ *Tragic Thoughts at the End of Philosophy*, p. 94 (See Introduction, above, p. 50).

It is perhaps consistent with Gadamer's aversion to making the subject of time central, despite, or perhaps because of its particular significance in his thought, that he has not written, to my knowledge, any essay whose title refers to narrative as an art form, much less refers to narrative designating it as a modality of thought. Of course, his remarks on what makes art art, remarks that, as suggested, repeatedly establish tarrying as definitive, seem all-inclusive, and so the literary genre of narrative would appear to be subsumed here. And narrative structures are also implicated in his critique of history. But none of his titles actually contain the term (*Erzählung, Narrativ*).⁷⁵ In terms of art's exemplary nature, among the arts it is lyric poetry that he singles out; poetry is the crucial locus for examining the linguistic nature of understanding, an enterprise at the heart of his philosophy. That poetry has the greatest potential to disrupt the natural forgetfulness we have of language, and of concept formation in particular, is a well-developed and prominent thread in Gadamer. In fact, he has stated that lyric poetry offers the example for philosophy, whose proper function he sees as a "corrective" for the "hubris that resides in concepts."⁷⁶ This alone invites the question of the relative status of narrative in a Gadamerian framework.

However, while Gadamer has never taken up the topic of narrative in any direct, or sustained way, he has, as we will see in this chapter, made many passing comments on narrative art, and a study of the contexts of these remarks does reveal a careful articulation of, if not the complicity of narrativizing in the modality of being that he finds excessive, then at least an articulation of the limitations of the hermeneutic experience of

⁷⁵ The "*Verzeichnis der Gesammelte Werke*" (table of contents) that concludes Vol 10 of Gadamer's *Gesammelte Werk* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995) contains no titles bearing these or related terms (pp. 453-62).

⁷⁶ "Reflections on My Philosophical Journey," p 38.

narrative art. I would like to begin with a mention of narrative in a recently translated essay, “Reflections on the Relation of Religion and Science.”⁷⁷ This mention of narrative is of particular interest to our study because it occurs in close proximity, as the title suggests, to the question of spirit, which, as we have seen, for Gadamer is closely associated with the temporality of tarrying. In fact, it is instructive to observe that the section of Volume Eight of the *Gesammelte Werke* where this essay appears is titled “The Transcendence of the Beautiful” (“Die Transzendenz des Schönen”).⁷⁸ It is under the auspices of the truth of art, therefore, that these essays are gathered, essays concerning the relations between religious experience (say, as the supposed locus of spirituality), scientific truth (say, as its supposed antithesis), and the Greek concept of *mythos*, a concept that encompasses narrative but, as might be expected, does so in a way consistent with event hermeneutics and with the Greek view of divinity we explored in the first part of Chapter One.

The mention of narrative closes “Reflections on the Relation of Religion and Science,” where Gadamer has been exploring the question, “Has the end of an illusion

⁷⁷ “*Reflexionen über das Verhältnis von Religion und Wissenschaft*” appears in English in *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer, (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1999), pp. 119-127.

⁷⁸ As I hope to suggest in this chapter, Gadamer’s arrangement of essays in Volume 8 of his Complete Works makes certain themes in his work much more salient. It might be noted, for instance, that the section in Volume 8 previous to the “The Transcendence of Art,” mentioned above, is titled, “Poetic und Aktualität des Schönen” (“Poetry and the Relevance of the Beautiful”), so that thematically he moves from the specific discussions of the truth of art in that section to the larger, cultural significance of this view of art in this second section. The table of contents of this second section, “Die Transzendenz des Schönen” is as follows:

“Aesthetic and Religious Experience” (1964/’78, in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*.)

“Reflections on the Relation of Religion and Science” (1984, in *Hermeneutics, Religion and Ethics*)

“*Mythos und Vernunft*” (1954, “Mythos and Practical Reason,” as yet untranslated)

“*Mythos und Logos*” (as yet untranslated)*

“*Mythos und Offenbarungsreligion*” (Mythos and Revelatory Religion,” untranslated)

“Myth in the Age of Science” (in *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*)

*The last three essays were originally published together as “*Mythos und Wissenschaft*” in 1981 (See Palmer’s bibliography in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*). In other words, none of the essays

arrived? Or is precisely that the illusion: thinking that human beings can live without religion?” (119). Pointing out that the demystification of religion was “conceived from the viewpoint of rationally mastering the world” (120), Gadamer wonders whether “appropriate access to religion” can ever occur via the Enlightenment concept of knowledge. Specifically, he questions the “reduction of religion to the certainty of faith.” (122). Raising the question of the opposition between “knowledge” and “faith,” he reiterates his position that the prevailing concept of knowledge is “only a partial view of the world,” one that is hermeneutically naive by virtue of the objectifying involved, and whose sweep includes objectifying the subjective itself (123). What we call “faith,” he observes, is conceived of from *within* this view, “uniquely suspended between a truth claim that lags behind knowing and a certainty that knowing lags behind” (121).⁷⁹ In other words, within an objectivist ontology, religion is reduced to something which is in excess of certainty but falls short of knowing. Faith is merely “that which cannot be known, yet which is utterly certain”(122).⁸⁰ Gadamer’s point is that, given the nature of this conceptual opposition between knowledge and faith, the latter is simply “a very slender basis for the understanding of religion”(122). This is the general context in which our mention of narrative occurs. In his closing remarks, he proposes that we might

specifically on mythos have been translated into English so that English readers must rely on passing remarks in other essays, as I must here.

⁷⁹ This critique of faith, that is, of its hermeneutics, is explored fully in the preceding essay in the *Gesammelte Werke*, “Aesthetic and Religious Experience” (in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, pp. 140-153).

⁸⁰ Gadamer’s treatment of subjectivity is noteworthy here: he says that when “subjective modes of comportment” are reduced to objects, they are relegated to the “realm of feeling,” a concept of “such indeterminate contours that it “completely dissolves in the world of what is experienced as fact” (121). It is important to see that his own description of subjectivity as a “mode” avoids such categories of objectifiable “feeling.” But more significantly, it of course calls to mind Gadamer’s preeminent mode of comportment, tarrying, and the emotive intensity that characterizes it. Thus, tarrying may be seen as presenting a challenge to a prejudicial concept of feeling that stands in diminutive opposition to reason and the ability to make distinctions.

understand more fully what religiosity is by going back behind this fruitless opposition to reconsider “the old opposition between *mythos* and *logos*” (126), which he says, were “precisely complementary” (126). He elaborates only on *mythos* here, stressing that “the concept of *mythos* originating in antiquity is undiscoverably tied to the ancient concept of the divine” (126). Gadamer describes Greek *mythos* in terms as an event of experiential truth, as discussed with reference to the essay “Word and Picture” in Chapter One. To offer an alternative way to understand religion, he recuperates the ancient notion of the divine, and this is the specific context in which the mention of narrative occurs:

A myth is always only believable, not “true.” But the kind of credibility that a myth has is not just *Wahrscheinlichkeit* (verisimilitude, probability, true-seemingness) deficient in demonstrated certainty; it bears its own riches within it, the *Schein des Wahren* (radiance...appearance of the true), the sameness of semblance in which the true appears. This truth is, to be sure, not the story itself, for it can be told in various ways; it is what appears in it -- not just something that is meant, something that would always need to be verified, but what becomes present in it.

Here, moreover, aspects of Christian culture find a new significance. *In this connection I think in particular of the narrative form of thought, and the ritual form of language that have long occupied me as philosophical problems.* (126-67, emphasis added)

First of all, this admission of a long-time preoccupation with a “narrative form of thought” (*die Denkform des Narrativen*) admits to the importance of the question of narrative. It is not unreasonable to think that the “new significance” which the Greek

concept of *mythos* gives to “the narrative form of thought” and to “the ritual form of language” (*an die Denkform des Narrativen und an die Sprachform des Rituellen*) in Christian culture may be that narrative content and/or its chronological modality of thought, are irrelevant to what he considers ‘holy’ in some crucial way, or at least “find a new significance.” Unfortunately, in this brief aside Gadamer does not elaborate upon how the particular truth of *mythos* “lends a new significance” to the narrative aspects of Christian culture, nor upon how ritual relates to *mythos* or a narrative form of thought. But these closing remarks clearly point the way by situating the question of narrative in relation to Gadamer’s work on the Greeks, specifically, to his interest in Greek divinity, and in relation to the truth of art. In fact, after this aside about narrative and Christian culture, Gadamer then restates his philosophical project in terms of *mythos*: “...we see our problem as bringing the objectivizing tendency of consciousness (not just that of modern science) into balance with mythic experience” (127). He would seem to be suggesting that the narrative form of thought is another objectivizing tendency of consciousness. In the last sentence of this essay, he mentions the radical resituating of spirit that his event-hermeneutics gives rise to: “Just as health is not known in the same way as a wound or disease, so the holy is perhaps more a way of being than of being believed” (127).⁸¹ As we have already seen, the ‘holy’ has to do not with what we are able to objectify but with our tarrying in an event. A new direction for thinking about narrative is also pointed out to us quite explicitly by Gadamer in footnotes immediately preceding and following the passage cited above: the note preceding his discussion of

⁸¹ This statement surely alludes to the hiddenness of health and to the wealth of hermeneutic insights this phenomenon suggests by analogy, which is the theme of his collection “*The Enigma of Health*.” The German title is *Über die Verborgenheit der Gesundheit*. “*Verborgenheit*” means “hiddenness.”

mythos as event refers his readers to more elaborate discussions of *mythos* contained in the same section in *GW* 8 (see note 69 above). The note following the mention of narrative refers readers “especially” to the new article, “On the Phenomenology of Ritual and Language,” where narrative is discussed at length.⁸² In this mention of narrative, then, we see its proximity to *mythos* in Gadamer, where *mythos* represents a challenge to the representational view of narrative art, as well as suggesting a challenge to narrative as a “form of thought” itself. Thus, “Reflections on the Relation of Religion and Science” instructs us to situate it in relation to *mythos* and to *ritual*.

Mythos

That *mythos* stands in opposition to narrative content as regards the appearance of ‘truth,’ because as an event, a narrative’s ‘believability’ has nothing to do with its “verisimilitude, probability, true-seemingness,” is confirmed, first of all, by Gadamer’s concept of mimesis, which he alludes to in the passage above. He distinguishes between the Classicist definition of mimesis as “representation of an original” and an older definition of mimesis as “recognition.” For example, in “Poetry and Mimesis,” he states,

However ineliminable it may be, and however we may emphasize it, the distance between the image and the original has something inappropriate about it as far as the real ontological meaning of mimesis is concerned . . .

When we know something *as* something, this certainly means that we recognize it, but when we recognize something, we do not simply know it for a

⁸² A study of the dates reveals that this footnote was added to the English translation. The recent “*Zur Phänomenologie der Ritual und Sprache*,” then, will be enormously important for what it contributes to this

second time after previous acquaintance with it. Recognition is something qualitatively different. Where something is recognized, it has liberated itself from the uniqueness and contingency of the circumstances in which it was [first] encountered. It is a matter neither of there and then, nor of here and now, but it is encountered as the very self-same. Thereby it begins to rise to its permanent essence and is detached from anything like a chance encounter.⁸³

This definition of mimesis coincides with Gadamer's theorization of experience (*Erfahrung*) that challenges the calculative modality, discussed in Chapter One. Indeed, mimesis, defined as "recognition," is clearly the aesthetic expression for the phenomenological presence of truth in art. Contained in this definition of mimesis is an argument for the irrelevance of the strictly representational aspect of narrative, since its referentiality is not directly equated with, nor relevant to its 'truth.' *Mythos* is also not conceived of by Gadamer as a *kind* of literature with generic features, but, rather, interests him as the occurrence in Greek culture of the appearance of truth in the Gadamerian sense: *mythos*, as event, denotes the socio-religious functioning of mimesis. When discussing *mythos*, Gadamer repeatedly emphasizes the telling of story over the story's content per se. For instance, even in his brief discussion of *mythos* in the above mentioned "Relation of Religion and Science," he writes, "The transition from stories to the mythic is fluid, and the stories themselves are fluid, in that they are continually refurbished by virtually limitless poetic invention" (126). The distinction made here

question of narrative, especially since none of the earlier essays on *mythos* have been translated (see note 78 above).

⁸³ In *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, pp. 116-122, p. 120.

between the mythic and the story itself suggests, again, that story per se has nothing to do with whether or not it is performative in this socio-religious way.

For Gadamer, making the Greek concept of *mythos* Greek enough is no different than making other Greek concepts so, such as *mimesis*, *theoros*, *energeia*, or *to kalon*: likewise, the difficulty is that its original ontological dimension has been falsely assimilated and finally layered over by objectivist thinking. The concept-history of myth is the subject of the essay that concludes the section “The Transcendence of the Beautiful” in *Gesammelte Werke* 8, entitled “Myth in the Age of Science.” Here Gadamer reflects both on some of the efforts, particularly during the Romantic period, to rediscover the religious significance of Greek myth, as well as on the particular prejudices that limited these efforts. One may therefore consider this to be his statement of an historical trajectory his own thinking follows, a thinking in which a rejuvenated concept of *mythos* may once more bridge the religious and artistic realms. At one point, he suggests a fracturing into these two realms with an etymology; he explains that from the term, *mythos*, two antithetical derivations developed. One derivation is the “mythological,” which generally denotes a content that is “not true,” a derivation stemming, he explains, from the lack of validity that Greek mythology held both for the Christian religion and then for scientific-minded historians. The second derivation is the “mythic,” which, he states:

has a completely different resonance. It awakens not only the vision of a greatness unknown in the experience of the present world, something beyond experience that happened within the real world, yet leaves all experience behind it -- for instance, great deeds, victories, events that are on all tongues and thus have

a continuing life. In a still more comprehensive sense, “mythic” also means everything that preserves the underlying substance of a living culture.⁸⁴

This sense of the mythic becomes fatally obscured by the belief that a ‘myth’ is something that one can consciously create, “like the Führer cults of totalitarian states” (97).⁸⁵ Yet in the sense of the mythic as mythic proportion, as having to do with the particular *magnitude* of an event, we observe distinct shades of the epochal experience. And recalling this helps to contextualize what he here says is its more comprehensive meaning as “preservation”; we are reminded that such disruptive experiences create authentic continuity, where the more memory is engaged in unforeseen ways, the more preservation takes place. So this clarifies the social function of *Mythos* as having to do with preservation in this special sense of engagement with tradition. The treatment of myth in this essay suggests that it is in fact another titular term for the kind of truth-experience which we are exploring, one under which the literary genre of narrative is clearly subsumed.

But of course, while the concept of *mythos* is at one with Gadamer’s emphasis on event-truth as opposed to objective truth, an event-truth that is naturally “coupled with the poet’s freedom of invention” insofar as it is not a specific content which occasions it (143), he also considers the question of how the historical development of writtenness

⁸⁴ “Myth in the Age of Science,” in *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics* (pp. 91-102), p. 96. In this connection, it is important to note that Gadamer’s reading of Plato’s philosophy as Greek enlightenment has very much to do with the challenge that dialectic poses to the normative status of Greek myth; according to Gadamer, for Plato dialectic is not about finding answers but about posing questions, about the practice of thought, as opposed to the celebration of sameness. This might be kept in mind later, when we examine the poles of conversation and ritual, which have a similar distinction.

⁸⁵ It should perhaps be noted that what Gadamer has suggestively articulated in these two derivations also divides into the objective and subjective: on the one hand, there is “mythology” which is not true in that it didn’t happen, and on the other, there is “the mythic” which marks the overwhelming quality of an experience.

may have affected the loss of event-truth ontology, a question that will turn out to be quite significant for the question of narrative. In Gadamer's "Aesthetic and Religious Experience," for example, an essay whose theme relates to a certain chasm between the religious and the poetic, he emphasizes, just as in "The Relation of Religion and Science," that "the primary thing about myth is the act of telling itself."⁸⁶ He states that

We should always be clear about what is involved in such telling: it is an intrinsically inexhaustible process that can go on indefinitely. A storyteller who does not manage to give the impression that he could in principle continue his story is not a real storyteller at all. This means that when stories are told concerning the gods, the very form of transmission implies the moment of continuation -- "and so forth" -- which goes beyond what has already been said to something that still lies beyond it. The dimension of the divine that is recounted in stories -- the behaviour of the gods and their dealings with men and heroes -- yields an infinite range of possibilities for storytelling, and the epic form of literature is an expression of this range. (144)

His interest in discussing the importance of telling has here to do with exploring "the step from this mythical and poetical tradition to 'literature'" (144-45). He states that this is "the step from the recounting of stories to the work" (145). In other words, his interest is in the historical step of art from event to artifact. The suggestion here is that a historical shift from orality to writtenness coincides with, perhaps even amounts to, the divergence

⁸⁶ In *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, p. 144. The subject of this essay, which opens the section in *GW 8* titled "The Transcendence of Art," is in keeping with the general theme there of the relations between religion, science, and mythos.

of the truth of the “holy book” and poetic truth (147).⁸⁷ That the immediacy and eventfulness of truth is lost in the former case is evidenced by the simple fact, says Gadamer, that a “testament in the form of a binding document” is necessary (147). In having to perform this testimonial function, the Christian word maintains a “universal translatability,” which contrasts with the fundamental untranslatability of the poetic text (148). The Christian message of faith must again and again be able to testify to the veracity of an original sacred history, testifying to, rather than invoking, its gods (It is thus mimetic in the other sense, i.e., as re-presentation rather than recognition). In contrast, the poetic text gains its autonomy from the religious text by never being measured against an original recitation: “A genuine text in this eminent sense is never measured against the original way in which it was originally said” (146). In language that is highly suggestive of the temporality of tarrying, Gadamer says that the poetic text “communicates a content and elevates that content into a vivid and tangible presence so that it entirely fulfills us” (144). As a work with unique formal properties, the literary text has both an autonomous “ideality” in the respect that the meaning of the text cannot ever be “fully attained by any realization” in interpretation, as well as an inherent untranslatability. Gadamer singles out the poetic text as particularly exemplary in these respects.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ C.f. Gadamer’s claim that “the work of art is no longer the present of the divine that we revere” (in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, p. 6; see above, p. 56-57), and his claim that with Christianity language becomes an object of reflection (in *Truth and Method*; see note 100 below). See also Vattimo’s recent argument in *Between the Human and the Divine*, which develops this historical observation in a different direction, i.e. that philosophical hermeneutics is the fulfillment of Christianity (see note 26 above).

⁸⁸ Gadamer discusses the ideality of the text at length in “Text and Interpretation,” *Dialogue and Deconstruction*, ed. & trans. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (Albany, NY: Suny Press, 1989), pp. 21-51.

It is obvious that “literature” compared with anything else handed down in written form, is characterized by the fact that its actual linguistic manifestation, and not merely its “meaning” is what matters. This is why the translation of literary texts itself represents a literary-poetic task that can only ever achieve an approximation to the original. Obviously, we meet the extreme case of a “literature” that almost completely defies translation in “pure poetry,” the very ideal of symbolist lyric poetry. Poetry of this kind is a radical consequence of a form of language that abandons the rhetorical element along with the usual linguistic means by which content is communicated. (146)

By virtue of features specific to the poetic text, it eludes easy translation. Interestingly, the special untranslatibility of the poetic work helps to clarify a specific difference between the kind of “recognition” that the lyric poem facilitates and the kind that occurs in entertaining the Christian message: in the case of the poem, it is an “awakening of a shared consciousness of something” which “is always an expansion of that infinite process of making ourselves at home in the world which is the human lot” (150-51). Here, Gadamer reiterates what he says elsewhere about the locus of human continuity. The kind of “recognition” specific to the Christian message, however, differs in respect to the kind of “familiarity” at play; rather than an awakening, it is a representation of an *already shared* understanding of articles of faith, performing “the representative function of pointing to something already universally shared” (150). Later we will see how Gadamer associates this kind of familiarity with the ritualistic use of language, but, for now, the point is that in the case of the Christian message, far from being part of an infinite process of enlarging what is home, Gadamer stresses contrary qualities, even

stating that the recognition is of “the extreme poverty of the *Ecce homo*” who is estranged in the world (151).

What has this to do with narrative? What is important about this essay on the divergence of art and religion for our question about narrative is, first, that the distinction which he makes here between the religious text and the poetic text turns out to be the same one that elsewhere distinguishes narrative as a form of “poetic” text, the distinction of the relative *translatability* of these as texts. This is a characteristic that frequently comes up in the references to narrative that we will continue to gather and unify here. Second, this means that narrative is further imbedded in the thematics of spirit, because of what narrative appears to share with religious texts vis-à-vis translatability. The question becomes, to what extent and in what sense does he transfer this quality of the already shared understanding to narrative generally? For it is with the phenomenon of translatability that Gadamer attempts to distinguish two forms of human participatory experience, the poetic and the religious, where one awakens solidarity while the other merely confirms it. These are forms of participation which, according to Gadamer, seem to have become differentiated with the advent of writtenness. Thus, narrative needs to be considered both as a form of “recognition” and as written. Conversely, we must ask what orality has to do with untranslatability, for as we recall, the experience of the untranslatable (poetic) text is described in terms analogous to those used to describe the experience of truth in the oral recitation of myth, which would seem to involve continual translation, in the sense that with every telling the stories go on being infinitely transformed. Gadamer tells us that in both cases, truth shines forth, immediate and overwhelming, an affirmation of something in which one recognizes, “this is you” (150).

Another essay where the untranslatability of the poetic text is discussed, this time in contrast to narrative, is “Philosophy and Literature” (an essay published in German in 1981 and so contemporaneous with the essays on *mythos*).⁸⁹ Here, he singles out the literary text’s special untranslatability as the definitive feature of written art. For “methodical reasons,” he notes the difference between “something we call poetry” and “oral and written narrative,” choosing the former as exemplary while asking of the latter the question, “which qualitative leap is taken here?” (249).⁹⁰ He states:

The novel, however, seems to be a late kind of literature and presents a mixture in which the essential function of the poetic words cannot be read so clearly. I shall choose the lyrical poem which, in its extreme form, in Mallarmé’s ideal of “*poésie pure*,” had almost entirely left behind all forms of the rhetorical, i.e., the everyday use of information. The means of grammar and syntax are employed as sparingly as possible. Fundamentally, all of the unique gravitational power remains entrusted to the words so that the movement of sound and the movement of meaning of the linguistic whole go together to form an insoluble unity. (251)⁹¹

As we saw above, the “essential function of the poetic words” is to achieve a certain kind of awakening, here called “a revival of our total *Lebensgefühl*,” our total “life-feeling,” as it is translated here (250).⁹² Something in narrative, however, would appear to obscure this revival. That this has again to do with translatability is suggested when Gadamer

⁸⁹ *Man and World* 18 (1985), pp. 241-59; *Gesammelte Werke* 8, pp. 240-257.

⁹⁰ “*Welcher qualitative Sprung ist da getan?*” (*Gesammelte Werke* 8, p. 248). The interrogative pronoun perhaps should have been translated simply as “what” to avoid the suggestion of a limited choice.

⁹¹ For a discussion of Gadamer and Mallarmé, see James Risser, “Reading the Text” in *Gadamer and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (New York & London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 93-105.

⁹² Gadamer tells us that the idea comes from Kant: “The experience of the beautiful, which no one has described so well as Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*, means a revival of our total *Lebensgefühl*...” (“Philosophy and Literature”, p. 250).

distinguishes here between the poetic word and the “everyday” word, which is readily translatable. In another essay, “Composition and Interpretation,” Gadamer explains that the everyday word is the intentional word: it refers to something in such a way that it “points to something beyond itself and disappears behind it.”⁹³ In this text, he explores the tension between “poetically articulated language on the one hand and the purely intentional on the other” (67). As opposed to the intentional, everyday word, which has a rightness to it that allows one to be “at home,” the poetic word is the word that demands interpretation due to its ambiguity. Here again, he cites two extremes: lyric poetry, and the other extreme of the novel, apparently the most flexible of art forms. Here the language of reflection that relates the things and events around us has always been at home, not merely in the speech of the fictional characters, but also in that of the narrator, whoever it may be. (67)

The mention here of at-homeness is very important, for we saw above how he mentions this as supposedly the special achievement of the recognition peculiar to the experience of poetry, but not narrative. The difference, however, is again between kinds of recognition: with poetry, at-homeness is progressive “awakening,” an *ever-growing* familiarity, a “revival of our total *Lebensgefühl*.” This is an image of home that is ever-enlarging, and it contrasts with an at-homeness that comes with the easy recognition of the already familiar.⁹⁴ Recalling this might explain the hint here that the novel’s claim to supreme “flexibility” is dubious, since to Gadamer, the real measure of its flexibility would of course lie in the transformative power of experiencing it. The power of narrative,

⁹³ “Composition and Interpretation,” *The Relevance of the Beautiful* (pp. 66-73), p 6.

⁹⁴ The Gadamer essay, also from 1992, “*Heimat und Sprache*” (“Home and Language”) promises to take up this topic of at-homeness (*Gesammelte Werke* 8, pp. 366-72).

measured on the scale of translatability-untranslatability, is less awakening because the need for interpretation is less disruptive. This is our first important qualification of the kind of tarrying occasioned by the narrative text.

Gadamer does not claim that a poem contains no intentional or everyday language, language that disappears in fulfilling a referential task. Similarly, he did not claim that religious and poetic language were exclusive (see “Aesthetic and Religious Experience,” 150). Rather, he speaks of a tension between the ambiguous and the unambiguous, the intentional and the autonomous word: “The ambiguous meaning of poetry is inseparably bound up with the unambiguous meaning of the intentional word” (69).

Gadamer uses the concept of the intentional word in two senses. Above, it distinguishes the degree of untranslatability of literary art, along the scale of which he locates literary narrative. But he also uses it to distinguish all literary art from other uses of the word in order to demonstrate the autonomy of art. For example, in “The Contribution of Poetry to the Search for Truth,” Gadamer explores the hermeneutics of three privileged forms of truth-containing texts, distinguishing these in terms of the kind of assertion (*Aussage*) each makes as something with a claim to autonomous authority, as something that “stands written” (108-109). These are: the religious pledge or promise (“*Zusage*”), the legal proclamation (“*Ansage*”), and literary art, (“*Sage*”). We note the root word is *Sage*, which means “legend,” but whose cognate is also *sagen* (to tell, to say, to mean). We note also how the translation into the English term, “saga,” erases the recitative emphasis.⁹⁵ His point in distinguishing these is to show that only the literary word is “detached from all intending” (107), and so “expresses a claim to completeness.”

Even here, elaborating upon the special autonomy of literary truth generally, he feels compelled to “insert a small observation” on the relative translatability of the novel:

Clearly in the language of poetry, the dimensions of sound and sense are inextricably interwoven. This fusion can exist to a lesser or greater degree, but in certain forms of linguistic art it reaches an extreme point where they become totally indissoluble. I am thinking here of lyric poetry, where we confront an unconditional case of untranslatability. No translation of a lyric poem ever conveys the original work . . . There are of course different levels of untranslatability. A novel is certainly translatable, and we must ask ourselves why this is, why we are able to see Dostoevsky’s staircase in front of us so vividly that I could almost argue with someone about the direction in which it turns, although I know no Russian? How does language achieve this? Obviously, in this case the relation between sound and sense is weighted rather more toward the sense.

(111)⁹⁶

Again raising our question but not pursuing it, Gadamer here emphasizes the purely corporeal value of poetry as sound, a quality that narrative does not necessarily share, in order to stress its special untranslatability. Here he speaks of translation across languages, but the term, translation, may be applied to the processing of language inherent in the act of reading or listening.

⁹⁵ It might be recalled that *Kunst als Aussage* (Art as Assertion) is the subtitle of Vol. 8 of *Gesammelte Werke*.

⁹⁶ In “Literature and Philosophy,” Gadamer uses the term *Sage* to denote literature generally in discussing degrees of “intimacy [*Vertrautheit*] with the world of meaning”: he states these degrees are illustrated by “what one could call the different modes of the “saga” (“*Sage*”)” (251). Thus narrative and poetry would differ in degree of this intimacy. One should note that the word *Vertrautheit* also means “familiarity.” He cites the example of Hölderlin, whose hymns “appeared as incomprehensible lunacy” even

Primarily, it is the everyday word that defines the translatability of narrative. Its everydayness is further illuminated in “Philosophy and Poetry.”⁹⁷ Here, in citing the “complete scale of translatability [ascending] from lyric poetry...leading up to the novel,” he stresses the syntactical untranslatability of poetry, stating that it is its “syntactical indeterminacy” that is responsible for invoking the full “semantic weight that inhabits every word” (135-36), and which is thus responsible for ambiguity. Everydayness here is partly a function of syntax. In this essay he contrasts the syntactical indeterminacy of poetry with the false integrity of the logical form of the proposition in philosophy. For example, in analytical philosophy, concepts, as grammatical subjects, are always a given: “In this case we distance ourselves from everyday speech in a quite different way. The problem is not that everyday prose threatens to infiltrate the language of the concept, but that the logic of the proposition takes us in the wrong direction” (137). This wrong direction is towards translatability, the only difference being that with the philosophical proposition there is a higher degree of presupposition (than with everyday speech) attending the concepts that are givens. The direction for philosophy should rather be towards poetry, a direction, which he here says Hegel takes, towards the word whose very multifariousness challenges everydayness and contains the possibility of deeper recognition (138-39). This statement of the complicity of syntactical structure in the everydayness or translatability of the word is very important for the question of narrative. It raises the question of a syntactical logic peculiar to narrative, namely, a temporal logic, a question which Gadamer has never pursued. In Chapter Three, we will examine, using

to some of his supporters, to stress that even the most hermetic of poetry still discloses much -- “*Sage, die vieles sagt*” (*Gesammelte Werke* 8, p. 250). See p. 114 below for a further discussion of *Sage*.

⁹⁷ In *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, pp. 131-139.

the analysis of Paul Ricoeur, whether the temporal logic of narrative similarly “takes us in the wrong direction.”

What is the full significance of the degree of translatability of literary art to which Gadamer repeatedly refers? We wish to establish the significance of the translatability of the literary work for tarrying, for the particular event-character of truth. At this point we must establish the link between the event-truth characteristic of oral *mythos* that Gadamer so wishes to rejuvenate, and the extreme “untranslatability” of the written poetic text, which he also idealizes. This is where we must situate Gadamer’s reservation about narrative.

I would like to suggest this link as follows: As mentioned above, in the oral transmission of myth no telling is identical to the last, so that in effect, a translation occurs with every telling. In effect, Gadamer tells us that *mythos* abides indubitably in translation. This is a case of the extreme invisibility of language, though, because while this movement exhibits the natural dynamic character of language, this character is never itself observed or understood. Rather, with an oral recitation of myth the sounding of the word is an event in which the matter-at-hand (*Sache*) comes into sensuous being, indeed may appear divine in the acuity of its presence. In this sense, each and every distinct telling is wholly an invocation. This acuity is due to the profound absence of the written word as such. In this sense, in the sense that this coming into being is simultaneous with the sounding of the word, the word is not in any way thought of as instrumental. Rather, the sounded word is rightly thought, albeit perhaps naively, to be the very element of being. When Gadamer looks to the Greek presence of being, and marvels at the Greek readiness for absorption in the matter at hand, he recognizes that an hermeneutical

requirement of this is the utter disappearance of language into its function, a disappearance which in no way implies the fixity of words and concepts, but rather their true malleability. On the other hand, in the case of the written work of extreme untranslatability, the movement of language, which is its natural historical character, is, as it were, stopped, and held. In this sense, the extreme case of written poetry is therefore not so much an experience of untranslatability as it is an *isolated and magnified event of translation*, a prolonging that is due to the full potential of language being called upon and awakened. This is the only respect in which written poetry actually differs from oral *mythos*. The fact that language use far exceeds any simple instrumentality is also emphatic in the experience of written poetry, an experience of tarrying *in* language rather than *with* it. Gerald Bruns refers to this as the “corporeality of poetry.”⁹⁸ Again we recall the hermeneutics of this: it is an absorbing experience in the matter at hand that, while disruptive, difficult, is yet a “determinate negation,” something positive, in the sense that the more one is open, or “radically undogmatic” in the encounter, the more this disruptiveness will yield a growing self-understanding. But with written narrative, one can tarry less disruptively, since, due to the ease of translation in reading or listening, the movement of language is itself not sufficiently halted. The experience of the literary work therefore may involve a greater or lesser invocation of our historicity, where “the presence of the past is the essence of spirit” (*Wort und Bild*, 399). And we may conclude that for Gadamer, narrative exemplifies the lesser experience.

The question of the performative function of narrative is illuminated, then, with a consideration of the orality versus the writtleness of language in the respect that the

⁹⁸ “The Remembrance of Language: An Introduction to Gadamer’s Poetics” in *Gadamer on Celan*.

dynamic, historical character of language that is apparent in orality is a character that is not supplanted, but only obscured by writtenness. Gadamer speaks of “extremes”: while poetry can unveil this inherent character, not simply despite its writtenness but in fact because of it, written narrative tends only to obscure it. It is in this same respect, of course, that conversation is so exemplary for Gadamer. Only there and in extreme forms of the literary work does the operative vitality of language finally become palpable.

What concerns Gadamer is the fact that our whole development of a concept of language itself occurred only subsequent to writtenness.⁹⁹ While according to Gadamer the historical shift from the sounded word to the written one by no means implies simply a loss, since only with writtenness can the full mnemonic potential of language be realized, there is no doubt that Gadamer’s basic position is that the written word generally obscures the locus and temporality of truth. A way of putting this that uses the terms of this project is to say that with the written word, the matter at hand appears, as it were, on the nether side of the word, at which moment the subject comes into being as a locus estranged from truth. The matter-at-hand in fact appears to have *preceded* the word in that the word appears to point back to it. In this way the experience of the subject is bracketed, alienated. The experience of understanding the fixed word appears to be an event, not of the coming forth of being, but rather, of discovering something seemingly *already* spoken, and hence truth is something in which one has not fully participated. One might say this is the word of god. We might name this, after Gadamer’s conception of the pastness of art, as the “pastness” of the word.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ See *Truth and Method*, pp. 405-37.

¹⁰⁰ See *Truth and Method*, pp. 418-28. Gadamer discusses Christianity as the historical moment when human language becomes an object of reflection. He explains that the incarnation of the word “introduces

A naive understanding of writtenness is of course at the very heart of the one-sided ontology that Gadamer's philosophy critiques. For instance, thinking and establishing what is true under the illusion of the absolute *pre-eminence* of given categories of classification are, as Gadamer argues in *Truth and Method*, in reality "far removed from verbal consciousness" (429). The essentially dynamic character of language that in the narrower context of the literary work he calls "translatability," in the broader context of his philosophical project he refers to as its *fundamental metaphoricity*:

...if a person transfers an expression from one thing to the other, he has in mind something that is common to both of them; but this in no way needs to be generic universality. Rather, he is following his widening experience, which looks for similarities, whether in the appearance of things or in their significance for us. The genius of verbal consciousness consists in being able to express these similarities. This is its fundamental metaphorical nature, and it is important to see that to regard the metaphorical use of a word as not its real sense is the prejudice of a theory of logic that is alien to language. (429)

In Gadamer's retrieval of Greek thinking, where *mimesis* is the aesthetic term for the phenomenology of truth in tarrying, and *mythos* denotes its socio-spiritual functioning in art, *metaphoricity* denotes the dynamic linguisticity of this truth event. *Metaphoricity* is, moreover, the essential functioning of all language no matter how disruptive, and no

the essence of history into Western thought, brings the phenomenon of language out of its immersion in the ideality of meaning, and offers it to philosophical reflection" (419). He later adds, "The greater miracle of language lies not in the fact that the Word becomes flesh and emerges in external being, but that that which emerges and externalizes itself in utterance is always already a word" (420). My essay, "Theology as Hermeneutical Stance," discusses the inner word or *verbum mentis* in Augustine's thought and suggests how Gadamer rereads this as coming not from God but from memory in the sense discussed here.

matter how much this functioning is obscured.¹⁰¹ Thus we may say that our historicity and our being reveals itself in the range of metaphorical possibility. In this range, finally, is where Gadamer situates narrative.

Ritual

The various mentions of narrative that we have gathered and studied establish more than that Gadamer is little interested in genre distinctions, although his efforts to escape generic categories should not be discounted; they are deliberate and consequential. Though it is the autonomy of literary art generally that above all accounts for its performative truth (*Vollzug*), we have also seen that the truth of art has a range proper to it, a range between the two poles of *familiarity* and *discovery*, which is determined by the everydayness of the language experience. And it is important to see that it is because of the association of spirit with the irreducible fact of historicity that Gadamer clearly esteems the experience at the pole of awakening. So while his various mentions of narrative are largely, as he says, “methodical,” one cannot ignore the importance of the fact that narrative lies at the pole where everydayness and writtenness conspire to obscure the eventfulness of language.

In Richard Palmer’s recent summaries of an as yet untranslated essay written by Gadamer in 1992, “Zur Phänomenologie von Ritual und Sprache” (On the Phenomenology of Ritual and Language), this range of linguistic experience, wherein the metaphors of recognition varies the truth experience of art, is focal, and seems to

¹⁰¹ In this connection, see Joel Weinsheimer, “Gadamer’s Metaphorical Hermeneutics” in *Gadamer and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 181-201. Weinsheimer’s thesis is

confirm what has been established here thus far.¹⁰² What appears from Palmer's summaries to be new and important in "On the Phenomenology of Ritual and Language," though, is that it contains an argument for the fundamental orality of language from which a distinction builds between these two different forms of linguistic activity, "ritual" and "conversation." As we recall, readers were referred to this piece on ritual in Gadamer's footnote in "The Relation of Religion and Science" in order that it might illuminate the question of the "narrative form of speech and the ritual form of language" as it applies to Christian culture (see p. 99 above). It is a lengthy essay which accounts for the conservative power of language, and in Richard Palmer's summary of it, we may observe in the section "*Sprache -- Gespräche und Ritual*" how the two forms of linguistic activity may be seen to correspond to distinctions discussed above between intentional and poetic language, within which narrative and lyric poetry are "extremes" of poetic language. Thus, for further illumination, we here return to categories broader than those within poetic language. Rather than conversation, it is the concept of ritualistic language that is the focus here, greatly deepening Gadamer's account of intentional, that is, non-artistic language. Gadamer deepens how this differs from "conversation" by, as Palmer explains, accounting for it anthropologically, going further back than Greek orality.

that metaphor "is the linguistic correlate of the *Bildung* of spirit Gadamer describes [in *Truth and Method*]" (188). See especially *Truth and Method*, pp. 15-18.

¹⁰² Palmer has written two summaries. The first, "Ritual Rightness and Truth in Two Late Works," appears in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, pp. 529-547, and is treated along with the other article from 1992 discussed above, "*Wort und Bild -- 'so wahr, so seiend'*." The second summary appears in *Continental Philosophy Review* 33 (2000), pp. 381-393. Palmer's second summary of the ritual essay is more substantive, following the structure of Gadamer's essay more exactly, and while Palmer apologizes in the headnote that this second summary is only an "interpretive reading" (38), the summary seems clear in its account of what is new in the Gadamer essay, which in fact is thinking that deepens the subject of concern to us here, namely, the two poles of familiarity and discovery. "On the Phenomenology of Ritual and Language" would appear to be Gadamer's definitive discussion of narrative. It is therefore regrettable that, due to its length, this essay will not appear in the forthcoming Gadamer reader (conversation with Prof. Palmer).

Gadamer describes our lifeworld of being together (*Ineinander*) as an interweaving of an animal togetherness (*Mitsamt*) and an interactive being together that language grew to facilitate (*Miteinander*). Palmer quotes Gadamer as follows: “We are dealing here with a doubling that consists of the togetherness of being in a unity with nature and of being with each other [*das Ineinander von Mitsamt und Miteinander*]” (385-86). Palmer explains that while it is language that has given rise to the *Miteinander* of the human lifeworld (*Miteinanderleben*), it can nonetheless perform in ways that harken back to this biological *Mitsamt*. Gadamer suggests that animal *Mitsamt* is the deep ancestry of ritual language.¹⁰³ He presents an analogue to this evolution in the organic growth of language use in the single human life:

Let’s look at the transition to language that in human behavior can be observed in the small child. As we have said, there is no graspable point of beginning. What we can observe in the small child is the slow growing into a speech community, which corresponds to all beginnings of speech communities, as they take shape in *ritus*, usages, customary morals, and all rules for behavior, and these finally lead to verbal exchange. (in Palmer 381)

Our common ear for “rightness” (*Richtigkeit*) gives language its power for maintaining solidarity. Thus, the conception of “conversation,” for Gadamer the concept that encompasses philosophy and poetry, is a late development, subsequent to the fixity of language that merely maintains solidarity with customary usages and, before that, within the purely ritualistic use of language.

¹⁰³ Some of the citations in the earlier Palmer summary flesh this out somewhat. See pp. 531-34.

Although with only the sketch that Palmer affords I can in no way claim to do justice to the complexity of Gadamer's argument, one can readily discern from Palmer's summary that this is the context for Gadamer's consideration here of writtenness and orality, and of oral narrative. As Palmer explains, Gadamer's focus on orality versus writtenness here is in part a reply to Derrida. Palmer states, "the 'difference' that is of interest is not the presence or absence of a referent but the difference between language in its spoken form and in its written form" (388).¹⁰⁴ The general structure of the German essay is indicative of this preoccupation; the subtitles of the first and last sections indicate this focus on the significance of writtenness for philosophy: The first section is titled, "*Die Verborgenheit der Sprache*" ("The Hiddenness of Language"), and the last, "*Auf dem Wege zum Begriff*" ("On the Way of the Concept").¹⁰⁵ According to Palmer, Gadamer once again looks to both Plato and Aristotle for early examples of "a struggle against the fixity of writing, against the alienation one feels from what stands forever frozen into the fixity of the text," and Palmer explains that, "in a parallel way, Gadamer argues, the history of Western philosophy has been a struggle against the hardening of living ideas and questions into metaphysical concepts."¹⁰⁶ In other words, Gadamer is

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of Gadamer's objection to Derrida's starting point in the written sign, see, for example, the discussion that concludes Gadamer's essay, "Hermeneutics and Logocentrism" in *Dialogue and Deconstruction* (pp. 114-25), p. 124-25.

¹⁰⁵ Gadamer's subtitles in the *Gesammelte Werke* again announce the thematics of his project and reverberate significantly: We note, as does Palmer, that the sub-title, *Die Verborgenheit der Sprache* ("The Hiddenness of Language") recalls the title of a recent collection of essays on health and the art of healing in the technological age, *Über die Verborgenheit der Gesundheit (The Enigma of Health)*. The suggested analogy between the invisibility of health and the invisibility of language is fascinating, and in something I take up briefly in my conclusion. A further note on thematics of subtitles: The second subtitle, "*Auf dem Wege zum Begriff*" ("On the way of the Concept") of course recalls Heidegger's philosophical project, but also echoes the title of the section of volume 8 of *Gesammelte Werke*, "*Auf dem Wege zur hermeneutischen Philosophie*," which contains this and the other 1992 essay, "*Wort und Bild*." The 9th volume carries the subtitle, *Hermeneutik im Vollzug* (Tübingen, 1993).

¹⁰⁶ "Ritual Rightness and Truth in Two Late Works," p. 535.

again concerned with the fact that the fixing of language into text has meant the loss of a sense for *living language*, because such fixity masks its fundamental metaphoricity.

Although Palmer doesn't remark on this, it is also clear enough that the question of ritual language versus language as conversation is again conspicuously crossed by the question of orality and writtenness. For how has the 'fixity' of writtenness conspired with the 'fixity' of ritual language? These two themes precipitate Gadamer's discussion of narrative art in the third section, "*Von der Sage zur Literatur*" (from the saga to literature). Gadamer focuses, perhaps at greater length than he has elsewhere, on the freedom of invention that is associated with the truth experience in the oral event of telling associated with ancient *mythos*. But here the treatment of this historical moment has a different focus than earlier treatments where lyric poetry is the primary example and its virtues the primary point, such as in the above discussed "Aesthetic and Religious Experience." There Gadamer treated this historical moment when recitation becomes the work, the example of extreme poetic "recognition" served to heighten the contrast with religious "recognition" and to emphasize the autonomy of art. Gadamer was showing how the move to the work coincided with the splitting off of religious from poetic truth. But here, the focus differs: the example of oral narrative appears to function to reveal a moment closer to the ritualistic origins of language when language was fundamentally oral.¹⁰⁷ Palmer summarizes,

¹⁰⁷ In the earlier essay, in fact, Gadamer sketches a trajectory that this recent essay lays out more fully. He had written, "I would say that we can observe such a gradual transition from ritual to the "work" in the development of Greek literature, a transition that eventually culminates in a work written to be read. We can trace the process in which all forms of poetic and religious speech, indissolubly connected with one another, begin to take shape as works: in the development of rhapsodic performance than went beyond ritual; in the choreographical staging of the choral lyric, which had certainly emerged from the observance of everyday religious practice; in the spectacle of tragedy...In short, we can see that all these things already find themselves on the road to the autonomy of art" (145).

For the form of this preliterate poetry, he points us to the German word *Sage*.

“Saga” means something that hands itself down only in being said, going from mouth to mouth, passing from generation to generation in free growth and the proliferation of narrative fantasy, ‘stories.’ In all narrating of a story “there reigns a kind of freedom that basically resists fixity,” the fixity of writing. In fact, “narrating has a tremendous power.” (Palmer quoting *GW* 8 421-22)

Gadamer also states here that the term “Sage” is akin to Greek *Mythos*: “*Im Griechischen heißes ‘Mythos’*” (*GW* 8, 421). Narrative seems to represent or correspond to a particular moment in the evolution of the experience of truth, a speculation quite aside from the particular quality of that truth as recognition, as *Bildung*, the emphasis in many earlier essays. Palmer states that Gadamer stresses how written narrative must be brought to life in the inner recitation, making it oral once more (389-90). So Gadamer is again identifying narrative with *mythos*, but seems also to be substantially and emphatically identifying its anthropological roots in ritual.

This will be an important essay to appear in English, for, in it, Gadamer seems not only to give a fuller account of the conservative power of language -- as opposed to what he is renowned for, accounting for its radical power (as *Bildung*) in poetry, conversation, and philosophy as he defines it -- but also to allow the conservative power of language its proper place.¹⁰⁸ The example of narrative freedom (in *Sage*, *Mythos*) in fact seems intended ultimately to show the participatory nature of being in community: “I have tried to bring to articulation the human being-with-each-other found in *ethos* and *logos* by the concept of ritual, in which ‘rightness’ dictates the standards for observance and

¹⁰⁸ The headnote to the 2000 summary states it is an “unheralded” but “major” essay from 1992” (381).

fulfillment” (in Palmer, 392). It seems especially significant that narrative is associated with this conservative power. Although Palmer does not say so, Gadamer’s larger aim seems to be to demonstrate that just as with conversation, it is the inherent oral-dynamical nature of language that best accounts for conservativeness, rather than a metaphysics of presence of the written word. In Palmer’s summation of the section on literature, however, a distinction between oral-experiential and written-artifactual narrative is not clear: “Gadamer identifies the power of language with the power of narrative and novelistic art. Here and in dialogue, language is language in its full sense” (390). Not keeping this clear is perhaps regrettable, for it leaves open the suggestion that Gadamer has changed his mind about the exemplary status of poetry, which is not the case.

What we may conclude about the temporality of tarrying as it relates to literary narrative, then, is that one can tarry in narrative, that the truth of being, spirit, can shine forth in this way, but it is a question of the degree to which one is “at home” in the language of the narrative. In narrative, the experience of truth is more normative than revelatory; it is more “ritualistic” than “conversational.” More than anything else, this seems most significant in regard to the question of spirit itself, which Gadamer elsewhere so clearly identifies with the optimal experience of tarrying. Spirit, as the presence of the past, is supremely malleable, variously paltry or immense as the experience of language itself allows. However, there is one question that still remains, whether the dimensionality of narrative language is a special feature of our at-homeness in it. Put another way, the question is whether the experience of narrative, as a language event, is precisely an at-homeness *in* dimensionality. For this may seal the triumph of this art form as a triumph of estrangement from deeper experiences of the spirit where a different

temporality presides. Having established the particular status of narrative as mythos in Gadamer, it is perhaps more conspicuous than ever that in all of Gadamer's mentions of narrative, he has not commented on its specifically dimensional nature.

Chapter Three:
The Spirit of Narrative: Onesidedness in the
Temporality of Paul Ricoeur

The question of what narrative dimensionality is to a philosophy where a temporality of tarrying is utterly fundamental to its exemplary hermeneutic experience is a question, then, which Gadamer's work would seem nearly to beg, but which, as I have shown in Chapter Two, is barely raised, much less answered. There remains the question of the relation between the at-homeness in narrative that Gadamer suggests tends toward the ritualistic language experience, and the specifically *dimensional* character of narrative subject matter. In this chapter, I examine Paul Ricoeur's ontological investigation of narrative as an answer to this question. Because of his own explicit focus on time, Ricoeur's work places the specifically temporal theme in Gadamer's project in greater relief. But more importantly, Ricoeur's work may be situated so that his thesis that narrative is time-made-meaningful can be seen as normative, and to underwrite the prevailing, thus "one-sided," calculative ontology that Gadamer's philosophical project is striving to counterbalance. I will show that Ricoeur's work on narrative depends upon the objectification of time, and must bracket the experiential eventfulness of understanding that defines Gadamer's hermeneutics of tarrying. This examination of Ricoeur is not intended to be a fully developed comparison with Gadamer in order to refute Ricoeur, but, rather, is an attempt to sketch out the other side of human being in

such a way that Gadamer's radical core stands out fully. Accomplishing this allows important issues to be redefined. For example, while the locus and scope of hermeneutics is itself at issue, a new question comes to light in the following symmetry: just as the temporality of tarrying is the context of Gadamer's enigmatic references to spirit, so the question of the spiritual deeply motivates Ricoeur's assertion of the ontological primordially of narrative. Distinguishing these orientations to time may reinvigorate questions concerning what, if anything, the spiritual has to do with. For instance, corresponding to each time-orientation are significantly different conceptions of human continuity, participation, and fulfillment. Radically differing notions of continuity, participation, and fulfillment articulate the spiritual in each case.¹⁰⁹

Ricoeur's work on narrative follows naturally from his earlier work in religious philosophy, the thrust of which had been to inform religious philosophy with a new hermeneutic sophistication. This is evident, for instance, in Ricoeur's *Conflict of Interpretations*, where, as Don Ihde explains in his Introduction, Ricoeur's concluding section on religion and faith sets out a new "hermeneutics of hope," which attempts to orient religiosity away from the dogmatisms of faith and, instead, orient it toward eschatology, toward the God who is coming.¹¹⁰ In a 1968 essay included in this book,

¹⁰⁹ The tendency, at least in Anglo-American scholarship, to affiliate Gadamer and Ricoeur will hopefully be discouraged by the current stream of translations of Gadamer's various essays. An example of this tendency occurs in the relatively recent Klemm and Schweiker collection, *Meanings in Texts and Actions: Questioning Paul Ricoeur* (full citation below, n. 102), where they state in their Introduction that Ricoeur "along with Hans-Georg Gadamer, is responsible for the emergence of a new hermeneutic in the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980's" (n. 102), p. 2. Also see Klemm's contribution, "Ricoeur and the Cross of Interpretation" (pp. 255-72), p. 264.

¹¹⁰ Introduction, *The Conflict of Interpretation*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1974), pp. ix-xxv, p. xxii. For an overview of Ricoeur's place in hermeneutics that emphasizes the singular, biblical roots of the various methodological transmutations which Ricoeur's work has gone through, see Ihde's contribution to *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (ed. Lewis E. Hahn, Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1995), entitled, "Paul Ricoeur's Place in the Hermeneutic Tradition," pp. 60-69. It should be noted, however, that Ihde does not present an accurate account here of Gadamer's concept of "prejudice." For

“Freedom in the Light of Hope,” Ricoeur states, “a new ethics marks the linkage of freedom to hope -- what [Jürgen] Moltmann calls the ethics of the *mission*, (*Sendung*); the *promissio* involves a *missio*; in the mission, the obligation which engages the present proceeds from the promise, opens the future.”¹¹¹ In this hermeneutics of hope, ethics is identified with the constancy of the will through time, so that narrative time is as implied by his hermeneutics of hope as faith is hidden in it. Hope, says Ricoeur, “opens up a career for existence and history” (411). Freedom is to be found in the “superabundance” of possibilities which hope’s “aporetic” nature allows for thinking and action (411-412). This superabundance that the aporetic nature of hope allows for thinking is critical for an understanding of Ricoeur’s philosophical work, for it is to this theological idea that one may trace his justification for the openness of philosophical endeavor: “Kerygmatic thought,” writes Ricoeur, is thought which “often take[s] the form of dislocation and recasting of systems. The theme of hope has precisely a *fissuring* power with regard to closed systems and a power of *reorganizing* meaning” (412-13). This formulation gives rise to a dialectic between deconstructive suspicion and theological surety. This is a dialectic that has endured in Ricoeur’s philosophy. As Mark Wallace has recently described it, “Ricoeur contends that an *archeology* of the decentered subject should stand in tension with a *teleology* of the fulfilled subject.”¹¹² While this is a dialectic Ricoeur has had to continually defend, since it is self-contradicting in bracketing off the givenness

Ihde, the concept of prejudice in Gadamer seems to mean an awareness of bias, rather than the fundamental condition of historicity. As a consequence, to Ihde, Gadamer “mutes the revolutionary” (68), while Ricoeur “does not reduce or ease” tensions between differing horizons. On this point, his account of Gadamer is misleading.

¹¹¹ *The Conflict of Interpretation* (pp.402-424), p. 408.

¹¹² In his Introduction to Paul Ricoeur’s *Figuring the Sacred* (trans. David Pellauer, ed. Mark I. Wallace, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996, pp. 1-32), p. 7.

of the kerygma to begin with, it nonetheless serves to validate the “eclectic” turnings, as Ihde terms them, in Ricoeur’s thought.¹¹³

In terms of the compatibility of Ricoeur and Gadamer, however, this dialectic between the deconstructive and the theological translates into a theory of the self that can, unfortunately, be stated in terms virtually identical to Gadamer’s, suggesting a compatibility which does not exist. Specifically, this dialectic ultimately evolved into Ricoeur’s theory of self, or “cogito” as being “by turns in a position of strength and weakness,” such that being is understood as a “discordant concordance,” as Wallace summarizes it.¹¹⁴ But while this might sound a lot like Gadamer’s “determinate negation,” their respective notions of temporality reveal, as we shall see, that Ricoeur’s “discordant concordance” is, in fact, diametrically opposed to Gadamer’s “determinate negation” (*Truth and Method* 353).¹¹⁵ In Ricoeur, conceptions of self that “do not consider the narrative dimension fail” (*Oneself as Another* 116).

Not only are the superabundant possibilities of hope aporetic, but in “Preface to Bultmann,” another essay from 1968, we see that hope is aporetic in its origin as well. In this essay, we see that to this aporetic origin, the Christian kerygma, narrative functions as a response, a position that also strongly anticipates his thesis on narrative and time: Ricoeur explains how narrative is a poetic response to, rather than eschatological

¹¹³ An example of the philosophical irritation that Ricoeur can sometimes inspire may be seen in David Detmar’s “Ricoeur on Atheism: A Critique,” in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (pp. 477-93). With respect to the apparent turns which Ricoeur’s thought has taken, in Ricoeur’s following reply (pp. 494-97), he discusses an instance of having to revise his earlier thinking as a result of the inevitable tension between his Christianity and his own philosophy.

¹¹⁴ Ricoeur, *Oneself As Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.4.

¹¹⁵ See above, Introduction, p. 41-42, for Bruns’ discussion of the negative in Gadamer, and Chapter One, p. 90, for the full citation from *Truth and Method* concerning “determinate negation.”

expression of, the kerygma.¹¹⁶ In the essay, he is elucidating the inherently “hermeneutic situation of Christianity” (382), explaining that meaning is only conferred upon the kerygma of the resurrection (the proclamation of hope) by virtue of the narrative temporalizing of it by the Christian typological allegorization of the Old Testament: “The event [kerygma] itself receives a temporal density by being inscribed in a signifying relation of “promise” to “fulfillment.” By entering in this way into a historical connection, the event enters also into an intelligible liaison.... In taking on time, it takes on meaning” (383-84). So while the divine purpose of the kerygma to engender hope is a (narrative) eschatology sufficiently open to accommodate a superabundance of possibilities for philosophical reason, narrative is also the human, poetic means of making the kerygma meaningful.¹¹⁷ In other words, for Ricoeur, hope and narrative time are such that hope is the eschatological mandate of the event of the kerygma, and narrative is a poetic response to it. When we look closely at the place of narrative in this hermeneutical circle of meaning, we see that narrative both makes the aporia of the kerygma meaningful (i.e.: poetically), and structures that which is itself still aporetic (the superabundant possibilities of hope).

A critical issue which is illuminated by, on the one hand, Ricoeur’s placement of philosophy within this eschatological aporia, and on the other, his identification of figuration (e.g. narrative) as a response to the sacred kerygma is that of the relation of figurative, or poetical thought to philosophical reason. Ricoeur must also assume an

¹¹⁶ *Conflict of Interpretations*, pp. 381-401. The original, French publication dates can be found in the bibliography section of *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, ed. Lewis E. Hahn (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1995, pp. 609-815), p. 663.

irreducible aporia separating these two “planes” of thinking.¹¹⁸ This perpetuates an essentially traditional separation of figurative and conceptual language, but it is a separation where, instead of the figurative being relegated to the junior status of rhetorical embellishment, as in Aristotle, it becomes the privileged (eschatological) *ground* of philosophical superabundance.¹¹⁹ This position is radically different from that held by Gadamer, who, as we have seen, maintains that metaphoricity is the fundamental dynamic of all language, including the discourse of philosophy.

That Ricoeur’s thesis on narrative is rooted in his theological preoccupation with futurity perhaps becomes most evident when one realizes that his thesis fits into a long-envisioned project, a trilogy called *Philosophy of the Will*.¹²⁰ As Ihde points out in his introduction, the role of the figuration of meaning in Ricoeur’s discussion of eschatology anticipated his envisioned *Poetics of the Will*, a work which Ricoeur intended to be the third study in this trilogy, but was never written (xxii). Ricoeur’s *Freedom and Nature* (1950) and *Finitude and Guilt* (1960, in two parts: *Fallible Man* and *The Symbolism of Evil*) are said to comprise the first two studies (see note 72 below). But Ricoeur says the third part of this trilogy has, in fact, been written. He explains, “As for the third part of

¹¹⁷ As Heidegger says, “Anyone can see we are moving in a circle.” The question is, as he says, whether we are compelled to follow it, or whether it can be avoided in the interest of logic (“The Origin of the Work of Art” p.18).

¹¹⁸ This is evident, for example, in his “Reply to David Detmar,” where he states that the “plane of figurative thought” lies “outside the limits of *philosophical reason*” (495; emphasis in original). It is on the former, not the latter plane, he says, that one must pose problems with regard to his religious position. He later adds that he “assume[s] an irreducible dichotomy” between these two forms of discourse (496). It is also the subject of an interview in Charles E. Reagan, *Paul Ricoeur, His Life and Work* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press), p.120.

¹¹⁹ One should note that while the narrative figuration of the kerygma into an open or superabundant future makes narrative a theological ground for all possible philosophical reason, the argument of Ricoeur we shall examine later ascribes to analytical reason itself the same aporetic givenness, reversing the impetus and making analytical reason, not theological narrative, the starting point.

¹²⁰ This project is laid out in the Introduction to *Freedom and Nature* (1950). See Charles E. Reagan, “Words and Deeds: The Semantics of Action” in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, pp. 332-345.

the plan, its realization is the least evident. Nevertheless, I would claim that what I have ... called a poetics of the will was accomplished in other modalities,” and he lists *The Rule of Metaphor*, *Time and Narrative*, and *Oneself as Another* as having done so.¹²¹ And so the famous hermeneutically circular thesis on narrative -- “Time becomes human to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience” -- was in part the realization of this long-envisioned theology.¹²²

In the introduction to *Meanings in Texts and Actions; Questioning Paul Ricoeur*, David E. Klemm and William Schweiker provides a useful synopsis of the now well-known thesis on narrative and time that had been latent in Ricoeur’s earlier theological work.¹²³ Klemm and Schweiker’s account has the benefit of suggesting the particular thematic importance of the notions of continuity, fulfillment, and participation in Ricoeur’s thesis, which we will go on to examine in greater detail. Narrativity, specified as a form of poetic productivity, defines continuity as a “coherence” of “episodes.” It similarly provides coherence to “self-identity.” And as well, narratives enable participation by preceding, in the sense of modeling by example, “deliberation and action” in life:

Focusing on the classic speculations on the nature of time in Augustine’s

Confessions and Aristotle’s *Physics*, Ricoeur shows [in *Time and Narrative*] a

¹²¹ In Charles E. Reagan, *Paul Ricoeur*, p. 124-25. It should be noted that in Idhe’s 1995 essay in “*The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*,” he erroneously states in footnote 1 that the three works that comprise the trilogy are *Freedom and Nature*, *Fallible Man*, and *Symbolism of Evil*, which contradicts his remark in the 1974 Introduction that the unwritten *Poetics of the Will* would have been Part Three. Ricoeur himself does not correct or clarify this in the reply that follows (“Reply to Don Ihde,” *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, pp. 72-73), but it is clearly incorrect by Ricoeur’s own account above.

¹²² *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, p.3.

¹²³ Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia (1993), pp. 1-12.

fundamental discordance between the phenomenological experience of time and the cosmological measure of time. Theoretical speculation on time leads to unsolvable aporia to which the productive imagination can respond through the narrative activity of composing or following a plot as a synthesis of episodes.

Narrative activity renders the theoretical aporia productive in a practical way: the reader or writer of narrative can give coherence to time and self-identity through the poetic activity, which in turn gives rise to deliberation and action in a return from the text to life. (9)

Klemm and Schweiker's summary is also useful in that one can readily discern, in addition to the theological background presented above, how contrary this is to Gadamer's account of tarrying. Taking a Gadamerian perspective, we might detect a certain falseness of predicament here. For, as we recall, a quite specific phenomenological experience can be said to reveal a different time/time differently, namely *indirectly*. Time, on this other view, is not a thing to be understood, or, if it were, one would have to say instead that knowing what time is *ensues* from a certain hermeneutical event (say that becoming aware of what this other temporality is is always a side-effect, perhaps an after-effect). On this view, it would seem obvious, and thus of no particular account, that "theoretical speculation" *directly* on time precludes this access to it, since time is event, not thing. This event-time is not simply different, but as "The Relevance of the Beautiful," "Word and Picture," and Gadamer's essays on time make clear, is precisely a hiatus from the normative conceptualizing of time that presides over the everyday and which Ricoeur's thesis builds upon. This is a hiatus which in a radically different way affects the change and growth of self-identity, for it is the subsequent

disappearance of self in the experience of tarrying that determines, indeed constitutes, deliberation and participation in the world. By contrast, in Ricoeur's objectivist thinking there must remain the insurmountable gap, or *aporia*, between the "cosmological" and the "phenomenological." It is the gap that recurs inevitably between subject and object, self and other, word and thing, poetry and philosophy. Gadamer's efforts have been to describe another temporal modality in which no such gaps exist, suggesting that alienation may be only illusory and indeed spiritually debilitating.

Ricoeur Encountering Gadamer

In what follows, therefore, our primary aim is to allow Ricoeur's enterprise to stand as a detailed account of the normative status of the temporality of narrative that Gadamer's thought anticipates but leaves provocatively unsaid. It may be hermeneutically appropriate, as well, to give particular attention to contexts in which Ricoeur is, ostensibly, at least, engaged with Gadamer's thought. For it is possible that Ricoeur's work on narrative time is a deliberate defense against the radical possibility of conceiving time in another way, a tacit response to Gadamer which reinforces the normative view of time against the challenge Gadamer poses.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ In one of the few sources which refers to Gadamer's essays specifically on the subject of temporality, Gary E. Aylesworth's "Dialogue, Text, Narrative: Confronting Gadamer and Ricoeur," he states that both Gadamer and Ricoeur are "aware that time is a deeply contentious issue in the philosophical tradition." In *Gadamer and Hermeneutics; Science, Culture, Literature*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (New York and London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 63-81), p. 74.

There has been, in fact, an occasion where Ricoeur was able to respond to Gadamer's work specifically on the subject of temporality, an occasion which, as it happens, is also one of Ricoeur's earliest publications on the relation of time to narrative. I refer to his Introduction to a collection of essays entitled, *Time and the Philosophies*.¹²⁵ In this volume, the third of Gadamer's essays on time, "The Western View of the Inner Experience of Time and the Limits of Thought" appears as the opening essay. That Ricoeur's attention was turning to narrative during the late seventies is evident here, although "Narrative Time," the more well known publication explicitly on the topic, and preparatory for *Time and Narrative*, didn't appear until 1980.¹²⁶ Thus the encounter with Gadamer occurred at a time when, even though the narrative thesis was conceived much earlier (earlier even than the first sentence of the Preface to *Time and Narrative* suggests, which states that *The Rule of Metaphor* and *Time and Narrative* were "conceived together"), Ricoeur may not yet have fully worked out the intricacies of *Time and Narrative*.¹²⁷

First of all, we should be clearer about the contents of the Gadamer piece which Ricoeur is encountering. Of Gadamer's three treatments of time that present a non-dimensionalized temporality as attending the ideal hermeneutical experience of tarrying (i.e. the one that satisfies the human requirements of fulfillment, participation, and continuity) and that considers the concept of dimensionality in light of the suspicions we have had since Heidegger of the inadequacy of "the way of the concept" ("Western

¹²⁵ "Introduction," pp. 1-30.

¹²⁶ *Critical Inquiry* 7.1 (Autumn 1980) pp.169-90; This is an abridged translation of "La fonction narrative et l'expérience humaine du temps," *Archivio di Filosofia* (esistenza, mito, ermeneutica. Scritti per Enrico Castelli. I) 80.1 (1980) pp. 343-67. Charles E. Reagan gives a detailed chronology of Ricoeur's shifting interests at this time in *Paul Ricoeur*, pp. 44-46.

View,” 33), the 1977 contribution to *Time and the Philosophies*, in fact goes furthest. The 1977 essay recapitulates and refines the earlier two essays. It goes to greater lengths to trace the history of the concept of time (Alcmaeon of Croton, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine, Husserl, Heidegger). But also, and more significant given Ricoeur on narrative, Gadamer moves beyond the way of philosophy himself by ending with an interpretation of how the figure of Prometheus is treated in the works of Aeschylus and then in Goethe. Respectively, these two Aeschylus-figures exemplify the contrast between “empty” time and the “definite-indefinite,” epochal experience which “ful-fills” self-understanding. The Prometheus of Aeschylus symbolizes what is anathema to Gadamer’s ideal, unrestrained technical invention and creative genius.¹²⁸ In Aeschylus, mankind is given the gift of a vast future to be unproblematically “filled by planning, activity and progress” (46). Goethe’s treatment of Prometheus interests Gadamer because Goethe contrasted “the basic one-sidedness of Prometheus’ practical proficiency with deeper experiences of life” (46). Gadamer characterizes this Prometheus as knowing the limitations of self-knowledge: “Each passion by which one is overcome represents a separation from oneself, a loss of sovereignty and of autonomy” (46). The Goethe Prometheus is suggestive to Gadamer because Goethe characterizes this dissolution as positive, indeed as spiritual, and here Gadamer once more enlists the rhetoric of religion: “In Goethe’s eyes... and in those of his hypothetical reader a new fellow-feeling and a

¹²⁷ *Time and Narrative*, Vol. I, p. ix.

¹²⁸ Gadamer discusses Aeschylus in *Truth and Method*, where he states that “ever since the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus, hope has been such a clear mark of human experience that, in view of its human importance, we must regard as one-sided the principle that experience should be evaluated only teleologically, by the degree to which it ends in knowledge” (p. 349-50).

new order of communal living and communal bliss must triumph over the exertions of the Titans, bringing with it the benediction of the truly divine” (48).

Now Gadamer’s device of ending by turning from philosophy to interpreting Prometheus points back conspicuously to a comment he makes about myth and religion in his opening; there, he states that

Religion and myth offer an inexhaustible variety of answers [to the question of time] which it would be fascinating to investigate. But however much mythic tradition reflects the riddles of ending and beginning, death and birth, nothingness and being, it does not provide a real answer to the problem of time. For myths do not treat the nature of time by means of concepts. (33)

Given this exclusion of myth and religion, at first glance it would seem odd that Gadamer concludes precisely by considering what a particular myth has to offer regarding the riddles mentioned here. A careful reader is required to consider why he does this. One answer, for instance, is that in this way he suggests the abandonment of philosophy. But this is not consistent with Gadamer’s thought. He does not dichotomize the philosophical and the poetical (as Ricoeur does). It is clear elsewhere, as we know, that Gadamer does not view the mythic as something necessarily opposed to the philosophical/conceptual, though this might be construed by Ricoeur from this opening statement of Gadamer’s. In terms of temporality, the mythic does not exist, as it does in Ricoeur, in a place “outside the limits of philosophical reason.”¹²⁹ Albeit not in evidence here, the correct context for understanding Gadamer’s mention of myth is, as we have seen in Chapter Two, his example par excellence of a certain event; it exemplifies the hermeneutical,

¹²⁹ “Reply to David Detmar”; Ricoeur is speaking of the “plane of figurative thought.”

phenomenological, and ontological aspects of mimesis, a particular nexus where time is experienced quite differently than the concept of dimensionality can account for. But this nexus is not peculiar to an experience of myth; philosophy can be the occasion of such a truth-event as well. Recalling Gadamer's speculative claim in the essay "Word and Picture" that "a highest form of activity" is "uninterrupted, pure looking," suggests the insignificance of such categories (44). Therefore, the way to regard the ending of Gadamer's essay is as neither a dismissal of philosophy nor a dichotomization of myth and philosophy, but as an enactment of the breakdown of their separation upon the new understanding of conceptuality itself, and a move, perhaps, toward hermeneutic practice, to *Vollzug*. So the seemingly provocative statement above is merely a prolegomenon to the critique he offers here on the way of the concept. His point of departure in the essay is merely that it is because we seek to ask this question with philosophical concepts that we must answer it this way. He goes on to explain that the question, 'what is time?,' could not even have been posed were it not for "the emergence of the desire [in Greek thought] for rational knowledge expressed in terms of concepts" (34). Gadamer then proceeds to explain how the question was doomed until the nature of conceptuality itself came to be understood, introducing the reality of another temporality that deeply normative concepts of time obscure:

There are, however, other ways of experiencing time, in which its reality is construed not as something which we encounter only when we attempt to reckon with it but as something which becomes operational within human existence as an integral part of it. Ever since Heidegger made the ontological meaning of the temporality and historicity of human existence a new subject of discussion and

drew a sharp distinction between this ‘authentic’ time and measured ‘world-time’, we have once more become aware of the constitutive role played by time as an ‘ontological’ moment in the structure of our life. (42)

The new understanding of conceptuality breaks down any separation of philosophy and poetry and opens the door to a reconsideration of art, which is literally how he ends: he interprets.

However, Gadamer’s strategy certainly provides an invitation for Ricoeur to suggest quite another sense in which myth and religion offer an answer to the question of time, an answer other than through philosophy. This is certainly what Ricoeur seeks to show in his Introduction. In consequence of Ricoeur’s having this specific aim, observing his encounter with Gadamer’s thinking is not a matter of our examining an introductory summary in order to assess the interpretation of Gadamer’s thought evident there. Ricoeur’s aim is not to provide a summarizing survey of contributions, but to provide his own argument on time and narrative. This argument emerges as he plots contributors according to a schema which he says their similarities and differences have suggested to him. His argument makes no mention of Gadamer until its conclusion, where Gadamer’s contribution is presented as a way of summing things up and reinforcing key points.

Specifically, Ricoeur’s strategy is to plot contributors according to those whose dominant concern is the “conceptual economy” of what we *say* about time, and those whose dominant concern is the “spiritual intensity” of our lived *experience* of time (13). These poles of conceptualization and experience “do not meet,” he says, and the aim of his introduction is to explain why this is (13). We should note that conceiving these as

two poles that do not meet excludes the possibility that conceptualization is itself an experience, and this immediately indicates the distance between Ricoeur and Gadamer.¹³⁰

Ricoeur states,

Our sole aim in these introductory pages is to help the reader to think about this paradox and understand its necessity. To my mind, it derives from a fundamental feature of our experience of time, namely, that time is never lived directly, that it is never a mute, immediate lived experience but one that is always structured by symbolic systems of varying complexity. Some of these systems come logically and chronologically first and are immanent in different cultures; others are built upon the first ... through philosophies, religions, and popular wisdom. (13).

Leaving aside (but not too far from mind) that Gadamer's account of time removes the necessity of such a paradox by treating conceptualizing as itself an experience, Ricoeur's account, despite his stressing here the symbolic nature of all experience of time, elsewhere makes exceptions; he uses two other categories, "presymbolic" conceptualization and "de-symbolizing" temporal experiences: first, while time is always experienced symbolically, conceptualizing it is "presymbolic," occurring prior to processes of symbolization (this exposes the question of where the activity of conceptualization itself stands in relation to what is "never a mute, immediate lived experience"). Second, he describes certain negative experiences of time as "de-

¹³⁰ It marks out the bracketing of experience that objectivist thinking requires. Oddly, although this disjunction between the conceptual and experiential provides the framework for Ricoeur's Introduction, he nowhere mentions Gadamer's own central interest in it. Ricoeur perhaps saves Gadamer for last in his essay because of an irreconcilability of their interests. Certainly, direct acknowledgment of this similarity of theme would have placed different demands on Ricoeur.

symbolizing”: certain “raw experiences” of time, a point we will delay discussing for the moment (24).

The term “presymbolic” is applied to the “systems” mentioned above that are logically and chronologically prior to symbolization. These occur at the pole of the “conceptual minimum,” and provide a “rational skeleton of time” upon which the properly symbolic systems are “built.” This rational skeleton that is prior to symbolization “in different cultures” asserts two things: first, the fact that analysis can’t explain the present (to lay this out, he presents the reasoning of contributor, Ted Honderich, rather than that of Gadamer¹³¹), and so contains a “gap,” an aporia. Second, this rational skeleton asserts the fact that time has a material reality: “It is the *development* of real phenomena that connects past, present and future, that makes the passing of time one-directional and irreversible, and orients all levels of reality towards the future” (16; there is a logical flaw here: while “development” in nature is evidently really going on, there may be a lot more to what is really going on that is not evident). These facts about time are irrefutable, and are prior to symbolization, as well as being its impetus. Symbolization, which builds upon this aporetic state of affairs, is the locus of spiritual meaning, for example, in the form of religion.¹³² In Gadamer’s philosophy there is no special enclave within the totality of our language that we can reasonably reserve as “symbolic” in Ricoeur’s sense here.¹³³

¹³¹ “Temporal Relations and Temporal Properties” (*Time and the Philosophies*, pp. 141-54).

¹³² Here we note a position that differs from his religious account of aporia presented at the opening of this chapter. There, aporia is a condition of hope, a religious orientation to the Christian Kerygma, whereas here, aporia is a condition of the human ability to conceptualize the present.

¹³³ For Gadamer, a symbol is mimetic in his sense of mimesis as recognition. It is his discussion of symbol that theorizes this attribute in “The Relevance of the Beautiful”: In the case of the symbolic, “the particular represents itself as a fragment of being that promises to complete and make whole whatever corresponds to it” (p. 32). This definition, as he explains, goes back to the Greek meaning of symbol as

What Ricoeur is describing as comprising “two poles,” the conceptual and the experiential, which paradoxically can never meet, turns out to be, therefore, somewhat misleading. They have quite a specific logical relation, one that is not diametrical but sequential: experience of time and conceptualization of time can never be reconciled because experience is symbolic, *in response to* an aporia of conceptualization. The paradox actually lies within these irrefutable “facts” about time. Within these irrefutable facts about time, we locate the origin of the unbridgeable gap, a gap that doesn’t so much separate “conceptual minimizing” from “spiritual maximizing” as give rise to “other approaches” than the conceptual to fill the gap that is left by pure analysis:

It is these other approaches that are purveyed by the symbolic systems by which we try to make sense of an experience which analytical philosophy has quite correctly shown us to be opaque. It is because it is opaque that it can be expressed only in symbolic systems whose cultural articulation is unavoidably manifold, divergent, even contradictory. (15)

This statement stands in direct contrast to Gadamer’s statement in “The Western View” that

however much we recognize the profundity of statements passed down through the history of religion, there is only one way along which we can continue our investigations: our Western culture has opted for the way of the concept, which means the way of philosophy. (33)

“token of recognition” (31). It invokes the “potentially whole and holy order of things” (32). This differs from the structural meaning of the symbolic in Ricoeur’s Introduction, where it is a system that sublimates aporia. Gadamer announced his conclusion to “Western View” using the term “symbol”: he will consider his subject “in light of the changing fortunes of a symbol,” that of Prometheus (45).

For Gadamer, it is necessarily through conceptuality that the concept of time can be investigated; for Ricoeur, it is “only in symbolic systems” that we can respond to a given regarding conceptualization, its opacity, in order to express meaningfully what time is. Gadamer is describing our development, like it or not, into conceptual animals, but his final point is that we fortunately, perhaps inevitably, came to reflect on conceptuality itself, thanks to Heidegger. Consequently, analytical philosophy has been compelled to check its hubris (to reinvent itself, say, as concept-history), while in addition poetry has been able to reclaim its preeminent status. However, Ricoeur’s mode of investigation here has not taken this step concerning conceptuality itself. Unlike Gadamer, who points to the exposure of the hubris of conceptuality, Ricoeur remains committed to the *givenness* of an aporia that he says analytical philosophy reveals.

It is important to note that Ricoeur is as oriented to aporia here as he was in his reasoning concerning the givenness of the aporia of the kerygma in his theological work. However, the argument here is different: while in the earlier reasoning the aporetic kerygma was said to have given rise to narrative, the meta-narrative of hope *within whose superabundance philosophy conducts itself*, here he states the opposite, the opacity of analytical reason itself gives rise to the symbolic, *of which narratives are an example*. This is not a hermeneutic circle, but a shift in ground. The reification of aporia occurs alongside conflicting efforts to formulate priority. This bears upon Ricoeur’s stated separation of his philosophical pursuits from his religion, for they seem from these differing formulations to be entangled. He states, for example, that he has a “commitment” to “the autonomy of philosophy” in relation to his Protestant faith, such that the latter “is always put in parenthesis in order to allow the formation of

philosophical arguments which are aimed at all rational beings capable of discussion, no matter what their position on the question of religion.”¹³⁴ In terms of “discussion,” in this encounter with Gadamer, the aporetic nature of conceptualizing time is maintained by bracketing Gadamer’s line of argument in “Western View.”

Having established, using various of the contributors, the material reality of time advancing into the future, the conceptual aporia in accounting for this fact, and the symbolic as response to this conceptual aporia, Ricoeur now offers narrative as exemplary symbolic response. Narrative is the exemplary symbolic expression of our experience of time wherein the spiritual might be “maximized.” In this essay, Ricoeur defines a symbolic system after anthropologist Clifford Geertz, as a “matrix” or model “through which experience is viewed and organized” and which functions “at once as ‘models of’ and as ‘models for’” (17). He explains that narrative is universal in this sense; narrative

shows how symbolic man’s consciousness of time is. In telling stories, men get a grip on their experience of time, find their way through the chaos of potential paths of development, use intrigues and their solutions to plot the all too complicated course of real human actions. In this way, man the narrator makes sense of the inconstancy of human affairs, which the wise men of many cultures have contrasted with the immutable order of the stars. (18)

¹³⁴ From an interview with Reagan in 1991, in *Paul Ricoeur*, p 125-26. As mentioned, this is a frequent question to Paul Ricoeur. For instance, in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, by far the dominant theme in the critical articles on Ricoeur (to each of which he replies, a convention in The Library of Living Philosophers series) is the connection between his faith and his philosophy. The sheer number of articles on this aspect of his work might suggest that many find this assertion of autonomy either unconvincing or not laudable.

What is notable here is Ricoeur's emphasis on planning the course of human actions, which is in Gadamer's essay the attribute of the Prometheus of Aeschylus. In placing priority on the emplotment of a life, Ricoeur's orientation is finally to the realm of human will.¹³⁵ This description, in fact, stands in notable contrast with Gadamer's suggestion in "Western View" that the utility concept of time is too limited, and that another modality exists in which the operation of this concept can be seen to dissipate with positive results, most importantly that the unfettered will is balanced with a humility born of the constructiveness of this hermeneutic experience. The Prometheus that Gadamer favors, the Goethe Prometheus, undergoes "the kind of ecstatic experience in which everything clear and definite dissolves and in which self-awareness reaches the highest peak of absorption" ("Western View" 48).

What is remarkable about the Ricoeur introduction is that, as opposed to Gadamer's substantive critique of utilitarian time in "The Western View," Ricoeur elaborates upon utility, titling a section the "Proper Use of Time" to further develop his narrative thesis (25). In this section, he accounts for what he calls, paraphrasing contributor Abel Jeanniere, "the pathology of time in modern societies," which refers to "segmented time, disjointed time, imposed time, time seen as a penalty, accelerated time, time without reference to the past, and so-on" (24).¹³⁶ While these phenomena might suggest that it is our deeply naturalized conception of time as useful which has itself become pathological, Ricoeur accounts for such phenomena this way: "the pathogenic

¹³⁵ Ricoeur will later specify that the inner experience of time described by Augustine's *distentio animi* is a narrative one, a three-fold present "in which everyday praxis orders the present of the future, the present of the past, and the present of the present in terms of one another. *For it is this practical articulation that*

structures engendered by industrialization can be interpreted as de-structuring the symbolic universes inherited from the past, i.e. acting as de-symbolizing agents” (24). “Suffering” here is caused by experiences (“pathogens”) such that “the interpretation matrixes which enable us to apprehend our own experience have themselves been disjointed” (24-25). These pathogens are the “raw experiences” of time mentioned above, which, even though time is supposedly always symbolically understood, have an other than properly symbolic meaning. In this conception of human suffering, the cause is *experience that doesn't accord with one's inherited self-understanding*. This is the exact reverse of Gadamer, who consistently speaks of such moments of discord positively -- as “ecstatic” as in the case of the Prometheus above -- and indeed as ultimately fulfilling. For Ricoeur, suffering is an estrangement from one's narratives, while it is clear that for Gadamer suffering, as the antithesis to fulfillment, is an estrangement from the experience of presence which would suspend the narrative modality and engage us deeply in our historicity. This is a deeply significant contrast.

Ricoeur goes on to explain that the proper use of time is ultimately modeled by people: In what is surely an allusion to Gadamer's essay (but he does not say to which Prometheus in Gadamer he refers), he states that man's “promethean claim as inventor and creator” is traceable to “all those who hold spiritual power” (17, 25). Ricoeur states, “one can hardly speak of models (in the twofold sense of ‘models of’ and ‘models for’) without also speaking of the figures who both exemplify them and affect them through their teaching, actions, or meditation” (25). The proper use of time will conserve, then,

constitutes the most elementary inductor of narrative”(Time and Narrative, Vol. I, p. 60, emphasis added). The presumption of the priority of utility is quite evident here.

the narrative integrity of our inherited symbolic universes, but he traces the existence of the inherited, narrative interpretive matrix, or model, to the affective power of an external, behavioral one, and in doing so, he glosses over the hermeneutic as Gadamer defines it, which appears to be an insignificant stage between the authority of the external model and the authority of an internal cognitive model. This means that the hermeneutic is finally ruled out of the question of spiritual value; For Ricoeur, disembodied structure, not the experience (of it) is the source of spiritual value.¹³⁷ And for Ricoeur, narrative is exemplary structure and spiritual source.

This question of structure and its relation to hermeneutics is the subject of a later encounter between Gadamer and Ricoeur, a meeting entitled, after Ricoeur's book, "The Conflict of Interpretations; Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur" (1982).¹³⁸ In this actual dialogue between them, Ricoeur would like the scope of hermeneutics to include what he says is a preparatory stage of understanding, the explanation of structure. He says, "the finality of explanation is understanding" (309). In so placing the stress on the function of explanation, Ricoeur claims to mediate between "the explanatory sciences and hermeneutical disciplines" (315). One should note that this attempt to formulate the relation of explanatory structure to understanding amounts to an attempt to definitively answer a question of priority (as though one can ask which comes first, structure, or the

¹³⁶ "The Pathological Structures of Time in Modern Societies," *Time and the Philosophies*, pp. 92-121.

¹³⁷ In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur translates this idea of modeled behavior into his theory of triplicate mimesis, wherein the "configuring operation constitutive of emplotment" is in an intermediary position (mimesis 2) between the real world of action which the writer of narrative writes from (mimesis 1), and reader's encounter with the writer's refiguration of this world (mimesis 3) (Vol. I, p. 53). We note the definition of mimesis as representation rather than recognition.

¹³⁸ "The Conflict of Interpretations; Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur," in *Phenomenology: Dialogues and Bridges*, ed. Ronald Bruzina and Bruce Wiltshire (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp. 299-320.

understanding of structure -- the chicken or egg question). In this exchange, Gadamer presents his position, followed by Ricoeur, concluding with a brief dialogue. Gadamer's presents his remarks as a response to Ricoeur's book of the same title in which, as discussed above, a deconstructive hermeneutics is balanced with a teleological one. In typical fashion, Gadamer refines the question of the irreconcilability of the two hermeneutics, the focus of Ricoeur's book, while questioning the "monolithic solidarity" of the Christian humanistic heritage, but also by legitimizing the truth-experience of religion and art as hermeneutically similar: "I mean that in both these fields, nobody feels this unbridgeable gap between oneself and another, between oneself and the truth" (301). He then poses the question as follows: "How can we hope to reconcile [the Nietzschean/Marxian/Freudian] radicalism of interpretation as unmasking with an attitude of participation in a cultural heritage which forms and transforms itself in a process of mediation?" (301). He answers, "I think Heidegger opened up the way to do this by raising a question even more radical than the radicalism of Nietzsche" (301). This is the question of facticity, which leads one to the position that "interpretation doesn't occur as an activity in the course of life, but is the *form* of human life" (302). In other words, Gadamer wishes, as he says, to "go behind the conflict of interpretations" and place interpretation, which he recognizes as "the element in which we live"(303), "at the center of philosophy" (302). Distinguishing this from Ricoeur's position, he explains that hermeneutics is not, accordingly, a matter of "new skill[s] for mastering something," (302), skills which may or may not conflict with each other. In Gadamer's reply to Ricoeur, he also wonders how Ricoeur could contrast "the hermeneutic and the structuralist approaches, and then apply a hermeneutic also to that contrast" (316).

Indicating his discontent with the logic of this move, he adds, “I could not see that it had the same level” (316). He is saying that it is illogical to combine structural description and the eventfulness of understanding under the heading of a dialectical structure.

Gadamer points out that possessing knowledge of structures is one thing, but any contribution they might make to the actual experience of meaning in any given situation is quite another:

There is not just structuralism, there are many other ways to interpret a text. I certainly need a great deal of knowledge about language and historical conditions and cultural habits and so on, that is one thing. But to concretize all that in this unique statement or text that must recollect all these externalized and objectifiable aspects, *to live through the meaning in concrete fullness, that is quite another thing.* (316, emphasis added)

Gadamer’s point here is that the experience of meaning occurs in a special, and, as we have seen, temporal, modality where prescriptions for finding meaning disappear as such in being subsumed in unpredictable ways. Ideally, the matter-at-hand makes demands of us that we cannot predict, or prescribe. Coming to understand such methodological prescriptions to begin with is simply another such experience. Therefore, no prescriptions exist outside of an understanding of them, making the placement of structure and event on the “same level” seem illogical to Gadamer.

Returning to his encounter with Gadamer in the Introduction to *Time and the Philosophies*, Ricoeur’s final point and segue to Gadamer concerns Eastern religions whose wise men, as originators of particular models, have taught the striving for a

transcendence of time through various forms of self-annihilation. Although he does not present such an aim to be in conflict with his own emphasis on Promethean will, one cannot help seeing the contrast. He describes how, in a form of Zen, one strives to arrive at a “place of nothingness” through “shedding of self, the relinquishing of all personal motive” (28). But rather than explain Gadamer’s distance from or proximity to such Eastern thinking where “the eternal present is contained in the here and now” (29), he instead explains that what Gadamer makes clear about such efforts to escape time is that, in fact, it cannot be done:

This [Eastern] wisdom proclaims that time is consciousness and that consciousness is all things. To this inclusiveness, whose method is to annihilate all determinations in a timeless void, Hans-Georg Gadamer, in “The Western View of the Inner Experience of Time and the Limits of Thought,” speaking in this respect for one of the major currents of Western thought, replies that we cannot get away from the experience of time. (29)

Gadamer is said to show that

time is an experience which thought always runs up against. What thought cannot encompass, because the imagination is limitless, is the beginning and the end. And thought is rendered all the more incapable of thinking this unthinkable barrier by the practice of its own kind of asceticism towards myth and epic, its asceticism in conceptualization. (29-30)

Merely that “one cannot escape time” would surely not be Gadamer’s reply to the Eastern notion of totally emptying the present to approach some sort of timelessness. For if

anything, it is the fullness of the present -- the fully present -- that may be said to create a sense of timelessness. It is precisely the relationship between thought and the experience of time in Gadamer that is glossed over here. For the relationship is *not one of aporia*, as this description suggests. In Gadamer, another time is experienced *only in thought*, not thought *about* "time," but tangentially, in a thought-experience of a certain kind and intensity, which he calls "tarrying," hardly a place of "nothingness." Gadamer's philosophy argues for the value of this experience of tarrying as a solution to a critical ontological onesidedness. Also, Ricoeur cites Gadamer here for the purpose of reiterating a dichotomization of myth and conceptualization, which, as I have shown, is not supportable by Gadamer's thought.¹³⁹

What is perhaps most striking in this important encounter of Ricoeur with Gadamer on the subject of time is not so much the ways in which this early sketch of a narrative ontology so clearly and directly counterpoints Gadamer's thinking about concepts of time but, rather, this strategy of appending Gadamer rather than engaging him. Gadamer is appended to a schema that *dichotomizes* the relation of conceptual articulation and "spiritual" experience. This effaces Gadamer on this critical question. Rhetorically, Gadamer appears in the end as more or less in agreement with Ricoeur, in a fusion of horizons that effaces any difference. This strategy allows Ricoeur to bracket

¹³⁹ Also in his concluding remarks that cite Gadamer on the impossibility of escaping time, Ricoeur comments on Augustine, Aristotle, and Heidegger (anticipating his focus on these thinkers in *Time and Narrative*). Here, while he comments in a way that again does not demarcate where his argument stops and his summary of Gadamer begins, his disagreement with Gadamer is perhaps more open. He states, for instance, that, in regard to the inescapability of time (which was not, as mentioned, Gadamer's point), "Heidegger does no more than carry Saint Augustine's intuition to its lucid ultimate when he makes time an 'ontological moment' in the structure of our life..." (30). But he is actually quoting from a point in Gadamer's essay when Gadamer is stressing that Heidegger's philosophy represents not a continuation, but the radical departure (see above, p. 124, for this passage in Gadamer: "There are, however, other ways of experiencing time...").

rather than to entertain an argument for the value, the spiritual value, of hermeneutic eventfulness, an argument that would pose a radical challenge the locus of spirit in the narrative modeling of experience. We encounter no defense in Ricoeur against a Gadamerian critique.

In a certain respect, however, Ricoeur's strategy of counterpointing and bracketing Gadamer rather than engaging in a dialogue simplifies a study of what is at stake in opposing time-concepts. This early essay on time and narrative by Ricoeur sets a trajectory wherein he continues to flesh out what I am arguing in a counter position to Gadamer on time. To expand upon the structural features of narrative, as though these features had some reality outside of the eventfulness of understanding, to define this structure as dimensional, and then to identify this dimensionality with our fundamental modality of being, fully defines the normative position. Such a comprehensive treatment makes it easier to identify critical issues. It of course recapitulates and reinforces the imbalance that Gadamer is hoping to correct, and this makes Ricoeur seem an antagonist of sorts, but ultimately it is in the interests of balance itself that the antithesis to Gadamer needs to be clearly defined. We will turn now to Ricoeur's refinement of this normative position to which Gadamer's thought is in the first place a response. In doing so, we will look for both those moments when the experience of reading narrative or of thinking narratively is described, as well as those moments when Ricoeur's very approach means the experiential is overlooked.

Tarrying in Narrative

In “Narrative Time,” published in *Critical Inquiry* three years later (1980), Ricoeur sketches out his new way of describing the temporal structure of narrative, one which specifies the relevance of narrative for the ontological question of temporality.¹⁴⁰ He attempts to establish the ontological significance of narrative by correlating its structure with the early Heideggerian analysis of three levels of time in *Being and Time* (within-time-ness, historicity, and deep temporality), the project Ricoeur continues in *Time and Narrative*. His context for addressing this question is the necessity of correcting certain prevailing structuralist descriptions of narrative which “search for the atemporal formula that generates the chronological display of functions,” descriptions whose impetus is an inadequate conception of narrative time as “a linear succession of instants” (184). Indeed, both theory of history and theory of fictional narratives “seem to take it for granted that whenever there is time, it is always a time laid out chronologically, a linear time, defined by a succession of instants” (171). In addition to this correction of structuralist treatments of narrative, his consideration of narrativity will, he says, deepen Heidegger, making “important and even fundamental corrections in the Heideggerian conception of time,” and, in effect, identifying certain levels of temporality as essentially narrative (170).

Ricoeur’s intention is first of all to distance narrative from the “ordinary representation of time” as simple linear sequence, and show instead that narrative time is

¹⁴⁰ *Critical Inquiry* 7:1 (Fall 1980), pp. 169-90. Ricoeur published “The Narrative Function” in 1979 (*Etudes theologiques et religieuses* 54; also in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, trans. & ed. John B. Thompson, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981, pp. 274-96), but the focus of this article is less the ontological-temporal description of narrative than the correlation between narrative and history, in particular, the poetic, or configurational aspect of both, which concerns the construction of “meaningful

better described as exemplifying Heideggerian “within-time-ness.” This involves stressing Heidegger’s distinction between the time of measurement and the time of preoccupation. Reviewing the main features of Heidegger on this point, he states,

being in time is already something quite different from measuring intervals between limiting instants; it is first of all *to reckon with* time and so to calculate. It is because we do reckon with time and make calculations that we have the need to measure, not the other way around (173).

Interestingly, this is the same observation about dimensionality and utility that is the basis of Gadamer’s thesis in “Western View,” the article Ricoeur introduced in *Time and the Philosophies*, wherein Gadamer inquires into time conceived as at-one’s-disposal. The difference is that whereas Gadamer sought to stress utility as the root impetus of *both* measurement and preoccupation with purposeful action, showing how *both* empty time in order to make it useful, Ricoeur’s purpose is to *stress the distinction between* measured time and the time of preoccupation. This pinpoints an essential theoretical difference between Gadamer and Ricoeur regarding time: Specifically, what Ricoeur points out is that narrative illustrates Heidegger’s claim that the “now” belonging to the “within-time-ness of preoccupation” preceded, and was then subsumed by, the ordinary sense of “now” in simple measured time. He points out that in narrative plot structure this hidden temporality is still visible: “the measuring of time is not yet released from time reckoning because this reckoning is still rooted in preoccupation” (175). His claim is that in narrative one can still observe the primordially of within-time-ness. Therefore, narrative illustrates Heidegger’s thesis that the ordinary notion of time as a series of intervals

totalities” (278). In “Narrative Time,” this aspect of narrative is correlated to Heidegger’s notion of

conceals a deeper level of temporality having to do with the ontology of preoccupation. In other words, Ricoeur specifies the ontological significance of narrative in *just the way Gadamer's argument about a more authentic temporality would predict*. Gadamer, starting from the same point in Heidegger, had developed his theory of another temporality experienced in tarrying from the observation that, *as far as the utility-function of dimensionality is concerned*, there is no difference between time as interval of measurement, and its progenitor, the temporality of the "anticipatory disposition" of human will because both require time conceived as at one's disposal and thus abstracted from experience itself -- emptied ("Empty and Fulfilled" 343). It is the ontology of dimensionality and preoccupation, then, and not that of their suspension, that Ricoeur wishes to elaborate. Ricoeur does not situate this elaboration as a challenge to the later Heidegger, or to Gadamer. Instead, he situates it as a refinement of analytical-scientific (structuralist) thinking about literature.

Ricoeur explains that "even the simplest story...escapes the ordinary notion of time conceived of as a series of instants succeeding one another along an abstract line oriented in a single direction" (174). Speaking explicitly of the experience of narrative, and so compatible with Gadamer's orientation to experience, he says that to read a narrative escapes simple linearity in that expectations rule:

Following a story ... is understanding the successive actions, thoughts, and feelings in question insofar as they present a certain directedness. By this I mean that we are pushed ahead by this development and that we reply to its impetus

historicality.

with expectations concerning the outcome and the completion of the entire process. (174).

Reading narrative of course also escapes linear time in the respect that, simultaneously, we are looking back, recollecting the appropriateness of episodes for outcomes: "...we have to be able to say that this ending required these sorts of events and this chain of actions" (174). The experience of reading narrative is precisely a recollecting anticipation, illustrating, not simple sequencing, but the operation of Heideggerian within-time-ness where "the existential now is determined by the present of preoccupation, which is a 'making-present' inseparable from awaiting and retaining" (173).

So the specifics of the recollecting anticipation of within-time-ness may serve to indicate the kind of tarrying experience that narrative art occasions: The experience of narrative art is an involvement in chronological anticipation and recollection. A similar passage from "The Narrative Function" (see note 114) brings out this particular quality of the experience of narrative more fully:

...to follow a story is to understand the successive actions, thoughts and feelings as displaying a particular *directedness*. By this I mean that we are pushed along by the development and that we respond to this thrust with expectations concerning the outcome and culmination of the process. In this sense, the 'conclusion' of the story is the pole of attraction of the whole process. But a narrative conclusion can be neither deduced nor predicted. There is no story unless our attention is held in suspense by a thousand contingencies. Hence we must follow the story to its conclusion. So rather than being *predictable*, a story must be *acceptable*. (277)

This being “held in suspense,” which reminds us of Barthes’ complaint that the impulse to merely complete the anecdote competes with the pleasure of the text, may serve to identify the distinguishing feature of the matter-at-hand in a narrative: It is always attended by such suspense. However manifold such contingencies may be, they are nevertheless directed -- say this is the illusion of freedom within a teleological imperative. We might note in passing a certain antithesis between the term “suspense” and the verb that it nominalizes, “to suspend.” In narrowing the verb to pinpoint the strictly temporal quality of waiting, meanings of the verb that are more indicative of the experience of tarrying are expunged, meanings such as abeyance, interruption, the ceasing of something, uncertainty, as in the suspension of dogmatism, for instance. One might consider these in relation to Barthes’ pleasure, where one might dwell rather than press on. But one hardly associates the idea of “suspending” in the sense of abeyance or interruption with the idea of narrative “suspense.” The nominal “suspense” is a temporal concept denoting a kind of duration, the attenuation of time, rather than indicating that which is interrupted or ceases. There seems to be something prototypical about this particular shift to noun from verb, which the narrative is capable of embodying and magnifying.

The concept of suspense helps to sharpen our query into how the positive effects of the experience of tarrying, in which all dogmatism might be radically *suspended*, may in the case of narrative be mitigated by the narrative’s dimensional properties. While dimensionality is thus indeed a special feature of our “at-homeness” in narrative language, to use Gadamer’s term, it is critically important to recognize that this involvement in narrative recollecting anticipation (suspense) is an *idealized* involvement. It is not so

much that this points to the nature of narrative art as “play,” as that it points to the fact that, ostensibly, the narrative text, as Ricoeur shows, is a wholly discernible map of and for recollecting and anticipating. This means that it obscures -- sublimates, perhaps -- the actual operation of these things as already beneath the threshold of conscious awareness and so distinctly *not* wholly discernible. So that just as the characteristics of within-time-ness are “easily leveled off” as Ricoeur puts it, after Heidegger, into the ordinary representation of time as simple sequence, the always already operative nature of historicity is *easily leveled off by narrative suspense* (172). And Ricoeur seems to acknowledge this when he explains that this involvement in anticipating recollection may mean that narrative “participates in the dissimulation both of historicity and, even more so, of the deeper levels of temporality” (175). He states,

We can apply to storytelling Heidegger’s remark that “factual Dasein takes time into its reckoning, without any existential understanding of temporality And it is indeed to factual *Dasein* that the art of storytelling belongs, even when the narrative is fictional. It is this art that makes all the adverbs enumerated above directly significant -- then, next, now, and so on. (175)

Ricoeur acknowledges that while narrative may display the temporality of preoccupation (of anticipating-remembrance) as opposed to merely displaying time-as-measurement (a sequence of nows), narrative does obscure the second level of Heideggerian time -- historicity.

Why, then, does Ricoeur later discuss plot “configuration,” which would seem to be exactly this idealizing of anticipating recollection so that it is something eminently knowable and controllable, as evidence meanwhile that narrative also “brings us back

from within-time-ness to historicity, from ‘reckoning with’ time to ‘recollecting’ it”? At this point, one must not forget Ricoeur’s dual aim to correct Heidegger with observations about narrative, but to also correct the structuralist simplifications of time with Heidegger. Many of Ricoeur’s observations about configuration are presented not to refine Heidegger, but to refute structuralist descriptions of episodic time. One of these observations “brings us as close as possible to Heidegger’s notion of ‘repetition’” (180).

It concerns memory:

By reading the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end, we learn also to read time itself backward, as the recapitulation of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequences. In this way, a plot establishes human action not only within time...but within memory. (180).

He later adds, “Memory, therefore, is no longer the narrative of external adventures stretching along episodic time. It is itself the spiral movement that, through anecdotes and episodes, brings us back to the almost motionless constellation of potentialities that the narrative retrieves” (186). While this narrative idealizing of within-time-ness certainly refutes the structuralist assumption, such observations about configuration would seem to poignantly detail the illusoriness of knowing recollection and anticipation that narratives are the construction of. Ricoeur has already allowed us to observe how the *manifest* nature of these potentialities is part of what is experienced in narrative art. Because this “constellation of potentialities” is *plotted out* in such a way as to occasion orderly anticipation and recollection, we could just as easily say that the paradigmatic quest is supremely paradigmatic of the obfuscation of authentic historicity, recapitulating a simple grasp of retrieval, where all that is past offers itself up to memory

in transparent continuity. With regard to our ultimate point of reference, Gadamer's notion of historicity, Ricoeur's observation about retrieval in narrative may indeed be as close as it is possible to get to Gadamer, but the distance is in fact very great.

But Ricoeur is finally not satisfied with the position that narrative, because of the way it occasions anticipating recollection, may be a "dissimulation of historicity." He wants to somehow "raise narrative above the level of within-time-ness" (182). A question he twice repeats is whether or not, given his observations about memory, the "function" of narrative, is to "establish human action at the level of genuine historicity, that is, of repetition" (180, repeated on 184). By "establish" Ricoeur surely must mean the *representation* of human action. But the question of historicity being "genuine" or not can only be properly asked at the level of a narrative's reception, not of its structure alone. The human action that is depicted belongs to the matter-at-hand, which is inseparable, I believe, from an idealized suspense. Our question has been how our *experience* of this functions with regard to genuine historicity, or what Gadamer calls historicity. Narrative, with its inscription of the temporality of preoccupation and of a naive historicity, is an experience that is in this sense inhospitable to tarrying *because it creates a continuity of orderly anticipation and recollection*. The "public time" in which this continuity is depicted is *precisely this feigned unity of events and actions*. The full presence of this *unity* is peculiar to narrative, and perhaps this may constitute the particular "eminence" of the narrative text.¹⁴¹ This unity will always insulate the reader

¹⁴¹ "The Eminent Text and Its Truth," *Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 13:1, pp. 3-10, p. 8. To reiterate Gadamer's point about the range of ideality of the literary text, it is one where, he says here, "the full equivalency of sense and sound, which turns the text into an eminent text, finds very different kinds of fulfillment in different literary genres" (8).

against disruption, disturbance, negation. One might say that it “stimulates our credulity” insofar as it instructs us in comprehending experience generally.¹⁴²

This stress on the reality of public time (cosmological time or time-out-there) is critically important in Ricoeur’s correction of Heidegger’s “analysis of a heritage of potentialities understood as something that is transmitted from oneself to oneself” (188). Ricoeur argues that his own “new temporal structure of narrative” establishes repetition on the communal level of “being-with-others,” instead of on the monadic, [i.e., internal to the individual] level.” He asks, “Is not a heritage always something that is transmitted from *another* to the *self*?” (188). He enlists Gadamer here, suggesting that if this is the case, a wider problematic is revealed, “the one Gadamer calls the problem of ‘tradition’” (189). Yet it is quite correct to say that the “transmission” of something from an other to oneself occurs as a transmission of “oneself to oneself” *in the respect that historicity is always already operative in any act of cognition required of communication with an other*, which the narrative is an example of. This serves to remind us of the dialectical, as opposed to the isomorphic, nature of the “transmission” that occurs in communication. If historicity, or historicality, as it is translated here, is such that it is always already

¹⁴² With regard to the stimulation of credulity, it is worth mentioning the significance of the fact that, as a speech act, narrative is monadic in the special respect that it is a communiqué of significant duration. The sheer magnitude of its duration makes it dictatorial. It is this aspect of narrative that Paulo Freire recognizes when he calls the educational practice of dictating the way things are “narrative,” and thus called a narrated education the “pedagogy of the oppressed” in “The Banking Concept of Education” (*The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, New York: Continuum, 1974, pp. 57-74). It is the passivity inculcated by narration that he finds politically suspect, for it “stimulates credulity” rather than the ability to inquire (59). The potential of narrative to stimulate credulity in this way is a supplement to Gadamer’s view that the experience of narrative art (*mythos*) is more ritualistic than conversational and, accordingly, a form of participation that affords a sense of belonging that is more superficial than deep. One’s engrossment in a narrative is marked by a certain ease in this respect, comparable with what Gadamer says in respect to the translatability of language. Kenneth Burke’s view that narrative has the potential to make reasoning seem ineluctable through the irreversibility of chronology is another observation about how a property of narrative, and in the case of Burke actually a temporal one, similarly stimulates a readiness to believe. See *The Rhetoric of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961).

operative at a level that is beneath the threshold of one's full recollection and cognition, in what way could the dynamics of retrieval *within* narrative hope to illuminate this? How could a narrative represent something that it cannot itself rise above?

Ricoeur admits that "the unanswered question in this essay concerns the relationship between historicity and deep temporality" (189). And he ends by proposing three possibilities, which are expanded in *Time and Narrative*. One of these is that "due to the tight link between historicity and within-time-ness in narrative activity," narrative art is "essentially incapable of this radical return toward the depth of temporality," in other words, of revealing deep temporality, Heidegger's third level of temporality (189). Narrative, as we saw, is even fairly tightly linked to simple sequentiality (which is, as Ricoeur points out, "not yet released" from within-time-ness), so, using the structural categories suggested to Ricoeur by Heidegger, narrative is even less capable of revealing deep temporality than this first possibility suggests. This would be true in the sense that, by objectifying these temporal categories in narrative structure, Ricoeur suggests something palimpsestic, where the presence of the superficial levels seem to supplant and so hide deeper ones. At any rate, it is the position of this study of the temporality of tarrying and its relevance to narrative that, yes, it is indeed due to "the tight link between historicity and within-time-ness in narrative," that narrative is "essential incapable," not of "a radical return" to something called "deep temporality," *but of affording the deep experience of what Gadamer calls tarrying*. The specific features that one experiences in a narrative are the syntactic and semantic ones instructing the reader to remember while marking time in the anticipatory way that Ricoeur details. A description of these features does not in fact require adopting a metaphoric of "levels."

The other two possibilities that Ricoeur mentions are, first, from narrative's depiction of being-with-others, one can derive a means of contesting "the most important trait of the Heideggerian theory of temporality, namely, being-toward-death" (190). Second is the possibility of critiquing the "radical genesis" of historicity in deep temporality, in the "unitary structure by virtue of which time temporalizes itself as future, past, and present" (190). But Heidegger is not our subject here, and this thesis makes no claim to be in sufficient command of his work to comment on these last two possibilities. Yet, something in Gadamer prompts a response to the latter possibility concerning the "radical genesis" of historicity, regardless of whether or not Gadamer may stand as a surrogate for the later Heidegger. For this second possibility marks out even more overtly the overriding difference between him and Gadamer. Ricoeur would show how, in Heidegger, deep temporality is the genesis of the other levels, each of which appears to "level off" the one "before" or "beneath" it so that deep temporality is hidden while time appears reduced to the vulgar idea of a sequence of nows. He wonders whether this genealogical argument can be refuted. For if one can refute this, one can reassess the status of narrative, specifically the diminutive status accorded it by its place in this genealogy. In other words, its ontological significance would be less diminutive if one refutes that these levels of temporality increase in degree of vulgarity the further they are from their source and the more they exhibit simple sequence. However, Gadamer would, again, not require any such metaphors of origin, just as he would not require a metaphors of palimpsestic "levels," which again makes Ricoeur's possible objections moot as far as our query is concerned. Perhaps the important thing here is to see is how symptomatic of an objectifying philosophy these metaphors of depth and origin are. As

attributes of “deep temporality,” depth and origin enable us to make temporality a thing we are nostalgic for the presence of. How very different this is from Gadamer’s formulation of access to a temporality that dissipates within-time-ness: *Remembering is itself* this accomplishment, remembering, that is, of a certain magnitude which language makes possible. It is from this alternate conceptualization that Gadamer’s distinctions concerning temporality come. Here, one cannot use spatial metaphors convincingly, even to say such a thing as remembering can *clear away* within-time-ness, for “deep temporality” is not what now shines forth from this space; rather, deep temporality is an attribute of be-ing, adverbially deep when *the remembered shines*, nominally, with truth.

It is appropriate at this juncture to point out that the fundamental difference in philosophical approach between Gadamer and Ricoeur, one that will always mitigate any comparison between their respective treatments of the question of temporality, is demarcated by their respective orientations to Heidegger. Gadamer’s event-hermeneutics is affiliated with the later Heidegger, while Ricoeur’s analytical work on narrative is engaged with *Being and Time*.¹⁴³ It is well known that Heidegger abandoned the project of the existential analysis of Dasein in *Being and Time*, not because he saw it as incorrect, but because its difficulties are born of something more fundamentally to do with the form of investigation. In a recent (1993) edition of Heidegger’s *Basic Concepts*, a work written in the period of what is referred to as Heidegger’s turning (*kehre*), Gary Aylesworth explains in his Translator’s Foreword that indications of a more authentic

¹⁴³ On the question of Gadamer’s relation to Heidegger, Robert Bernasconi makes the important point that much of the later Heidegger was unavailable to Gadamer when he was writing *Truth and Method*, first published in 1960, such as the essays comprising *Time and Being*, from which, Bernasconi says, “we derive so much of our understanding of Heidegger’s notion of the end of philosophy.” See “Bridging the Abyss:

sense of being emerged to Heidegger from the paradoxical nature of the conclusions wrought by traditional metaphysics: “These are not to be taken as “propositions” about being, but as indications that point beyond propositional thought altogether.”¹⁴⁴

Aylesworth explains that Heidegger observed this about his own propositions concerning the temporality of being in *Being and Time*, and Aylesworth suggests that *Being and Time* was in this important sense prefatory. Other introductory discussions of Heidegger consistently characterize Heidegger’s turn as something more radical than a change of emphasis or interest. The point is that the turn Heidegger takes is precisely the one towards *event* hermeneutics -- “we can only find the meaning of Being in something called *das Ereignis*,” writes Albert Hoffstadter, whose opening essay in *Poetry, Language, and Thought* captures so well the Heidegger that has influenced Gadamer.¹⁴⁵

He writes that Heidegger is finally able to “use ‘thing’ as a verb, “as over against the modern concept of the thing which sees it primarily in its relation to human understanding as an object of representation and in its relation to human will as matter or product of a process of production or self-imposition” (xvii). Gadamer’s elaboration and refinement of the concept of *tarrying* is a tenacious bringing to life of this hitherto elusive philosophical insight, a dwelling on dwelling that explores what it might mean not just for the human sciences, but for human fulfillment generally. But the further point is that Ricoeur has simply not taken this turn himself, and because of this, it would seem difficult to fruitfully or perhaps fairly compare Gadamer, who, like Heidegger, took this

Heidegger and Gadamer,” *Heidegger in Question*, (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993, pp. 170-89), p 172.

¹⁴⁴ Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993, p. xii-xiii.

radical turn toward event-hermeneutics, with Ricoeur, who has not. However, we have examined the extent to which Ricoeur, when faced with the questions such a turn to event raise, engages these questions, most importantly, of course, the question of time itself. Otherwise, one must charitably assume that the jury is still out on the general practice of analytical philosophy, aside from taking his particular practice of it to task.

Only to confirm, then, that the Heidegger corpus does indeed mark out this distance between Ricoeur and Gadamer, we note another introduction to Heidegger, James Risser's *Heidegger toward the Turn*, where Risser stresses how, when Heidegger "turns the question of the meaning of being [as entity] in the direction of the question of the truth of being," the realization is that "the historical density of the West is bound up with the manner of asking and answering this question."¹⁴⁶ This shift from determining what is true to the question of conceptualization itself is what Heidegger's abandonment of the analytic of Dasein concerned. It is a questioning of the objectivizing associated with such analysis, of the presumption of the givenness of categories upon which intricate, formal structures may all too easily be erected. In Gerald Bruns' *Tragic Thoughts at the End of Philosophy* (1999), Bruns describes Heidegger's subsequent formulation of "the end of philosophy": it is not that philosophizing stops but that "it stands out clearly now for what it is in all its rigorous formality."¹⁴⁷ He quotes Heidegger's *On Time and Being* (1969) in order to point out what analytical philosophy is

¹⁴⁵ Hofstadter explains here that a "decisive passage" concerning the new meaning of *das Ereignis*, where Heidegger is "concerned to describe the world and its presencing, its 'worlding,'" occurs in the essay, "The Thing" (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 165-82), p.xix.

¹⁴⁶ *Heidegger towards the Turn: Essays on the Work of the 1930s*, Ed. James Risser (Albany: State University of NY Press, 1999), p. 4. Concerning Heidegger's shift from the problematic in *Being and Time* to the question of the truth of being, see also Gary Aylesworth's Forward to *Basic Concepts: Being "is a truth whose disclosure is to be won through a confrontation with the history of being itself"* (xi).

¹⁴⁷ "Tragic Thoughts," p. 11.

“perilously close to”: “Theory means now: supposition of the categories which are allowed only a cybernetical function but denied any ontological meaning. The operational and model characteristic of representational-calculative thinking becomes dominant.”¹⁴⁸ This is Gadamer’s fear too, of course: a collective deference to the authority, not merely of concepts, but now of whole systems that obviate real thought.¹⁴⁹ Gadamer’s efforts to “escape an ontology of static substance,” like Heidegger’s turn toward the deconstructing of highly normative concepts, is finally a course of articulating the linguistic character of being.¹⁵⁰ In the following affirmation of the Heideggerian critique of thing-k-ing, Gadamer stresses the explicitly temporal properties of languaging itself:

When Heidegger thinks the metaphysical concept of *Wesen* or essence no longer as the property of presence in present objects but understands the noun *Wesen* as a verb, he injects it with temporality. *Wesen*, or essence, is now understood as *Anwesen*, as actively being present, in a way grammatically counterposed to the common German expression *Verwesen*, to decay or decompose. This means, however, that Heidegger ... imputes another meaning to the original Greek experience of time, namely, a sense of dwelling, abiding, or tarrying.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ “Tragic Thoughts,” p. 11. Bruns is quoting the Joan Stambaugh translation (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp.58-59 (in Bruns, p. 220, n. 21).

¹⁴⁹ This point in relation to Ricoeur is nicely summed up by Gary E. Aylesworth in his essay “Dialogue, Text, Narrative: Confronting Gadamer and Ricoeur.” He writes, “where Ricoeur sees the methods of linguistic explanation as a weapon that hermeneutics can employ against false consciousness, Gadamer sees the subjugation of discourse to method *per se* as a capitulation to the unbridled calculative interest that prevails in the technological age” (66).

¹⁵⁰ In “*Destruktion* and Deconstruction,” (*Dialogue and Deconstruction*, pp. 102-113), p. 111: In commenting on Heidegger’s effort to underscore the verbal character of Being, he states, “Similarly, my philosophical hermeneutics should be seen as an effort to shake off the burden of an inherited ontology of static substance, in that I started out from conversation and the common language sought and shaped in it, in which the logic of question and answer turns out to be determinate.”

¹⁵¹ P.110.

This is the thread in Heidegger that Gadamer develops in his description of the temporality of tarrying.

In *Time and Narrative*, his most influential and substantive work, Ricoeur amplifies the concerns conveniently condensed for us in “Narrative Time,” and is steadfast in his orientation to the existential analysis, to the early rather than to the later Heidegger. For example, in *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur states that his central ambition, the ambition that Heidegger abandoned and that Gadamer eschewed as the “proto-type” of philosophical perplexity, is to settle the question, “what is time.”¹⁵² He offers an apology for focusing on the early Heidegger at the beginning of the 3rd chapter of Volume 3, “Temporality, Historicity, Within-Time-Ness: Heidegger and the “Ordinary” Concept of Time.” Ricoeur states that, despite the danger of separating *Being and Time* from the later Heidegger, “It is perfectly legitimate to treat *Being and Time* as a distinct work, because this is the way it was published, once we propose a reading that respects its unfinished character, or even that stresses its problematic aspect” (60). Specifically, he proposes the legitimacy of identifying “tensions and discordances” which don’t relate to Heidegger’s abandonment of the existential analytic generally, but have only to do with the analysis of Dasein itself:

If we do not allow Heidegger’s later works to overpower the voice of *Being and Time*, we give ourselves an opportunity to perceive, on the level of this hermeneutic phenomenology of time, tensions and discordances that are not necessarily those that led to the incompleteness of *Being and Time*, because they do

¹⁵² In Volume 3, he concludes the first section by stating, “...we have undertaken a process that is no longer that of phenomenology..., but rather a process that is one of reflective, speculative thought as a whole in its search for a coherent answer to the question: what is time? (96).

not have to do with the overall relation of the existential analytic to ontology, but have to do rather with the meticulous, extraordinarily well-articulated detail of the analytic of Dasein. (61)¹⁵³

This section is where the possibilities that conclude the “Narrative Time” essay are settled, most notably, the third possibility: Deep temporality is shown *not* to be the “radical genesis” of historicity. We shall note the implications of this for our examination of narrative before ending with a recent attempt of Ricoeur’s to clarify his analysis of the present, which provides a final counterpoint to and clarification of Gadamer’s radical core.

Having distinguished “tensions and discordances” within Heidegger’s analytic from Heidegger’s final abandonment of it, Ricoeur disputes, in this section of *Time and Narrative*, that deep temporality is the origin of the other levels, ordinary time being its most diminished aftermath. He does this by arguing that the ordinary concept of time is not a leveling off of within-time-ness after all. He suggests, instead, that this concealment of within-time-ness was actually a “separating out” of autonomous cosmological time. Its autonomy is evident, for example, in evolutionary biology or geology (88). This is a position “Narrative Time” did not prepare us for. It is a position that negates the earlier effort to show that narrative illustrates how ordinary time is “not yet released” from within-time-ness, weakening the earlier argument against the structuralist reductions of narrative to simple sequence. For sequence is now a fully autonomous temporality. We should be careful to note, however, that this still does not

¹⁵³ Notwithstanding the unfairness of questioning Ricoeur’s orientation to the early, analytical Heidegger, it still seems fair to say that the question of “overall” analytical mode might supercede any

affect our aim to show how Ricoeur fills in the silences left by Gadamer concerning narrative, because, as we recall, Gadamer's hermeneutics makes no distinctions between these two levels to begin with. They are both predicated upon dimensional time.

However, what is notable is that when Ricoeur observes that this concealment of within-time-ness is rather a "separating out" of autonomous cosmological time, he is able to revert to the view of narrative theorized in his Introduction to *Time and the Philosophies*, where his position was that its function is to sublimate the temporal aporia that the philosophical analysis of time makes evident. Just as he had proposed there that the "rational skeleton of time" is irreconcilable with our experience of time, Ricoeur here concludes that "Having something to do with movement [measurable, cosmological time] and something to do with Care [experienced time that is subservient to preoccupations] seem to me to constitute two irreconcilable determinations in principle" (89). Heidegger, consequently, does not do away with the aporia that maintains between the cosmological and the phenomenological present, which is the "fundamental paradox" to which narrative replies, according to Ricoeur. Finally, the paradoxical nature of the entity of the present can be reinstated as "the pivot point, just as it was in Augustine and Husserl" (81). Ricoeur's argument about narrative once more hinges on his conception of the present as aporetic.

The foundational importance of this view of time is evident in Ricoeur's enduring desire to clarify it, to analytically clarify a conception of the present. One year after Volume 3 of *Time and Narrative* was published (1985), an essay entitled "Initiative"

attempts to distinguish the structure of the present in an especially fine-grained way.¹⁵⁴ As the title indicates, this analysis specifically addresses “the meaning of the present” in relation to the human will (208). This meaning lies in something called the “axial moment,” and Ricoeur’s elaboration of this concept constitutes a remarkably symmetrical contrast to Gadamer’s formulations of the epochal, existential, or transitional experience, all of which describe the dynamics of tarrying. This essay is therefore an appropriate way to end this treatment of Ricoeur’s work on time as the counterpoint to Gadamer’s own enduring efforts to open the question of time by articulating the temporality of tarrying.

Ricoeur states that axial time is a time “held to break with a former era and to inaugurate a course of events different from all that had preceded it”; the axial moment “is determined by an occurrence so important that it is held to set a *new* course of events” (213, 214). This sounds remarkably like Gadamer, but whereas Gadamer’s similar sounding *epochal experience* is marked ethically, as we have seen, by humility, axial time, as the locus of initiative, is marked by the ethics of the promise: “the promise, I shall say, is the ethics of initiative” (217). This contrast shows Ricoeur countering Gadamerian ethics in that there is no room in this “ethics of the promise” for humility born of the claim which the Other makes upon us during such “occurrences.” Instead, Ricoeur formulates its antithesis, what in effect is righteousness:

The promise, I shall say, is the ethics of initiative. The heart of this ethics is the promise to keep my promises. Being faithful to one’s word thus becomes a guarantee that the beginning will have a sequel, that the initiative will actually inaugurate a new course of things.

¹⁵⁴In Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action, Essays in Hermeneutics*, trans. K. Blamey & J. Thompson,

There are four phases traversed by the analysis of initiative: first, I *can* (potentiality, power, ability); second, I *act* (my being is my doing); third, I *intervene* (I inscribe my act within the course of the world); fourth, I *promise* (I continue to act, I persevere, I *endure*). (217)

This differs very little from Ricoeur's early statements about the ethics of hope with which this chapter began: "in the mission, the obligation which engages the present proceeds from the promise, opens the future."¹⁵⁵ The axial moment, or more specifically, initiative, in all its apparent hermeneutical avoidance, amounts to the ethical description of hope, since the axial moment expresses the same orientation toward action as a fulfillment of a promise.¹⁵⁶ It should be stated that while narrative is not mentioned in the essay, the essay buttresses the narrative argument to the extent that, for Ricoeur, narrative is also, perhaps above all, about the initiatives of human will; narrative is a representation of human action that either does or does not adhere to the phases of initiative mentioned above.

In a sense, Ricoeur's essay is another attempt to correctly draw the line between the phenomenological and the cosmological vis-à-vis aporia. The basic structure of this formulation of time is still one where, albeit not narrative, yet axial time is the answer to an insurmountable gap between phenomenological experience and cosmological measure. But what is important is that the "paradox" is now thought to originate in the complexities of a dialectic *within* phenomenological time, one between the present as "origin" and the present as "transit" or "passage" (210). This doublet of origin and transit

(Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1991), pp. 208-222.

¹⁵⁵ "Freedom in the Light of Hope," p. 408.

¹⁵⁶ In fact, he says in that essay that the promise or mission is "the ethical equivalent of hope" (p. 408).

has a dialectical relation to measurable cosmological time, here expressed as the “instant,” which is “the sole aspect of time that allows itself to be represented” (211).¹⁵⁷ The axial moment is a “third time” that is “born of the anonymous instant and the living present” (214). It is a necessary response to this dialectic.

Ricoeur’s refinement of the present into a dialectic of origin and transit, where we find the locus of paradox in their irreconcilability, is quite revealing, however, because once again, one does not find Ricoeur distinguishing between thinking that is explicitly time-concerned, for instance, thinking that is planning or that promises, and thinking that is not in any way deliberately using temporal categories. “Transit” refers to “that aspect of time in which expectation and memory enter into an exchange with one another (209). Transit is distinct from the present as origin, where only in relation to a present can a past and a future be known as such. But what is most critical here is that Ricoeur characterizes the transit-present of the exchange of memory and expectation, “due to care,” as “passive” (209). Here, time is transit-like in the respect that the present is a thing passed over, “an experience of passivity that delivers us over to the force of circumstances, as we feel this in boredom” (211). It is as though transit denotes apathy and inertia due to the absence of the other sense of the present as deliberate marking of time. For how does one describe the temporality of initiative if within-time-ness has no proper present in this sense? This is a very revealing moment. While Gadamer shows, convincingly, I think, that on the contrary boredom entails an acute sense of the passage

¹⁵⁷ This should be compared with the line drawn in the “Introduction” to *Time and the Philosophies*, where the origin of aporia is within conceptualization, which is then irreconcilable with experience, but where it was between the formal-linguistic and material facts both of which are revealed by conceptualization that aporia is finally traced. In *Time and Narrative*, the line is similarly drawn between the phenomenological and the cosmological.

of time (i.e., a sense that, when bored, what is past and what might be contrasts acutely with the excruciating emptiness of the present), the important point is that, on the other hand, in moments of extreme absorption in the matter at hand, expectation and memory enter into an exchange of such a magnitude that it is far from any sort of passivity. The line Ricoeur seems to have drawn in this description of *thinking* seems to be *a line between deliberate planning and its absence*, as though every moment must have initiative, every moment must be in service of something.¹⁵⁸

So even here, in this fine-grained description of the structure of the phenomenological present, Ricoeur still does not make room for the possibility of a thinking which is not presided over by the dimensional category of the present, i.e., when one is thinking deeply *but not planning or promising*. It is because of Ricoeur's forbearance here, which leaves us with only the alternatives of planning or not planning, that he is able to subsume the dynamics of thinking into the centrality of taking action. It must be said that his conception of the present takes no account of a crucial, perhaps definitive aspect of thinking, and is thus a retreat from the hermeneutical as Gadamer conceives it.

¹⁵⁸ A very instructive discussion of Ricoeur's ethics of initiative occurs in Richard A. Cohen, "Moral Selfhood," in *Ricoeur as Another: The Ethics of Selfhood*, Eds., Richard A. Cohen and James L. Marsh (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 127-160. This article takes issue with Ricoeur's criticisms of Levinas on the question of the alterity of the other. Ricoeur takes the view, contra Levinas, that it is the self, not the other that is the basis of the ethical. Cohen maintains that Ricoeur seriously misunderstands Levinas' theory that alterity is the origin of ethical responsibility, and says that because of this, Ricoeur incorrectly attributes a passivity to Levinas' self: "It is because [Ricoeur] misunderstands the level or significance of the alterity of the other in Levinas, that Ricoeur misunderstands, in addition, the passivity of the self that responds to alterity" (134). Cohen explains that Levinas sees the self's "displacement" in the face of the other not as identical with "inertia," which he says seems to be the sense in which Ricoeur understands Levinas, but, akin to what Gadamer says, a necessary condition for ethical action.

Ricoeur's efforts to maintain an objectivist approach to time constitutes an explicit, comprehensive articulation of a normative temporality, one that is implicit in the ontological one-sidedness Gadamer critiques. As far as philosophical hermeneutics is concerned, their respective work should be seen, I believe, as not just divided on, but distinguished from one another by this important question. Ricoeur's counter-position has the virtue of making clear that time *is* a critical ontological issue. But because Gadamer's efforts are to deconstruct a normative view of time to reveal to his reader that this view of time is not a given, he faces a natural resistance of thought, whereas Ricoeur's efforts to clarify a normative view of time do not. It is therefore not surprising that Ricoeur's and not Gadamer's treatment of time is widely appreciated. My introductory chapter attempted to demonstrate the difficulty many readers of Gadamer have in fully orienting their thinking, thinking about Gadamer at least, to the experiential event of understanding, which requires this other view of time. But in addition to the great resistance Gadamer meets in deeply normative thought, he faces an additional challenge. To remain consistent with his own event hermeneutics, time certainly cannot dominate as a subject matter! The way of philosophical hermeneutics is the practice of tarrying, not theoretical reflection on it. His references to temporality, especially to its spiritual potential, are entrusted to the attentive reader. As stated, until "Word and Picture," only the three articles discussed in Chapter Two have time as their central topic, work that seems dwarfed by Ricoeur's. It is unfortunately, but appropriately, a predicament that only reading of Gadamer can remedy.

The account of the time-concept of tarrying presented here has tried to stress what this deconstruction of time allows us to rethink, in particular, naturalized social concepts

of human participation and human continuity. These can be seen as co-relational in the eventfulness of understanding, rather than prescriptions for human will to heed, which follows from a narrative ontology. But also, this deconstruction of time, as this study has attempted to emphasize, is especially important for the question of human fulfillment. Despite the problem of alienation, the idea of fulfillment is still something closely tied to what one *feels*, or seeks to feel, perhaps waiting to feel. Things we *do* are fulfilling. Is there any escaping, after Gadamer, the possibility that *being in thought is the craved-for life*? The possibility that it is the boredom and restlessness endemic to the planning life that is pathological? It bores not because plans are boring in themselves, but because the mundane occupation of planning and waiting, forecasting, promising, and keeping to plans is boring by nature, boring because such activity is by definition a displacement of involvement in the now. By contrast, Life, the Adventure, is to have embarked upon some endeavor whose essential experiential component turns out to be that the unpredictable occurred. One marvels at the degree to which experience did not follow an expected path. If there prevails a malady of mind having to do with a meagerness of being-in-thought, or tarrying, and conversely an abundance of the tendency to defer rather than to think, then a very specific challenge is posed, a problem is identified to which answers will present themselves. Gadamer's development of the time-concept of tarrying, a development in which an experience we thankfully still recognize *gains magnitude*, establishes an identifiable antithesis to alienation, and renews the question of spirit.

Conclusion:

On the Way of Event Hermeneutics

I would like to close by considering what it might mean to go further in the direction that Gadamer takes us, further in the direction of a radically experiential hermeneutics. His exemplary experience is of art. In its contemporaneousness lies its engrossing power -- its truth, which is transformative in unpredictable ways. This dissertation has tried to show that the inherent uncertainty of this experience of uninterrupted pure looking is for Gadamer positive and full of potential for human well-being, and is the locus of spirit for Gadamer. Gadamer's point of departure is our hermeneutic situatedness, our human condition of finitude, and one might say that he has devoted himself to pointing out the inherent *invisibility* of this condition to us, that we are never in a position to discern it. Yet the invisibility of this condition cannot only be considered in relation to the experience of truth, as evident in the experience of, for example, art. In other words, hermeneutics, Gadamer's hermeneutics, isolates the optimal linguistic experience of truth, but the condition of finitude is *always* invisible to us and it conditions *all* our experiences, not just those with which hermeneutics might concern itself. So it seems that event hermeneutics raises an unavoidable question about human experience generally as far as our condition of finitude is concerned, namely, how to bring to light *other human experiences that point out this condition to us*. A further deepening and enriching of our understanding that this is our general human condition, *not just our condition when we grapple with the true*, amounts to a full bringing to life of an event ontology. This is

the everyday backdrop to event hermeneutics, the ontology that would, in fact, make an orientation to event hermeneutics seem effortless and “right.” Gadamer’s event hermeneutics tells us that our grasp of this condition -- that is, of the fact that it exists, can be further deepened and enriched only with reference to specific *experiences*. One may ask the question of the scope of event hermeneutics in this connection: as a philosophy of concrete experience, should hermeneutics concern itself with our *general* condition of finitude? Or does it only point the way?

Being so necessarily tied to the concreteness of the event itself -- a necessary modification of the phenomenological slogan -- might seem to place limits on the specifically scholarly parameters of hermeneutics, since the universality of our condition of finitude poses such a fundamental challenge to objectifying and abstraction. While the decisive point would seem that scholarly study is estranged from experience in the sense that humanities disciplines are in fact conceived of in terms of defamiliarizing the everyday, of emancipating us from our invisible condition, Gadamer’s work cautions us that simply contesting the condition of finitude, while necessary and useful, cannot be our only purpose. It is naïve. *The lesson of event hermeneutics is surely that the familiar, the invisibly familiar, would seem deserving of a different kind of attention, one whose purpose is quite distinct from that of freeing ourselves from structures we don’t realize are oppressive*: in other words, a kind of attention to the eventfulness of experience that has no further purpose than to simply and poignantly reveal the *underlying condition* of finitude. One would look more closely at the experience, not of blind or failing reason, or other surmountable shortcomings of human reason evident in and via language, but rather, quite *outside this*, at the naturally occurring blind spots in human experience that

we know we cannot surmount. A banal but decisively *experiential* example serves to suggest what I mean by an ontological backdrop. Consider how we experience smells: The smell of me is precisely what I cannot smell. As in the case of the person who has seriously misjudged the power of his cologne, even one's carefully contrived scent is largely lost on oneself, possessing a sort of ephemerality quite aside from its tendency to dissipate over time. It is an ephemerality wherein the very *persistence* of smells, whether beautiful or repulsive, and whether your own or another's, makes smells gradually become invisible to us. This inevitable fading to the neutrality of air suggests something about our human condition that is quite distinct from surmountable ignorance, which is that it cannot be surmounted. Another such phenomenon approaches the properly hermeneutical, and might cause us to reconsider what we mean by the enduring quality of beauty. We might all agree when something is visually beautiful, the architecture of ancient Greece, a photograph, or whatever. But in the instance where I myself live in proximity to this beautiful structure, or with this photo always on my wall, do I continue to be struck by it? Doesn't its beauty become, after a time, quite invisible to me, even when I attempt to see it again? Just as smells do, beauty has an *experiential* ephemerality, by being *lost to the constancy of looking*. That which has been constantly looked upon can neither strike one as beautiful nor as ugly. It does not strike one at all. What does this tell us about truth in addition to what Gadamer says about the grip of "uninterrupted, pure looking"? Why doesn't such a purely experiential value concerning beauty even register on the scale of aesthetic significance? In addition to registering the experience wherein one *is* struck by beauty, or other acute experiences of human consciousness, why do we not take an interest in cataloguing such experiences of *deficit*? Is it because they

are experiences? Or, is it also because they are in addition experiences that point out a particular *frailty, ephemerality* of human knowing?

Gadamer's interest in the hiddenness (*Verborgenheit*) of health is very relevant here.¹⁵⁹ As he makes clear, it is precisely its absence from consciousness that defines the experience of perfect health. Again: not a question of measurement or quantification, we can't *experience* perfect health because it is precisely its absence to consciousness that defines it. "Perfect" physical health, strictly speaking, is always a measure of how enabled one is by the *disappearance from consciousness of bodily concerns*. Our involvement in tasks at hand is predicated upon being able to take our selves for granted in this way. Yet, here is another recognizable analogy between what is quite outside of the traditional bounds of hermeneutics, and what lies within such bounds. Just as in the athlete's physical training, where only when aspects of the performance become automatic, or involuntary, can the athlete apply herself to further heights of "perfection," extraordinary intellectual effort is sedimented, built upon previous efforts of reason cast in language. Any struggle to communicate something depends upon, and is an attempt to surpass, one's *involuntary* knowledge of language. Why isn't the ordinary, unassailable nature of one's reality and identity thought of in terms similar to those marking a state of perfect health, that is, made possible by what has become absent to mind, by that which has grown invisible through long familiarity? This would seem an apt description of the general condition of human finitude. One might, however, draw from our example the conclusion that one's reality and identity is like a prison. The important point, however,

¹⁵⁹ See especially his discussion in "The problem of Intelligence" (pp. 45-60), in which he discusses illness in terms of its sudden appearance to consciousness. Our realization of this must, he says, "occasion

is that one's reality and identity isn't *experienced* this way (as a solipsistic trap), but as quite the reverse, as boundlessly self-evident.

These preliminary examples suggest how event hermeneutics establishes a new direction for the study of literary art. For here we find a phenomenon that occurs in the reading of literature, especially of narrative, that is very similar. A prevalent failure in the teaching of narrative literature is to unapologetically overcome the invisibility of the text with structural apparatuses of varying complexity, a failure not because theoretically a structural approach is incompatible with the approach of event hermeneutics, but because it is a procedure which flies in the face of what every reader knows, which is that the real power of the literature over the reader in the first instance resides in the invisibility of the language as such. Our inability to experience the language as such, hence its "invisibility," is especially the case with narratives. This is what Gadamer teaches us. The question that his event hermeneutics poses is what would it mean to dwell, not on language per se, but on the fact of its invisibility, as one might dwell on the other examples above. Here I must be clear that I do not mean affirming instead of denying the student's understanding of the subject matter of the narrative as a legitimate understanding, or other reader-response approaches, since an experiential approach is not at all necessarily entailed in such an affirmation. I mean: *to ask the question of the disappearance of language in the event of understanding*, and to entertain all the inquiry that might follow from this, such as an inquiry into "ritual" language. It is after all the invisibility of language that Gadamer points to in defining it as the "element" in which we all live. He argues that the experience of reading poetry, not performing structural

reflection [on the fact] that extreme forms of dementia are incompatible with an awareness of being ill" (p.

analysis, makes us confront language, poetry being at what he calls the “untranslatable” end of the scale of translatability. But it is arguably the experience of narrative that allows us to *confront the fact of its invisibility*. One must be very clear here that it is not the narrative artifact we are considering. The point is that as long as we do not validate narrative as an *experience*, narrative cannot illuminate our condition of finitude. Surely we notice that both narrative and finitude can be characterized as invisible? The invisibility inherent in the experience of narrative art is, therefore, quite special.

This dissertation has attempted to show that a specific feature of narrative language is the measuring and ordering of time. This creates a reading experience conditioned by the recollecting and anticipating that comfortably mimics our most rudimentary grasp of human action in the world. This is what Ricoeur elucidates. But the specifically narrative element of literature, as I have emphasized, also idealizes and simplifies the world as a readable totality of cause and effect, where all can be grasped and is coherent, and is, moreover, predictable, if not to the inhabitants of the fictional world, then to the attentive reader. Even in the most otherwise opaque and disorderly of narratives, even in self-reflexive meta-narratives, this is so; how hard the reader must work to secure a sense of temporal order is not the point so much as that, even if it isn't there, she will still struggle to discover this order. And this is because the “real” world may be read this way, too. That narratives have the special virtue of overlooking the ultimate unreadability of the world perhaps alleviates anxieties about control; it is reassuring to know of worlds where the entanglement of agendas is a surmountable problem. Yet the point is that this is just the mark of hubris that our knowledge of human

finitude wishes in the first place to check. So the invisibility of narrative is special: it prompts us to ask the question of the disappearance of language, but it does not point out human finitude so much as how language conspires with the temporality that conceals it. Affirming, rather than overcoming the “invisible” nature of narrative language deepens our understanding not only of narrative, but of the *general* tension between the element of language in which we abide and our condition of finitude. This provides a necessary balance with defamiliarizing the narrative artifact with tools of analysis, an approach that often meets with resistance. Against the backdrop of such examples as those above, the question of how the experience of narrative might be made possible by the absent-from-mind and the invisibly familiar becomes richly significant. What would it mean for narrative, by analogy, to constitute another such indicator of the *ephemerality* and *frailty* of human knowing, while simultaneously having an undeniably positive value precisely by having experiential poignancy? I will end by describing an experience in which these particular qualities of the invisibility of human finitude are apparent, the experience of *creating* art. This experience is again on the borders of the traditionally hermeneutical, but it is nevertheless a supplement to Gadamer’s exemplary experience of art. This other exemplary experience has the benefit of poignantly displaying a realization about humility, which, as “not-knowing” is arguably the ethics of finitude.

The Artist and the Mirror, A Gadamerian Symbol

What is the most interesting property of a mirror? First of all, even a flawlessly flat mirror does not flawlessly reflect reality, but presents reality differently -- with its ‘reversed’ image; a doorway on the right of a person in a mirror is actually to the left of

the person looking at the person and doorway in the mirror, and so-on. It is perhaps noteworthy that seeing reality altered in this way doesn't disorient us more radically than it does. That objects are not significantly de-familiarized when we see their reversed images would seem to interest only those who study cognition and optics. However, there is one instance when a de-familiarizing of reality can occur this way, when seeing a mirror opposite of something does make the thing seem uncannily foreign. This occurs when one holds to a mirror an art object one has created. Its uncannily foreign appearance in the mirror is due to the fact that its creation, say a sketch of a live model, is a lengthy, incremental process in which the artist's involvement at every step is so full and intimate that she comes to 'know' the artwork in an utterly complete way, having weighed every decision, every relation, and weighed these again as new possibilities present themselves at every new stage. But specifically, this process occurs in such a way that, paradoxically, as the work emerges, so does it become steadily more invisible to the artist in terms of her ability to detach herself from it and gain a sense of its effect or merit. The artist sinks into it. Every artist is conscious of this special blindness, which places the artist so humbly at the mercy of her audience. What kind of knowing is this whose stamp of authenticity is such a blindness? This degree of familiarity, i.e., to the point of blindness, would seem to be the reason that one's artistic creation comes to obtain its strange status in the mirror; to experience this foreignness, one first of all has to have achieved a certain depth of knowing. Holding this object up to a mirror will immediately, if only briefly, render it startlingly foreign, having the benefit of allowing one to spot imperfections. The effect can be quite humbling in the ordinary sense, but it is also an education of a particularly exhilarating kind for one to be struck, not simply by *what* was

invisible to the eye before, but to be struck by *the fact* that it was; in other words, to see that what was before fitting and measured is now, from this new vantage, quite otherwise. The blindness of familiarity, due to the extent of the particular involvement one has with a subject matter, is at the very heart of this kind of knowing.

The experience of artistic creativity offers us in microcosm a lesson about knowing. The lesson is that a certain disappearance follows from the depth of involvement that the knowing of creativity entails. In the process of artistic creativity, we see in microcosm the relation between one's deep involvement with something and the corresponding disappearance of one's ability to assess its value. From the experience of artistic creativity comes the strange possibility that the process of deep involvement, whose result is a deep knowledge, yields a state of blindness. But in the example of artistic creativity, we also see a concurrent coming to awareness of this process, and a consequent value place on humility as the basis for seeking any kind of validation. It is an awareness of this state of blindness that the artist feels *compelled to remedy* with the mirror of one's peers, being unable to answer herself the increasingly pressing question, "does it work?" Unlike other paradoxes of familiarity where there is no particular challenge to have the invisibly familiar appear before us once again, which might allow us to address its decrepitude or receive its radiance, to the artist, seeing it anew is all important. For the artist can recall the whole adventure of coming to know.

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