The Resurrection of Socrates:
Towards Rehabilitating the Political in Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics

Afra Jalabi

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By: Afra Jalabi

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Signed by the final examining committee:

_____Chair
Dr. Rosemary Reilly

_____External Examiner
Dr. Ronald A. Kuipers

_____External to Program
Dr. Emilia Angelova

_____Examiner
Dr. Michael D. Oppenheim

_____Examiner
Dr. Lorenzo DiTomasso

_____Thesis Supervisor
Dr. Marc P. Lalonde

Approved by Dr. Marc Des Jardin
Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

June 23rd, 2022 Dr. Pascale Sicotte
Dean of Faculty

Abstract

The Resurrection of Socrates: Towards Rehabilitating the Political in Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics

Afra Jalabi, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 2022

This dissertation aims to *rehabilitate* the dialogical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer as a way of offering a new critical approach to navigating, and even possibly transmuting, power relations by exploring the ethical and political implications of his project. Given the centrality of the dialogic in Gadamer's hermeneutics, the dissertation itself engages in a dialogue with the projects of Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt. Foucault's *relational conception of power* brings out a political dimension in Gadamer's dynamic dialogical modality, but while Gadamer's main metaphor of the human condition is *conversation*, Foucault's main metaphor is *war*. Consequently, Foucault's discussion of the ineluctability of power relations in the social matrix and his doubt about the possibility of turning "relations of domination" into "relations of meaning" arises as an inevitable contention between their perspectives. On the other hand, Arendt's redefinition of *the category of the political* in dialogical terms closes some of the gaps that arise between Gadamer and Foucault. Her metaphor of the political as an *oasis* emerging from the sterile desert of domination aligns with Gadamer's dialogical ontology as an alternative to such domination. Arendt argues that with the execution of Socrates, Western philosophy divorced itself from the political, ever since Plato retreated into the "Academy," and given how Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics resurrects the Socratic dialogue, their respective projects intersect in ways that create radically new political possibilities. Arendt's dialogical reconceptualization of the category of the political allows a new reading of Gadamer's project, in which hermeneutics re-orients us back to the *Polis* given the ineluctability of encounter. With these intersections, we see how philosophical hermeneutics, with its emphasis on *phronesis*, could be *rehabilitated* to investigate and interpret the inevitability of *difficult and concrete dialogues* in desert conditions. Gadamer's conception of language as the horizon of a hermeneutic ontology provides new ways of maneuvering, because in Gadamer's linguistic turn understanding does not merely interpret the world but it changes it. The dissertation aims therefore to explore the *power of hermeneutics* as an alternative to the *hermeneutics of power* by examining the implications of Gadamer's dialogical ontology in light of the main questions raised by Foucault and Arendt about the nature of power and the promise of the political.

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Even though this dissertation is about hermeneutics and the power of language, my sense of gratitude towards my supervisor, Prof. Marc P. Lalonde, goes beyond language. He has been a true mentor in so many ways. Prof. Lalonde is the kind of instructor who combines academic rigor while safeguarding the progress and growth of his students. He encouraged me to keep going and to finish. He always gave continuous support—providing academic guidance and references and following my progress closely. I am especially touched by his patience and kindness when I had hurdles or had to deal with health issues. I am also indebted to Prof. Michael Oppenheim for opening new academic horizons throughout the years and especially around relationality and dialogue. His feedback to both the initial proposal and the dissertation have been invaluable, and his recent insights have inspired me to further explore these themes. Prof. Lorenzo DiTommaso kindly and generously agreed to be part of my committee towards the end. His feedback has been helpful and encouraging. I would also like to thank all the learned instructors I studied with or worked with as a TA.

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The amount of destruction and loss that my extended family, friends, and outer circles experienced in the past several years in Syria (and, more recently, the new sorrows experienced by our Ukrainian-Canadian friends) imposes inevitable questions. We urgently need to renew our thinking on phrases like "never again." Such issues are also central for us in Canada, especially after the recent discoveries of mass graves of Indigenous children and the attempts over many decades to erase their identities and languages. In such dark times, it behooves us to really reflect and rethink the role of intellectuals, writers, and academics.

Family, friends, and mentors are a source of light, love, and sustenance in such times. I am deeply grateful for my husband, Yasser Malki, and our two sons, Elias, and Noah, who made life more meaningful through their love, humor, and constant help (including creating a wonderful office corner in the family room during the Covid lockdown). My circle of family and friends is a large tribe, including a brilliant father who has been always a writer while—or despite of—being a surgeon. I am so fortunate to have amazing and talented sisters—Mariam, Arwa, Amina, and Buschra—as well as a wonderful circle of cousins and in-laws, all with their own unique experiences and perspectives. I want to particularly thank my sister Arwa for her constant support and advice during this journey. We are also blessed with a wonderful circle of friends who have been a source of joy, inspiration, and laughter (and always with great new books to read). Our wise cat Leo also attempted his contributions with his little paws! Although this dissertation has my name, I know it is authored by all these mentors, family, and friends. It takes a large hermeneutic circle to finish any intellectual or artistic endeavor. I am so grateful to all of you.

Dedication

It is with a deep sense of privilege and gratitude that I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my uncle and mother, Jawdat Said (1931-2022) and Laila Said (1943-2005), who made us, and anyone who came close enough, understand the critical value of dialogue, commitment to nonviolence and the eloquence of writing as tools of expanding the realms of justice and compassion that are always beckoning us…

We have created you from male and female,
And made you into nations and tribes,
So that you can get to know and befriend each other.
The most dignified of you in the presence of God is s/he who repels doing harm (to self and other).

–Quran 49: 13

That even in the darkest of times we have the right to expect some illumination, and such illumination may well come less from theories and concepts than from the uncertain, flickering, and often weak light that some men and women, in their lives and their works, will kindle under almost all circumstances and shed over the time span that was given them on earth.

–Hannah Arendt

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There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal.

–Toni Morrison

Absolute freedom mocks at justice; absolute (totalizing) justice denies freedom. To be fruitful, the two ideas must find limits in each other.

–Albert Camus

This dissertation aims to *present philosophical hermeneutics in a new light by bringing to the surface the political implications of Hans-Georg Gadamer's project given the unique angles and strategies he offers in approaching the predicaments of power and domination* in both its modern and postmodern forms. Although Gadamer is generally perceived as being apolitical, his approach offers a nuanced political perspective even if it tends to go unnoticed. In fact, by revolutionizing hermeneutics, Gadamer negotiates a novel path that borders on being a paradigm shift in our political thinking, especially when he *introduces dialogue as an alternative modality to domination.* Between the appeals to the principles of the Enlightenment and the postmodern critiques of such principles, Gadamer navigates a *third new alternative*. The political and ethical implications of Gadamer's dialogical model of human relationality introduces different hermeneutics for conceptualizing power and domination in ways that could open the conversation to new horizons, especially given Gadamer's focus on situatedness, praxis, and application.

This project is largely motivated by Gadamer's ability to chart a new orientation that is responsive to the serious dilemmas facing our contemporary world, while also offering a sense of hope and possibility. While Gadamer emphasizes the universality of our *linguisticality* (*Sprachlichkeit*), he is also cognisant of the *ineluctability of our historically effected consciousness* (*Wirkungsgeschichte Bewusstsein*). His project therefore offers new critical possibilities for advancing the questions in any field. One way to highlight the universal relevance of Gadamer's thought and the significance of his contribution, while also situating him historically, is to place him within difficult conversations on power, otherness, and marginalization. In more than one way, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is framed around dialogue and the intersubjective nature of understanding. For him, we are always already positioned within concrete situations. His emphasis on our relational ontology advances dialogue, not simply as mere technique, but also as the very condition of being human with all the tensions and difficulties that come with it.

Just a few months before Gadamer's death the United Nations declared 2001 as the year of "Dialogue Among Civilizations," a response to the whole notion of "the West versus the Rest" which had been forwarded by Samuel Huntington in his infamous essay, "The Clash of Civilizations" (1993). The essay received wide attention globally, and in response the concept of "dialogue among civilizations" was put forward as an alternative ethos for our age by the then-president of Iran, Mohammad Khatami. However, the period became drenched with blood with the attacks of September 11 in New York city, followed later by the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the whole campaign of the "war on terror," thus affirming the values of *clash* over *dialogue*.

In a paradoxical way, the early years of the second millennia capture the very rugged terrains of modernity; the way our poetic slogans and appeals fail to conceal the global military industrial complex or those who attempt to resist it by similar means. The German-American academic, Fred Dallmayr wrote his book, *Dialogue Among Civilization: Exemplary Voices*, to

honour Gadamer's legacy in the year of Gadamer's death (2002). He felt compelled to highlight Gadamer's dialogical modality as an adequate response to the difficulties of our global world, and as an appropriate angle from which to address the difficulties endemic to dialogue and human relationships. Dallmayr saw Gadamer as one who could make us think differently in light of the increasing challenges and opportunities in our cultural and political encounters. To highlight Gadamer's relevance to such complex conversations, Dallmayr explains that the importance of Gadamer lies in his ability to offer an understanding of dialogue that takes place within concrete situations fraught with tension and misconceptions (2002, 27-28). Dallmayr's insistence on including *philosophical hermeneutics* in conversations on power and domination, which he revisits in his later works, is connected to Gadamer's ability to conceive of dialogue as a promising alternative in an age of technoscientific hegemony, domination, and global inequalities.

"What is particularly important in Gadamer's view of dialogue," explains Fred Dallmayr, "is its radically non-instrumental sense: dialoging here involves not only an act of questioning but also the experience of being questioned or being 'called into question'—often in unsettling and disorienting ways. The openness of dialoguing means precisely the readiness of participants to allow themselves to be 'addressed' and challenged by the other; particularly the stranger, the different, the exile" (2003, 27). This means that dialogue for Gadamer is also a way of acknowledging the givenness of relationality at an ontological level, and therefore the need to also examine the concrete contexts and dynamics that govern our interactions.

Scholars like Gayatri Spivak, Wael Hallaq, and Seyla Benhabib are among the voices who point out the gaps in both modern and postmodern critiques. They point to the further marginalization that results from some of the blind spots, or "prejudices," to borrow Gadamer's concept, that occur when addressing issues of oppression, colonization, or human rights violations. American and Canadian scholars like Richard Bernstein, Paul Fairfield, and Monica Vilhauer show why including Gadamer in these conversations could widen the scope of the debate and thicken the critical lens when responding to such pressing matters. They are among the few who insist on the relevance of Gadamer's project to important critical and political questions, an insistence rooted in his emphasis on a dialogical ontology and the space it creates for *acknowledging the inescapable situatedness of self and the inevitability of the presence of the other*. Both Bernstein and Fairfield thus point out the added value in the critical lens of philosophical hermeneutics, especially when it turns around to show us our own situatedness and partiality—the limitations and finitude of our own critical perspectives. Fairfield, in particular, is emphatic about reincluding Gadamer's project in critical conversations as a means of advancing debates towards new horizons. He stresses the importance of Gadamer's hermeneutics in sharpening our critical tools. After all, one of the salient features of Gadamer's project is its insistence on examining the perspectivity of all, and especially the prejudices of our own complicities in the tensions that inevitably arise in the dialogical situation (2002, 157).

Bernstein's work on Gadamer is predicated on the way philosophical hermeneutics manages to navigate past the two modalities of both modern objectivism and postmodern relativism. In commenting on Gadamer's magnum opus, *Truth and Method*, Bernstein argues that a "more appropriate title or subtitle of the book, and indeed of Gadamer's entire philosophic project, might have been 'Beyond Objectivism and Relativism'" (1983, 115). It is not surprising, then, that Bernstein's own book on Gadamer's hermeneutics is titled, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (1983), in which he presents Gadamer's project as creating new alternatives beyond such dualities. Bernstein asserts that "Gadamer's primary philosophic aim is to expose what is wrong with the type of thinking that moves between these

antithetical poles and to open us to a new way of thinking about understanding that reveals that our being-in-the-world is distorted when we impose the concepts of objectivism and relativism" (1983, 115). In a similar vein, the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor points out how Gadamer's project is capable of overcoming the dilemma within both modern and postmodern approaches. Gadamer, argues Taylor, "has in fact proposed a new and different model, which is much more fruitful, and shows promise of carrying us beyond the dilemma of ethnocentrism and relativism" (Taylor 2002, 279).

Gadamer's resurrection of the Socratic dialogue goes beyond academic pursuits of antiquity or literary explorations of tradition. The resurrection is rather a political move; an invitation to come back to the polis, with all its inhabitants and their issues and perspectives. However, philosophical hermeneutics is not evangelical in any sense—its main aim is Socratic, in the sense that it helps us awaken from our modern imprisonments in which the supremacy of epistemology reigns supreme. Instead, it invites us to come back to life and acknowledge the finitude of any of our knowledge(s)—*to know that we know not*.

Echoing Bernstein's and Taylor's conceptions of the place of hermeneutics, the work of Fairfield makes us aware of the Socratic character of Gadamer's intellectual trajectory. Fairfield conceives of Gadamer's hermeneutics as characteristically Socratic, given its emphasis on dialogue and insistence on the finitude of any knowledge. What makes hermeneutics a viable perspective, then, is that hermeneutics is "constitutionally Socratic (the Socrates, that is, of the doctrine of ignorance, of dialogue, and intellectual humility) while Foucault or Apel is not, or not in the same manner," as Fairfield explains (2011, 4).

For such reasons, Fairfield frames Gadamer's project as providing critical horizons in discussions on power, especially in responding to the challenging dilemma and gaps in both modern and postmodern conceptions of power. In his book, *The Ways of Power: Hermeneutics, Ethics, and Social Criticism* (2002), Fairfield argues that "critical reflection not only is possible for hermeneutics but is properly conceived as itself a mode of hermeneutic reflection" (2002, 9). This is the case because Gadamer's hermeneutics "is a practice that uncovers meaning in the same gesture in which it fashions evaluative judgements" (2002, 10). According to Fairfield, the awareness that our evaluative judgments should not be viewed as ahistorical and transcendent above the meaning being examined is what gives Gadamer's critical project an edge. The critical lens in philosophical hermeneutics, argues Fairfield, is not projected only externally, but also turned back to critically examine our own assumptions and prejudices.

Gadamer revives the Socratic dialogue as a new philosophical and political alternative to the epistemological hubris of our time. He does not do this to recover classical antiquity, but to create an ethical orientation towards rehabilitating the Socratic dialogue as a new dynamic alternative to the ethos of dominance in our modern monologues. The appeal to both *universality* and *situatedness*, and to both the *past* and *present*, places Gadamer's project on an alternative trajectory. He is able to engage with the past while simultaneously forwarding leading-edge responses to contemporary challenges. Moreover, going beyond such dichotomies offers philosophical hermeneutics a unique stance. It allows it to have an "ethical political standpoint that is universal while historically conscious," argues Fairfield, because it adopts "a framework of critiques premised on hermeneutical principles" (2002, 166). This is further elaborated in Fairfield's other book, *Philosophical Hermeneutics Reinterpreted: Dialogues with Existentialism, Pragmatism, Critical Theory and Postmodernism* (2011), where he uses the hermeneutic principles to revisit the four various traditions (as mentioned in his title) to show the relevance of the core concepts of philosophical hermeneutics. Fairfield sees the relevance of philosophical hermeneutics

even to schools that preceded it, precisely because in addition to its capacity to rehabilitate tradition, it also "exhibits clear differences in many of its orientating questions, from all four of these traditions, as well as differences of vocabulary, style and often temperament" (2011, 4).

According to Fairfield, the emphasis in Gadamer's hermeneutics on the perspectivity of all critiques, including our own evaluative judgements, is what makes philosophical hermeneutics pregnant with possibilities. Gadamer's emphasis on horizontal forms of interaction, expressed in his I-Thou modality, in critical engagements and praxis, gives us a new critical angle (2002, 157). Fairfield argues that the "primacy of dialogue" in Gadamer's project has profound ethical and political implications, because dialogue is seen as the context that increases the possibilities and chances for both objectivity and moral application. "In hermeneutic dialogue, opposing perspectives are drawn into engagement with one another in a common effort to reach an understanding, a practice that allows the confrontation of interpretations and competing descriptions. Moral perceptions are neither presuppositionless nor monological but are fashioned in practical judgement and tested dialogically" (Fairfield 2002, 10). This insistence on the dialogical condition of life presents a different paradigm. Instead of the angst and fear, usually associated with otherness and difference, Gadamer's project forwards dialogue as an opening up to the world in its given diversity and plurality. Inevitably, Gadamer's intersubjective conception of the human condition accentuates the indispensable relevance of his dialogical project to conversations and critiques that examine various forms of repression and subjugation of otherness—whether historic or contemporary.

Gadamer's dialogically oriented approach creates wider possibilities for any critical thought. For example, despite his critical assessment of the underlying principles of the Enlightenment and the modern obsession with method, Gadamer does not let go of the question of truth, but rather approaches it differently. He insists that the question of truth and the legitimacy of any form of knowledge should not be hinged solely on methodic criteria. The different modes of accessing reality, and the "modes of experience that lie outside science," according to Gadamer, "are all modes of experience in which *a truth is communicated* that cannot be verified by the methodological means proper to science" (2013, xxi, emphasis mine). At the core of philosophical hermeneutics, then, lies the seeking of "the experiences of truth that transcend the domain of scientific method wherever that experience is to be found" (Gadamer 2013, xxi). Ultimately, Gadamer's main concern is about the way an entire spectrum of knowledge and modes of experiencing reality, in which a truth can be communicated, are perceived as being outside the margins of science, or have become devalued as sources of being oriented to truth. In doing this, Gadamer approaches the question of truth from a different angle. He reconceptualizes our modes of experience dialogically as occurring within a dynamic movement that remains open to various horizons and modes of knowing.

Openness to the world and relationality to each other are therefore what make us *oriented to truth*. It is not our strict adherence to method that secures truth. For Gadamer, truth is not some transcendent and metaphysical thing to be captured and stabilized. It is, rather, an orientation; a moving horizon, always receding to new frontiers. Our willingness to listen to each other and the openness to different ideas and experiences, even when they go against our own, according to Gadamer, is where the horizon of the communicability of truth expands (2013, 316). The dynamic character of Gadamer's dialogical horizon, insists Bernstein, puts Gadamer in a unique position regarding truth, one that traverses a narrow path between foundationalism and relativism. Gadamer's project thus shows us a conception of truth, argues Bernstein, "which is not exhausted

by the scientific achievements of scientific method and which is available to us through hermeneutical understanding" (1983, 151).

By tracing the modern trajectory that has collapsed our diverse ways of knowing into methodic approaches—a trajectory that has, in turn, led to the marginalization of various modes of experience—Gadamer sees a *dwarfing of truth* and *not a securing of truth*. He is, therefore, adamant about pointing out the importance of investigating the history of how the social sciences participated in eclipsing the wider spectrum of knowledge, and "the difficulties that result from the application of the modern concept of method to the human sciences" (2013, 22). Gadamer therefore offers an invitation to re-widen the spectrum of knowledge as "a way to reinforce an insight that is threatened with oblivion in our swiftly changing age" (2013, xxii). Until the founding of the social sciences, Gadamer points out, it was acknowledged that truth was larger than questions of proof. "Ultimately, it has always been known that the possibilities of rational proof and instruction do not fully exhaust the sphere of knowledge" (Gadamer 2013, 22). Gadamer thus asserts that, "the way we experience one another, the way we experience historical traditions, [and] the way we experience the natural givenness of our existence and of our world, constitute a truly hermeneutic universe, in which we are not imprisoned, as if behind insurmountable barriers, but to which we are opened" (2013: xxiii).

Despite all the challenges the ascendency of science presents in the modern age, Gadamer is not a luddite. He does not reject science or scientific methods. What he rejects is the way we have turned the natural sciences into a golden calf, thereby eclipsing all other forms of knowing. Gadamer does not shy away from pointing out the limitations that this kind of dwarfing places upon our consciousness. He is wary of the narrowing epistemological imprisonment of our age, in contrast to the fecundity of our diverse hermeneutic experiences and worldviews. In an essay entitled, "Citizen of Two Worlds," Gadamer foregrounds the tensions that exist between the two worlds of tradition and modernity. "The emergence of the modern empirical sciences in the seventeenth century is the event through which the previous form of the totality of knowledge, of philosophy or philosophia in the broadest sense of the word, began to disintegrate" (1992, 212-213). He therefore argues that the humanist tradition's reliance on methodic and narrowly scientific approaches rendered it not only imprisoned, but "impoverished," and thus explains "how the human sciences' claim to know something true came to be measured by a standard foreign to it—namely the methodical thinking of modern science" (2012, 22). Gadamer sounds an alarm bell against the collapsing of our hermeneutically rich and diverse world within the dry desert of science and technology. But he is not alone. Gadamer's warning about the dangers of collapsing our wide spectrum of knowing into an epistemological imprisonment is also echoed by other scholars critical of modernity.

0.1 The Conditions of the Desert

According to Hannah Arendt, we are creatures of the oasis who have been forced and domesticated to live in the desert. In parallel to Gadamer, Arendt paints the challenge of domination in the human condition, particularly in its modern forms, as a surreal desert precisely because dialogue has been arrested and quelled. Although there have been different diagnoses and critiques of modernity, for Arendt, "the modern growth of worldlessness, the withering away of everything *between* us, can also be described as the spread of the desert" (2005, 201). Arendt paints modernity as an arid and sterile desert that obliterates the fertile "in-between" spaces; as a place where, instead of appreciating difference and diversity in an interactive manner, we have become

programmed to collapse the world into a narrow monologue. "Modern psychology is desert psychology," she asserts, in that "it helps us 'adjust' to those conditions, taking away our only hope, namely that we, who are not of the desert though we live in it, are able to transform it into a human world" (2005, 201). For Arendt, then, *the desert* is where violence and coercion reign supreme, while *the oasis* is the term she chooses for the exceptional contexts that sometimes arise in defiance of desert conditions, fertile and productive contexts where we come to recognize our given plurality and organize our affairs accordingly (2005, 203).

Gadamer's awareness of the impoverished desert and his ability to suggest ways out of it are the main reasons this dissertation is built around his project, particularly his dialogical re-conceptualizing of the process of understanding. Even if Gadamer does not provide solutions or final answers—or perhaps because he does not do so—he invites us *to dream again of the oasis*, and to view our desire for the oasis as a normal yearning rather than a displaced pathology. Gadamer's ability to radically question certain assumptions that often get taken for granted creates a new orientation that has serious political implications. The primacy of the dialogical modality in Gadamer's project, which is usually taken as suspect, and even viewed as evidence for the apolitical nature of Gadamer's hermeneutics, is precisely the angle that creates a political paradigm shift at a deeper level. Although Gadamer does not deal directly with politics, his emphasis on the ethics and conditions of dialogue creates the very context for rethinking the category of the political at an ontological level, aligning him with Arendt's new hermeneutics of the political.

Bernstein points out that the political dimensions that arise in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics are directly connected to his conception of understanding beyond the control and manipulation of a transcendent Cartesian metaphysical subject. "To appreciate what is distinctive about philosophic hermeneutics," Bernstein stresses the importance of seeing the Cartesian legacy "as the backdrop drama that Gadamer unfolds" (1983, 115). Gadamer's reconceptualization of the process of understanding within an inter-subjective modality is the philosophical reframing that facilitates his political paradigm shift. By deconstructing the transcendent Cartesian subject, Gadamer makes us question the very assumptions of both power and politics in their social and cultural expressions, especially in our attempt to secure knowledge manifest in our attempts to control and exploit external phenomena (Bernstein 1983, 115-116). Bernstein insists that Gadamer's critique of the Cartesian paradigm "is radical in the sense of 'getting at the roots,'" and thus argues that despite Gadamer's "indirect and almost oblique" style of critique, the implications are dramatic and profound (1983, 118).

The strength of Gadamer's dialogical modality has to do with its applicability within various concrete contexts of encounter. Gadamer provides critical tools to measure levels of both suppression and relief in the I-Thou encounter. His insistence on the dynamic, back-and-forth, movement of dialogue creates a new hermeneutic lens from which we can read the degrees of dialogical interaction in an actual encounter, as will be discussed in the second chapter (Gadamer 2013, 367-369). The ontological shift of dialogue in philosophical hermeneutics invites us to awaken to the dialogue that is constantly unfolding within and without. Since Gadamer invites us to reappreciate the various modes of experience that have been marginalized and pushed away in an age obsessed with objective truth, verified and legitimated only by reliable methods, his project points to unexplored new horizons. Despite the philosophically tempered tone of Gadamer's language, there is an underlying call for a radical awakening. The main ethical thrust underlying Gadamer's project lies in his emphasis on the necessity of re-experiencing ourselves and the world beyond the reductionist and limiting categories advocated by the principles of the natural sciences.

The conditions of desert domination are well-captured by the recent images of a White American policeman pressing George Floyd, a Black American man, to the ground with his knee bent on his neck, while Floyd pleads, "Please, please, I can't breathe, I can't breathe." It is not a pretty scene if we look deeply into it. But neither are the images of Syrian men, women, and children being pulled from the rubble[1] of leveled buildings for the last ten years, the bodies of children washing up on the shores of nearby countries, or the images of world leaders shaking hands with the Chinese leader Xi Jinping to guard their economic interests, even after the conditions facing Uyghurs in Chinese concentration camps have been widely exposed in international media. However, the devastating consequences of several revolutions during the Arab Spring in multiple countries which began in 2011—especially in the case of Syria and Yemen—also reveal deep and risky internal challenges, where the marginal and oppressed resort to violence and fanaticism in response to state terror and military repression. Moreover, the rise of populism in the West and the increase in ultra-nationalistic and chauvinistic sentiments also reflect the dangers of the lack of space for navigating difficult conversations in various political contexts.

The book, *From the Ruins of Empire* (2012), by the Indian author Mishra Pankaj, is predicated on this theme; how a White-dominated victory in the past three hundred years created a world in which the dignity of non-Whites has been stripped. He raises the importance of rediscovering a place of dignity for oneself in a world organized around structural imbalances, in which the dominant powers have reserved the best positions for themselves. Pankaj therefore creates a dialogical framework centered on three prominent intellectuals responding to Western domination. By choosing the works of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Liang Qichao, and Rabindranath Tagore as voices that talk back, Pankaj employs a Gadamerian strategy as a form of dialogical resistance. Although Pankaj uses the term "White domination," it is clear throughout his book that the term has wider implications, especially given the different angles he incorporates to lay his critical framework. What is significant in his approach, however, is the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of his respondents to Western domination, especially the way he sets them within a dialogical dynamic to talk back.

In a similar vein, the American philosopher and academic John McCumber uses "Western domination" to explicate current global structures of domination as a way of highlighting the problematic nature of the underlying ethos in Western thought. Yet he too acknowledges that this term goes beyond geography and colour, despite the relevance and significance of these categories. As he argues, "behind all its cultural, political and ethnic variety, the 'West' is founded on a single account of Being, according to which any being is composed of 'form' and 'matter,' with matter dominating form. The West is thus founded on a writing of domination into the nature of being itself" (2005, 197). McCumber does not conceptualize "the West" simply as geography: "There is no necessary connection between the enterprise of gunpowder-driven global domination and the fact that the people who are engaged in it and benefit from it now live to the west of other people. They also live, for example, to the north of other people," and, moreover, "many people in the western regions of the planet, even in the great cities at the heart of 'The West,' lead lives that we can only call 'third world'" (2005, 197).

McCumber therefore uses these categories to reflect on a larger political, economic, and cultural phenomenon. He uses "the West" to refer to "the region of the world which, having been through the Renaissance and inspired by the Protestant reform of Christianity, turned gunpowder

[1] For more information on the 35-page report released on April 14th, 2021, by the Syrian Network on Human Rights (SNHR) on the use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs, see: https://sn4hr.org/blog/2021/04/15/56121/.

to the task of subduing the rest of the world" (2005, 197). He therefore defines the current forms of domination—whether they are termed 'Modern,' 'White,' or 'Western'—as being part of a larger historical metaphysical enterprise that sustains the conditions of domination:

> But the fact remains that several centuries ago, *something* separated itself from the rest of the world and turned against it. And if using a geographical term to refer to that something is a sign of semantic desperation, it may be that the desperation is temporary. What we need is a way of looking at 'the West' which sees it as, on some levels, a coherent enterprise, but as one which has also provoked resistance and challenge even on its own territory. (2005, 198).

In the introduction to his book, *Poetic Interaction: Language, Freedom and Reason* (1989), McCumber argues that what needs examination is the way this metaphysical enterprise suppresses the natural movement of language, what he terms "the interactive turn" (13). He therefore *introduces dialogue as a means of recovering the dynamic movement of language*. In parallel, Gadamer's concept of the domination of being is exemplified by the way modern science, with its methodic apparatus and forms of knowledge, is "aimed at dominating what exists" (2013, 470). Our modern world is therefore organized around the stabilizing monologue of the dominance of a metaphysical project aided by the epistemological certainties of science, *and* supported by the power of gun powder, as McCumber puts it (2005, 197). This well-captures the conditions of Arendt's desert, a context in which the suppression of the oasis occurs in instances where plurality is denied, and the *different other* is feared (2005, 203-204).

The intersections of power, knowledge, and politics—and their various manifestations—lend themselves as appropriate themes to be probed through the questions and ethical concerns of philosophical hermeneutics. Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault are engaged in the main chapters of the dissertation, given the nature of their questions about power relations *and* the category of the political. Their perspectives give Gadamer's project a new impetus and bring forward the significance of Gadamer's focus on the ontology of the dialogical. Consequently, Gadamer's interest in questions of knowledge and domination, as well as his reconception of knowledge in dialogical terms, work together to create political possibilities that highlight the critical significance of philosophical hermeneutics in a new way. Bernstein also points to how potentialities offered in philosophical hermeneutics reorient us to new horizons:

> Concerning Gadamer, we can say that his philosophic project has been concerned to offer us a reading of philosophy which shows that what is most distinctive about our being-in-the-world is that we are dialogical beings. Gadamer's reflections on the speculative character of language provide a rich phenomenological understanding of what dialogue, conversation and questioning mean. I have argued […] that if we draw out the meaning of what he says and appropriate it for an understanding of *praxis* today, we are compelled to recognize the radical tendency implicit in his work. (Bernstein 1983, 224)

Gadamer's commitment to dialogue as a modality of engaging with various forms of thought, knowing, and otherness, stems from his ontological conceptualization of the dialogical character of our mode of being in the world. For him, dialogue is not a choice. It is, rather, the very condition of being human. Such ontological notions of the ineluctability of the dialogical dynamic expand our critical understanding. The conception of dialogue as a vehicle that helps us make use of difficult experiences recasts dialogue as a political and critical tool. This is precisely why philosophical hermeneutics should be rehabilitated to become better suited for navigating difficult and rugged terrains of encounter. Considering Gadamer's emphasis on dialogue as the ontological

condition of humanity helps provide two-way critical conversations. In fact, we could easily say the emphasis is precisely on difficult dialogue because Gadamer himself stresses the importance of the negative experience in the process of understanding.

Given Gadamer's complex view of dialogue, challenging encounters are perceived as having an impact on our consciousness due to their role in unsettling the contents of our consciousness. Gadamer is therefore wary of oversimplifying real experience; of portraying it as if it "contained no contradictions" (2013, 361). Instead, he portrays "genuine experience" as a complex process that is "essentially negative," precisely because "false generalizations are continually refuted by experience and what was regarded as typical is shown not to be so" (2013, 361). Gadamer asserts that "experience is initially always the experience of negation: something is not what we supposed it to be" (2013, 363). This is why, for him, the rugged, difficult, and challenging conditions are inseparable from what defines true experience. In other words, the landscape of concrete dialogic encounters is not devoid of conflict, tensions, or difference, because, for him, the "structure of a reversal of consciousness" happens as a result of undergoing a difficult encounter, and therefore Gadamer insists that consciousness "recognizes itself in what is different and alien" (2013, 363).

Gadamer's dialogue therefore is obviously not about facile agreements, unchallenged consensus, or reconciled positions, but about concrete encounters and experiences that *break through* a "generation" of expected patterns (2013, 361). More importantly, for Gadamer, undergoing difficult experiences is not simply about securing some correct understanding that allows us to discern final judgments between right and wrong. Rather, it is more about an ongoing dialectical process of openness where such experiences expand our own horizons and shift the contours of our limited and initial boundaries of presupposed universal knowledge:

> 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 comprehensive knowledge. We cannot, therefore, have a new experience of any object at random, but it must be of such a nature that we gain better knowledge through it, not only of itself, but of what we thought we knew before—i.e., of a universal. The negation by means of which it achieves this is a determinate negation. We call this kind of experience *dialectical*. (Gadamer 2013, 361-362)

Gadamer's emphasis on the dynamic and practical conceptions of dialogue has other advantages. It can also help us engage with and appreciate the work of those who ventured into critical and challenging investigations as a means of expanding the horizons of those debates. Gadamer's hermeneutical approach is itself based on the constant movement and renewal of any perspective, including our own understanding and critiques. The dynamic conception of the dialogic movement, which is also internally oriented, pushes us to examine power from new frontiers, beyond the essentialist and metaphysical, or even physical, conceptions of power. Philosophical hermeneutics therefore does not present itself as a unique school of thought, or a corrective approach to overcome other schools, but as an invitation to expand the width and depth of the conversations that occur between various schools and individual perspectives.

By addressing some of the problems and challenges facing critical approaches, the place of philosophical hermeneutics becomes clear. Gadamer's relevance in these debates could be appreciated when viewed in light of some of the dilemmas around the discussions on power and domination, not just in pointing out power issues in the abstract, but also the need for pushing ourselves to become more cognisant in acknowledging our own prejudices and blind spots within concrete situations of power asymmetries.

0.2 Critiques of Modernity and Postmodernity

The critiques of the past century, particularly those that arose in its second half, parsed in critical ways the underlying assumptions of modernity—its modes of producing knowledge and power and its investment in totalizing metanarratives. The postmodern critique of these metanarratives was predicated on advancing an "incredulity" towards metanarratives, as well as new linguistic means to help deconstruct them (Lyotard 1984, Derrida 1998). While many of these attempts have been helpful in critiquing *the ways of power*, one of the central questions that has arisen in this discussion is whether such critiques have succeeded in re-including the "other," and, more importantly, whether postmodern critics are themselves aware of their own historical situatedness.

According to Gayatri Spivak, there remained, in many ways, blind spots when it came to the "others" who had been already pushed out of the very debates that directly involved them. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is the title of the famous essay by Spivak which opens up questions regarding the presence and absence of the "subaltern" (1988). Using various approaches, Spivak tackles the problematic nature of *representing* the other instead of *dialoging* with the other (1988, 290). However, given such a delineation, Spivak does not examine "dialogue" as an alternative to the issues she raises, even though she implicitly points in such Gadamerian directions.

There are two themes raised in Spivak's essay to which Gadamer's project stands as a matching interlocutor with responses that could possibility advance the conversation. Spivak raises the theme of monologue (about the other) as a problem, and presents, in turn, a hermeneutic task in which the "measuring of silences" is made into her "object of investigation" (1988, 296). Spivak presents the colonial project as a form of "epistemic violence" which "constitute[s] the colonial subject as Other" (1988, 280-281). In line with Lyotard's presentation of postmodernism as the "incredulity towards metanarratives," Spivak presents the necessary task of resisting such epistemic totalizing as the "unlearning" of these metanarratives (Spivak 1988, 296). She therefore conceives of the critic as one who can articulate and interpret the "masculine-imperialist ideological formation" of *the colonial subject as other* (1988, 296). Being disappointed in the postmodernist critic's silence, she also turns the question to herself as a postcolonial intellectual. "I am influenced by that formation as well," she writes, as a way of acknowledging the inescapability of our formative contexts (1988, 296).

Spivak's own reflexive moment is precisely reflected in Gadamer's emphasis on the need to become aware of our situatedness and prejudices. In dialoguing with Spivak's essay, we realize that the problem of the silence of the other cannot be raised in a vacuum without thinking about what arrests the dialogical dynamic with the other. This thinking needs to happen at the level of "ideological formation," even including from the perspective of the critic. Gadamer's central themes offer several possibilities for adequately responding to the main problematics Spivak raises. The vitality and relevance of Gadamer's project, especially in this context, lies in its ability to examine the "ideological formation" of entire spectrums of Western knowledge in which both human subjectivity and the voice of the other were rendered obsolete. Spivak's demand to investigate the formation of such knowledges is *a hermeneutic task par excellence*, which is already undertaken in philosophical hermeneutics. After all, Gadamer's entire project is predicated on questioning the way modern knowledge was narrowed down into a methodic and systematic monologue beyond reproach. If, as Gadamer asserts, the spectrum of knowledge was narrowed down in modernity, with much of its variation and range of experience pushed to silent margins,

then his emphasis on the primacy of dialogue already implicitly poses the question about the silence of the subjectivities of all those who inhabit these margins.

This interest in examining the underlying philosophical principles of modern knowledge is precisely what qualifies Gadamer's project as a befitting dialogical interlocutor to postcolonial concerns. In other words, his investigation in the way monologue was written into the very methods of modern sciences allows us to *hermeneutically investigate* exactly the kind of "epistemic violence" and blind spots Spivak points out in Foucault's narrow genealogy. Spivak takes Foucault to task for forgetting, in his large corpus, to examine "the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity," which she describes as "the subtext of the palimpsestic narrative of imperialism" (1988: 281).

The suppression of difference and the exclusion of the "other" in the production of Western knowledge has also been taken up by the Palestinian-Canadian academic Wael Hallaq, in his book *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (2018). Hallaq revisits the relationship between the Western production of knowledge and the devastating consequences of colonialism, the Holocaust, and the systematic destruction of the natural world. In his book, Hallaq stresses the need to put the problems of power and knowledge to *a renewed ethical critique* by theorizing about exit strategies from modernity's predicaments—not only for those who are excluded, but also for those who are doing the excluding. He does this by raising the same problematics Spivak raises, namely the suppression of the voice and agency of the other even in critiques of modernity. Hallaq is interested in this problem because, conventionally, in examining injustices and colonial practices critical literature ends up recreating imbalances when focusing on the agency of the oppressor while erasing the agency of the oppressed. Injustice is presented as the doing of one side, which obliterates the dialogical possibilities in such contexts. It creates a kind of monological hermeneutics of injustice in which possibilities are denied when the agency of the oppressed is overlooked. In line with the way Spivak raises Foucault's blind spot, Hallaq, too, traces some of the problems in postmodern literature "to have originally been Michel Foucault's problem, which Said replicated, in disallowing individual 'agency' in the formation of power discourses" (2018, 2).

These are significant issues in philosophical hermeneutics because Gadamer problematizes the denial of agency in the oppressor/oppressed dyad in any context, no matter how withdrawn the weaker side is. Gadamer even goes as far as situations of slavery, or servant-master relations, to emphasize the inescapabilty of the dialectical nature of any human situation regardless of the level of agency recognized, expressed, or exercised. Any imbalance in the concrete dialogical situation itself does not obliterate dialectical agency, because for him, more often than not, "the dialectic of reciprocity that governs all I-Thou relationships is inevitably hidden from the consciousness of the individual" (2013, 368).

Benhabib also shows that the new attempts in postmodern critiques to deconstruct the metaphysics of humanist subjectivity are perpetuating another self-enclosure. She argues that some postmodern critiques end up reproducing the distancing of the "other" by trivializing their struggles and histories. Instead of creating a more ethically accountable interaction with the other, the critiques of metaphysical subjectivity have closed the options of an interactive modality (1992, 206-207). Benhabib goes so far as to doubt whether "as feminists we can adopt postmodernism as a theoretical ally" (1992, 224-225), and highlights the tension between postmodern critiques of modernity and feminist theory. As she argues, even when supposedly freed from the metaphysics of subjectivity, the door is not yet open to otherness—much less to the female other—because, as Spivak also puts it, "the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (1988, 287). Benhabib

therefore argues that the "death of the subject" represented in the phrase, "Death of Man," means exactly this—that it is more about the "Demystification of the Male Subject of Reason" and therefore should remain as such (1992, 212). Benhabib argues that the problem with the proclamation of the "death of the subject" is that it renders all other subjectivities obsolete, finished, and bracketed off. It is the same with the "death of history," which renders all other histories irrelevant (1992, 211).

Benhabib argues that the postmodern critique of Western domination via a rejection of, and incredulity towards, metanarratives, actually ended up closing the door on re-including the very narratives on whose behalf these critiques had been put forward. Yet, these male subjects, as she notes, have not stopped their cultural production, especially in their monologues about the other—thus effacing the subaltern, as Spivak suggests. The irony is not lost on her. She sees the contradiction in holding on to the status of authority (increased further by occupying neutral positions of critique), while also writing about the death of the subject (1992, 212). Spivak's contention with Foucault is precisely this. She problematizes the male intellectual who positions himself as a neutral transparent observer of the history of subjectivity while simultaneously failing to acknowledge the history of his own subjectivity (1988, 280). It is exactly this issue of "representation"—of speaking on behalf of the other—that Spivak problematizes, because as long as we are attempting to "represent" the other, there is no context for their speaking. And hence, the subaltern cannot speak; she is confined to a coerced silence. There is "no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak" (Spivak 1988, 307).

It is in understanding such a problematic that we come to appreciate the significance of Gadamer's spotlight on the situatedness of the critic, and not just on the other, as an object of analysis. This is specificially the angle that Fairfield highlights when emphasizing the relevance of philosophical hermeneutics in our currrent critical conversations. If for Heidegger the main problem in Western philosophy is the "forgetfulness of being," one can argue that, for Gadamer, it is *the forgetfulness of the other.*

This forgetfulness of the other, avoidance of encounter, and the assumption of *absolute sovereignty* over being, Hallaq argues, is at the core of the modern epistemological worldview. But according to him, even postmodern critiques of modernity overlook certain remnants of modernist inclinations. Hallaq's recent work is important because it adds new angles to some of the challenges that have been raised in critical debates about modernity. Such critiques include dissecting and rehabilitating Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1977). Hallaq also follows a reflexive hermeneutic critique, in a Gadamerian sense, when he proposes examining postmodern and postcolonial critical approaches as a body of literature that helped construct the other in oppositional categories. Moreover, by questioning some of the tendencies in postmodern deconstructions of the metaphysics of power mechanisms, Benhabib contributes a more layered hermeneutics of some of the problematic implications in the critiques of modernity.

Hallaq, like Spivak and Benhabib, notes the gap in critiques where suppression and marginality, though constituting "immediate" concerns, are not addressed adequately. Hallaq uses the term "sovereignty" to refer to the attempts for totalized control that have been produced by the combination of knowledge and power in modernity. This sovereignty, according to him, extends to encompass control over nature as well as over social and political phenomena, and which is why the colonial experience and other power enterprises are not accidental to modernity, but rather integral to it. "Foucault had already understood that oppositions and resistance to late modernity

make for what he called 'immediate struggles'[2] because they look not for the 'chief enemy' but for the 'immediate enemy'" (2018, 5). Hallaq therefore revisits the work of Said, Foucault, and other scholars, whose projects are found wanting, not just for failing to include the voice of the suppressed other, but also for the assumption of the neutrality of the critic. When interpreting power relations in "immediate struggles," such blind spots—especially the critic's omission of his own positionality—result in overlooking their own historical situatedness within particular political discourses of critique. Hallaq states,

> I think that Said's work and the various reactions to it, positive as well as 'neutral,' have been preoccupied with the 'immediate enemy.' There are, as I shall try to show, deeper reasons why Said (and the vast field of discourse his writings generated) could not undertake a profound investigation, one that would have militated against, if not sharply contradicted, his own positions as a liberal critic and scholar, and no less as a secular humanist. For it is my argument that secular humanism, like liberalism, is not only anthropocentric, *structurally* intertwined with violence, and incapable of sympathy with the nonsecular Other, but it is also anchored, per force, in a structure of thought wholly defined by modes of sovereign domination. Secular humanism is not just a name for a particular type of discourse, of 'analyzing' the world; it is the psychepistemic substantiation of a particular subject who articulates the world wholly through disenchanted modern categories that are inherently incapable of appreciating intellectually, and much less sympathizing spiritually with, non-secular humanist phenomena. (Hallaq 2018: 5)

Hallaq, like Spivak, raises the issue of being lost in postmodern critiques of immediate struggles, or what he calls "horizontality," at the expense of maintaining critical vigilance about vertical forms of power that many populations in the world still experience (2018, 30). In light of these issues, the significance of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics therefore lies in being well suited to respond to some of these serious questions and concerns regarding both modern and postmodernist assumptions. Put differently, Gadamer's emphasis on the dialogical modality contains possibilities for conceptualizing power and ethical issues, even in complex situations, as being catalysts in any kind of encounter. This is why Hallaq also points to the problematic way postmodern critiques, when they create sweeping generalizations about horizontal struggles, overlook various forms of scholarship that actually bring forward the voice of the other. Hallaq therefore argues for the importance of engaging with scholarship which allows the native voice to speak without claims of cultural superiority (2018, 30). It is obvious that Hallaq's insistence on the importance of ethical discernment when critiquing Western scholarship relies primarily on using the dialogical as a critical category of analysis.

Gadamer's conception of the process of understanding as a dynamic and open-ended movement is therefore not limited to textual hermeneutics but extends to our very mode of being in the world. His relational conception of knowledge lends itself to certain critical frameworks that

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[2] In his essay, "The Subject and Power," (1997) Foucault makes a distinction between older centralized conceptions of power and more diffuse ones. He discusses different kinds of resistance towards centralized forms of power and the significance of the concept of "chief enemies" as found in revolutionary struggles against the state or in class struggles. He discusses, in contrast, new sites of power and resistance in the modern period, as in the power of men over women, or medicine over the ill, which are more immediate and horizontal in nature and hence the focus being on "immediate enemies." He refers to such new struggles as being "immediate" and "transversal" (beyond being within one country) because in "such struggles, people criticize instances of power that are the closest to them, those which exercise their action on individuals. They look not for the 'chief enemy' but the immediate enemy. Nor do they expect to find a solution to their problem at a future date (that is liberations, revolutions, end of class struggle)" (1997: 330).

can help salvage and recover dialogical dynamics, and even possibly various form of non-supremacist scholarship, as Hallaq argues (2018, 30-31). The "restating" of these issues by Hallaq, in ways that go beyond the current critiques of Orientalism and other kinds of scholarship, parallel the ethical thrust underlying philosophical hermeneutics. Hallaq argues that if knowledge formed the bridge through which colonialism achieved its control, then it is going to be through the bridge of knowledge again from which such a project will retreat. "If the way *into* the Orient *required* Orientalism as the most obvious and direct bridge, the way out of the Orient, and back to a reformed self, requires a bridge as well. Structurally reformed and ethicized, Orientalism continues to have an important function" (Halaq 2018, 38). What Hallaq is suggesting here is exactly what Gadamer advocates for in his "rehabilitation of authority and tradition" (*Die Rehabilitierung von Autorität und Tradition*) (Gadamer 2013, 289).

Instead of collapsing or redacting areas of knowledge, Gadamer advocates a critical dialogue to *rehabilitate* these knowledge(s). By bringing them into a dialogical context, we can be both critical of all that does not serve the ethical, while also being receptive to potential new insights. By using *critical rehabilitation*, new areas of historical reflection can also emerge. This is simply why the Other, whether historical or contemporary, is indispensable to us. Gadamer insists on the need to "ask how we can break the spell of our own for-meanings"[3] that have impacted our epistemologies, especially in the social sciences (2013, 281). Taking these issues into consideration, for Gadamer, "is not something that makes understanding easier, but harder, since the fore-meanings that determine my own understanding can go entirely unnoticed" (2013, 281). This means that the kind of hermeneutic world which determines meaning is always already present in any attempt to understanding the new. Consequently, for Gadamer, the claim to be free of prejudice is itself a form of prejudice—hence his questioning of the Enlightenment's "prejudice against prejudices" (2013, 279).

The forgetfulness of the other, therefore, for Spivak, is a form of prejudice that remains at the heart of the Western production of knowledge, or what she refers to as "'the sanctioned ignorance' that every critic of imperialism must chart" (Spivak 1988, 291). Gadamer would agree. "All that is asked is that we remain open to the meaning of the other person or text" (2013, 281). Understanding, for Gadamer, is neither simple nor linear. Rather, understanding is a process that is difficult and demanding "whether in conversation, letter, book" (Gadamer 2013, 281). Hence the utility of dialogue and the opposing perspective. If my own prejudices can go entirely unnoticed, they will "give rise to misunderstandings," because our misunderstandings of anything, according to Gadamer, could not "be perceived at all if there is nothing to contradict them" (2013, 281). This is why, for Gadamer, difficulty and misunderstanding are part and parcel of the process of understanding, and why dialogue allows the process to be less obfuscating since it creates a chance for evaluating and assessing even our own perspectives.

Hallaq, Spivak, Benhabib, and others, are frustrated by postmodern critiques that are not self-conscious about their own perspectivity and the erasure of otherness. Many of these critiques attempt to understand the way our modern world has closed itself into a barricaded, rationalized,

[3] Gadamer here is rehabilitating the concept of the "fore-structure of understanding" that had been coined by Martin Heidegger. Whereas the term was used by Heidegger for the purpose of explicating ontology, Gadamer employs the concept to free hermeneutics "from the ontological obstructions of the scientific concept of objectivity" (2013: 278). In Gadamer's terminology it thus becomes a term that refers to all the prejudices that we bring to any situation of understanding, no matter, how neutral we think we are. It is the hermeneutic bubble in which we are always already positioned, regardless of any claims to objectivity. This of course, Gadamer explains as the inevitable "historicity of understanding," meaning that any understanding could never stand transcendent above and beyond temporal and spatial contexts (2013: 278).

and hierarchical monologue—with the voice of the other absent—and yet are raised in a manner which silences the very voice of the other. Given these grievances, Gadamer's dialogue raises the debate to a different critical level. The emphasis in Gadamer's hermeneutics on intersubjectivity echoes Hallaq's emphasis on the necessity of a relational conception of oppression and the necessity for new bridges. Hallaq, in fact, argues that liberation should not be conceived as a one-sided project, solely the burden of the "colonized self," because "the ultimate challenge facing Western modernity must be met from within the Western self, whose first act of self-liberation resides in the shedding of sovereignty over all that exists" (Hallaq 2018, 8). This is well-aligned with the ethical thrust of Gadamer's dialogical modality, which calls for an *awakening* from a self-enclosed worldview that is designed to "serve the growing domination of being" (Gadamer 2013, 492). Hallaq's emphasis on the agency of all sides, as well as his concept of "bridging," are well suited to Gadamer's relational model of both hermenetuics and phronesis.

The gaps in postmodern critiques of modernity highlighted by these scholars, especiallly around the issue of the absence of the other, can find new respones in philosophical hermeneutics. Given the relationship between knowledge and power, this dissertation demonstrates how Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics widens the critical scope by probing the philosophical assumptions underlying the founding principles of modernity, while also being capable of responding to some of the challenges plaguing postmodern critiques. The dialogical modality and ethical turn emphasized in philosophical hermeneutics can raise an alternative *emancipatory hermeneutics*, one which considers new angles that are not always taken into consideration in other critical projects. Gadamer's emphatic stress on the priority of the dialogical increases our awareness of the agency inherent in all sides of the dialogical interaction, even when it is "hidden from the consciousness of the individual," and especially when her "own self-consciousness consists precisely in withdrawing from the dialectic of this reciprocity" (2013, 368). Gadamer thus provides a critical angle that transcends the facile dualities and hierarchies of oppressor and oppressed, domination and resistance, and victorious and vanquished. The inherent ethical implications in Gadamer's project engages us in a conversation that summons us all to the *reality of encounter*, no matter how unaware either side is to the inevitability of our intertwined lives and intersubjective understanding. *If modern modalities of domination are predicated on excluding the other, then philosophical hermeneutics is predicated on re-including the other.*

When exploring the archeology of domination, some scholars unknowingly end up perpetuating the continuation of the erasure of otherness through their very attempts to "rescue" or "represent" the other. Gadamer's suspicion of the Western social sciences is at the core of this dilemma, and raises the problematic nature of *speaking of the other* instead of *speaking with the other*. This is exactly the dimension that Taylor stresses when highlighting Gadamer's relevance to critical debates around otherness. Gadamer's ability to critique the "very ideas of objectivity that underpinned Western social sciences," argues Taylor, is where "Gadamer has made a tremendous contribution to twentieth century thought" (2002, 279). Taylor views the contribution of philosophical hermeneutics as being related to Gadamer's ability to expose how "real cultural openness appeared to threaten the very norms of validity on which the social sciences rested" (2002, 279). Gadamer's dialogical relationality therefore takes the methodic approaches of the modern social sciences as being at the core of treating the "other" as an object of study instead of taking her as a dialogical interlocutor.

The mode of knowledge of the social and human sciences is presented in philosophical hermeneutics as being one of the most problematic manifestations of the obsession with epistemological parameters in encountering the other. In other words, prioritizing epistemological

concerns in the situation of encounter becomes a means of arresting dialogue. Gadamer does not mince his words when discussing this issue. He is adamant about pursuing these questions to "liberate the problem the human sciences present for philosophy from the artificial narrowness in which nineteenth-century methodology was caught" (2013, 17). Gadamer goes further and suggests that it is resistance to "the claims of modern science" and the monological shape of its methods that will aid us in awakening to new orientations, because "a logically consistent application of this method as the only norm for the truth of the human sciences would amount to their self-annihilation" (2013, 17-18).

Given the problems raised above, it is obvious that we could not separate epistemological anxieties around securing reliable foundations for controlling external phenomena in modernity from actual historical events. The manifestation of power relations—both diffuse and vertical—are not properly investigated when the other is silent (Hallaq 2018, 30). By truly examining the "archeological depth of the epistemology and philosophy" on which many modern knowledges were founded, Hallaq argues, we can become cognizant of both the verticality of modern power in many contexts on the planet as well as the horizontality of power relations in the postmodern condition (2018, 30).

The concerns tackled by Hallaq, Spivak, and Benhabib show the necessity of examining the philosophical principles underlying the attempts to control and erase otherness by various means, whether intellectually or physically. Together, these scholars, and others, point out the many ways postmodernist critique falls short, and how the voice of the other remains beyond the critical radar of many postmodern critics. Gadamer's analysis and discussion of modernist assumptions, as well as his emphasis on dialogical ontology, present an adequate response to the problems raised around both modern and postmodern critiques. After all, Gadamer's project aims at disclosing the relentless drive underlying our modern forms of knowledge, a drive which aims to govern a projected field of all objects of being (2013, 468).

Gadamer's interest in re-widening the spectrum of knowledge(s) is his way of opening up a field of possibilities beyond the reductionist categories of modernity, with its limiting epistemological methods and constraints, not to mention the silencing of the other (2013, 492). The emphasis Gadamer places on the dialogical dynamic recalibrates agency in ways that widen the scope of our current critiques. Gadamer frames emancipatory issues as being of concern to all sides in a dialogical encounter—not just as the exclusive concern of the "oppressed." The dialogical conception of power asymmetries can thus open new doors for various forms of interaction, not just to measure the landscape of silence, but also to measure the degrees of agency and presence. Such hermeneutic shifts create new possibilities of *playing* in innovative, productive, and creative ways in the field of possibilities.

0.3 Philosophical Hermeneutics and the Room for Maneuvering (or Playing)

With its insistence on the inescapability of our dialogical condition, philosophical hermeneutics provides a different angle on understanding the situation of encounter, particularly in diagnosing the oppressor/oppressed dyad in new ways. Gadamer's dialogical modality offers new possibilities to the dualities of either silence or confrontation. The silence of the other—and hence resistance and attempts at confrontation—is the theme that pulses throughout Spivak's essay (1988). Spivak's question regarding whether the subaltern can speak is not rhetorical; it is a profound political critique of the conditions of both modernity and postmodernity. Her answer in the essay—that the subaltern is mute and cannot speak—is of deep strategic importance. In today's

world, the question of whether the subaltern can even breathe is becoming even more urgent, as articulated by movements like Black Lives Matter. It points to contexts in which questions of survival seem to have gained a political a priority over voicing opinions or entering into a dialogue. However, the two are not separate if we understand the profound implications of Gadamer's notion of *linguisticality* and his insistence on the ethical dimension of the dialogical encounter. The way Gadamer raises the question has potential for identifying concrete situations of survival within the dynamics of dialogue and language. From a Gadamerian perspective, as discussed in this dissertation, when the breath of a people is at stake it is also because their words have been hijacked. Gadamer's dialogical modality offers a hermeneutic angle that makes us see the situation of those who have been pushed out of the conversation on an ontological level. Gadamer therefore shifts the question of the silence of the other from being an abstract issue to one of survival within concrete life situations, with unavoidable ethical and political dimensions.

The dilemma arises further in the political situation of the subaltern. It is worth noting that Spivak's "mute" is actually *dangerous*—not only to others but also to herself. She is a violent armed rebel who eventually commits suicide. The last part of Spivak's essay reveals that the subaltern character, whose story is at the center of her piece, as a distant cousin of Spivak. The story has several layers that require a hermeneutic reading and unpacking:

> A young woman of sixteen or seventeen, Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, hanged herself in her father's modest apartment in North Calcutta in 1926. The suicide was a puzzle since, as Bhuvaneswari was menstruating at the time, it was clearly not a case of illicit pregnancy. Nearly a decade later, it was discovered that she was a member of one of the many groups involved in the armed struggle for Indian independence. She had finally been entrusted with a political assassination. Unable to confront the task and yet aware of the practical need for trust, she killed herself. (Spivak 1988, 307)

Even though she is resistant to the idea of *reading subjects or events as texts*, Spivak analyzes some of the details as a form of misplaced Freudian analysis. "The analogy between transference and literary criticism or historiography is no more than a productive catachresis. To say that the subject is a text does not authorize the converse pronouncement; the verbal text is a subject" (1988, 297). Yet, according to philosophical hermeneutics, subject, event, and script are all texts to be understood and interpreted. Accordingly, this event could not be properly approached without a hermeneutic reading of its implicit message given its anthropological and historical specificities. Due to the timing and hidden political message, reading this event and making sense of its implications requires a culturally sensitive hermeneutics. Spivak does not directly address the link between armed resistance and the arresting of the dialogical dynamic; however, she does suggest that the central task in such difficult investigations is to *measure silences* (1988, 309). She also never engages the equally important task of measuring acts of terrorism as a means of expressing political grievances. It therefore becomes clear, from the details Spivak reveals towards the end of her essay, that the place of the young woman's suicide is also the very spot of her erasure from language. Perhaps it is worth reflecting on how she chose to die silently and how the real details of her suicide were not understood until a decade later. Gadamer's emphasis on the vital link between one's capacity to move within language and one's capacity to challenge and critique is extremely relevant to these very spots of problematic silence(s), marginalization(s), and violence(s).

The significance of the subaltern's silence and subsequent suicide lies in how it reflects the rugged terrains of encounter—or the lack thereof. Spivak's story has parallels in every context of conflict and resistance. It is almost an archetypal modality. We have our own version in Montreal,

in the case of the Quebecois novelist Hubert Aquin, whose story is also about the challenges of facing imposed silences. When he joined the separatist movement he too took up arms, and subsequently committed suicide in 1977 as an act of political resistance. In his book, *Discoveries of the Other: Alterity in the Work of Leonard Cohen, Hubert Aquin, Michael Ondaatje, and Nicole Brossard* (1994), Winfried Siemerling shows how in Aquin's autobiographical novel, *La Prochain Episode* (1967), "the terrorist['s] attempt to break a law of meaning" in a literary manner provides an actual text to the subject of his own life. Aquin's novel is his way to disrupt and "escape from the painful arrangement of things as they are," argues Siemerling (1994, 62).

In Aquin's context, both actual text and lived subtext become gateways to help us rethink the relationship between language, violence, and resistance. Siemerling links the antagonism of Aquin's language in the novel to the tensions in his own life. He connects Aquin's sense of historical defeat to Aquin's sense of lacking power, and thus to the yearning for an alternative future as expressed in the title of the novel. Aquin's predicament, argues Siemerling, "is caused, in fact, by his unsuccessful attempt to tamper with history" (1994, 62). Taking up armed resistance results in yet another defeat. Aquin is incarcerated, ending, again, his other—this time materially and physically oriented—attempt at affecting history. He therefore engages in yet another act of violence—taking away his own life. All these events, according to Siemerling, underscore the sharp, and even violent, intersections of language, identity, and marginality in their political dimensions. As a separatist agent, Aquin had "been incarcerated for seeking to transform the reality of Quebec" by means other than language (1994, 63). Aquin's own life and death parallel, in uncanny ways, Spivak's subaltern rebel. Both provide texts for hermeneutic analysis. Such acts of resistance, harm to self and other, and the politics of language, in the cases of the South Asian and Quebecois rebels, raise new questions. This is precisely why Talal Asad takes up these themes in his book, *On Suicide Bombing* (2007), in which he examines the concept of terror and our linguistic definition of its various forms. Asad provides his hermeneutics of the issues of dying, killing, and resistance within the landscape of modern subjectivities caught up in an asymmetry of power structures. Such situations, for Asad, are better navigated through what could be easily termed *investigative hermeneutics* to unpack the layers of power asymmetries in concrete contexts of confrontation with self and other (2007).

0.4 Can the Subaltern Speak? Yes, but…

Despite tremendous odds and challenges, dialogue can emerge even amidst the most dire of circumstances. Or perhaps a dialogue worthy of the name is the very one that emerges in such difficult terrains. Instead of focusing on what Hallaq calls sweeping generalizations by critics of power relations, philosophical hermeneutics, with its emphasis on dialogue and the practicality of phronesis, gives us interpretative lenses that allow us to examine dialogue in the concrete. We are not only sensitive to trace instances of silence, but also finetuned to contexts in which the voice of the other emerges. Our sweeping generalizations can easily make us fall into the trap of silencing the other even when she speaks, especially when we are more interested in the hermeneutics of measuring silence than *the hermeneutics of measuring presence*. Given that being open to encounter is the ethical imperative of Gadamer's project, it behooves us to highlight contexts in which the subaltern could actually speak. Such highlighting is itself a political move, because it reminds us of the power of *dialogue as a tool of transformation*. The stories of an actor—a black American women—and a Mauritanian detainee at Guantanamo, presented below, illustrate the significance of dialogue in difficult concrete situations and give actual examples of contexts in

which the subaltern *attempts to regain his or her humanity and voice*. They also provide modalities of empowerment in the face of power, showing us alternative forms of resistance that contrast with the violent Indian and Quebecois rebels.

The story of American actor Nichelle Nichols, who played Lieutenant Uhura on the original *Star Trek* series which debuted in 1966 in the United States, provides a poignant example of race, gender, art, and science all intersecting in the dialogical encounter of the subaltern. In her essay, "More than 'Just Uhura': Understanding Star Trek's Lt. Uhura, Civil Rights, and Space History," the American Space historian Margarete Weitekamp highlights both the political implications and actual concrete consequences of the introduction of Lt. Uhura into American culture.

Many aspects of Nichols's struggle to appear in the American monologue intersect with the central themes of philosophical hermeneutics, especially the *political character of science* and the *ineluctability of encounter*. Officer Uhura suddenly shows up on television amid the historic struggles of several American postwar social movements, argues Weitekamp, including the women's movement, the civil rights movement, and the anti-Vietnam War movement (2013, 26). Despite her extremely marginalized role in the series, Weitekamp stresses the significant role Nichols played in making NASA open its doors to women and minorities in its science and space programs. Although casting her was a revolutionary step in the history of American television—Black women were usually relegated to appearing as maids in the background—she remained a marginal character on the show itself. André M. Carrington puts it eloquently when he describes how Nichols, by playing such a minor character in the famous series, actually ends up playing the starring role in a story of marginalization (2016, 69). In his book *Speculative Blackness: The Future of Race in Science Fiction* (2016), Carrington argues that, despite her marginality, Uhura's mere presence had profound political implications for the black community. Carrington describes how when the young Whoopi Goldberg saw Uhura on the bridge of *Star Trek* for the first time, she ran around the house shouting, "Everybody, come quick! There's a Black lady on television and she ain't no maid!" (2016, 70). Weitekamp points out how things come full circle for Goldberg when she ends up playing the wise Guinan in the later *Start Trek* series, the *Next Generation* (2013, 37).

Carrington argues that while "her role as Uhura may have spared Nichols the hazards of actually becoming or being typecast as a domestic worker, making Star Trek all the more fantastic, her working conditions on the series bowed to racial and sexual norms" (2016, 70). Nichols herself shares some humiliating details about her working environment in her autobiography, *Beyond Uhura: Star Trek and Other Memories* (1994). She describes how she was allowed only a limited daily contract given her marginal role, and yet how she had to "stick around" for the entire day of shooting so as to appear in shots on the *Star Trek* bridge from different angles. She recalls how having to stay on set, with her limited daily contract, not allowed to speak more than her signature one-liner, deeply frustrated her. "I felt like the scullery maid," she writes (1994, 12). She also discusses the lack of dialogue or adventure given to her character. Nichols describes how she came to dislike her signature phrase, "hailing frequencies open," because it served to remind her of her marginal position on the set. "I mean I just decided that I don't even need to read the FUCKING SCRIPT! I mean I know how to say, 'hailing frequencies open'" (1994, 18).

Although the role of Nichols as a futuristic space officer marks a threshold in American TV history, Carrington argues that "Uhura appears simply to facilitate the actions of other characters—to be a plot device—rather than fulfilling any discrete role of her own" (2016, 77). Nichols came from a musical theatre background, and not being able to act beyond a one-liner or,

at best, extremely short lines in scattered episodes, led her to finally submit her resignation at the end of the first season and planed her return to musical theater (Weitekamp 2013, 27). But the next evening, while she was attending a civil rights fundraiser, Martin Luther King asked to meet her. When he learned about her resignation, her asked her to stay, and said: "'You cannot do that… this show is changing the way people see us and see themselves. And the manner in which they're seeing the world.' King confided that *Star Trek's* racial integration made it one of the few programs that he and Coretta let their children watch" (Weitekamp 2013, 27). He asked Nichols to stay on the set even if she had just one line, because her presence and voice, no matter how limited, were making an impact on racial integration and were "essential to that change" (Weitekamp 2013, 27). In fact, Carrington explains how Officer Uhura's one-liner signature phrase took on a life of its own. "Poetically, the very phrase that reiterated her marginal status on *Star Trek* would commemorate Nichelle Nichols's performance once a human voice actually spoke it from a spacecraft in orbit. Astronaut Mae Jemison, the first Black woman in space, repeated the line at the start of every shift when she flew as mission specialist on the space shuttle Endeavor" (2016, 81).

The recent documentary, *Woman in Motion* (Thompson 2019), titled after the company Nichols founded in 1977, chronicles how Nichols, after the end of *Start Trek*, leveraged her celebrity status to petition NASA to change their recruitment and hiring policies. Both Weitekamp and Carrington explain how NASA ended up hiring her to lead their diversity campaign, which resulted in monumental historical changes. "Her celebrity status and concern for science made her a natural choice to lead a public relations effort that would expand NASA recruiting efforts and promote science education throughout the United States" (2016, 84).

Nichols's ability to inscribe herself in contexts where she had been rendered mute is replete with linguistic strategies for expanding the spectrum of meaning and belonging. When Nichols joined *Star Trek*, she chose the Bantu word *uhuru* meaning "freedom" or "liberation" as a last name for her character, and chose Nyota, which is "star" in Swahili as the first name (Carrington 2016, 76). In other words, her choice of names marked her initial political maneuvering, inserting a resistant subtext, albeit subtle, into the very script that marginalized her. The *Star of Liberation*, Nyota Uhura, thus gains her own stardom while also proposing a political statement that is inseparable from her identity as a Black woman. Carrington also describes how Nichols's act of writing her own *Star Trek* memoire was a way to reclaim her agency and articulate "a desire to move past her typecast position as a minor character in genre television" (2016, 69). Using language to expand her agency is not disconnected from her ability to petition NASA for inclusivity and diversity. Her linguistic maneuverings, in various contexts, show concrete forms of emancipatory hermeneutics.

This is one of the instances in which we see the ontological dimension of hermeneutics. Nichols's interpretation of her own positionality and the resulting linguistic maneuvers she employs—despite the limitations upon her voice in concrete situations—become events themselves. Gadamer argues that concrete dialogical encounters and experiences represent sources of knowledge, and this is well-captured by stories such as Nichols's.

The importance of concrete experiences as sources of knowledge beyond methodological and theoretical constraints is also something that casts the experiences of African American women as a form of knowledge when viewed from a Gadamerian lens. This in turn provides an example of Foucault's genealogical approach and the significance of resurrecting subjugated forms of knowledge which have been pushed out of our narrow modern spectrums of recognized forms

of knowing. The dwarfing of our epistemological categories, as discussed by both Gadamer and Foucault, is addressed later in the third chapter.

The widening of the spectrum of knowledge that Gadamer advocates is captured in these concrete struggles. The idea of lived experience as another dimension of epistemology is the theoretical framework by Patricia Hill Collins, in her highly acclaimed and well-known work, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990). Although she examines both the theoretical and literary contributions of African American women, Collins is adamant about not perpetuating any hierarchies of knowledge. She shows the value and unique angles of the experiential knowledge(s) that African American women bring to any conversation, because for her, "the ideas themselves are important and not the labels we attach to them" (1990, viii). Collins develops the concept of "outsider within" to denote the social location of many Black women who, as domestic workers, had access to both the White and Black communities that other members of each community lacked (1990, 107). Collins also examines her own hesitation about writing and attempting to speak for the women in her community. Yet through the capacity to re-interpret one's position and the power that lies in one's new self-definitions she becomes reconciled to her project when she positions herself as *a dialogical interlocuter within a larger conversation* instead of *speaking for all women in her community*. "I had to overcome my reluctance concerning committing my ideas to paper. 'How can I as one person speak for such a large and complex group as African American Women?' I asked myself. The answer is that I cannot and should not because each of us must learn to speak for herself. In the course of writing this book I came to see my work as being part of a larger process, as one voice in a dialogue among people who have been silenced" (1990, x).

Carrington also positions Nichols's story as a voice that contributes to our understanding of the larger political struggles of African Americans. He highlights the importance of interpreting and understanding the various layers of implication in her story. For him, it is a story that highlights the role of art and fiction in transforming and navigating, not just culture, but also the political applications and practices of science, not to mention the larger political terrains of race, equality, and marginalization. According to Carrington, the huge impact of Lt. Uhura's story demonstrates how art and popular culture push towards egalitarian visions beyond the actual practices of scientific and cultural establishments, even more than immediate and intransigent political confrontations. It is obviously not a coincidence, given this history, that the most recent version of the *Start Trek* series*, Discovery* (Fuller & Kurtzman 2017), stars Michael Burnham, a charismatic African-American woman (played by Sonequa Martin-Green) in the leading role of the whole series:

> The notion that space exploration could inspire Americans to leave behind our chauvinist ideals was articulated more thoroughly by science fiction than it was put into practice by our new space program. Simple prejudice might account for the absence of women and people of colour from both endeavors, but a closer examination of the politics of space exploration, real and imagined, indicates that space was constructed as yet another frontier to be conquered by both NASA and speculative fiction. (Carrington 2016, 68)

Another voice that emerges in the difficult terrains of encounter is that of Mohamedou Ould Slahi, the innocent Mauritanian prisoner who was incarcerated at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, without being charged, for 14 years (2002-2016). Given the contemporary tropes around the terrorist Arab man, his voice arises within the context of the despicable *terrorist other*. In his book, *The Mauritanian*, first published in 2015 as *Guantanamo Diary*, Slahi presents the

possibility of encounter against extreme odds. Yet, even after his release, the US government refused to "free" the diary in its entirety due to various security and bureaucratic entanglements. At the beginning of the new edition, Larry Siems, the editor of the diaries, explains the difficulties of working with an *arrested* and *censured* text (2021). Even when he and Slahi managed to acquire a copy, he explains how entire sections and many pages were redacted from the original 466 pages, and how their job became the freeing of the text from the restraints of US government censorship. The story of the book itself is almost as dramatic as Slahi's own story of abduction and imprisonment.

The fear and suppression of Slahi's text in a country that was founded upon freedom of expression brings to light the ethical concerns Gadamer raises around the voice of the other addressing us from within the text. Gadamer's emphasis on responding to the voice of the other becomes poignant in light of the fear around Slahi's text, where the ineluctability of the political is thrown into the open in the dialogical situation with the other. Moreover, in the textuality of Slahi's political struggle, Gadamer's notion of the independence of the text and the ethical demand of the voice of the other become highly significant in the discussion of power asymmetries.

In her book, *Victims' Stories and the Advancement of Human Rights* (2016), Diana Tietjens Meyers uses the story of Slahi to introduce a series of difficult narratives that deal with voice and victimization. She opens her book with Slahi's story to show an example of the way voice and narrative emerge in some of the most difficult circumstances. Slahi's story provides a powerful example of the *linguisticality and relationality of power asymmetries* and the impact the subaltern can have when agency is claimed through the power of language and the struggle to maintain one's own humanity. Meyers discusses how Slahi's writing, his religious subjectivity, and his insistence on creating friendships were his tools for asserting his agency and humanity (2016, 11-12). The book is dedicated to his mother, Maryem Mint al Wadia, who passed close to his actual date of release, which had been delayed by then-President Barak Obama for several years after the court issued his release. He places her name as if securing her presence before he allows us to enter his story. This struggle to highlight presence and equality is evidenced in the first lines of Slahi's own introduction to the new edition of his diaries. His language underscores the sense of equality he perceives in *the in-between* spaces that connect him and his captors. "Every time we had a hurricane warning in Guantanamo Bay, I had the same daydream. I imagined the prison camp wiped away and all of us, detainees and captors alike, fighting side by side to survive. In some versions I saved many lives, in others I was saved, but somehow, we all managed to escape, unharmed and free" (2021, xxi).

Meyers argues that "Slahi's book is unquestionably the most important victim's story of human rights abuse in recent US history. And it may be the premiere victim's story of our time, if only because those responsible for the abuse he recounts acted as agents of one of the world's oldest and strongest constitutional democracies" (2016, 2). After 14 years of torture, solitary confinement, and other harsh conditions and treatment, Slahi is allowed to return to his country—while also not allowed to travel beyond its borders. Following the recent release of the movie based on the diaries, *The Mauritanian* (McDonald 2021), Slahi is asked in an interview (in Arabic) why he accepted an invitation by the USA embassy in Nouakchott, the capital of Mauritania. He responds that the invitation was akin to an apology and that the ambassador personally apologized to him. He says he accepted the apology, but also adds: "We can't exist in a state of animosity. We can only exist in a state of friendship." This inclination towards creating a space of friendship is evident in Slahi's diaries, argues Meyers. "Most amazing of all, Slahi makes friends everywhere he is forced to go. Although the guards in the detention centres are forbidden to talk to the

prisoners, Slahi befriends guards… Slahi is an amiable individual, who prizes human companionship and a self-respecting moral subject who has not forgotten the heinousness of the wrongs committed against him" (2016, 14-15). Meyers identifies the power of "retained humanity despite human rights abuse" as the ethical theme that runs throughout Slahi's diaries (2016, 11). This insistence on creating spaces of friendship works as a form of gentle resistance by freeing a space for encounter where the dialogical dynamic had been arrested. Thus, it is a form of "play" within a larger game, in a Gadamerian sense, in which friendship becomes a context where the subjectivities of those involved are engaged differently than the game already set within prison rules. This also becomes an illustration of Foucault's notion of the possibility of "reversal" in power relations in which the dynamics could shift within the matrix of power relations.

The friendships and human connection that emerge in the severe conditions of the prison, and some of which are maintained thereafter, are a testament to the power of dialogue in the midst of desert conditions. Slahi's insistence on constantly attempting to humanize the spaces he inhabited, argues Meyers, was among his tools to exercise his agency and retain his humanity. "Indeed, it is touching, though by no means excusing, to read that a number of the people who viciously abused Slahi at Guantanamo came to respect and like him" (2016, 15).

Slahi's political textuality is reminiscent of the power of Holocaust literature. For example, the diaries of both Anne Frank (1993) and Etty Hillesum (1996), whose texts survived the Holocaust while they themselves perished, provide actual historical evidence for *the power and invincibility of an agency claimed through language*, and the act of writing. We get to see the validity of Gadamer's idea regarding the way a text, or even one line as in the case of Uhura, can take on a life of its own. The insistence on retaining one's humanity through the act of writing, even when the writers never suspect that their voice will be heard, or their words seen, are great examples of acts of political maneuvering in a dark, unpredictable, and difficult landscape. The commitment to maintaining a diary in prison, or in hiding, despite the difficulties, therefore, is not separate from a writer's own struggle to retain her humanity.

Slahi's relentless efforts to keep a diary and his choice to see his struggle and survival in the doing of language captures Gadamer's notion of linguisticality as the field of human possibility. Slahi's maneuvering—learning English in prison, conversing with his guards, writing in his diary—all become vehicles for moving language in a political sense. Equally, the commitment of Nichols to leverage her limited role and curtailed voice to eventually increase diversity in NASA is another example of both the difficulties and rewards in struggling to remain within the dialogic dynamic. In other words, *both Nichols and Slahi announce their voices from contexts that render them mute*. Despite some of the stark differences in the details of their concrete situations, what is common in their struggles in their ability to achieve a dialogical dynamic under mechanisms of silencing and erasure.

Arendt (2005) defines the miraculous as the creation of new possibilities in the face of tremendous odds, a definition that is poignant and relevant in such contexts (112).[4] Weitekamp argues that choosing a black woman to depict a futuristic space communications officer during a politically and racially intense period in American history in the sixties was transformative, "a depiction that was not only innovative at the time but that also helped to change history… The evolution of Uhura's character both reflected—and spurred—historical changes for women and people of colour in postwar America" (2013, 36).[5]

[4] This will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

[5] Such changes keep unfolding and represent part of the legacy and struggle of Nichols who passed in the summer of 2022. As if a tribute to Nichols, in months preceding Nichols's passing, Paramount+ released its new series of *Star*

Although Slahi's story is more difficult, with less resolution, he nevertheless also succeeded in articulating his forcibly muted and suppressed voice, and was eventually able to share his story with the whole world. The significance of these two stories lies precisely in the differences of their concrete situations despite the universality of their struggle for dignity and recognition. Meyers therefore insists that including the stories of those who have been victimized in various contexts has an indispensable hermeneutic value, because "victims' stories can lend support to interpretations of human rights that augment the protections they afford and can fortify non-victims' commitment to human rights norms" (2016, 3). For her, the voice of the other can raise serious questions about how we can carry on in ways that address solutions from practical perspectives, because including the perspective and interpretations of the other ultimately "can contribute to building a culture of human rights—a transnational moral community in which human rights are fully realized and enjoyed by all persons, a community in which the dignity of every person is secure" (2016, 3). Meyers' further insistence on the necessity of including various interpretations of difficult encounters highlights the hermeneutic dimensions in rearranging the order of things within terrains of power struggles, echoing Foucault's emphasis on the possibility of "reversal" (or shifts) in the field of power relations, discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

When examined closely, the matrix of power relations, as will be discussed in the third chapter on Gadamer and Foucault, shows the capillary nature of power in society. We get to see how power permeates various levels and contexts—and hence revealing the importance of Gadamer's dialogue and highlighting the significance of re-including the voice of the other *and* the perspective of the other in articulating and experiencing these dynamics of power. Spivak's contention is a serious one. She makes us aware of the problematic nature, no matter how good the intentions are, of speaking *about* the other—instead of speaking *with* the other. Spivak calls for an "archival, historiographic, disciplinary critical" intervention devoted to the "task of measuring silences" (1988, 286), but as this dissertation shows, it is not enough to only measure silences; it is also important to measure and value all heroic attempts at reclaiming the dialogical context. The dissertation aims therefore to invite us to re-interpret what political maneuvering means, because even though it is important to be cognizant of both silence and voice, we still need to commit to the task of measuring voice and examining acts of reclaiming agency.

Distances and silences emerge everywhere, but so do agencies and voices as well. All intertwine and intersect in an *infinite variety of ways*. In Canada, the depth of the cultural and religious suppression of the First Peoples has come more to the foreground in the past couple of years with the discovery of the graves of indigenous children who were forcibly taken from their families and placed in residential schools. Moreover, in our local context here in Quebec, despite the multi-layered political struggles well-represented by the history of linguistic suppression faced by French Canadians and First Peoples, or perhaps because of it, there remains tensions around cultural diversity, and difficult debates around Islamophobia. In her book, *Who Belongs in Quebec?: Identity Politics in a Changing Society* (2020), the Canadian journalist and writer Raquel Fletcher examines the denial of Islamophobia and racism in the mainstream political discourse of Quebec and its media,[6] particularly in the aftermath of the Quebec Mosque shooting in 2017.

Trek: Strange New Worlds. The new series revisits the characters of the original series, where Lieutenant Uhura, played by Celia Rose Gooding, is a central character. She is smart, dignified, and a gifted astro-linguist who is fluent in 38 languages. The emphasis on Uhura's linguistic talents demonstrate the self-conscious act of Star Trek creators to inscribe new scripts into old ones, and thus their historical corrective representing as an artistic gesture that gives back to Uhura her voice and presence.

[6] See also the M.A. thesis, *Meditations of the Quebec City Mosque Shooting in La Press and The Montreal Gazette*, in the Department of Communication at Concordia University in Montreal, by Aurelia Talvela (2019).

Sunera Thobani, on the other hand, provides a historical and theoretical analysis of the trajectory of power and identity in her book, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada*, by focusing on the constructed nature of our identities (2007). She uses Foucault's theoretical framework and his understanding of regimes of power and control to examine the various cultural and historical factors that shaped the formation of an *exalted* national Canadian subjectivity, a subjectivity which was predicated on excluding many racialized segments of society. Thobani, in her analysis, demonstrates how colonial violence was articulated into Canadian legal structures, thereby erasing the presence of indigenous people from our self-image as Canadians (2007, 67).

Such intersections demonstrate how questions of violence and suppression occur in so many diverse and concrete contexts, manifesting in different forms within varying degrees of repression and resistance. For this reason, both Hallaq and Spivak see the colonial model as applicable beyond its relegated status as a fringe or peripheral matter. Hallaq uses the term "sovereignty" to refer to the kinds of totalized control effected by the combination of knowledge and power produced by European modernity. Sovereignty extends to encompass control over nature as well as over social and political phenomena, which is why the colonial experience and other power enterprises, Hallaq argues, are not accidental to modernity but integral to it (2018, 5-6). As we see in the case of Slahi, the issues of freedom and control in Western thought and practice have been inextricably linked in the attempt to increase the freedom of the Western subject from the constraints of both nature and the ethical demands inherent in encountering otherness. The stories of Nichols and Slahi cannot be separated from the larger colonial ethos of our times, and the vertical nature of the exercise of power in such contexts of power asymmetries.

As a perceived "Muslim terrorist," Slahi was placed, for example, in a prison camp in Cuba, beyond regular US legal jurisdiction, as a means of maintaining his subaltern status. Cast away as the dangerous religious other. This is where we see the significance of understanding the situated and lived forms of power relations, and the relevance of critical hermeneutics for investigating the political dimensions and power implications of actual concrete contexts; even when there are claims of progress or humanism. Perhaps it is precisely in such contexts of high-level claims that our *hermeneutics of suspicion* should be piqued.

The dilemma of Spivak's subaltern in India and Aquin's anguish in Quebec reflect the anxieties surrounding self and otherness in encounters under duress. The dynamic activism in the voice of Nichols and diary of Slahi, however, give us hope regarding the possibility of *agency in contexts of domination and suppression*. Together, they demonstrate the universality and ubiquitous character of power relations in the dialogic encounter. Yet at same time, the particularities of the content of each struggle highlight the importance of the historical situatedness and geographic locality of power relations in concrete contexts. Their experiences indicate the need for dialogical hermeneutics *to interpret the texts and subtexts of different kinds of encounter and the need to measure the varying degrees of power tensions within them*.

Gadamer's hermeneutics, with its emphasis on both universality and situatedness, creates new interpretive and critical strategies. The awareness of the universality of our dialogical predicament, aligned with a recognition of the difficulties of encounter, helps us interpret and closely assess the historical and cultural specificities of each context of domination—beyond facile categories of geography and colour as McCumber argues. Gadamer's repeated emphasis on *historically effected consciousness* (*Wirkungsgeschichte Bewusstsein*) is relevant here, especially in understanding and interpreting local struggles (Gadamer 2013, 350). By stressing the importance of localized hermeneutics beyond methodic and measured approaches, and as taking

place within concrete situations, Gadamer opens up new possibilities for understanding power relations in more nuanced ways. In his emphasis on both hermeneutics and the situatedness of encounter, Gadamer achieves more than one thing. He provides frames of reference that help us raise these struggles to a universal dimension, and therefore to conceive of human dignity as inalienable, while also situating these struggles, tensions, and forms of consciousness within historically concrete, and culturally specific, contexts (2013, 20). The centrality of practical wisdom (phronesis) in philosophical hermeneutics, "as another kind of knowledge," engenders *acting in actual situations* because it is primarily "directed towards the concrete situation" (2013, 20). The importance of *phronesis* lies, for Gadamer, in the ability "to grasp the 'circumstances' in *their infinite variety*" (2013, 20, emphasis mine). Gadamer's interest in also resurrecting the significance of phronesis cannot be separated from the political dimension of his hermeneutics given his emphasis on application and situatedness.

A situated conception of the dilemmas in the dialogical encounter, in actual concrete situations, helps us see the relevance of Gadamer's hermeneutics, especially given his insistence on dialogue as the dynamic in which understanding occurs. The way philosophical hermeneutics combines the universal and the particular could be instrumental and innovative. It could help in creating a new hermeneutics of human rights since it provides a wider analytical space for understanding both the universality of power struggles and yet the uniqueness and particularities of their historic and cultural expressions. While contexts of silencing and marginalization of the other are universal, precisely because they happen everywhere, their content is particular, because such suppressions also occur in different forms given the *infinite variety* of life situations, as Gadamer points out. In his book, *Dialogue among Civilizations,* Dallmayr points out that Gadamer's real contribution lies in viewing dialogue *within concrete historical contexts*.

> The notion of the concrete situatedness of dialogue is prominently connected with the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer […]. Proceeding from this premise, his work develops a philosophical account of dialogue or a perspective that sees human encounters as necessarily dialogical. In this respect, Gadamer's outlook resembles that of Martin Buber, the celebrated proponent of the 'dialogical principle,' who insisted that 'all real living is meeting,' a meeting happening 'in-between' partners and allowing 'experiencing [of] the other side. (Dallmayr 2002, 2)

The aversion to methodic reductions in understanding human phenomenon is directly connected to the uniqueness and specificity in which human interactions occur. Gadamer's dialogic lens could, therefore, result in pushing towards a new critical hermeneutic of the ways the dialogic encounter is arrested or liberated. More importantly, what makes Gadamer's critical angle significant is that his dialogical hermeneutics is not only about the perspective of the external critic of such genealogies, but rather about the importance of the perspectives of all involved—as encountered in the very voice and experience of the marginalized themselves. Ultimately Gadamer's dialogic conception of hermeneutics changes everything. Re-including the voice of the other entirely shifts the content and variables in the field of possibilities.

The dialogical encounter, given the ineluctability of questions of power, is deeply a political matter for all interlocutors—the speaking and the mute, the colonizer and colonized, the dominant and rebel. The issues of silence, dialogue, and the power asymmetries of encounter, as layered in Gadamer's levels of dialogical relationality, are, therefore, not matters of abstract intellectual reflection, suitable only for academic discourse. They are, rather, questions of life and death, where the tensions of power and politics are always inescapable in any encounter; not just

between humans, but also regarding the very sustainability of life on our planet, as Gadamer argues (2013, 357).

A serious concern is currently rising the world over around the efficacy of bringing about social and political transformation, especially because many such attempts end up either fading back into silence and oblivion or getting crushed in violence and bloodshed. In his book, *Room for Maneuver: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative* (1991), Ross Chambers highlights the importance of discovering the maneuvering power within linguisticality, given our global conditions. He argues that we live in a world where "the violence of revolutionary reversals is less and less felt to be justified while modern apparatuses of social control are increasingly experienced as alienating and intolerable" (1991, xi). The main theme of Chambers' thesis is premised on creating new political maneuvers. He therefore proposes the *politics of oppositionality* as an alternative to the *tactics of resistance*. Thirty years after his book, the issues Chambers raises about the nature of politics and language are even more pressing, especially in light of recent movements and revolutions, and the large-scale suffering and destruction unleashed by the struggles to renegotiate power dynamics, particularly in many post-colonial dictatorships. "Many groups of people are concerned, these days, with the problem of bringing about desirable social change without violence" (1991, xi). Chambers explains that members of post-colonial societies, and those engaged (including in many Western societies), "in the struggles of women and Blacks or of sexual minorities or marginalized ethnicities," stand at a crossroads given the forms of politics and resistance available to them (1991, xi). Although these groups are not in power, Chambers argues "they are to various degrees and various ways empowered," and when they resort to conventional ways of resistance, can become caught "between the possibility of disturbance in the system and the system's power to recuperate that disturbance" (1991, xi). This is also echoed in the more recent book, *The Impossible Revolution: Making Sense of the Syrian Tragedy* (2017), by the Syrian writer Yassin al-Haj Saleh, who argues that the Syrian context is impossible, not only because of its internal challenges, but also because of the vertical forms of power that have impacted the trajectory of the struggle (2017, 65). He highlights the importance of understanding the relevance of the international order, which is predicated on a hegemonic military complex in which the local struggle for a free democratic Syria goes on by self-organizing groups and entities, with much suffering and hardly any tangible results (2017, 175).

However, in contrast to the *muteness* of Spivak's subaltern, and Saleh's *impossible revolution*, Chambers argues that "there is 'room for maneuver,' and that it is in that space of 'play' or 'leeway' in the system that oppositionality arises and change can occur" (1991, xi). This is exactly why Gadamer's notion of "play" in the context of transformation, Foucault's dynamic conception of "power relations," and Arendt's emphasis on the "in-between" space, all have profound political implications. Through these dynamic and relational notions, these perspectives offer new strategies that can enhance the context for *maneuvering*, or possibly even shifting, our academic conceptions of both power and resistance. Beyond abstract theorizing, the new *hermeneutics of power* and the *power of hermeneutics* provide new exit strategies. Given the emphasis on concrete political situations and the effective wisdom of phronesis, philosophical hermeneutics is positioned to create *new room for maneuvering* and *playing in a field of possibilities*, and thus being capable of effecting transformation in a manner quite different from revolutionary acts and violent confrontations.

Philosophical hermeneutics, as I argue throughout this dissertation, provides *room for maneuvering* outside the conventional contexts of *revolutions and armed resistance*. This is what makes Gadamer's ideas on the dialogical modality radical; precisely because such a modality

offers the potential for shifting the discussion from resistance to creating the conditions for questioning, interpreting, and transforming situations of power asymmetries. The emphasis on *linguisticality* by Gadamer also shifts the loci of conflict. It opens up new and different contexts for oppositional engagement. Gadamer's notion of the dynamic of play within established social structures unlocks possibilities for transforming dynamics of power that might otherwise be recuperated or maintained when violence is used. The emphasis on the intersubjective character of *play* when conceptualizing both the process of understanding and the relationality of encounter lines up with Chambers' notion of *maneuvering*.

Chambers uses the term *oppositionality* to refer to various forms of political confrontation and styles of play and maneuvering in contrast to armed resistance, which tends to reproduce the same power relations it resists. "Oppositionality" writes Chambers, "can only be complicitous, but violence repeats the methods of power in overcoming it" (1991, xv). Chambers puts forward the idea "that revolution and dictatorship are part of the same system of power, but without changing that structure itself" (1991, xv). The kind of hermeneutics Chambers offers of these distinctions serves to create a new kind of critical and oppositional possibility beyond conventional forms of resistance. The challenges and consequences of conventional forms of resistance, he argues, become glaring when viewed in light of the circumstances of many actual revolutions or situations of armed resistance in the modern era. "Under these circumstances, oppositionality appears as a way of thinking *a politics of change* without destructive social confrontations that transform power relations rather than modify them, and independently of the end-directed narratives that seem to legitimate violence" (1991, xii). The distinction Chambers makes between *oppositionality* and *resistance* is significant, especially because he derives the distinctions from Foucault's diffused, relational, and ubiquitous conception of power. Such distinctions are poignant because they also bring to the foreground the wider political implications of Gadamer's dialogical modality.

The difference between a *transformation* of power relations and a *modification of* power relations is further elaborated in the dissertation, especially when discussing Foucault's analysis of the way many confrontations leave power relations intact while merely changing the surface. In many contexts of resistance "one can perfectly well conceive of revolutions that leave essentially untouched the power relations that form the basis for the functioning of the state" (Foucault 1997, 123). This is the central issue in Gadamer's emphatic differentiation between the notions of "change" (*Veränderung*) and "transformation" (*Verwandlung*) when discussing the structure and dynamics of play and transformation (2013, 115).

Chambers does acknowledge that taking a more linguistic and literary approach to social and political transformation is not radical in the conventional sense, because the *room for maneuvering* in such oppositional dynamics within language is neither about universal change nor about sudden and radical shifts (1991, ix). But just as Gadamer uses textual hermeneutics to explain a dialogical dynamic on a larger lived scale, Chambers also uses the *act of reading* and the effect of being "influenced" to model social and political transformation that is also situated in an intersubjective context. Towards the end of his book, Chambers argues that the act of interacting with another subjectivity—whether it be a text or a person—engenders new understandings that are capable of deflecting the desire for power and dominion and therefore of effecting a real transformation. Chambers' effort to use reading as a metaphor for shifting power relations shows the importance of introducing the power of hermeneutics into the hermeneutics of power. The relational understanding of oppositionality that Chambers forwards in his project brings to the surface the political dimensions of Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutics. Chambers offers an understanding of effective political opposition within a web of relations, within a localized situated

context devoid of violence (Chambers 1991, xii). This, of course, also echoes Arendt's own conceptualization of the category of the political which will be discussed in the chapter on Arendt.

0.5 A Question on Methodology: Dialogue, Critique, and Rehabilitation

It is somewhat paradoxical to bring up the issue of methodology in a dissertation on Gadamer, especially since his entire philosophical project is predicated on questioning our obsession with methodology as a means of legitimating knowledge. One of the problems of modernity that Gadamer tackles is the way our spectrum of knowledge has been narrowed down by the emphasis on scientific methods that started with the Enlightenment project. Gadamer's philosophical project is therefore centered on questioning our modern epistemology by revisiting the underlying conceptions regarding the nature of understanding and the categories of knowledge. Georgia Warnke argues that for "the whole of his philosophical career and culminating in his magnum opus, *Truth and Method*, his [Gadamer's] concern has been to overcome the positive hubris of assuming that we can develop an 'objective' knowledge of the phenomena with which we are concerned" (1987, 1). To be more precise, Gadamer is not against methodology, nor does he mind the use of methodology. Rather, Gadamer is concerned about the possible limitations a blind adherence to method imposes on us when we dwarf the wider spectrum of knowledge. Warnke, therefore, asserts that Gadamer's "emphasis has been on *the limits of our knowledge* of texts, nature, ourselves and our world. The claim is that we are always involved in interpretations and that we can have no access to anything like 'the truth' about justice, the self, reality and the 'moral law.' Our notions of these 'truths' are rather conditioned by the cultures to which we belong and the historical circumstances in which we find ourselves" (1987, 1, emphasis mine).

Despite Gadamer's wary attitude towards the limitations of methodology and given his own commitment to the dialogical modality of understanding, one could argue that he does provide a certain *modus operandi* to navigate different kinds of subject matters. He uses his own dialogical modality to navigate various topics by engaging with different theorists and schools of thought. This is clear throughout his books, essays, and lectures. In *Truth and Method,* for example, we come to appreciate certain aspects of Hegel's thought while also seeing the problematic areas and gaps in Hegel's *Absolute Spirit*. However, through his commitment to the ethics of an open dialogue, a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of Hegel emerges in which Hegel is neither completely correct, nor completely incorrect. Gadamer's discussion of Hegel, as also exemplified in his engagement with other scholars, is particularly rich and multilayered. Gadamer highlights and underscores Hegel's open-ended themes, like his dialectics of experience. But Gadamer equally points out the dead ends, like Hegel's closing up of openness to the new and different, since, for Hegel, dialectics must come to a finalized end through the "overcoming of all experience which is attainted in absolute knowledge" (Gadamer 2013, 363-364). This is one example in which Gadamer uses his dialogical modality to *rehabilitate* Hegel's thought. He does acknowledge that "Hegel's dialectical description of experience has some truth" (2013, 363), but also, after engaging with his inclination toward overcoming experience, argues that "applying Hegel's dialectic to history, insofar as he regarded it as part of the absolute self-consciousness of philosophy, does not do justice to hermeneutical consciousness" (2013, 364).

The multifaceted and multiangled dialogue in the rehabilitating approach of Gadamer explains much of what is misunderstood about philosophical hermeneutics. Some critics find Gadamer too concerned with recovering some elements of the tradition, and thus consider him a Eurocentric apologist, or even a conservative. Yet others see him as undoing the entirety of the

Western tradition when he points out the closed ends, illusions, and limitations, not to mention his undoing of some of the basic underlying principles. What Gadamer does, however, is neither. Instead, he engages with the tradition in a dialogical manner, one in which the tradition is neither rejected nor taken as final authority (2013, 286-287), but is critically and carefully addressed from within a continuum, hence Gadamer's phrase, "rehabilitating authority and tradition" (*Die Rehabilitierung von Autorität und Tradition*) (2013, 289).

The term "rehabilitation" conveys a strong critical approach without creating complete rupture. It has, among others, corrective and interactive connotations, and includes political undertones. Many uses of the term have sharp edges, as in the rehabilitation of offenders or addicts. But other uses have softer edges, as in examples of recovery and healing. One can easily deduce the critical implications that such a carefully chosen term indicates—i.e., emphasis on an intersubjective engagement that maintains the integrity of the other. It is a form of interaction, in a dialogical manner, in which destruction and obliteration of the other is avoided. Gadamer, therefore, applies himself to a modality of encounter that he himself proposes as a way of dealing with distance, difference, and the difficult. He himself adheres to this dialogical model whether in encountering a person, tradition, or a dead scholar (modern or ancient). Adherence to Gadamer's dialogical model requires a high level of self-consciousness towards our own prejudices, as well as towards any form of authority, therefore increasing the likelihood of overcoming dynamics of both inferiority and superiority.

Gadamer's approach of *rehabilitation* therefore provides wider critical possibilities. It is his own method of avoiding methodology while adhering to consistent and ethical parameters in contexts of personal interaction and scholarship. In more than one way, rehabilitation allows us to appreciate aspects of any thought without being blind to its gaps and cracks. In fact, Gadamer's interest in the practical side of ethics, particularly in recovering the political dimension of phronesis, is itself inspired by the past. "What makes classical ethics superior to modern moral philosophy" argues Gadamer, "is that it grounds the transition from ethics to 'politics'" (2013, 292).

Given the wider possibilities of *maneuvering* in Gadamer's notions of dialogue and rehabilitation, this dissertation is formulated around these dynamic approaches. The modality of *dialogical rehabilitation* is applied in dealing with Gadamer's own project. Using this approach, the dissertation is designed to underscore the less salient political features of Gadamer's thought by providing actual dialogical interlocutors capable of bringing out dimensions that are somewhat eclipsed in his project. By applying these angles, whether in reading texts or bringing different perspectives together, I use both dialogical and critical approaches to rehabilitate Gadamer's political orientation within his philosophical hermeneutics.

The disseration consists of four main chapters, in addition to an introduction and conclusion. In combination, they deal with the themes of the *hermeneutics of power* and *the power of hermeneutics* in ways that show the deeply political nature of Gadamer's dialogical modality. The main aim is to demonstrate the relevance of Gadamer's project for opening up new critical possibilities and oppositional strategies. This introduction has siutated Gadamer's project in light of some of the more difficult questions that have been raised about otherness and silence. Given the significance of the concrete and situated character of encounter in philosophical hermeneutics, some cases have been discussed to highlight Gadamer's relevance in measuring voice and presence, and not just silence and erasure. This introduction has been designed to demonstrate why philosophical hermenetuics is an appropriate approach to interpreting aystemmtries of power.

The first chapter, "The Evolution of Hermeneutics: Gadamer's Ontological Rehabilitation of Hermeneutics and Dialogue," is a literature review that deals with some of the current literature around hermeneutics and the significance of Gadamer's ontological shift of hermeneutics. The chapter also includes some relevant debates on dialogue to situate Gadamer's contribution given the political implications and uses of dialogue. I begin with a general overview of the evolution of hermeneutics which situates Gadamer in the historic trajectory of the development of hermeneutics. I do this by highlighting Gadamer's role in shifting hermeneutics from being merely an approach of textual interpretation to becoming a whole philosophical orientation in the modern period. Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics and the primacy of the dialogical modality in philosophical hermeneutics are presented as some of the most significant and central shifts in modern hermeneutics. Some specific problems in the larger discussion on dialogue and power relations show the necessity of including philosophical hermeneutics to ongoing debates. But I also end the chapter by identifying certain gaps in the current literature on dialogue to show the necessity of including philosophical hermeneutics to ongoing debates.

The second chapter, "The Relevance of the Beautiful in the Ruins of Ugliness: Gadamer and the 20th Century," is designed to present a biographical sketch of Gadamer to situate him, not only as a philosopher, but also as someone who lived through a difficult and violent century. We understand Gadamer better when seeing the major themes of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as a corollary to the trajectory of the cataclysmic events of the 20th century, which he witnessed firsthand, especially as they unfolded in Germany. Here, I take care to show that Gadamer's critique of modernity as articulated in his magnum opus *Truth and Method*, cannot be separated from the destruction he came to witness. The paradigm shifts Gadamer achieves in his dialogical presentation of hermeneutics are presented as his own political responses to the concrete circumstances of his own life. Gadamer's hermeneutics of modern domination parses the ways we have narrowed our world into what Arendt calls the "desert." By re-interpreting epistemological reductionisms, Gadamer shows how we have suppressed other modes of knowing and relating for the sake of a progressive scientific paradigm. For Gadamer, we have fallen into a certain arrogance that has disconnected us from the world, which he refers to as the "naïve self-esteem of the present," a form of modern arrogance that closes the door in the face of the voice of the other, or an insight from the past that may reveal something that is superior to modern knowledge (2013, xxi). Gadamer asserts that in encountering otherness, whether in the tradition or in dialogue with people, a certain "truth is known that could not be attained in any other way, even if this contradicts the yardstick of research and progress by which science measures itself" (2013, xxi).

The third chapter, "The Play of Power: A Fusion of the Horizons of Gadamer and Foucault," brings Gadamer and Foucault into dialogue in light of the inevitable intersections in their respective projects. Each scholar's central concern with knowledge and power makes a conversation between the two inevitable. Both emphasize the need for a critical self-understanding of the history of the social sciences and the problematics that arise when modeling their epistemological frameworks around the methodologies of the natural sciences. This history is seen, by both, through a lens of power in which the attempts to legitimate human sciences through scientific methodology expose the underlying power dynamics of our age. Although both genealogy and hermeneutics present strategies for engaging the past in a critical and interpretive manner, Gadamer and Foucault also part in certain ways. However, Foucault's relational conception of power, as a tension that arises in intersubjectivity, aligns with Gadamer's dialogical ontology and creates ample room for a reading that parallels Gadamer's dynamic metaphor of "play" and his notions of transformation. The intersections and differences in their projects bring

out new dimensions when conceptualizing power through a hermeneutic lens and hermeneutics through a power lens.

The fourth chapter, "The Resurrection of Socrates: The Ineluctability of Dialogical Plurality," deals mainly with the dialogical conception of *the political* in Arendt's thought, which aligns her with Gadamer's ontological conception of hermeneutics. The title of this chapter identifies the Socratic dialogical stance that underpins the entire dissertation as being the central and common ground between Gadamer and Arendt. The intersection of Gadamer's dialogical characterization of the human condition, and Arendt's own reconceptualizing of the political as a dialogical activity, presents profound implications for creating a rehabilitated new political theory. Their respective approaches provide new angles for understanding conflict, plurality, and the dialogical as contexts for the coexistence and navigation of difference. Arendt's definition of the category of the political, at an ontological level, is clearly an effort to reappropriate a concept coined by Carl Schmitt, the Nazi political theorist, who defined the political along extremely antagonistic, hostile, and divisive parameters, in which politics was the field that differentiated friend from enemy. Arendt's re-definition of the political in opposing terms is not a coincidence. For her, the political is by definition what defines the context in which differences and hostilities are navigated in more agonistic, rather than antagonistic, parameters within a cooperative, nonviolent, and dialogical model. In light of Gadamer's conceptualization of the dialogical, Arendt's own project, which is sometimes criticized as idealistic or utopian, gains more gravitas as an *alternative oppositional hermeneutics* to antagonistic conceptions of the political. In the parallels that emerge between the two, Gadamer's own hermeneutics, based on a dialogical linguistic modality, also manifests its latent political potential in a more pronounced manner.

The conclusion, "The Hermeneutic Circle: The Relevance of Gadamer to Critical Theory and Other Political Possibilities," comes back full circle to summarize the main themes presented in the thesis while also examining, from a widened and artistic hermeneutic circle, the relevance of philosophical hermeneutics to our current political and global challenges. The concluding pages encapsulate the major themes of the thesis by re-emphasizing the political nature of Gadamer's project, and therefore the relevance of philosophical hermeneutics in traversing difficult terrains and navigating challenging situations and difficult conversations. Given the way Gadamer reopens closures without finalized conclusions, philosophical hermeneutics is presented as a circular and dynamic endeavour that remains open to difference and otherness, as a modality with the capacity to pave new critical avenues. This underscores Gadamer's project as an invitation to continue our hermeneutical journeys and explorations. Here, we also come to appreciate how our contemporary contexts, and some of the tensions of our world, can be re-examined differently, and, as a result, maneuvered in ways that engender new forms of transmuting power relations that may initially seem immune to disruption.

Encountering Gadamer, initially, is quiet and uneventful, but slowly and steadily something radical begins to emerge. Not because we come across a particular philosophical stance or approach, but because we are awakened to encounter and movement as the inescapable conditions of life. Philosophical hermeneutics liberates us from the arrogance of epistemological shackles, thereby inviting us to enter into a Socratic dialogue—with its admission of ignorance and the practice of humility. Bernstein acknowledges the subtlety in Gadamer's radical undoing of the underlying premises of our modern age. He observers how Gadamer's radical approach lies precisely in his ability to present something in a style that is un-confrontational, because "while Gadamer's critique is radical, it is not frontal. On the contrary, it is indirect and almost oblique,

but nevertheless—or perhaps because of this indirectness—devastating" (1983, 118). This is why anyone who enters into a serious and sustained dialogue with Gadamer does not emerge the same.

In our age of science and technology, we feign confidence and objectivity, always repressing our deep questioning. We need to be reflexive and vigilant about the way knowledge, authority, and privilege intersect. We tend to mistrust entire spectrums of experience and personal insight; we construct silences and quiet gaps in which others are rendered into objects of analysis rather than engaged with as dialogical partners.[7] But Gadamer inspires us to raise our eyes to new horizons while also having "the courage to confront that with the truth of remembrance; with what is still and ever again real" (Gadamer 2013, xxxv). Philosophical hermeneutics reconciles us with the plurality within, but most importantly it empowers us to open ourselves to the diversity without. It awakens us to the significance of the multiple hermeneutic horizons in our vast cultural and temporal ecology. Gadamer asks us to awaken to the reality of our historic moment, because only in acknowledging our situatedness, here and now, can we interact with the world as finite beings with finite knowledge. He says that what a human being needs "is not just the persistent posing of ultimate questions, but the sense of what is feasible, what is possible, what is correct, here and now. The philosopher, of all people, must, I think, be aware of the tension between what he claims to achieve and the reality in which he finds himself" (2013, xxxv).

[7] Much of the work of the French philosopher and academic Pierre Bourdieu deals with the dynamics of power, especially in relation to the production of modern knowledge in its various forms, especially in academia, in which power is maintained through systems of hierarchy and privilege. His book, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979) is a discussion of the way power functions through social positionings and claims of knowledge and authority. On a lighter note, see also Andrew Marzoni's piece, "Academia is a Cult" in *The Washington Post*, November 1st, 2018. Marzoni explains the way academia creates its own system of social control within an insular atmosphere creating systems of rewards and punishments that enhance submission to authority figures.

Chapter One
Literature Review
The Evolution of Hermeneutics: Gadamer's Rehabilitation of Hermeneutics and Dialogue

All knowledge that is about human society, and not about the natural world, is historical knowledge, and therefore rests upon judgment and interpretation. This is not to say that facts or data are nonexistent, but that facts get their importance from what is made of them in interpretation… for interpretations depend very much on who the interpreter is, who he or she is addressing, what his or her purpose is, at what historical moment the interpretation takes place.

–Edward Said

Susan Sontag, in her famous and castigating essay, "Against Interpretation," pontificates that hermeneutics is something to overcome, and retorts at the end of her piece, "In place of hermeneutics we need an erotics of art" (2001, 10). The term *hermeneutics* obviously comes with a cluster of connotations. It evokes a sense of dry academic textual analysis, or the application of methods and techniques for interpreting ancient and classical texts.

Hermeneutics had been what Sontag imagined it to be—a dry literary method for explicating and interpreting ancient texts—but what she missed in her essay is what happened to hermeneutics in the 20th century. More precisely, what she really missed was the shift of hermeneutics, especially at the hands of Hans-Georg Gadamer, from a literary method to a philosophical orientation whose main aim is to awaken us to life again—exactly as she demanded. In fact, Gadamer offers more than she demands. Beyond just receiving the pleasure of art, Gadamer revolutionizes the concept of hermeneutics on the basis of our experience of art, and reintroduces art as a means of experiencing truth and reality. In her book, *Gadamer's Ethics of Play: Hermeneutics and the Other* (2010), Monica Vilhauer argues that Gadamer uses the experience of art to create a whole new ethical orientation for our interactions with the world. By challenging traditional aesthetic theories, Vilhauer argues, Gadamer not only reconnects us to art, but uses art to reconnect us to the world. She underscores the value in Gadamer's reintroduction of art as a means of accessing reality, beyond reductionist methods.

> For Gadamer, the methodological conception of aesthetic experience (*Erlebnis*), which seems to always reduce experience to a feeling of pleasure, fails to account for and achieve the genuine understanding that occurs when we truly experience art. He believes that it is the phenomenological return to aesthetic experience (*Erfahrung*), which captures the way in which experience is an "undergoing" of genuine reality and truth, that will help do justice to the unique mode of knowing that is involved in the encounter with a work of art. (2010,12)

Karl Simms acknowledges how the new version of Gadamer's hermeneutics completely changed the direction of many fields, encouraging some new radical practices in literary criticism, for example, but he also underscores that Gadamer was more than just an influence on such literary shifts. According to Simms, Gadamer's great achievement was *broadening the concept of hermeneutics* beyond its methodic constraints into a new philosophical direction (2015, 1). In parallel to this, Nicolas Davey, in his book *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics* (2006), emphasizes the way philosophical hermeneutics brings us back to examining the nature of experience—our own subjective experience in the process of encounter. As he argues, "Gadamer's rejection of methodology challenges received, regulatory frameworks

of institutional knowledge" (2006, 5). He also emphasizes how Gadamer "reinvokes the value of experientially acquired wisdom (*paideia*). Philosophical hermeneutics endeavors to show that what is learned from experience extends beyond the strictures of formalized method. It offers a gentle (but pointed) reminder that philosophy is more than a love of formalized knowledge. Philosophy participates in a dialectic of shared experience and refines a sense of the communal, of belonging to something larger than oneself" (2006, 5-6).

This chapter surveys highlights from the literature around Gadamer's transformation of hermeneutics, as well as some of the relevant debates that lend themselves to a Gadamerian perspective. It first traces the evolution of hermeneutics generally, in its historical trajectory, by presenting some of the main figures and examining their contributions to the major shifts. The following pages explore the literature concerning the ontological shift in hermeneutics that followed Gadamer's reconceptualization of understanding and interpretation in dialogical terms. Included here is a consideration of some trends related to the impact and influence of Gadamer's work, particularly the way he drastically shifted the place and scope of hermeneutics. Given this dissertation's emphasis on the political implications of Gadamer's contribution, I focus on secondary literature that highlights the critical potential of Gadamer's project. Gadamer's critique of the underlying principles and conditions of modernity, especially the dogmatic framing of methodic science as the only source of knowledge, places him within a current critical debate. The review therefore includes some literature that deals with power and dialogue, to demonstrate the relevance of philosophical hermeneutics to such debates. Gadamer's contribution in these areas, especially given his ethical conception of dialogue, is quite often overlooked.

The absence of Gadamer's perspective in debates that stand to gain greatly from the insights and sagacity of hermeneutics is addressed by engaging with secondary literature that makes use of certain aspects of Gadamer's project to underscore his relevance. In particular, the ontological shifts of both hermeneutics and dialogue are discussed as entry points to highlight the relevance of the ethical and political dimensions of Gadamer's project, especially in encountering otherness and difference. The current literature around power and the problem of silencing the other shows spots that could make use of philosophical hermeneutics, given its emphasis on the ineluctability of dialogue. The gaps and blind spots in some of these long-standing debates render Gadamer's dialogical ontology a worthy contender in expanding the critical debates on power and language.

1.1 What is Hermeneutics? And What Has Gadamer Done to Hermeneutics?

According to Richard Palmer, the first use of the term "hermeneutics," recorded by the Oxford English Dictionary, dates back to 1737 (1969, 35). To be sure, the term was obscure and limited in circulation—and remains so almost to this day—appearing mostly among those interested in ancient and biblical interpretation. Although the word was used in specific theological circles in the English-speaking world before the 20th century, Palmer's book *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer* (1969) was among the first to introduce hermeneutics, with its modern implications and applications, to a broader audience. By introducing these new developments, Palmer presented hermeneutics in its new make-over to the English-speaking world, and especially to North American academic audiences.[8]

[8] Richard Palmer makes reference to the emergence of the movement of the New Hermeneutic in Protestant theology in Europe in the 20th century, and its relationship to the emergence of hermeneutics in general in North America. He

Moreover, he was one of the first North American scholars to help strengthen the bridge with continental European philosophy during a period when most English-speaking philosophical circles were fairly dominated by analytic philosophy.

Palmer acknowledges the novelty of the term hermeneutics and the general lack of knowledge around its history and evolution. In his introduction, he discusses how his book could have been called "*What Is Hermeneutics?"* or even "*The Meaning of Hermeneutics*," because, as he explains, the book itself was a record of his "own quest for an understanding of a term at once unfamiliar to most educated people and at the same time potentially significant to a number of disciplines concerned with interpretation" (1969, xi).

Although Gadamer's relevance and impact have, in general, been more felt within European philosophical circles, several North American academics have helped disseminate Gadamer's thought after Palmer. Scholars like Richard Rorty, Georgia Warnke, Richard Bernstein, and a few others, were instrumental in making his work more known. Gianni Vattimo and Donatella De Cesare, both of whom were students of Gadamer, as well as Riccardo Dottori, Gadamer's assistant and associate for many years, helped spread his influence in Europe. In the Canadian context, Charles Taylor, Jean Grondin, and Paul Fairfield are the main scholars interested in showing the relevance of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics for responding to contemporary challenges. Fairfield, in particular, has successfully situated the importance of Gadamer's paradigm shifts in a critical direction, noting the importance of philosophical hermeneutics in discussions of power relations and critiques of foundationalism. In his book, *The Ways of Power: Hermeneutics, Ethics, and Social Criticism* (2002), Fairfield presents Gadamer's project as a suitable critical response to some of the malaise surrounding both modernist and postmodernist debates. Grondin, on the other hand, in several works, has been keen on showing how philosophical hermeneutics navigates a new path between the facile dichotomies of objectivity and relativism. This is also echoed by Bernstein, who aptly titled his book on Gadamer *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (1983). Grondin is particularly conscious of the way philosophical hermeneutics situates *truth* historically while also remaining invested in being oriented towards truth. As he asserts, "hermeneutics strives to understand what is said by going back to its motivation, or its context. However, this is not done in order to relativize the truth claim contained within a given statement. On the contrary, it is only if one inquires into the underlying motivation of what is being said that one can hope to grasp its truth" (1995, ix).

Grondin frames a major shift in the history of philosophical thought as the result of *a slow evolution from metaphysics to hermeneutics*, tracing it back to when Kant questioned certain dogmas. He therefore attempts to "reconstruct historically the transition from metaphysics to hermeneutics within the realm of philosophical thought," by centring the trajectory of his book around the "shift that quietly took place over the last two centuries or so. The origins of this transition can be traced back in large part to the appearance of Kant's epoch-making *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). And although Kant himself had no inkling that his destruction of dogmatic metaphysics would eventually usher in the age of hermeneutics, key elements in his philosophy do point to such a shift" (1995, 2).

Gadamer's project is viewed by various scholars as another major paradigm shift in the 20th century, a shift we cannot afford to ignore given its serious responses to both the problematic

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discusses how the concept of "hermeneutics" entered the academic lexicon when the New Hermeneutics became a focal point in modern theological issues. He mentions, in relation to these developments, the three international "Consultation on Hermeneutics" that were held at Drew University in New Jersey in 1962, 1964, and 1966.

features of modernity and some significant philosophical dilemmas raised in the last decades. Alasdair MacIntyre is deeply grateful for the sharp turns that Gadamer offers, and takes Gadamer's magnum opus, *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960), as well as *Die Idee des Guten zwischen Plato und Aristotle* (1978), to "be accounted among the classics of twentieth-century philosophy […] To accord a text the status of a classic is to say that it is a text with which it is necessary to come to term, that failure to reckon with it will seriously harm our inquiries" (MacIntyre 2002, 157). In his book *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis*, Richard Bernstein argues that *Truth and Method*, "is one of the most comprehensive and subtle statements of the meaning and scope of hermeneutics to appear in our time" (1983, 34). Like Grondin, Bernstein situates Gadamer as offering a unique perspective on issues of objectivism and perspectivism. Karl Simms, who has been teaching phenomenology, linguistics, and hermeneutics at the University of Liverpool, argues that Gadamer was the main figure responsible for shifting hermeneutics in the modern age, and considers him to be "one of the towering figures in the humanities" (2015, 1). He argues that Gadamer's importance lies, not just in paving the way for the "more radical practices of literary criticism that were to prevail during the final third of the twentieth century," but rather in his broadening of "the concept of hermeneutics beyond mere practice of reading into a philosophy of life itself" (2015, 1).

Grondin also agrees with this conception of the importance of Gadamer's influence, and reiterates that there "is no question that contemporary hermeneutics received its most forceful and coherent exposition in the work of Hans-George Gadamer" (1995, xi). However, he is equally aware of the lackluster reception of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, which has been "received in a rather one-sided way in the English-speaking community, its understanding being somewhat overshadowed by the figures of Rorty and Derrida, who do not always render justice to Gadamer's endeavor nor to the sources of his thought" (1995, xi). In order to really situate the literature around Gadamer's contribution and highlight aspects of the discussion around hermeneutics we need to also situate hermeneutics in a larger historical trajectory.

1.2 Sources and Trajectory of Hermeneutics: The Historical Evolution of Hermeneutics

In *Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction* (2015), Jens Zimmerman situates Gadamer's project as a decisive turn in the history of hermeneutics, given the intrinsic role interpretation plays in philosophy, theology, art, law and science. For Zimmerman, understanding and interpretation are what defines the human condition—as we cannot imagine our humanity without the faculty of interpretation, hermeneutics emerges as a defining trait of being human and as an indispensable area of human knowledge. "Hermeneutics is more than the interpretive principles or methods we resort to when immediate comprehension fails us," argues Zimmermann. And although hermeneutics, or even understanding, could be guided and/or improved by analytic principles, Zimmermann affirms that the importance of Gadamer lies in his ability to show us that understanding *cannot* be reduced to methods, because understanding "requires art rather than rule-governed science" (2015, 2).

1.3 So, What is Hermeneutics?

There is a simple answer and a complicated one. "The simple answer," notes Zimmerman, "is that it means interpretation" (2015, 1). The complicated answer deals with the evolution and transformation of hermeneutics into a new philosophical orientation. But going back to the simple answer; interpretation occurs in many areas of study as well as in various forms in our lives. "We interpret plays, novels, abstract art, music and movies, employment contracts, the law, the Bible, the Quran, and other sacred texts; but we also interpret the action of our friends and enemies… The goal of interpretation is to make sense of a text or situation, to understand what they mean" (Zimmerman 2015: 1). According to Zimmermann, interpretation arises in contexts in which immediate understanding is not available, particularly in moments when we strive to sense something, and therefore, "most people would agree that plays, novels, legal statutes, and religious texts require interpretation, although some fundamentalists like to affirm the utter clarity of religious texts. We also accept that the Supreme Court interprets that constitution" (2015, 1). Although hermeneutics "has often stood for a set of interpretive rules designed to clear up difficult textual passages," Zimmermann's book aims to show that hermeneutics is ineluctable; it is not only about methodic approaches designed to deal with textual matters, but rather "is already unconsciously at work even when we grasp the obvious meaning of a red light" (2015, 2). However, before moving into this broader and more complex meaning of hermeneutics, we should first look back further into its origins—to the "messenger" designated to translate and interpret the messages of gods, as it first appeared among the Greeks.

In their book, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* (2011), Stanley Porter and Jason Robinson argue that Hermeneutics "has a long complex history with many surprising twists and turns" (1). They also acknowledge their own journey of such twists, in which their earlier ambivalence to hermeneutics in their own academic careers turns enthusiastic when encountering the modern shifts of hermeneutics and their profound implications. Their interest deepened upon realizing the centrality of hermeneutics in conceptualizing many areas of knowledge, as well as the possibility it represented for many fields. Their book therefore provides a great overview of the historical landscape of the evolution of hermeneutics. They start by tracing the term *hermeneutics* itself to the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, which means to interpret or translate. The Greek verb itself has a link to Greek mythology and to the Greek god Hermes, a character in ancient Greek epic poems like the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. According to Greek mythology, the role of Hermes was to deliver messages from the gods to mortals. Porter and Robinson argue that the symbolic significance of Hermes lies in his being "a medial figure that worked in the 'in-between' as an interpreter of the gods communicating a message from Olympus" (2011, 3). Hermes, the son of Zeus, was therefore responsible for mediating meaning which required more effort than mere translation. Hermes had to facilitate understanding by recreating and producing "the meaning that would connect to his audience's history, culture, and concepts in order to make sense of things" (2011, 3). Porter and Robinson argue that modern hermeneutics still echo such a function in which hermeneutics mediates understanding where meaning does not simply emerge as a direct exchange of symbols. Rather than such a direct exchange, meaning arises in intersubjectivity "by virtue of a 'go-between' that bridges the alien with the familiar, connecting cultures, languages, traditions and perspectives that may be similar or millennia apart" (2011, 3). Grondin, on the other hand, argues that although the ancient Greeks had the notion, the use of the term *hermeneutica* did not emerge in Latin until the 17th century when it was first introduced by Johann Dannhauer, a German theologian from Strasbourg inspired by the Renaissance's emphasis on seeking wisdom from

ancient and classical sources (1995, 19). Dannhauer drew his inspiration, Grondin writes, "from Aristoteles's treatise *Peri hermeneias (De interpretatione)*, claiming that the new science of interpretation was in effect nothing but a complement to the Aristotelian Organon" (1995, 19). As Palmer also argues, Dannhauer framed his new science of interpretation as a methodology distinct from exegesis. This distinction is significant because it has marked hermeneutics to the present day. "The distinction between actual commentary (exegesis) and the rules, methods, or theory governing it (hermeneutics) dates from this earliest usage and remains basic to the definition of hermeneutics both in theology, and when definition is later broadened, in reference to nonbiblical literature" (Palmer 1969, 34).

1.4 Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and William Dilthey (1833-1911)

The German scholar William Dilthey, whom Grondin considers the first real historian of the hermeneutic tradition, presents a different historical trajectory than those who focused on its Greek origins. Dilthey insisted on tracing the emergence of hermeneutics to the rise of Protestantism, especially given its emphasis, due to Luther's principle of *sola scriptura*, on interpreting the Bible directly. "This principle," argues Grondin, "had been used to undermine the authority of tradition advocated by the Catholic Church" (1995, 19). Although Luther did not use the term hermeneutics, "his exegetical interpretation of texts and the Catholic reaction to it to it are not without significance in regard to the emergence of hermeneutics" (Grondin 1995: 20). Dilthey's emphasis therefore holds a certain significance, because following "Dilthey's lead," explains Grondin, "many prominent historians of hermeneutics such as Bultmann, Ebeling and Gadamer have paid great attention to Luther's hermeneutic revolution" (Grondin 1995, 19). But, according to Palmer, the reason most historians consider Dannhauer as having wrested the term from its ancient Greek origins is that after Dannhauer, "the term appears to have occurred with increasing frequency, especially in Germany" (1969, 34). Palmer also explains how this connection to Protestant exegesis impacted the early evolution of hermeneutics in England and later in America, where "the usage of the word 'hermeneutics' followed the general tendency to refer to specially biblical exegesis" (1969, 34-35).

Dilthey was influenced by the tail end of the Romantic era, during which the German scholar Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) had conceived of hermeneutics as a recovery of the original conditions and meaning that influenced the author. According to Palmer, "Schleiermacher has the distinction of having reconceived hermeneutics as a 'science' or 'art' of understanding […] such a conception of hermeneutics implies a radical critique of the standpoint of philology, for it seeks to go beyond the concept of hermeneutics as an aggregate of rules and to make hermeneutics systematically coherent, a science which describes the conditions for understanding in all dialogue" (1969, 40). This results in yet another broadening of the concept beyond its textual applications, and is, according to Palmer, considered to be one of the most important watersheds in the evolution of hermeneutics, because for the first time *hermeneutics is conceptualized as the study of understanding itself.* This helps us better comprehend Gadamer, who maintains a dialogue with Schleiermacher's broader conception. Palmer even goes as far as to suggest that "hermeneutics proper" emerges historically in this moment, being born "from its parentage in biblical exegesis and classical philology" (1969, 40)

Dilthey, who was a biographer of Schleiermacher and a well-known philosopher, also made landmark contributions in the evolution of hermeneutics. Like Schleiermacher, Dilthey

broadened hermeneutics and expanded it from its textual confinement. But he also, according to Palmer, created new orientations for hermeneutics when he pushed it to serve the establishment of an equivalent methodology to the natural sciences. "He saw in hermeneutics the core discipline which could serve as the foundation for all the *Geisteswissenschaften* (i.e., all the disciplines focused on understanding man's art, actions, and writings)" (1969, 41). The significance of hermeneutics, as seen by Dilthey, lied in having scientific potential for creating reliable methodologies for the human sciences. Palmer explains how Dilthey's interest in the human and historical sciences is connected to Dilthey's hope of creating another critique of reason "that would do for the historical understanding what Kant's critique of pure reason had done for the natural sciences—a 'critique of historical reason'" (1969, 41). Since numbers and lab procedures could not be implemented in the understanding of the human realm, there was a certain methodic and philosophical angst forming within the scholarly community. A sense of urgency was deepening, especially with the fast and exponential rise of the epistemological status of natural sciences. There was a need to establish alternative methods that would render these other areas of knowledge into fields of empirical research. All this, of course, gave momentum to a whole new direction that still influences, to this day, the methods and approaches of the social sciences. The interest in hermeneutics in this period reflects the epistemological priority of the modernist project, because with "Schleiermacher and Dilthey, the first major move of hermeneutics was toward providing a general hermeneutics, preoccupied with method and an epistemic desire to find correct, even objective interpretations" (Porter and Robinson 2011, 9).

1.5 Edmond Husserl (1859-1938)

Although most scholars do not immediately think of Edmond Husserl when discussing the evolution of hermeneutics, given his interest in setting reliable methods, Husserl ended up creating the context and grounding for the major breakthroughs that were to follow, especially due to the impact of his later conceptions of the way understanding takes place within a situated consciousness. One could easily argue that Heidegger's insights would not have happened without Husserl, and, in recent years, there has been a reappreciation of the role played by Husserl's ideas in the evolution of hermeneutics by several scholars like Fred Dallmayr, Grondin, and Porter and Robinson.

In his recent book *Horizons of Difference: Engaging with Others* (2020), Dallmayr provides a different narrative of the evolution of both hermeneutics and dialogue and connects hermeneutics to the dislodging of the Cartesian *cogito*. Dallmayr sees the relevance of Husserl's contributions in this trajectory. Modernity is centered on a transcendental subject, argues Dallmayr, where all experiences are traced back to the constitutive function of a transcendent consciousness lodged in a subject. This suddenly shifts, notes Dallmayr, when Edmond Husserl, especially in his later career, creates a new direction when he begins to discover that "the thought and experience of the subject is always embedded in a presupposed matrix or framework of multiplicity transgressing individual constitution, a matrix he called the 'life-world'" (2020, 21). Of course, the rest is history, given what unfolds after Husserl. The notion of *horizon* as a reference to this ground of intelligibility in Husserl's framing of consciousness as being within a specific context of understanding is taken up by Heidegger and developed further in *Being and Time*, and also becomes also a central term in Gadamer's project and his notion of the *fusion of horizons*. Grondin acknowledges that even the "notion horizon, which is so important for hermeneutics,

comes directly from Husserl" (1995, 38). Perhaps this is why Grondin dedicates a whole chapter in his book, *Sources of Hermeneutics*, to Husserl, while also acknowledging the general lack of recognition when he chooses to title the chapter, "Husserl's Silent Contribution to Hermeneutics" (1995, 35). Similarly, Porter and Robinson argue that while "Husserl avoided working directly with hermeneutics, his work has proven to be of inestimable value to all later hermeneutical thinkers" (2011, 8).

The reason Husserl's contribution is not always mentioned or acknowledged in later versions of hermeneutics has to do with his earlier commitments in wanting to create foundations and methods for understanding human consciousness. Porter and Robinson argue that Husserl's scientific pursuits connect some of his earlier aims to those of Dilthey. "Like Dilthey, Husserl claims to offer a foundationalist theory of knowledge and method on which to ground other disciplines" (2011, 9). But, as Grondin argues, Husserl's later research shifted in emphasis: "wishing to reverse the 'harmful' influence that, according to him, Heidegger's work wrought, Husserl hoped that new writings from him would be able to confer a new voice and a new weight to what he viewed to be authentically phenomenological thought" (1995, 37). Grondin explains how these aspirations, unfortunately, came to an end as "the political tragedy of Germany shattered the projects and hopes of Husserl" (1995, 37).

However, Husserl's voice and contribution cannot be easily eclipsed, especially given his later orientation of opening ourselves to reality beyond formulas and methods. As Grondin writes, "it still remains possible to discern the properly hermeneutic meaning of the call to return to the things themselves, beyond writing, formulas and theories" (1995, 37). But what is significant in all this is that "the most hermeneutic students of Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer, naturally conceived the phenomenon of understanding according to the model that Husserl had proposed to them. To understand is to return from the spoken word to the meaning that animates it" (1995, 38). Perhaps such influence would not be surprising if we knew that it was Husserl himself who "had been the first to instruct his students to distrust theories who had intuitive basis in the things themselves. Thus, by inviting them to permanently criticize all nonphenomenological constructions, he oriented them more toward the task of a destruction of metaphysics than toward a prolonging of the avenues opened up by his own research" (1995, 43). It is therefore not an exaggeration to suggest that the hermeneutic turn of the phenomenological project of Heidegger was already actually present in the new orientation Husserl created with his later approaches to understanding human consciousness.

Husserl's influence remains upon hermeneutics, even if it is not always acknowledged. The radical shifts that broadened the scope and meaning of hermeneutics in the projects of Heidegger and Gadamer are directly connected to many of Husserl's ideas. Gadamer's idea of universal hermeneutics retains Husserl's conception of universal human consciousness. Grondin is aware of the impact of Husserl in influencing the general direction of modern hermeneutics, despite Husserl's earlier methodic ambitions. In some ways, some of the core issues in Husserl's thought, especially his later concerns, were given better fruition in hermeneutics when they were released from their foundationalist ambitions and agenda. This is why, Grondin argues, that "the hermeneutical orientation Heidegger imparted on phenomenology appears insuperable and more conforming to the things themselves than Husserl's dream of an ultimate foundation" (1995, 45).

1.6 Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

Heidegger's project represents yet another major shift in the evolution of hermeneutics. If his predecessors broadened the concept, what Heidegger did was bring hermeneutics to a whole new direction. "Heidegger's deepening of the conception of hermeneutics and the hermeneutical in *Being and Time*," argues Palmer, "marks another turning point in the development and definition of both the word and the field" (1969, 42). It was also Heidegger who first gave hermeneutics an ontological orientation. Heidegger used the term hermeneutics, not to refer to a particular activity that humans do, but to define the very mode of our being in the world—the mode of *Dasein*. The later Husserl's conception of consciousness as being within a ground of intelligibility take shape in Heidegger's project, in which he reconceptualizes understanding as being defined *temporally* rather than being transcendent to our temporality. Naturally, this had profound implications for the trajectory of hermeneutics, which until then had been epistemologically defined and therefore invested in arriving at "correct" or "objective" interpretations. Porter and Robinson argue that with Heidegger's new conception of understanding, all acts of interpretation suddenly become inseparable from our temporal situatedness. What this means, especially given the concerns of all the previous approaches in hermeneutics, is that "no matter how thorough and objective the interpretation maybe seems, it will always be at least partially determined by presuppositions and prejudgments –sometimes for better, sometimes for worse" (2011, 10). This is why, according to Porter and Robinson, Heidegger coined the term "thrownness"—to refer to our situatedness within a particular space and time, as well as to the inescapability of this situatedness. As they state, "Heidegger's hermeneutics is made possible because of our nature as existentially situated creatures […] To understand, for Heidegger, is to understand in relation to one's finite situation" (Porter and Robinson 2011, 9).

Heidegger's seminal contribution was the crack he achieved in the foundational wall when he shifted our thinking about the Cartesian subject/object duality. Even though the legacy of Edmond Husserl's reductionist phenomenology was the starting base, Heidegger released it from its search for finding secure ground in a *phenomenology of consciousness* and pushed the investigation in new directions. The earlier aspirations of phenomenology had implied separating consciousness in its pure and most reduced form to arrive at nominal notions and hence bracket off the world (Cerbone 2008). "In contrast to Husserl, Heidegger argues that we should avoid a methodological stance towards fostering human understanding and clarity of interpretation" (Porter and Robinson 2011, 9). Heidegger's major contribution to hermeneutics, which lays a new ground of questioning, shifts the very nature of the philosophical concerns of Western thought. Instead of securing foundations to ensure accuracy, Heidegger emphasizes Dasein's mode of being in the everydayness and its interaction with the being of entities around it. Instead of being occupied, like Schleiermacher and Dilthey, with approaches and methods to guarantee "objective" interpretations and understandings of the world, Heidegger shifts the locus of inquiry to the mode of Dasein as a knowing being interpreting its own being.

> Heidegger rejects this path pioneered by earlier hermeneuts for a much more radical approach that begins with the forgotten existential question – What is the "meaning" of being? This is not a question of what we know and how we may guarantee interpretive accuracy. Rather, it is a question about our mode of knowing, a question about our living as knowers, not about the status or content of our knowledge per se. (Porter and Robinson 2011, 9)

Heidegger's new questions created a major philosophical shift with profound implications and consequences for Western thought in general and Continental philosophy in particular. Heidegger's philosophical turn marked the beginning of the shift from *epistemological* concerns

to *ontological* ones. The questions now raised were no longer just simply about the content of our knowledge and its correspondence to an external objective reality, but rather the modes of our knowledge and the mode of the knower's being in the world. In his book *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique* (1980), Josef Bleicher argues that "Heidegger's fundamental-ontological conception provided a complete re-orientation and a far more radical solution by developing a number of *Esistentialien* (existentiales)," because by shifting the nature of the inquiries "Heidegger not only deepens the epistemological analyses of Dilthey and Husserl, but also provides a critique of the body of underlying assumptions that they share with the whole of Western philosophical tradition and which Heidegger identifies as 'metaphysics'" (1980, 98-99). As a result, the ontological shift, and the introduction of hermeneutics as the mode of being in the world, in the projects of both Heidegger and Gadamer, marks a major historic gateway in the trajectory of modern philosophy.

1.7 What Has Gadamer Done to Hermeneutics?

In her book *Gadamer: A Philosophical Portrait* (2013), Donatella Di Cesare, the Italian academic who was the last student of Gadamer, emphasizes the differences between Heidegger and Gadamer. She acknowledges the "radical" shift Heidegger achieved when he reconceptualized hermeneutics as a way of gaining access to facticity for Dasein—that the process of understanding is not about texts or the act of reading, but is, rather, Dasein's actual mode of being.[9] Di Cesare explains how, by shifting the focus to our mode of being in the world, understanding takes on an inescapable existential dimension with Heidegger. "It means that one has no choice whether to understand or not to understand. *To exist is to understand—to understand is to exist*" (2013, 79). However, for Di Cesare, Gadamer's hermeneutical shift remains the major landmark in the modern turn of hermeneutics.

Although Heidegger's ideas served to broaden the notion of hermeneutics and recast it in an existential dimension, it was Gadamer's project that gave hermeneutics its new turn, as Di Cesare argues throughout her book. Despite the fact that Gadamer's project is seen as representing a continuation of both phenomenology and ontology, Di Cesare contends that Gadamer's contribution lies in shifting hermeneutics towards linguistic and dialogical dimensions. Di Cesare explains how Gadamer moved in a completely different direction when he helped create a linguistic turn within phenomenology, and, as a result, gave hermeneutics a whole new impetus, because the "*hermeneutic turn in phenomenology* is a *turn toward language*" (2013, 77). Such a new linguistic turn obviously has critical implications, since, according to Di Cesare, "language puts all foundations into question" (2013, 77). In contrast to Heidegger, Gadamer turns from depicting understanding as the ground from which we start to "the depiction of understanding with the figure of the *circle*" (Di Cesare 2013, 85). Although Heidegger embraces the notion of the hermeneutic circle, Gadamer moves the concept to a whole other level:

[9] Di Cesare has remained committed to Gadamer's project while simultaneously coming to distance herself from the thought of Heidegger, especially after the publication of the first transcript of Heidegger's *Schwarz Hefte* (Black Notebooks) in 2014. Although she served from 2011 to 2015 as the vice president of the Martin Heidegger-Gesellschaft, she resigned immediately after the publication of Heidegger's Black Notebooks. In response she wrote the essay, "The 'Jewish Question' and the Question of Being: Heidegger Before and After 1945," in which she coined the phrase "metaphysical anti-Semitism." This was part of a book she had started writing and which was published under the title, *Heidegger and the Jews: The Black Notebooks*, which came out in English in 2018. In the book, Di Cesare analyzes further the relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and his earlier affiliation with Nazism.

> The decisive break occurs with 'Heidegger's disclosure of the fore-structure of understanding' [as Gadamer discusses it in Truth and Method]. Heidegger conceives of understanding as the movement of Dasein itself, and he uncovers circularity as its basic character. Gadamer begins with Heidegger's view, but reinterprets both the *circle* and *understanding*. He broadens the *hermeneutics circle* so fundamentally that it becomes the guiding thread of the entire middle section of *Truth and Method*. (Di Cesare 2013, 84)

According to Di Cesare, Gadamer, in his examination of the phenomenology of understanding, does not only broaden the concept of hermeneutics beyond the angst of methodological concerns, but also creates a whole new conception of understanding as a linguistic process that arises in intersubjectivity. "Heidegger's analytic of Dasein is foreign to Gadamer," argues Di Cesare, since "Gadamer does not share the radical as well as solipsistic disquiet of Heidegger, his concerns about existence, his striving for authenticity" (2013, 80). None of these issues preoccupy Gadamer. This explains, according to her, why Gadamer did not get pulled too much into the question of deconstructing metaphysics. Instead, Gadamer put "all ultimate foundations into question, through the dialects of language and dialogue" (Di Cesare 2013, 80), and it is here, Di Cesare argues, where Gadamer really "distances himself from his teacher" (2013, 125). She further explains how Gadamer even proposes "that a language of metaphysics does not exist at all" (2013, 125), despite not denying the existence of a 'metaphysical' tradition, which has consolidated itself through linguistic and conceptual rigidity. For Gadamer, argues Di Cesare, "Metaphysics is this rigidity." In other words, because Gadamer emphasizes the natural movement of dialogical dynamics, she argues that, for Gadamer, it is "not language that is metaphysical but its hardening into concepts, which, however, as soon as they return to the flow of philosophical dialogue—as Wittgenstein suggested—already prefigures the lines of their own overcoming" (2013, 125).

In her other book, *Utopia of Understanding: Between Babel and Auschwitz* (2012), Di Cesare, underscoring Gadamer's role in the "linguistic turn," argues that although language was destined to become the central and dominant theme in many schools in the philosophical landscape,[10] philosophical hermeneutics was a major influence in the linguistic turn which "had not yet been fully achieved" when Gadamer wrote *Truth and Method.* When Gadamer "ventures alone into what in many respects is still uncharted territory for philosophy, the difficulties of his path are as entirely clear to him as the goal he had set out to reach: the ontological turn of hermeneutics guided by language" (Di Cesare 2012, 2).

For many reasons, including the ones mentioned above, Di Cesare insists that Gadamer—despite having been influenced by Heidegger's ideas—is neither simply a disciple of Heidegger, nor is Gadamer's project a continuation of Heidegger's legacy. Di Cesare contends that Gadamer could not be described as the one who urbanized Heidegger. She discusses how Habermas asserted this in his well-known German essay "Hans-Georg Gadamer. Die Urbanisierung Der Heideggerschen Provinz" (The Urbanization of Heideggerian Province"), which she sees as being misguided (Di Cesare 2013, 198). For her, Gadamer created his own turn that was altogether different from Heidegger's. She therefore emphasizes "the substantial differences between Heidegger's 'turn to the mysticism of Being' and Gadamer's 'humanism'" (Di Cesare 2013, 198).

[10] In her book *Utopia of Understanding*, Di Cesare lists the various philosophical schools that coalesced under the theme of language, including logical positivism, the ordinary language philosophy of Oxford, American pragmatism, structuralism, psychoanalysis, the late Merleau-Ponty, Derrida's deconstruction, Wittgenstein, Heidegger and philosophical hermeneutics, as well as the transcendental pragmatics of Apel and Habermas (2012).

Gadamer, obviously, was deeply and clearly influenced and shaped, in large measures, by both Husserl and Heidegger and their phenomenological and ontological approaches. Nevertheless, Di Cesare asserts that Gadamer was the one who created a whole new reorientation capable of encompassing many elements of those who preceded him while also venturing into a radical new orientation. She also points out how Habermas came to slowly appreciate the political dimensions of hermeneutics, especially after his debate with Gadamer. "Habermas can be credited with having emphasized the emancipatory potential of hermeneutics, which he happens to share with Vattimo" (Di Cesare 2013, 198).

Porter and Robinson argue, in the same vein as Di Cesare, that the most important shifts in hermeneutics in the modern period find their clearest expression in Gadamer's project. This is because he combines several approaches, including the introduction of the linguistic dimension. This, of course, helps reorient philosophy towards an interactive hermeneutic turn. "In Gadamer, the broader hermeneutical shifts from regional to general hermeneutics, and from epistemological to existential hermeneutics, are clearly evident. His most significant contributions to hermeneutics come from his unique emphasis on how understanding is mediated through language and tradition" (2011, 11).

Di Cesare, Davey, and Vattimo underscore the importance of Gadamer's reconceptualization of understanding in dialogical and ontological terms. They all argue that, for Gadamer, understanding is not an internal or subjective state but rather an event, because for him, understanding, if it is at all really understanding, it is always a *new* understanding. This is why Jens Kertscher chooses Gadamer's famous sentence as the title of his essay, "'We Understand Differently, If We Understand at All': Gadamer's Ontology of Language Reconsidered" (2002, 135). Kertscher highlights Gadamer's ontological conception of language and understanding as an *event* because "Gadamer's main thesis in relation to meaning, understanding, and language, as expressed in *Truth and Method*, is that language, or to use Gadamer's own terms, verbal experience, determines the object as well as the achievement of understanding. Language is therefore not a mere instrument of communication, but a dimension that is independent and constitutes the space of understanding" (Kertscher 2002, 142). Davey and Vattimo provide some of the best interpretations in explaining why Gadamer's ontological shift has political implications. Davey, for example, argues that Gadamer "proposes that understanding does not merely interpret the world but changes it" (2006, xiv). This echoes Vattimo's political conception of the ontological shift as well.

In his essay, "Gadamer and the Problem of Ontology," Gianni Vattimo, the Italian philosopher and student of Gadamer, presents this as "a radical ontological revolution" (2002, 301). For him, Gadamer completely turns around the Marxist maxim about philosophers interpreting the world without changing it. Vattimo rewrites Marx's famous proposition by restating it in Gadamerian terms: "Until now, philosophers thought they were only interpreting the world, yet they were truly changing it" (2002, 299). Given the implications of this turn-around, Vattimo reads Gadamer's ontological shift as a radical revolution and as a philosophical orientation with strong political implications. Vattimo argues that one of the main tenants of Gadamer's hermeneutics "is the identification between the act that interprets that world and the act that changes it" (2002, 299). This is where, according to these scholars, Gadamer's ontological conception of hermeneutics opens new possibilities. Hermeneutics is no longer merely a methodological tool—rather, understanding and non-understanding have their own being; become events capable of altering reality. This is why Di Cesare's book on hermeneutics includes the event of the Holocaust, with her reference to Auschwitz in the title underscoring the centrality of such

apprehensible events in navigating the difficult and treacherous terrain of understanding. In this case, non-understanding itself becomes an event. According to Di Cesare, then, with each new understanding, or non-understanding, a new world comes into being because every understanding, misunderstanding, or even silence, is an act of creation. When our understanding shifts, the world shifts. And sometimes the world vanishes. "At the wall of the limit, the human being completely alone in his foundering. All of a sudden, his knowledge vanishes, the word falls silent and the voice fades away. A lonely and isolating silence takes over. And since the silence is absolute, so, too, is the solitude. The limit situation stands at the limit of language" (2012, 199).

This is why, for both Di Cesare and Vattimo, hermeneutics should not be considered only a philosophy of language and understanding, but rather a philosophy about the limits of language and the process of misunderstanding as integral to understanding. Given the underlying ethical and political implications of the ontological shift of hermeneutics, Vattimo asserts that hermeneutics makes "us accept that there is no ultimate truth of knowledge," and also that "the only ethical imperative is tolerance that befits historically finite beings like us" (2002, 301). Like Di Cesare, Vattimo's essay also shows that "Gadamer's system of thought provides the tools to proceed well beyond such persistent metaphysical prejudices" (2002, 301). Di Cesare and Vattimo thus both invite us to appreciate the political and ethical dimensions in the ontological and dialogical shift of hermeneutics in Gadamer's project.

Digging into these dimensions, we can see that, for both Italian scholars, our being is altered when we experience a shift in meaning and interpretation. For them, Gadamer's linguistic turn implies that language should no longer be viewed merely as tool to represent reality, but rather as a medium in which reality is created and constructed, because one should "say that things are what they truly are," argues Vattimo, "only within the realms of interpretation and language" (2002, 301). This is precisely why David Bohm, the well-known nuclear physicist who worked on dialogue theoretically and politically, would also often say that a "change of meaning is a change of being" (Ellinor 2004, 273). Meaning is not just our epistemological verbal representation of the world, but the result of our interaction with the world in which the world also comes into creation in our interaction with it and interpretation of it. Bernstein, also, explains Gadamer's statement that "'understanding must be conceived as a part of the process of the coming into being of meaning,'" as indicating "that neither meaning nor understanding are to be identified with psychological states of mind [...;] they are essentially and intrinsically linguistic. It is the work of art or text itself that possesses meaning. And furthermore, this meaning is not self-contained—simply 'there' to be discovered; meaning comes to realization through the 'happening' of understanding" (Bernstein 1983, 126).

The *ethical turn* in Gadamer's project is, therefore, at the core of Vilhauer's discussion of Gadamer, a discussion which underscores the ethical and political implications of philosophical hermeneutics. In her book, *The Ethics of Play: Hermeneutics and the Other* (2010), she emphasizes the centrality of dialogical play in Gadamer's thought. According to Vilhauer, Gadamer redefines understanding as an intersubjective process and therefore shifts the nature of the ethical concerns he raises. This, in turn, creates various implications for the application of hermeneutics, including political ones. Vilhauer zooms in on the notion of *play* as a significant and central concept in Gadamer's project, because it lays down a different modality of relating between the I and Thou. Vilhauer highlights Gadamer's insistence of the inescapability of the ethical in any form of encounter. "When the play-process of understanding is finally recognized to have the fundamental form of *dialogue*, the first of the distinctly ethical dimensions of play—and the understanding that emerges in and through it—comes to the fore in a more explicit way" (2010, 75). This ethical turn,

Vilhauer argues, has political implications in our conceiving of otherness, especially in our increasingly globalized context where difficulties in understanding difference often arise. "Though understanding constitutes our very mode of being-in-the-world, and we are thus always already understanding, every new experience presents us with the possibility of alienation, confusion, and a rupture in understanding" (2010, 129). For her, what is at stake in Gadamer's project is the way we could create alternative ways of encountering the world, especially by inviting us to confront our avoidances and apprehensions. Gadamer's Hermeneutics, therefore, according to Vilhauer, helps us go beyond usually limiting dualities and categories.

> Hermeneutics, as a theory and practice of understanding and correct interpretation, aims to confront the alienation we face with new meaning, and to learn from the Other in what proves to be an open-ended process of grasping the unfolding truths of our shared world. The account of understanding that Gadamer provides aims to give us guidance in our efforts to reach understanding with one another, and works to help us past various obstacles that stand in the way of our quest. (2010, 129)

Although other scholars of Gadamer have taken notice of his unique reappropriation of the notion of play to explicate his dialogical process, like Grondin in his essay, "Play, Festival, and Ritual in Gadamer," (2000) it is actually Vilhauer who shows Gadamer's radicality in offering a completely alternative mode of knowledge to the dominant scientific and cultural forms. "The concept of play inevitably depicts the structure of our fundamental relationship to the world in a way so different from the Cartesian one that has dominated philosophical thinking (all the way through Kant and the nineteenth century, according to Gadamer), that with 'play' Gadamer manages to call into question all the familiar concepts of subject, object, knowledge, and truth that have been handed down to us by the early modern era" (2010, 26). Vilhauer therefore connects the concept of *play* to the thrust of Gadamer's ethical orientation, and hence the deeper political dimensions of his project.

What makes Vilhauer's work unique is her own ethical hermeneutics of Gadamer's concept of play. Gadamer, argues Vilhauer, is emphatic in drawing attention to the denial of our ontological standing in the world in the modern era, because "Gadamer repeatedly suggests that the goal of domination is built right into the objectifying method of the natural sciences, where making what one studies into an 'object' is itself an attempt to become active 'master' over and against a passive 'thing." Consequently, even though we live in dialogically animated world, according to Vilhauer, we avoid dialogue and interaction and instead break down the thing we study into its parts "so that it may be more easily controlled and manipulated" (2010, 7).

Although, in our modern age, there are some hermeneutical investigations that remain focused on techniques and method, as Porter and Robinson argue in their book, the real shift has been in the way hermeneutics "has become a general theory of understanding for all spheres of human awareness" (2011, 5). Richard Palmer captures Gadamer's influence on this shift by quoting the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who states that "'science manipulates things and gives up living in them'" (Palmer 1969, 7). Palmer further argues that we have

> forgotten that the literary work is not a manipulatable object completely at our disposal; it is a human voice out of the past, a voice which must somehow be brought to life. Dialogue, not dissection, opens the world of a literary work. Disinterested objectivity is not appropriate to the understanding of a literary work. The modern critic, of course, pleads for passion—even surrender to the 'autonomous being' of the work—yet all the while he is treating the work as an object of analysis. Literary works are best regarded, however, not primarily as objects of analysis but as humanly created texts which speak. One must risk his personal 'world' if he is to enter the life-world of a great lyric poem, novel, or drama.

> What is needed for this is not some scientific method in disguise, or an 'anatomy of criticism' with the most brilliant and subtle typologies and classifications, but a humanistic understanding of interpretation of a work involves. (Palmer 1969, 7)

1.8 Relevant Problems and Debates

In order to really appreciate the contribution of Gadamer and locate his place in the philosophical landscape, we need to recognize the importance of his reconceptualization of the phenomenology of dialogue as a mode of being in the world. What makes Gadamer's project relevant to discussions on otherness and power, as the scholars above argue, is his emphasis on the inevitability of encounter; more specifically, his emphasis on the inherent ethicality of encounter.

Several scholars critical of modernity see the consequences of the modernist paradigm as a form of self-enclosure, as a way of bracketing off the world. By understanding the attempts to recover the world, and hence acknowledging the obstacles to such a recovery, we can locate and assess Gadamer's breakthroughs in a more appropriate manner. The sharp detours Gadamer's project offers cannot be properly appreciated without understanding the implications of his shift towards a dialogical conception of understanding. This shift, as seen in the discussion above, raises as problematic the *monological* character of Western epistemologies and highlights the dangers in not accounting for prejudice and for-understanding within the process of any understanding. Gadamer's emphasis on recovering the dialogical condition of understanding, and therefore of knowledge, reveals the genealogy of the Western monologue as fraught with ethical problems, especially when considering the issues of control and power that are inherent in the production of knowledge. The underlying assumptions of modernity and the way "otherness" is constructed within the modernist paradigm, whether in the "silence" of the other or in the inequality of the dialogical interlocuters, highlights the place of philosophical hermeneutics as being indispensable in any of our conversations about knowledge and power.

The misconception that Gadamer overemphasizes understanding and consensus is one of the main reasons for Gadamer's conspicuous absence in conversations on power relations and marginalization, and most critics of modernist approaches generally do not engage with Gadamer's project. In his book *The Ways of Power: Hermeneutics, Ethics and Social Criticism* (2002), Fairfield presents Gadamer's project as one of the critiques of modernity that should not be overlooked. Moreover, he also shows that it is particularly capable of dealing with many of the gaps in the various approaches critical of modernity and foundationalism. Cognisant of Gadamer's conspicuous absence from these conversations, Fairfield argues that various "conceptions of ethical and social criticism have been much debated in recent decades by many of the discontents of foundationalism" (2002, 13) who, despite thinking in historical terms and emphasizing the conditionedness of thought, tend to overlook, not only Gadamer's project, but other issues like their own situatedness. This is why Fairfield applies Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and dialogical modality "to relations of power that are often overlooked" by modern and postmodern dominant paradigms (2002, 13). "If we wish to develop a nonfoundationalist and critical rationality we must begin by recognizing the pervasiveness of interpretation and dialogue in our effort to appraise the forms of power endemic to modern practices" (Fairfield 2002, 13).

Fairfield thus examines why the projects of Foucault, Habermas and Ricouer are found wanting. While they make good contributions and provide strong critiques of the foundationalist paradigm, they also leave out some significant dimensions. Fairfield is emphatic about the critical import of philosophical hermeneutics in these critical conversations. He argues that we cannot

approach or analyze power relations conceived within the dialogical encounter without also acknowledging the historical situatedness of the critic and her encounter with the "object" of her study within a concrete situation. He therefore suggests that we cannot engage in critiques of foundationalism without seriously engaging with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, given his insistence on the ineluctability of dialogue.

Most critical thinkers who take up the themes of domination, power relations, and intersubjectivity hardly touch upon Gadamer, when these themes are in fact at the core of his project. In many discussions around the marginalization of the "other," the muteness of the "subaltern," or fear of the "different," Gadamer's relevance is overlooked, despite these being prominent underlying themes in philosophical hermeneutics. In his essay, "Critical Fusions: Toward a Genuine 'Hermeneutics of Suspicion," Lorenzo Simpson stresses the importance of the "ongoing relevance of hermeneutic approaches to matters that are far beyond the field of literary and textual analysis, to which hermeneutic strategies have all too often ben restricted" (2016, 21). Grondin and Warnke also underscore the unique position of philosophical hermeneutics in critical conversations. Like Bernstein, they place Gadamer on a fine line between foundationalism and deconstruction. Here, Gadamer conceives of understanding as a possibility, albeit one fraught with difficulties and tensions. According to them, for Gadamer there is not understanding or misunderstanding, but rather a movement between the two in which finite understanding could arise. Ultimately, argues Di Cesare, Gadamer conceives of understanding as finite and limited; as a process that is always happening within a situated historical consciousness—with room for more. In her book, *Utopia of Understanding*, Di Cesare stresses the issue of limits and the experience of negativity in philosophical hermeneutics. She shows how Gadamer's discussion of the limits of method extends to other areas in his work, and explains how Gadamer sees language as both possibility and limit. According to Di Cesare, Gadamer's stress on limit creates possibility and openness, because the "limit says there is more" (2012, 9). Therefore, the limits that Gadamer stresses, "are not to be understood here as 'lacks' or 'flaws' of language, measured against the yardstick of reason's perfection" (2012, 8). Gadamer, she argues, offers an approach to both experience and language in which imperfection and misunderstanding are also included as elements of the process of understanding.

Gadamer's interest in the difficulty and negativity of experience, as well as his interest in the shortcomings that naturally occur in conversation, shows the openness of philosophical hermeneutics to what Dallmayr calls the "tensional nature of all understanding" (2010, 109). Given Gadamer's emphasis on the experience of limits, Di Cesare argues, "language is far from being a means of dominating and calculating the world" (2012, 8). This kind of nuanced position and the emphasis on "human finitude," according to Di Cesare, is what places Gadamer in a unique position (2012, 9). Vilhauer therefore argues that Gadamer offers a conception of understanding that stands between Derrida's impossibility of understanding and the Enlightenment faith in the possibility of full understanding (2010, 91). "A hermeneutical conception of critique renounces the myth of total enlightenment and views critique as opening up new dimensions of meaning, revealing what habitual understandings conceal and transforming what is given into what is questionable" (Fairfield 2002, 106).

Grondin brings out the resistant side of dialogue while acknowledging that Gadamer's emphasis on the dialogical and linguistic "has not been well understood" (1995, 150). He argues that to "know how to convey in what is said all that which cannot be said […] is the perilous task of discourse" (1995, 152). This is the case because understanding, according to Gadamer "is less a domination of a state of affairs than a participation in shared meaning" (Grondin 1995, 30). In

hermeneutics, argues Grondin, "we only understand to the extent that we are willing to engage in the dialogue opened by what is said and venture into all that isn't said, but remains essential to understanding" (1995, 30). Di Cesare sees this as an area in which Gadamer and Derrida are close, because "hermeneutics is open to the infinity of everyday dialogical practices by referring to the originary dialogical horizon where every saying evokes an unsaid, and every answer a question" (2013, 21-22). This is the case, argues Grondin, because Gadamer always emphasises the *limits* of understanding, reminding us of the finitude of our knowing. "The original hermeneutical experience is therefore less that of language than that of the *limits* of language. It is because language never succeeds in exhausting everything that want to be said and understood that our understanding always remains in a permanent quest of language" (1995, 150).

Grondin states that to "understand is to bring out the unsaid which is necessary in order to accomplish that which was said" (1995, 152). Vilhauer argues that according to Gadamer "every new experience presents us with the possibility of alienation, confusion, and a rupture in understanding" (2010, 129). But this is precisely why, for Gadamer, a breakdown in understanding also "present[s] us with an opportunity for our understanding to grow, shift, and become deeper" (2010, 129). Vilhauer therefore insists that difference, misunderstanding, and rupture are integral to Gadamer's conception of understanding, which are usually overlooked in the literature. Perhaps this is why Dallmayr insists that Gadamer emphasizes the *tensional nature of all understanding*. Like Simpson, Dallmayr is emphatic in stressing how, in Gadamer's conception, understanding is an open and dynamic process that can never be fully stabilized or completed:

> This aspect is admirably highlighted by Gadamer at another place when he speaks of the tensional character of all understanding—a tension derived from the distance or difference between reader and text, between self and other, between present and past […] This tensional character also affects the circular quality of interpretation—what is called the 'hermeneutical circle.' This circle is not a closed sphere, permitting only an empty turning 'round and round,' but an open circle fostering a learning process or a steady amelioration and transformation of understanding. (Dallmayr 2010, 109)

Gadamer's refusal to stabilize language, according to Grondin, is his way of resisting the thrust and hegemony of Western thought (1995, 106). For Gadamer, argues Grondin, the "propositional statement" is one of the main ways language is stabilized and completed. Gadamer's conception of the dialogical character of language thus has particular implications, because it is "a conception which is, without doubt, directed against the hegemony of propositional logic" (Grondin 1995, 106). After all, Gadamer's entire thesis is predicated on questioning the reliance on methodic means to stabilize and secure knowledge. Therefore, the underlying intent of his project, according to Grondin, "is to call into question the traditional fixation of philosophical thought on the theoretical" (1995, 106).

Given the ability of hermeneutics to mount serious challenges to the thrust of Western thought, Fairfield, in his later book *Philosophical Hermeneutics Reinterpreted: Dialogues with Existentialism, Pragmatism, Critical Theory and Postmodernism* (2011), revisits the need to dialogue with Gadamer's project. It is for this reason, as well, that Simpson advocates for a "critical hermeneutics," given "the commonly voiced charges of relativism and critical impotence" against philosophical hermeneutics (2016, 22.) Like Fairfield, he also affirms that "hermeneutics can be a critical philosophical enterprise as much as an interpretive one," because "the wide-ranging salience of hermeneutic approaches to philosophical issues […] show that the relevance and value of hermeneutic philosophy is by no means as limited as many of its critics maintain" (2016, 22).

Despite the oversight observed by Fairfield and Simpson, it is worth noting that some of the main scholars who problematize Western metaphysics and critique foundationalist paradigms, and who *propose the dialogic as an alternative*, tend to miss the central contribution Gadamer brings to this conversation. Among these are well known scholars who propose a *dialogical alternative* to Western domination, without engaging with Gadamer's dialogical modality.

There is an emphasis on the dialogic as an alternative perspective in the projects of Christopher Falzon, Gayatri Spivak, and John McCumber. They highlight the problems in Western approaches to understanding and consequently the silencing of the other but end up appealing to well-known figures to squeeze dialogical alternatives out of their works. Falzon, for example, rushes to re-mold Foucault's relational conceptions of power to propose a more dialogical alternative to Western hegemony, because "Foucault's thinking is in fact amenable to a dialogical interpretation, offering an understanding of subjects as immersed in inherently reciprocal intersubjective relations" (2010, 223). Spivak, in her critique of Foucault's failure to look into the archeology of colonization, points out the problematic implications of "ignoring" the economic and cultural marginalization of the majority of the world inhabitants, and chooses Derrida (1988, 308). John McCumber, on the other hand, raises *dialogue as a form of resistance to Western thought*, and proposes dialogue as a dynamic alternative to the way epistemology and metaphysics stabilize and finalize language.

As discussed above, Falzon remodels Foucault's relational conception of power into a dialogical model to provide a missing alternative to Western metaphysics; as a result, he reads Foucault's project as one that could offer a dialogical solution. But because Foucault does not directly present the dialogical model as an alternative to the problems of domination, especially regarding the problematic of power relations, Falzon attempts to find theorists who provide a dialogical model and selects Habermas as a possible candidate. However, given Habermas' appeal to some foundationalist ideas and his attempt to rescue Western metaphysics, Falzon ultimately finds the project of Habermas to be a poor candidate for presenting this dialogical alternative to the Western foundationalist paradigm. "Thus, although Habermas moves beyond the isolated Cartesian and Kantian subject, locating the subject in a context of dialogue with others, he also reformulates a totalising standpoint in dialogical terms. Otherness, the sway of external forces is interpreted purely as the distortion of an ideal unity, something to be overcome, and hence is sacrificed to a totalising vision" (Falzon 1998, 82). For Falzon, the main question is not simply the critique of Western metaphysics, but the search for an alternative mode of being and relating that rises to the double challenge of going beyond the foundationalist transcendental paradigm while also not falling into a fragmented relativism. In understanding the problematics these scholars raise, the potential of Gadamer's project takes on a different significance.

The issue of domination underlying the thrust of Western thought and science, which John McCumber raises poignantly, underscores Gadamer's relevance to this discussion. It highlights the significance of the implications of his project considering the serious challenges we are facing in opening up this conversation. In his essay, "Dialogue as Resistance to Western Metaphysics," McCumber raises the problem of the way dialogue has been arrested and emptied of its inherent function—movement of meaning. McCumber uses the metaphor of a stalled car to discuss the way we arrest the natural movement of language that occurs in dialogue (2005, 203). He problematizes the old view of language and speech acts as fixed carriers of meaning, and also the way we use language to stabilize meaning and fix truth. The old "view of speech as the imparting of information, and of language as a medium for the conveyance of truth," argues McCumber, "remained basically unchallenged until the last century, when Heidegger attempted to articulate a

different view in *Being and Time*. It is unclear that Heidegger's account is successful" (2005, 203). But not being familiar with Gadamer's conception of dialogue and Gadamer's differences with Heidegger, McCumber proposes Jurgen Habermas and his communicative theory as a way to advance the possibility of dialogue. The perspective of Habermas can certainly contribute to the issues of communication.

However, McCumber's own modality of dialogue is far more hermeneutic and aligned to Gadamer's dynamic *linguisticality* than the empirical critique of ideology found in Habermas's transcendent critical position. McCumber is interested in providing a dynamic alternative to language, with an emphasis on dialogue to revive the essential function of language—movement and creativity. And hence he sees this potential function as a tool of resistance and as a vehicle for navigating difficult terrains:

> In order to begin formulating an alternative view of language, I would like to suggest that viewing it exclusively as a descriptive medium maybe ben a little bit like viewing an automobile as a personal climate control device—as a machine which enables me, perhaps with a few friends, to sit comfortably warm on cold days, and cool on hot days. The fact that this climate control device also moves around at my behest, that it has wheels and an engine and brakes and an accelerator—well, maybe that is just irrelevant to serious discussion of automobiles. (2005, 203)

McCumber's metaphor is meant to demonstrate the limited ways we perceive language from the modernist lens, but, importantly, it also draws our attention to the contexts of domination we maintain when arresting and blocking the natural movement of dialogue. Towards the end of his essay, McCumber provides a somewhat pessimistic conclusion about the conditions of our contemporary moment given the near impossibility of genuine dialogue, because "for the West to adopt any or all of these ways of understanding its own dialogues with other cultures would be to adopt a non-dominating view of language and that is (I fear) a lot to hope for. It has not begun to occur even on the individual level, let alone when entire cultures and civilizations are encountering each other" (2005, 207). This is why McCumber is invested in widening the scope of the dialogue on dialogue by viewing the modernist project through the lens of domination: to open up options and exit strategies. McCumber's conception of the modernist project is complex and defined around power relations, economic advantages, and, most importantly, around strict linguistic and epistemological barriers. His questions and metaphors, especially his emphasis on the linguistic and epistemological barriers, raise serious questions that echo the ethical thrust underlying Gadamer's project. McCumber's vision aligns with Gadamer's conception of the potential transformative power of dialogue because he hopes that we can "one day view encounters with others, in our own and other cultures, not merely as occasions to exchange truth but as chances to grow and free ourselves" (2005, 207-208).

1.9 The History of Losing the World: The Modernist Paradigm

Hanna Arendt argues that *with the birth of the modern world the world was lost*. She dates the beginning of this loss to the moment when Descartes cast his doubt upon reality, thereby disconnecting us from the world. But more significantly, for her, was the drive underlying this doubt, a drive which sought to find approaches and methodologies to secure knowledge (1973, 277). And to secure knowledge, subjectively experienced reality was suddenly dubious—put differently, there was a need for secure foundations beyond what the senses registered or what was

experienced internally. Arendt asserts that Cartesian philosophy is haunted by two nightmares which, in a sense, became the larger condition of the whole modern age. These nightmares are basic and well known. In the first, the reality of the world as we see it was doubted. The second was the closing of the gate for a human being to trust her experience and inner subjective knowing (Arendt 1973, 277).

This did not occur simply because Cartesian philosophy shifted consciousness, but because the emergence of the worldless world, as Arendt argues, was almost inevitable once the consequences and implications of the modern worldview were unleashed. Falzon echoes this loss of the world as well:

> Descartes employs scepticism to destroy the idea that our experiences link us to a wider world. In the First Meditation, methodical doubt is used to raise the possibility that all our experiences are mere 'delusions of dreams,' and that they tell us nothing about the world. [...] [T]his destructive work opens the way to positive developments, to the establishment of a standpoint beyond doubt. [...] [I]f we accept that all our experiences may be deceptive, what remains beyond doubt is an 'I' that is required in order to have these experiences, to sustain them, however deceptive they maybe. (Falzon 1998, 21)

In order to situate Gadamer, then, we need to understand the significance of his undoing of the Cartesian subject. With the advent of the Cartesian worldview, the modern period secures a transcendental knowing subject out of space and time, reflected also in the angst of the early hermeneutic scholars, like Dilthey, who so desperately wanted to establish scientific methods to secure the content of knowledge. In other words, modernist scholars wanted to establish a ground of doubtless consciousness. They were invested in finding foundations to secure knowledge of the world beyond doubt and illusion. "However, with the Cartesian move, a great gulf has opened up between the self and the world. The self has become an obstacle that Descartes has to overcome in order to have knowledge of the world, and it becomes possible to imagine that the world beyond the self might not exist" (Falzon 1998, 22). This is why there is an element of a *coup-d'état* in Gadamer's dialogical shift of understanding. By redefining understanding as being beyond our control, Gadamer usurps the transcendent subject, sovereign over an external disconnected reality, as the only heir to knowledge. Up to this point, the thrust of Western thought, especially from the Enlightenment's perspective, and the centrality of the Cartesian cogito, as the literature here suggests, had been based on perceiving understanding as being within the control of an autonomous knowing subject.

Vilhauer stresses the obstacles that arose in the modernist paradigm, and the solutions Gadamer's dialogical model offers in response. She argues that, for Gadamer, the disengagement, distance, and claims of neutrality that characterize science are not necessarily appropriate means of advancing understanding or knowledge. While modernity frames the model scientist as one who "stand[s] back as a disengaged observer," Vilhauer notes that this stance does not "risk oneself or one's presuppositions," and examines why Gadamer "demands the opposite," to these attempts that aim to stabilize and secure reality (2010, 55). According to her, the modern scientific method "is based on a profound misunderstanding of what makes understanding possible and hinders the process in which we can come to understand" (2010, 55). She therefore puts forward Gadamer's perspective as a way to widen the scientific view. In other words, if we really want to expand our knowledge or seek to gain a new insight, "we must not keep ourselves at a distance, but *open* ourselves to strange and different meaning and actively *engage* it" (2010, 55).

The implications of Gadamer's view for the social and humanist sciences are even more profound. Warnke therefore argues that while the prejudice against experience, especially subjective experience, led to it losing its epistemic legitimacy in this new closed world, Gadamer "locates the personal attitudes of interpreters in history and thus undermines both an Enlightenment conception of objectivity and an individualistic subjectivism" (Warnke 1987, 81). To deal with human events, productions in art and literature, as well as all forms of experience, the humanities and social sciences attempted to create their own secure categories of knowledge, and molded themselves on the natural sciences that had started yielding positive and successful results. "Natural science had become the yardstick against which all science was measured," argues Vilhauer, "and its method had become considered the only way to produce certain, reliable knowledge. It was only by the utilization of the natural science's mode of investigation that the human sciences of the nineteenth century could maintain their status as 'sciences' at all" (2010, 8). Paradoxically, then, the attempt to understand the world in a certain and reliable manner resulted in disconnecting us from the world and in reducing the spectrum of knowledge. In other words, the world was lost to us at the beginning of modernity, and, as a result, we found ourselves in a closed off monologue, attempting to control and domesticate the order of Being. Gadamer's concern, therefore, argues Joel Weinsheimer, revolves around the narrowing down of knowledge into a "technical model of applied knowledge"—a model which, in its slow ascent to universality, has also reduced the world. Weinsheimer thus reiterates Gadamer's call for the need for a "new Enlightenment" to "overcome the old Enlightenment superstition that we can make our world anything we would have it" (1998, vii).

Considering the discussion of the scholars above, we come to realize that Gadamer's hermeneutic revolution is therefore arguably one of the best suited approaches to recovering the world, because Gadamer redefines the process of understanding, and hence various forms of knowing, as arising in interaction with the world, in a give-and-take process, situated within already formed perceptions. Accordingly, Porter and Robinson appreciate the implications of power and control in the way Gadamer redefines knowledge when he redefines understanding as an intersubjective dynamic. They underscore how, for Gadamer, the world is not a separate distant external phenomenon that we could manipulate in a one-way direction.

> Gadamer proposes that understanding is not something we grasp through experimental isolation and interrogation but that which grasps us as an experience or event of meaning outside of our control. Method is a valuable tool but it is severely limited. Genuine understanding, for Gadamer, emerges when we begin to see what is questionable in new ways and open ourselves to a dialogue with other, e.g., text, person, work of art. (2011, 10)

Davey also argues that, for Gadamer, understanding is never within the control of any side, because understanding is not something that happens outside language, with language being employed merely as a tool. Rather, for Gadamer, understanding is always linguistically mediated, and hence language is the larger play in which dialogue partners engage. Davey explains the significance of Gadamer's ontological shift of understanding and why he emphasizes the *event* of understanding. "Stress is laid on the event of understanding because its random but autonomous occurrence breaks the subject's control over understanding. It subjects the knowing subject to the disclosure of understanding. Understanding is no longer subject to the will of the subject" (2006, 33). This is why Gadamer's conditions for genuine dialogue cannot not be separated from his ethics or politics, and hence his relevance in conversations on the connection between knowledge and power.

Falzon stresses that our incessant and relentless will to know and control the world is inextricably connected to our first anxious experiences and interactions with the world, where "the child's jarring recognition that it is not all-powerful" impacts us and forms us. These anxieties, argues Falzon, are then articulated into a larger cultural pathos (1998, 33). It is perhaps not surprising then, as Falzon points out, that Kant's definition of maturity is not about the ability of dialoging with the external world, but rather the complete and radical autonomy from the control and influence of the external world, hence his emphasis on complete liberation from any external authority (Falzon 1998, 27). Bernstein connects Kantian liberation, understood as the need for epistemological assurance, to a larger trend that had been forming, and thus argues that "the 'radical subjectivism' that Gadamer ascribes to Kant's aesthetics is not limited to aesthetic phenomena, or even to Kant, but pervades all of modern thought. It is itself a reflection of the modern obsession with objectivism" (Bernstein 1983, 126). Bernstein shows how this Kantian rebellion against the external world had the particular consequence of separating knowledge(s) into subjective and objective categories, thereby deepening the Cartesian divide and bracketing off entire spectrums of human experiences:

> One of Gadamer's most striking criticisms of nineteenth-century German hermeneutics is that although it intended to demonstrate the legitimacy of the human sciences as autonomous disciplines, it implicitly accepted the very dichotomy of the subjective and the objective that was employed to call into question the cognitive legitimacy of these disciplines. (Bernstein 1983, 126)

The constant attempt to step out of history in order to secure a stabilized, transcendent, and reliable access to reality is a central problematic raised by critics of modernity. Most critics see it as a central feature of modernity, one that cannot not be separated from questions of power and domination. According to Fairfield, however, the attempt to jump out of history meets with appropriate responses in Gadamer's insistence on the temporality of knowledge. Gadamer's notion of *historically effective consciousness* emphasizes the temporal situatedness of any knowledge, and therefore points to the impossibility of stepping out of history or removing ourselves from cultural conditioning and historical perspectivism. Gadamer's insistence on our situatedness makes his contribution highly relevant and central to this discussion. Fairfield therefore emphasizes how philosophical hermeneutics "adopts an attitude of historical consciousness not only in interpreting texts distant in time and place, but in our thinking about philosophical matters generally, including our approach to ethics and politics" (2002, 6).

Gadamer's notion of the inevitability of prejudice and his concept of effective history directly deals with our situatedness within tradition and history, even including the situatedness of our modes of knowledge, no matter how methodic we attempt to be. As Grondin puts it, "the principle of effective history clearly implies becoming conscious of the continuing efficacy of tradition beyond our conscious awareness of these effects, and therefore, the impossibility of a complete self-awareness of consciousness about itself" (1995, 94). As a result, argues Fairfield, acknowledging the impossibility of escaping our situatedness makes us think differently. "We are to remain cognizant" he urges, "of our involvement in tradition rather than continue the Enlightenment project of leaping out of history or beginning from scratch" (Fairfield 2002, 6). This anxiety around securing and stabilizing knowledge of external reality takes the form of an epistemological determination to break free from history, according to Fairfield, which has implications for the tendency to control and subjugate external phenomena, including other human beings (Fairfield 2002, 167).

In light of the discussion above, the difficulty of stepping back into history while recognizing the specificity of our cultural contexts becomes poignantly clear, in the general trajectory of Western thought and metaphysics. Even the most radical attempts at critiquing metaphysics and reconnecting us to the materiality of history end up, at the same time, stepping out of history. Marx's project, for example, which aims to critique Hegelian metaphysics, still recreates metaphysical transcendent categories of analysis outside of time, and thus does not acknowledge "the priority of concrete social and historical practices" (Falzon 1998, 30).

This is why Falzon finds in Marx's humanist successors—including those engaged in critical social theory, as in the Frankfurt School[11] (*Frankfuter Schule*)—the constant attempt to reformulate and reaffirm foundationalist assumptions. They consciously seek to secure truth through subscribing to methodic grounds, because once again, "the turn to history will be compromised by the effort to preserve an essentially anti-historical, totalizing standpoint" (Falzon 1998, 30). This is the main problematic from the perspective of the discussion of power, because in the obsession with stabilizing our world, there obviously lies the constant drive to control and manipulate a world that seems chaotic and out of control. The attempt to secure a totalizing metaphysical position, "imprisoned by its own ruling categories," argues Falzon, "is unable to give any kind of historical account of their emergence, and we are left with a standpoint which is abstractly ahistorical and unconditioned" (1998, 30). This is where Fairfield finds Gadamer's emphasis on historical consciousness, including that of the scholars themselves, even if it seems somewhat radical, as one of the perspectives that addresses this significant gap, not just in relation to foundationalism, but also in addressing the underlying assumptions among some of the critics of foundationalism themselves (2011, 165-166). Grondin argues that Gadamer conceived of his approach to effective history as an urgent task facing philosophy and the social sciences, because, for Gadamer, we cannot conceive of any form knowledge, or any propositional statements, as transcending history.

> Philosophy, hermeneutically understood, is not exhausted by a system of true sentences. Its propositions may only be understood when one has referred them back to their motivational background. The content of philosophical propositions, as all propositions, cannot be read from their semantic-logical character. To understand philosophically and hermeneutically one must proceed to the motivation of the spoken. (Grondin 1995, 94)

According to Fairfield, the power of philosophical hermeneutics lies in pointing us to the practice of dialogue as a means of increasing our awareness of our own limits. Dialogical dynamics help create spaces to reflect upon our own critiques, because in dialogue we also allow ourselves to *hear critiques about our critiques*. This is why, for Fairfield, even leading-edge critiques can fall short of being aware of the historical conditions of their emergence and stay blind to their own limits. "The methods of genealogy and ideology critique are unable to pronounce a critique that is philosophically compelling while remaining cognizant of its conditions and limits" (2002, 165). This is in contrast to philosophical hermeneutics, argues Fairfield, because Gadamer does not advance a particular program or system of ideas, but opens up spaces for reflection and critique to

[11] The Frankfurt School is a German intellectual movement centered on social theory and critical philosophy that started at the Institute for Social Research (Institut für Sozialforschung), an attached department at Goethe University in Frankfurt, in the late 1920s. The movement included academics, intellectuals, political dissidents, and writers who were critical of capitalism, fascism, and communism. More recently, since the 60s, the movement has been guided by Jürgen Habermas, while before him, the Frankfurt school has been generally associated with Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse.

inform more ethically sensitive practices. "Hermeneutical conceptions of ethics focus not on justifying abstract and universal principles but on the practice of dialogue and its promotion" (2002, 140). The primacy of dialogue in Gadamer's project, argues Vilhauer, therefore redefines knowledge in terms quite different from the paradigm of modernity (2010, 28).

1.10 The Ontological Shift and the Inevitability of Encounter

Philosophical hermeneutics therefore provides a critical orientation that makes us recognize the ways we attempt to close off the world. Vilhauer urges us to become more aware of those who are *always already* in the conversation but whom we push out and silence. She thus invites us "to remove the obstacles that keep us from a genuine participation with our interlocutors" (2010, 130). As these comments suggest, Vilhauer is interested in Gadamer's discussion of the ethical conditions of understanding and interpretation. Gadamer's ethical concerns, she argues, help us re-address the nature of the dialogic situation, because, for Gadamer, ethics can never be evaded in our inter-subjective interactions (2010, 129). "Instead, we must *open* ourselves to a kind of listening in which we allow our own prejudgements to be truly challenged and transformed" (Vilhauer 2010, 130). Due to Gadamer's understanding of knowledge as arising in inter-subjectivity, Gadamer is invested in challenging and difficult conversations:

> One of the chief virtues of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is that it seeks to find willing dialogue partners, never merely passive audiences. Thus, unlike many current (especially scientific) interpretive methodologies, it does not treat given subject matters, texts, or people with dispassionate and neutralizing distance, but as mutually influential partners in an ongoing interpretive dance or play of give-and take. (Porter and Robinson 2011, 10)

According to Warnke, Gadamer never offers the possibility of intentional, one-sided, and prejudice-free understanding. In her book, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition, and Reason* (1987), Warnke argues that "Gadamer is concerned to counter suggestions that because we are prejudiced or, otherwise put, because we speak a certain language and employ certain categories we are cut off from other languages, other cultures and even our own past, and thus can only misunderstand them" (Warnke 1987, 81). What Gadamer offers instead, according to her, is a new direction where we see the necessity of engagement; where we see that the dialogical encounter initiates a process of a back-and-forth movement between understanding and misunderstanding. Gadamer is aware, even certain, that in any encounter there will be misunderstandings or attempts to assimilate and co-opt (1987, 75-76). This, Warnke argues, is precisely why Gadamer insists that *prejudice is built into the very structure of understanding*—because we cannot understand anything without applying our already formed fore-understandings, which are what allow us to experience the world in the first place (1987, 80). In other words, for Gadamer, it is our prejudices that make understanding possible in the first place.

This is also why, in the case of Spivak, Falzon, and McCumber, we immediately see Gadamer's relevance, whether in problematizing the silence of the subaltern or in raising the dialogical dynamic as an alternative to domination, especially given its ethical importance and political potential. Both Fairfield and Vilhauer highlight how Gadamer problematizes the issue of "representing" the other, which is the central problematic in Spivak's essay, as the lowest level of historical consciousness. Spivak finds this obliviousness to the situatedness of the intellectual deeply problematic. She problematizes the notion of "representing" by discussing how recognition

of the subaltern position becomes the very spot of erasure as it becomes "recognition by assimilation" of the other, especially of the "female other," without considering the silencing effect (1988, 294)

However, for both Fairfield and Vilhauer, representing the other, according to Gadamer, places the other in the position of an *object* to be discussed rather than meeting her as an *equal interlocutor* to be engaged. This way of organizing relations with the other cannot be disconnected from placing oneself in a disengaged "objective" position, which is the ideally valued position within the scientific paradigm. And yet, as Vilhauer argues, this precise issue—assuming one's own neutrality and ignoring one's own prejudices and situatedness within a particular tradition and perspective—is highly problematic for Gadamer. Spivak raises the problem of representing the oppressed other as predominant in the Marxist paradigm, and argues that, for Marx, "'they [the oppressed] cannot represent themselves and so must be represented'" (Spivak 1988, 276-277). But according to both Fairfield and Vilhauer, even this "charitable" position is deeply problematic from Gadamer's critical stance—it is indicative of violating the I-Thou of relating, and thus results in an asymmetrical relationality.

Fairfield strongly addresses this problematization of the "charitable position" in his treatment of Gadamer's discussion of the three levels of relationality, which also informs his critique of Emmanuel Levinas. For Gadamer, charity is not always a positive dynamic of relating with the other, given the implications of hierarchy. To understand how Gadamer measures levels of equality, discussed in more detail in the chapter on Gadamer, it helps to see how Gadamer places relationality within a spectrum. He measures the variation of levels of equality in contexts of encounter by highlighting three types of interaction (2013, 369). He places the I-Thou as the highest level, followed by the master/slave, or oppressed/oppressed dyad, and then points to the I-It as the lowest level, where the other is perceived merely as an object (2013, 367). Despite the good intentions, the emphasis on elevating the other ethically, argues Fairfield, could just recreate the problem in a different way. The danger lies in the possibility of simply reversing this hierarchy and leaving the problem of asymmetry remaining in the balance. According to Fairfield, then, Gadamer's insistence on the dialectical character of the intersubjective context, and the possibility of movement and balance within the relational dynamic itself, evades such problematic possibilities. "For Gadamer, the dialectical reciprocity between self and other prevents the ethical relation from deteriorating into one of mastery and servitude—a reciprocity that finds political-legal expression in the principle of equal rights—while Levinas adamantly reserves moral priority for the Other" (2002, 160-161).

Fairfield is aware of the positive implications of the ethical priority of the other, but, given the inherit power implications in any encounter and how easily relationality can slip to the negative, he considers what Gadamer offers to be a safeguarding mechanism. This whole theme, of course, requires a longer conversation which addresses love and compassion in their self-denying expressions and thereby enriches our understanding of the spectrum of the human experience. But what is at stake in this conversation is the delicate balance of wills that arise in the situation of encounter, whether in the voice of the other from the past, or in the presence of the physical other in the present.

Despite Gadamer's own insistence on goodwill and the relevance of the beautiful in interacting with the other, his emphasis on the dialectical nature of relationality addresses the ineluctable political and power implications of encounter. The position of charity, Fairfield argues, requires caution, given the necessity of considering the power implications inherent in any encounter. This is precisely the concern raised by Spivak when she questions *representing the*

other's oppression as a form of charity instead of *including her* in the conversation. For Fairfield, the impetus of Gadamer is plain; "to avoid the totalitarian implications of rampant egoism (an egoism ostensibly underlying many of the most profound evils of modern times)" (2002, 161). This cautious treading when dealing with otherness and difference, argues Fairfield, is indicative of the political and ethical sensitivities of philosophical hermeneutics—neither an I nor an Other can dictate, even in relations of charity and compassion. "Alterity must not be reduced to ipseity,[12] nor the imperative of recognition to the self-regard of the I" (2002, 161).

Davey sees the issue from another perspective and offers a frame that can rehabilitate the ethical import of the other in the stance of Levinas. Davey argues that dialogue is not only about including the other; it is also about recognizing oneself in the distance and difference of the other. There is an ethical emphasis on the importance of the other in Gadamer's stance, paralleling in some way the stance of Levinas on the priority of the other. The centrality of the other in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, according to Davey, is not just about fulfilling our curiosity about external reality, elevating ourselves to represent others, or even acting in charitable ways towards them, but about acknowledging that our very understanding of ourselves is dependent upon open interaction with the other (2006, 240). Davey differentiates between the ways Gadamer and Derrida tackle the issue of the difficulty of understanding. Gadamer brings to the foreground the ethical problem of claiming to understand the other, because such a claim makes me blind to my own self as well. In contrast, Derrida does something different than Gadamer, argues Davey, because in the case of Derrida, he connects such difficulties to the impossibility of understanding, argues Davey. Gadamer, however, connects the difficulties to the recognition of the voice of the other and "my ethical dependence on the other," since "the other's distance from my understanding is capable of making me distant to my own self-understanding […] The difficulty of understanding the other leads me to sense the difficulty of understanding myself" (Davey 2006, 241). Davey's reading of philosophical hermeneutics in this sense therefore underscores the ethical importance of the other in the philosophy of Levinas, while Fairfield's analysis makes us aware of the power implications that we must always take into consideration in contexts of encounter.

According to Vilhauer, this is why dialogue is important for Gadamer—it's not just the movement towards understanding the other, but also the very movement of understanding itself. While this is what makes Gadamer's hermeneutics useful, it is also what makes it misunderstood. As Simpson argues, we tend to overlook Gadamer's relevance to critical discussions because of certain perceptions of Gadamer's dialogue as being a tool for coaxing consensus and agreement:

> That the validity of a result of an act of dialogical understanding is so tightly indexed to an agent or to a community of agents seems to leave no space for rationally challenging the world as those agents know it. For this reason, hermeneutics has seemed to many to be unable to interrogate critically the status quo of a given tradition, given its overweening concern with understanding. (2016, 21)

Friction and misunderstanding are part of the process of understanding for Gadamer. Warnke explains why *misunderstanding is integral* to Gadamer's idea of understanding. She argues that, according to this perspective, our *limitations* and *prejudices* are what allow the process of understanding to occur, because "prejudices, in general, may serve as our orientation to meaning

[12] Ipseity is a philosophical term used to refer to the quality or state of having selfhood, personal identity, and individuality. It originates from the Latin *ipse* (self).

and, hence, as the basis for the possibility of understanding" (1987, 82). Further explaining the nuance of this position, she states: "Understanding is always interpretation and meaning is always a 'fusion' of the 'horizons' of the interpretation and the object. It follows that one's historical and linguistic situation presents no barrier to understanding but is rather the horizon of perspective from which understanding first becomes possible" (1987, 82). This is why it is important to include Gadamer in the difficult conversations in which various hermeneutic perspectives encounter each other without necessarily sharing the same evaluative judgements. Warnke argues that by considering Gadamer's "analysis of the applicative moment and dialogic structure of understanding," we come to realize Gadamer's unique ethical response to resolving the issues of relativism that arises when positing all perspectives as equal (1987, 82). Gadamer's insistence of the dynamic structure of dialogue points to different possibilities altogether. Warnke argues that instead of having to choose between the validity of different positions, Gadamer's insistence on movement within dialogue points to the arising of completely a new insight and perspective "that goes beyond the original positions of the various participants" (1987, 104). Gadamer's way of resolving these issues is more about the creativity engendered by encounter—a creativity which affords all sides movement towards a *new horizon* rather than the bliss of the ignorance of being stuck in one's particular perspective.

Warnke's main purpose in her book on Gadamer is to show how Gadamer *rehabilitates* the notion of *prejudice* to emphasize the inescapability of our historical and cultural situatedness. This focus on prejudice provides an easier entry point for comprehending Gadamer's difficult notion of historically effective consciousness. Warnke explains that, from Gadamer's perspective, we never come into contact with anything from a clean slate. The ideas of Enlightenment were based on the claim that it is possible to approach things from a neutral position. But as Warnke argues, this position, which allies reason and method, is just a means of trying to escape prejudice—"in opposition to this view, Gadamer argues that prejudice and tradition are essential to understanding" (1987, 75).

By highlighting the importance of 'prejudice,' Warnke thus shows that the accusations against Gadamer's alleged conservatism, given his emphasis on the role of tradition and prejudice in the process of understanding, are completely misplaced. It is, in fact, what makes him stand out, because such emphasis on prejudice and tradition allows for a *more self-conscious critical stance*, according to Warnke. A critical approach that acknowledges the inescapability of prejudice implies a critically inverted gaze on our own situatedness, no matter how methodic and rational we claim to be. Fairfield presents the issue of the critic's neutrality and objectivity as what is at stake in Gadamer's dialogue with Habermas,[13] who also wants to grant the critic a superior and external standpoint in the role of a doctor who sees the illnesses of his society.

Gadamer's emphasis on the situatedness of the critic, in combination with his dialogical ontology of the human condition, renders philosophical hermeneutics extremely relevant to critiques like those of Spivak, Falzon, and McCumber. Spivak recommends Derrida as an alternative to Foucault, given Derrida's reluctance in representing the "other," while McCumber picks Habermas as an alternative, given Habermas's notion of communicative action theory. Falzon also chooses Habermas as a possible alternative to Foucault, but still finds him wanting. As these examples suggest, Gadamer's model seems to be deliberately avoided while they curiously struggle to fit into the dialogical model those who do not exactly offer such dialogical alternatives. Fairfield discusses the limitations of Habermas's critique of ideology and Foucault's critical genealogy of power as positions that do not acknowledge the historicity and particularity

[13] See also Jack Mendelson's 1979 essay, "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate."

of the critic's own position and perspective. This is why McCumber's nomination of Habermas, which doesn't pay much attention to the power implications in Habermas's approach to "saving" the other from "false consciousness," is also problematic, as Fairfield argues in his discussion of the Gadamer and Habermas encounter (Fairfield 2002, 92). The attempts to squeeze certain scholarly works into a "semi-dialogical" contrived form, while ignoring Gadamer's own dialogical modality, requires a serious *hermeneutics of suspicion*—i.e., a serious evaluation and critique the prejudices against Gadamer's hermeneutics.

1.11 The Agony of Dialogue

In contrast to these thinkers desperately searching for a dialogical modality, others, like Fairfield, Vilhauer, and Di Cesare, already take Gadamer's dialogical ontology as a fitting alternative to the dominant structure of modern epistemology. In fact, for Fairfield, philosophical hermeneutics is a serious dialogical interlocutor to contend with, for both the Frankfurt School's critique of ideology *and* the Foucauldian critical genealogy. According to Fairfield's perspective, one can even go further. The use of Gadamer as a possible new alternative, given the ethical and political implications of Gadamer's rehabilitation of dialogue, creates far bigger possibilities for dealing with the silence of the subaltern than can be found in Derrida's deconstruction, as suggested by Spivak, or in Foucault's genealogy, as suggested by Falzon. Despite Derrida's contribution to deconstructing the metaphysics of Western logocentrism, some problems remain that seem unaddressed by Spivak, problems which parallel the issues she raises about the silence of the other.

Davey argues that since Derrida stresses the impossibility of understanding, he ends up removing any chance of meaningful encounter or interaction with otherness, which in fact leads to more silence, given the focus on apprehension (2006, 154). Davey shows that by focusing exclusively on deconstructing metaphysics, Derrida moves toward denying the possibility of any experience of meaningfulness. "Derrida's overt preoccupation with the absence of meaning-in-itself arguably drains language of its capacity to generate new configurations of meaning" (Davey 2006, 200). Whereas for Gadamer, Davey argues, "language's vitality and the possibility of meaningfulness depends upon the ability of the word to pass continually in and out of different relationships. Closing the playing of language implies the death of understanding" (2006, 200).

Davey presents Gadamer's conception of understanding as something dynamic and moving rather than final and static. "Something is meaningful not because a final interpretation has been reached but because something is brought to light by an unexpected conflict of interpretations" (Davey 2006, 199). This conception of meaning as moving back and forth within the play of language also responds to the problem McCumber raises about the way metaphysics stalls the movement of language in its obsession with finalized, static, and transcendent truths. In light of the problems raised by those preoccupied with deconstructing metaphysics, Davey suggests that philosophical hermeneutics offers something even more important; the invitation to allow language its natural movement and play. This is not merely an idealistic invitation to dialogue, but rather an alignment to the vital dynamic of movement that is endemic to dialogue. According to Gadamer, argues Davey, the "movement of conversation has its autonomy," not due to any metaphyseal conception of language, but because "its insights can prompt its participants to question the assumptions they bring to it" (Davey 2006, 248).

It is worth considering this invitation to really understand the profound significance of Gadamer's notion of dialogue and whether it is in fact as radical as Davey claims. Interestingly,

some of the critiques against Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, and even some of the shock regarding his take on language, accuse him of rejecting notions of truth and objectivity. Warnke argues that the Italian legal theorist, Emilio Betti, takes Gadamer to task about the nature of understanding being inherently the result of a dialogical process arising in intersubjectivity (1987, 98). This Gadamerian stance, argues Warnke, is the reason behind Betti's vehement rejection of Gadamer's approach, since it leads to losing any standards for objectivity, thereby sliding into the arbitrariness of subjectivism (1987, 98).

In his book, *Validity in Interpretation* (1972), E. D. Hirsch criticizes philosophical hermeneutics and makes a call to revive Schleiermacher's hermeneutics to reaffirm authorial intensions and historical validity. It helps to examine some of these criticisms and objections leveled against Gadamer's work, particularly those still invested in securing methodologies for valid and objective interpretations, which are directed against his dialogical reconceptualization of understanding and cast him as a radical. And yet there are also postmodern and deconstructive criticisms that frame his notion of horizon as being one that aims to assimilate difference and control otherness. In her introductory remarks to the edited volume *Inheriting Gadamer: New Directions in Philosophical Hermeneutics* (2016), Warnke discusses Gadamer's peculiar philosophical position among these divergent schools; how he is seen as completely radical by one side, but also not radical enough by another (9).

The direct criticisms and attacks against Gadamer's notion of dialogue, therefore, arise from a diversity of perspectives. John Milbank, for example, is highly suspicious of the whole notion of dialogue, particularly inter-faith dialogue. He raises structural and historical imbalances of power, all which render dialogue obsolete, even if it actually takes place. In his essay "The End of Dialogue," Milbank writes that dialogue, "is not relevant to the poor and dispossessed, because justice toward them is not primarily a matter of listening to them, but constructing for them and with them the circumstances in which they join in many conversations, no longer as the poor" (1990, 183). Milbank considers many of our dialogical practices to be pretenses with underlying dynamics that go against encountering or empowering the other. In the context of actual dialogical events, he points out that the participants are not usually willing to face the real differences, but rather attempt to conceal them. Moreover, in religious contexts, he even goes as far as saying that the underlying agenda is usually *conversion* and not *conversation*. Although Milbank does not make direct attacks against Gadamer, his position gives us an idea why the notion of dialogue can trigger strong objections, especially when considered in light of power asymmetries.

But we must still ask whether Gadamer's notion of dialogue as a fusion of horizons is truly different from what Spivak raises as problematic—not allowing the subaltern her own voice and perspective. In other words, is this *fusion* not a form of *recognition by assimilation* of the other? (Spivak 1988, 294).

1.12 Gender as a Hermeneutic Differential

The category of gender is another inescapable element of the discussion on dialogue, especially given the emphasis Gadamer gives to encountering otherness. Put differently, it is inevitable since it provides an inescapable differential other. The forgetfulness of encounter within concrete situations and the attempt to transcend history cannot be separated from the forgetfulness of the alien other, doubly manifest in the female other. This forgetfulness of the other, *the subaltern other,* the erased colonized self, within a coerced invisible silence is the core of Spivak's larger project, captured in her well-known essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988).

Although Gadamer does not directly address issues of gender in the dialogical encounter, his dialogical modality, which emphasizes the tensional character of the dialogical situation, engages both supporters and critics within contemporary feminist discourses (Hoffman 2003, 92). Even though female scholars like Warnke, Vilhauer, and Di Cesare have been instrumental in making Gadamer's project more accessible, some feminist interpretations of philosophical hermeneutics tend to be cautious, if not outright critical and hostile (Elam 1991, Schott 1991). The conception of understanding as a "fusion of horizons" is not always well understood, and is sometimes, if not often, perceived as referring to forced assimilation and contraction rather than growth and expansion in encountering alterity and otherness.

Some serious objections are raised when Gadamer's hermeneutics is perceived as closing the hermeneutic circle, as Marie Fleming argues in her essay, "Gadamer's Conversation: Does the Other Have a Say?" (2003). In many ways, her concerns parallel Spivak's questions about whether the subaltern can speak. And just as Spivak acts towards critical theorists like Foucault, Fleming does the same with Gadamer. As just noted, she is particularly suspicious of Gadamer's notion of the "fusion of horizons." She considers the notion "misleading," and therefore chooses to refer to it as the "One Horizon" (Fleming 2003, 123). Here she is referencing the famous phrase Gadamer uses to refer to the way different and divergent horizons, old and new, all interact in the processes of both understanding and dialogue. Even though Fleming acknowledges other feminist interpretations of Gadamer's dialogical modality—interpretations which highlight its value for feminist critiques—she nevertheless writes that, "the question of how to think about a possible plurality of horizons, whatever its value for feminism does not arise in the context of Gadamer's hermeneutics" (2003, 122). This is the case for her because Gadamer "disallows the idea of the coming together of two or more distinct standpoints in some sort of unity that would, for example, encompass aspects of each" (2003, 122). Fleming insists that she does not see any basis for the position that Gadamer's hermeneutics supports ontological/structural plurality. "Rather, Gadamer explicitly argues that, for the interpreter, there is really only "one" horizon" (2003, 122-23). She goes on to argue that in Gadamer's notion of dialogue understanding is not about understanding each other, but about fusing all our views to create a unified perspective, and, moreover, that Gadamer's allowance for "difference" is only to strengthen one's own project. "This unity project," she writes, "is ongoing, thus always in need of differences to overcome and ever prepared for an instrumental encounter with the other. The hermeneutic circle, in which there is apparently no beginning, no end, and no 'outside'—only circular motion—turns out to be a figure for the tradition preserving itself, taking care of itself, withdrawing into itself, determined to eliminate everything that is other, foreign, and opaque" (2003, 131).

Veronica Vasterling, on the other hand, articulates a middle ground that values Gadamer's emphasis on our historical situatedness while also finding issues with his approach. She acknowledges, for example, the "strength of Gadamerian hermeneutics" for its ability to combine "the situated finiteness of understanding with an account of the open dialogical character of understanding" (2003, 177). However, for Vasterling, like Fleming, Gadamer "fails to address the pertinent questions of alterity and power" (2003, 178). She attributes this to Gadamer's being a Hegelian apologist: "Gadamer's universalist Hegelian tendencies undercut the finiteness of understanding and disregard the plurality of evaluative standards" (2003, 178). To consider Gadamer as nothing more than a Hegelian apologist would be somewhat disconcerting to Warnke, who asserts that Gadamer *is* different from Hegel. For her, the dialectic is not a process that assimilates and subsumes difference into some finalized transcended reason:

> The difference between Hegel and Gadamer in this regard is not that Gadamer no longer identifies the dialectical or dialogic process with the possibility of an advance on the part of reason; it is rather that Gadamer refuses to foreclose this advance by projecting a point of absolute knowledge at which no further dialogic encounters can develop that rationality. Gadamer therefore calls himself an advocate of the 'bad infinite' and maintains that as long as history continues, the absolutely rational position is always one that can be further enriched. (Warnke 1987, 170)

Warnke's point highlights Gadamer's unique style of engagement with tradition, because Gadamer, as she argues, neither upholds tradition nor attempts to recover its values. In her introduction to her edited volume, *Inheriting Gadamer: New Directions in Philosophical Hermeneutics* (2016), Warnke argues that tradition, or the past, for Gadamer, is not something static, but a dialogue that we are constantly engaged in—even if we are not fully aware of that engagement:

> He also makes it clear that affirming, embracing, and cultivating do not preclude, but rather require, rethinking and re-evaluation. In this regard, he thinks that both the Enlightenment and Romanticism erred in opposing tradition and reason. Whereas the Enlightenment falsely presumed it could rid knowledge of all presumptions not grounded in rational foundations, Romanticism viewed tradition as a natural substrate that could not be questioned. (2016, 1)

Warnke therefore stresses that Gadamer understands tradition as a dialogical interlocuter beyond right and wrong, hence his notion of *rehabilitating* tradition rather than *rejecting* or *revering* tradition (1987, 75). The value of this dynamic conception of knowledge as always arising in intersubjectivity, i.e., as always arising within a dialogical dynamic, is lost on those who try and stabilize Gadamer's notion dialogue, despite the fact that it is not invested in stabilizing any form of knowing. Simpson thus argues that Gadamer's modality is not focused on coherence and consensus as much as on creating a context sensitive to the asymmetry of the interlocuters, including their negotiating tactics (2016, 33-34). Accordingly, Gadamer's dialogue creates a context that lends itself to being "a model for mutually critical conversations" (2016, 36). Simpson shows that Gadamer's hermeneutic "emphasis upon the conversational negotiations and expansion of interoperative frameworks enables a distinctly illuminating analysis of the pragmatics and intelligibility of such conversational situations" (2016, 36). As for evaluative standards, Simpson believes that the assumptions and standards underlying tradition cannot be changed or fixed externally but must be allowed to evolve and change within the dialogical context. He therefore argues that the evaluative stance arises naturally and "is an inescapable aspect of cultural understanding" (2016, 36). All of these aspects of the dimension of otherness in the dialogic context have implications for feminism. But they are also relevant to all categories of the political differential, and hence to various forms of otherness in concrete situations.

1.13 Dialogue in The Concrete

According to Bernstein, the radical implications of Gadamer's project come to the surface when considering his interest in the practical and ethical aspect of dialogue in the concrete. Despite acknowledging how critics of Gadamer "stress the conservative implications of philosophic hermeneutics," Bernstein draws our attention to how "the critics have neglected the latent radical strain implicit in Gadamer's understanding of hermeneutics as practical philosophy" (1983, 163) To highlight Gadamer's interest in the pluralistic and perspectivist modality of dialogue, he

presents Gadamer's interpretation of the Greek term *phronesis* (practical wisdom). But most importantly, for Bernstein, "this radical strain is indicated in his emphasis—which has become more and more dominant in recent years—on [the] freedom and solidarity that embrace all humanity (1983, 163). Bernstein is fully aware of the way Gadamer *rehabilitates* the Greek notion of *phronesis* to advance a pluralistic egalitarian ethics of his dialogic modality. He thus argues that Gadamer "softens the elitist aura by blending his discussion of *phronesis* with his analysis of a type of dialogue and conversation that presupposes mutual respect, recognition, and understanding" in order to raise the problem of inequality in the concrete situation of dialogue (1983, 165). This has political implications, argues Bernstein, because it means an emphasis is placed on the equality of the participants as a condition for real engagement. Bernstein asserts that Gadamer achieves a certain radicalization in his *rehabilitation of phronesis and praxis* by pushing for a certain historical telos, "not in the sense of what will work itself out in the course of history, but in the sense of what ought to be concretely realized" (1983, 165).

Aware that most critics of Gadamer do not consider his emphasis on the egalitarian conditions of encounter, Bernstein highlights another reason why Gadamer is left out of debates on dialogue. He argues that "in his analysis of dialogue, Gadamer emphasizes the type of mutuality, sharing, respect, and equality required for a genuine dialogue" (Bernstein 1983, 190). Di Cesare also acknowledges the importance of Bernstein's recognition of the political dimension of philosophical hermeneutics, given the importance of *phronesis*. It is clear that she appreciates that, for Bernstein, "philosophical hermeneutics contains a political critique, confirmed by the role of *phronesis* or practical wisdom" that shows the critical relevance of Gadamer's project (Di Cesare 2013, 198).

Given the charges of, and misconceptions surrounding, Gadamer's alleged conservatism, Simpson explains that most of the criticisms raised against Gadamer's dialogue are predicated on the assumption that the particularities of horizon(s), whether of a person or cultural identity, are perceived as singular, fixed, and static (2016, 23). By highlighting Gadamer's dynamic conception of meaning Simpson emphasizes the fluidity and movement of meaning, and thereby problematizes the stabilization and fixing of perspectives or identities in the dialogic encounter. He emphasizes that Gadamer's dynamic conception of understanding as always arising in intersubjectivity offers a different modality altogether. Gadamer's dialogue, for Simpson, is one that expands, not just the resulting new horizons of dialogue, but also the respective original horizons of all involved (2016, 23). The encounter is not between fixed positions and views, argues Simpson, because for Gadamer, "cultures are not monolithic homogeneous wholes" (2016, 24). Cultures unfold in a dynamic manner, arising around views that are also in a state of flux and are themselves fluid (2016, 24). For Simpson, cultural identity itself can thus be understood as a "cluster concept," which for him means "that certain elements of the set of features that collectively constitute one's social identity may be revised as a result of critical reflection without resulting in the loss of that identity" (2016, 23). Consequently, argues Simpson, Gadamer's notion of horizons can be misunderstood if we view culture or identity as static and fixed instead of being dynamic, and the result of divergent discursive conversations (2016, 23). Weinsheimer is also aware of this misconception of Gadamer's fusion as a form of assimilation, despite the fact that Gadamer's project writes difference and otherness into the very dynamic of understanding.

> The metaphor of fusion is often taken as proof that Gadamer never comes to grips with fission, multiplicity, otherness of all kinds, personal, cultural, historical. This seems an implausible charge when directed at a hermeneutics that takes as its motto: 'we understand differently, if we understand at all.' […] Gadamer moves on to acknowledge that, unlike naïve tradition, a more sophisticated

> historical consciousness knows that times change, new and old are different, and historians must recognize the otherness of history to do their job well. (Weinsheimer 2004, 164-165)

These misconceptions and accusations, especially in regard to the notion of *fusion*, are not lost on Dallmayr either. In his book *Integral Pluralism: Beyond Culture Wars* (2010), he argues that "Gadamerian hermeneutics is accused of, or identified with, a facile consensualism, with a happy blending of views devoid of conflict. To some extent, his *Truth and Method* has encouraged this construal, especially through its notion of a 'fusion of horizons'" (108). But Dallmayr understands Gadamer's modality of fusion differently. His interpretation echoes Simpson's emphasis on the dynamic conception of Gadamer's notion of horizon. Dallmayr therefore argues that "what is involved here is not so much a fusion in the sense of convergence but rather an unlimited openness to horizons, in such a manner that interpretive understanding can never be fully stabilized or completed" (2010, 108-109).

In parallel to these views is Warnke's explanation of the dynamic nature of understanding, which echoes the ideas of Simpson, Weinsheimer, and Dallmayr, and therefore provides a strong response to Fleming's critique. Warnke stresses how Gadamer emphasizes otherness as a parameter for arriving at new understanding. She also reminds us that what makes Gadamer stand out is his re-definition of understanding based on dialogue and otherness as embodied in the Socratic dialogue. Warnke's comment about Gadamer's conception of the unity of the subject-matter helps us understand how Gadamer's dialogue can be misunderstood. She clarifies how Gadamer's dialogic notion, even when agreement occurs, is not about consensus or compromise as much as about innovation and newness—that *understanding is always understanding differently*:

> The unity with which he [Gadamer] is concerned is not the result either of one partner's imposing his or her views on another or of one partner's simple acquiescence to the views of another. Rather, if individuals or groups come sincerely to a shared understanding of a subject-matter, the understanding they share is not the original property of one or the other but represents a new understanding of the subject-matter at issue. Gadamer's model here is that of a Socratic dialogue in which the position to which Socrates and his interlocutors come at the end represents a significant advance over the position each maintained at the beginning. (Warnke 1987, 100-101)

In his book *On Dialogue* (1996), Bohm argues that there "may be no pat political answers to the world's problems. However, the important point is not the answer—just as in a dialogue, the important point is not the particular opinions—but rather the softening up, the opening up of the mind, and looking at all the opinions. If there is some of sort of spread of that attitude, I think it can slow down the destruction" (1996, 46). This is why Davey also argues that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, given its emphasis on *the hermeneutic priority of the question*, does not constitute a "philosophical position," but rather a "philosophical dis-position." "It is a practice of disposing or orienting oneself toward the other and the different with the consequence of experiencing a dis-positioning of one's initial expectancies" (Davey 2006, xvi). When explaining why dialogue, questioning, and conversation stand at the very center of Gadamer's philosophic hermeneutics, Bernstein argues that it is "precisely in and through an understanding of alien cultures that we can come to a more sensitive and critical understanding of our own culture and those prejudices that may lie hidden from us" (Bernstein1983, 36). This is why, as Bernstein stresses, for Gadamer it is practical wisdom *(phronesis)* that defines the dynamic character of dialogue. As Bernstein argues, then, it is the transformative potential of dialogue that lies at the

heart of Gadamer's notion of dialogue, since, for Gadamer, one of the important features of dialogue is the increased awareness of our conditioned minds. This is also emphasized in Taylor's approach to dialogue—its capacity to reflect back to us a certain level of intelligibility, sparing us a facile "slide to moral subjectivism," as he puts it in *The Malaise of Modernity* (1990, 55).

In his essay "Dialogue in Agony: The Problems of Communication in Authoritarian Regimes" (2008), Andrew Smith foregrounds the political implications of the dialogical modality. For him, dialogue is not an ideal to aspire to but rather a dynamic that is already given in life, albeit one that gets arrested in situations of repression and domination, or, as Simpson argues, in situations of political asymmetry:

> The dialogic should be thought of not so much as a precondition for the kinds of freedom of expression and assembly taken for granted in democratic societies nor as the end state suggested by a romantic ideal or utopian vision of civil society. Rather, it involves contingent and fallible instances of interaction during which two or more persons agonize over words and phrases, feelings and ideas, tones and gestures, similarities and differences, histories and consequences, languages and politics, social positions and institutional proclivities, duties and obligations, gauging prudent action. (Smith 2008, 161)

Dialogical positioning in this sense, for Smith, is where individuals have agency. The positioning of the interlocutors "reflects selves that are constituted as nodes of multiple language games […] nodes that are determined (in both senses of the word) to express feelings and meanings in the face of differences, oppositions, and, at times, the threat of being silenced" (2008, 161). What Smith raises here as a problematic to be examined within the dialogical context is precisely why both Vilhauer and Fairfield, in their respective books, underscore the political importance of Gadamer's project. For them, Gadamer's three levels of the I-Thou relationality–discussed in more detail in the next chapter—reference concrete situations in which power tensions can be more closely observed, depending on the level of denying or supressing dialogical dynamics. Vilhauer explicitly delineates the three levels of interaction that Gadamer offers in his parsing of the power dynamics in the dialogic encounter, and shows us how these levels offer new layers for analysis (2010 76-78). As he states,

> By considering first the two I-Thou relations in which Gadamer finds a failure to achieve real dialogue and understanding, we will be better able to appreciate the distinctiveness of Gadamer's third, "highest" type of I-Thou relation, where we find a unique approach and commitment to the Other that makes genuine dialogic play and true understanding possible. (2010, 76)

As Smith contends, the issue of inequality in the dialogical context cannot be overlooked. In addressing the difficulty and agony of dialogue, Smith invites us to understand dialogue beyond abstract terms. His political discussion of dialogue highlights the potential for a more ethical and political reading of Gadamer's project:

> Any approach to dialogue, then, that presupposes just and equitable treatment of and between interlocutors, or presumes that dialogue constitutes a single genre with well-defined rules of interaction, begs the question of differends. To engage dialogically requires a subtle prereflective sense of how to overcome the double bind of the differend[14]—translating the untranslatable. The

[14] The term "differend" was first coined by Jean-François Lyotard to refer to cases of conflict in which different and irreconcilable worldviews were in tension. He introduced the expression in one of his best-known books by the same

> passage to dialogical communication is full of the agony of putting damages into recognizable forms—chromatic, symbolic, acoustic, or otherwise. Hence, the importance of poiesis and refiguration, rhetoric and demonstration (the *quod* rather than the *quid*), sounds and stories, lines and traces, colors and tones. In sum, the obligation to hear and remember the different is not the same as obligation to the ethical prescription, listening to a compelling narrative, of the feeling of group solidarity. (Smith 2008, 170)

If Smith emphasizes the importance of the political within the dialogic, the question then becomes more about how we can open such spaces for individual and communal perspectives and questioning. How do we even perceive of human history, both in its universal and local manifestations? The difficulty and complexity in answering such questions is found in Spivak's discussion and suggestions. She highlights the problems of *silencing the other*, and hence also turning "measuring the silences" into the *object* of investigation, as one of the important tasks of critical theory (1988, 296). What Spivak demands is a hermeneutic task, for the measuring of silence cannot be undertaken without an interpretive frame that probes the ethics of encounter, especially inter-culturally.

The Latin American (Argentinian-Mexican) philosopher Enrique Dussel highlights the effective role of hermeneutics in critically examining inter-cultural confrontations and asymmetries, especially in tracing violently forced silences and negations. In his essay "Hermeneutics and Critique from a Liberation Ethics Perspective" (2016), Dussel forwards the necessity of developing a more inclusive, non-Eurocentric historical perspective to locate the inequality of the various positionalities within the larger modern global system (27). "It is frequently forgotten that China, India and most of the Muslim world are just as authentic inheritors of this system," argues Dussel, who therefore affirms that the "unilinear syllogism Greco-Rome-Europe is false" (2016, 32). A new historical and political hermeneutics is required, argues Dussel, to unpack the way Europe, which had been a secondary and peripheral culture, used, in the fifteenth century, a large and complex system of violence and colonization to create a world system that has been based on the "negation of the other" (2016, 36). Moreover, the global system, notes Dussel, normalized injustices by rendering "economic exploitation as structure" (2016, 38). Dussel therefore views *hermeneutics as a central tool in reinterpreting our world from the perspective of an ethics of liberation*. For him, hermeneutics in this inter-cultural perspective could parse, in a far more critical manner, the "globalization as exclusion" way in which we live, where participants are located within a larger system of asymmetrical of power and domination (2016, 41).

The import and role of hermeneutics within the context of intercultural encounter is also emphasized in *The Agon of Interpretations: Towards a Critical Intercultural Hermeneutics* (2014), a volume of articles edited by Ming Xie, a Chinese Canadian scholar (2014). Xie chooses Gadamer's hermeneutics to mold a more egalitarian and critical inter-cultural hermeneutics, a hermeneutics which might generate new orientations "from within by freeing itself from the constraints of its primarily Western model of epistemological understanding. A hermeneutics reoriented and transformed in this way should offer us a heuristic structure for thinking both interculturally and transculturally" (Xie 2014, 4).

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name—*The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (1983)—as a means to create a more complex alternative to Wittgenstein's term "language games," which Lyotard had used as the theoretical framework in his earlier book, originally published in French as *La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport Sur le Savoir* (1979). In his later book, Lyotard explains that being "distinguished from a litigation, a differend [*différend*] would be a case of conflict between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy" (1983, xi).

As the title suggests, the authors and editor of this volume make use of the Greek term "Agon"[15] to highlight the conflictual and political nature of dialogue. The critical side of hermeneutics, according to Xie,

> comes to entail the texting and contesting of assumptions. Self-definition, self-critique, and self-revision are built into the internal dialectic of any given culture and its historical becoming and—more broadly in the intercultural context—as the continual articulation of the logic of relations between cultures, in terms of both commonalities and differences. This dialectic enables one to be more historically and critically self-reflexive towards one's own normative standards. (2014, 3)

There are various Taoist, Buddhist, Jewish, and Muslim philosophers, and contributors to the long conversation on dialogue from various cultural and religious perspectives. The Pakistani philosopher, academic, and poet, Muhammad Iqbal, addresses relationality and ethics through the dialogical. Through Rumi's modality of the dialogical and Ibn Arabi's ontology of love, Iqbal urges the rehabilitation of such Sufi and medieval philosophical orientations to advance the conversation on reason and faith in order to question the nature of conflict in the modern context. In 1930, Iqbal presented his critique of modernity in his well-known work, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1982), by providing new reconfigurations and constructions as alternatives. In viewing the consequences of modernist epistemology, Iqbal argues that "in the domain of thought, [the modern person] is living in open conflict with himself; and in the domain of economic and political life he is living in open conflict with others. He finds himself unable to control his ruthless egoism and his infinite gold-hunger which is gradually killing all higher striving in him and bringing him nothing but life weariness" (1982, 187). Iqbal therefore forwards the concept of "response" (*Istijabah*), in which the relational is ineluctability interconnected with ethical responsibility, especially given how the concept of *responder* or *dialogical interlocutor* (*Al Mujeeb*) is one of the Beautiful Names of God in the Muslim tradition (1982, 19). In parallel, the mid to late 20th century works of the Jewish philosophers Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas forward the dialogical modality through reclaiming the primacy of the other as an ethical interlocutor. Gadamer actually makes reference to the way a generation of thinkers interested in renewing Kierkegaard's dialogical orientation, especially his Christian notion of the "I" and "Thou," gave relationality a contemporary impetus (Gadamer 2007, 56). Gadamer thus writes, "One sees this orientation in Theodore Hacker, Fredrich Gogarten, Edward Griesebach, Ferdinand Ebner, Martin Buber, Karl Jaspers, Viktor von Weizsacker, and also in Karl Lowith's *the Individual in the Role of a Person with Other Persons*" (2007, 56-57).

In more recent years, the work of Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin has been drawing increased attention due to his emphasis on notions like "polyphony" and "unfinalizability" in his understanding of the dialogical, especially as found in his work *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984). One of the great contributions in presenting the Western landscape on dialogue is *On Dialogue* (2005) by Dmitri Nikulin, in which he examines the evolution of Western dialogue from Plato to the modern period (2005). Nikulin examines the dialogical angles in the thought of Kant, Buber, Jacques, Feyerabend, Levinas, de Maistre, Taylor, Gadamer, and Habermas.

It is therefore unfortunate that given the very limited scope of this dissertation there is not much room to allow further exploration of such significant contributions. Hilary Putnam's book *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life: Rosenzweig, Buber, Levinas, Wittgenstein* (2008), explores

[15] Agon is an ancient Greek word used to refer to athletic contests, competition during games, or even a gathering of different sides. But in general, the term has the connotations of conflict, struggle, and contest. Ming Xie's use of it in the book has similar connotations as the ones found in Lyotard's "*différend.*"

the contributions of several Jewish philosophers and their impact on modern Western philosophy. Moreover, Fred Dallmayr's *Dialogue Among Civilizations: Some Exemplary Voices* (2002), attempts to discuss dialogue through a wider historical landscape, highlighting the necessity of engaging in dialogue with other philosophical traditions. As a tribute to Gadamer, Dallmayr presents various historical examples including the way the German poet, Goethe, engaged with the Muslim tradition and produced works of art as a result of this dialogical encounter (2002, 147). Dallmayr also stresses the importance of engaging with Hindu philosophy, and dedicates two chapters to the theme. He focuses on the intellectual trajectory of the Indian philosopher D. P. Chattopadhyaya to highlight the importance of dialogue as a means of redefining and expanding our understanding of both power and freedom (2002, 201). His discussion on engaging with Hindu philosophy underscores the political struggle of Gandhi and his idea of "self-rule" as a modality of both resistance and relationality, a modality he argues has the ability to make us understand the difficulties of the dialogic situation (2002, 213). In the chapter, "Reason, Faith, and Politics: A Journey to Muslim Andalusia," Dallmayr examines medieval Europe as another historical and political alternative, one in which diversity and the dialogic were normative values. "Islamic civilization," writes Dallmayr, "provides resources for tackling the conflict [between faith and reason] and for nurturing a fruitful, though always tentative reconciliation under politically tolerant auspices" (2002, 122). As a tribute to Gadamer's emphasis on dialoguing with the past and thereby travelling through time, Dallmayr attempts such temporal crossings. "To discover these resources" he argues, "it is necessary to travel back in time to the great age of Islamic philosophy, particularly to the period of Moorish or Arabic Spain" (Dallmayr 2002, 122).

Such diverse interests in relationality across time and cultures invites further research, especially given the ample opportunities and creative possibilities that lie ahead in such new dialogical adventures and encounters. The aim of Dallmayr's work is actually to encourage such research orientations, orientations in which other cultural and historical contributions to the values of diversity, coexistence, and dialogue are taken seriously and engaged with as dialogical partners rather than being studied as exotic but irrelevant instances, if not altogether overlooked.

Fred Dallmayr's most recent book—*Horizons of Difference: Engaging with Others* (2020)— also centers on Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutics as an urgent task in our increasingly global world. He revisits the topic because Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutics easily lends itself to any critical orientation that is invested in plurality and equality. It is for the same reason that the Canadian scholar Xie also chooses Gadamer's hermeneutics to mold a more egalitarian critical inter-cultural hermeneutics, because, as noted above, this new version of hermeneutics might generate new orientations capable of helping us break free from the narrowness of the Western model of epistemological understanding.

This is also why Vilhauer underscores the ethical dimensions of the dialogic encounter in Gadamer's modality. She discusses the problematics Gadamer raises in silencing the other or claiming to understand the other—the very problems Spivak raises. We live in a world where monologue still largely dominates as a modality of knowledge. In fact, in contexts fraught with power tensions and issues of superiority and inferiority, argues Vilhauer, it becomes a struggle to outdo the other, where the more powerful can claim "to know the Other better than the Other knows himself" (2010, 79). Vilhauer says that, according to Gadamer, this way of relating "is still, then, a relationship in which mastery, control and dominance is attempted over the Other, and the Other is thus devalued, belittled, and disrespected" (2010, 79-80).

Smith is aware of the underlying difficulties in such politically challenging contexts. He therefore chooses the notion of *différend*, the term coined by Lyotard, to refer to a situation in

which power dynamics determine the value, or devaluation, of the meaning(s) exchanged, or the perspectives voiced, depending on the power positionality of the interlocuters rather than the content of their exchange.

> The work of the dialogic involves strategic and tactical attempts to gain a hearing, a viewing, or some way of expressing damages and wrongs, driven as it is by the anamnesis (feeling of the memory) of events. Such action requires delegitimizing monarchical myths, bringing dominant genres into question publicly despite dangers and setbacks, rusing [sic] authorities bent on corruption and co-optation, and refiguring sense poetically, politically, acoustically, chromatically, allegorically, and otherwise. The agony involved in such experimental endeavor creates hope for dialogical communication that might foster change in the status quo. (Smith 2008, 180)

Given the dilemma within political asymmetries, Smith decides to choose *dialogue* over *agonistics* as the appropriate means to navigate agonies. He discusses his preference by using Bakhtin's conception of dialogue as a mechanism that allows heterogenous voices, a modality which reflects Gadamer's dialogic encounter. Dialogue, for Smith, arises as the dynamic that encompasses larger possibilities in contrast to agonistics or confrontational tactics. He uses the term *différend* to refer to the encounter between opposing hermeneutic bubbles. "The notion of differend provides a way to think about the dialogic as encompassing the primordial struggle to express something—something at all, even a poignant silence—that can be sensed (perceived meaningfully) if not fully understood (or understood differently). Dialogue is necessary because it is impossible" (Smith 2008, 170).

Although Smith uses Bakhtin to stress the priority of dialogue, Gadamer provides another relevant alternative in this context, especially because Gadamer's hermeneutics does not promise final destinations or solutions. Vilhauer stresses the dynamic and moving character of Gadamer's dialogue and pushes Gadamer's conception of dialogue as a dynamic play where tension has a vital role. "Without some Other who introduces new meaning to us, there would be no play-movement of dialogue at all in which we enrich our grasp of the world," Vilhauer writes (2010, 92). According to her, Gadamer conceives of difficult elements like prejudice, tension, and difference as part of the process of understanding, albeit ones that are usually missed in critiques of Gadamer's dynamic dialogue. "Difference and tension," argues Vilhauer, "maintain a vital role in play, in that a certain amount of resistance is needed for there to be any game at all" (2010, 92). Given the requirements of tension and difference in the dialogical process, I argue that we can rehabilitate hermeneutics into a critical approach.

Because philosophical hermeneutics is not invested in the content of a particular hermeneutic stance, it ends up pointing to a new horizon, even beyond itself. At the very core of philosophical hermeneutics is both dialogue and application, and hence an open-ended and practically oriented pathway. This is why Bernstein argues that "while Gadamer opens new questions concerning praxis and *phronesis*, he does not adequately answer and resolve these questions. Indeed, there is a radical telos in his questioning that requires us to move beyond philosophic hermeneutics" (1983, xv). This is intentional. Gadamer does not provide static answers or prescriptions, but instead points to new horizons. He opens up actual possibilities for an alternative way of being and living within concrete situations that are always open to the new and different (even within contexts of *differends*). By rehabilitating the importance of *phronesis*, according to Bernstein, Gadamer brings our attention to practical realities that do not fit into formulas and methods (1983, 219). Practical wisdom, and therefore practical politics, are reconceptualized and reclaimed as dynamic, open, and encompassing of diversity.

Like Bernstein, Dallmayr also stresses the centrality of *phronesis* and its political implications in Gadamer's project. "Hermeneutics, for Gadamer," argues Dallmayr, "presupposes a constitutional regime (perhaps a democratic constitutional order) that does not rely on arbitrary decisions or willful domination and that makes room for the hermeneutical balancing of 'whole and parts' and the dialogical inquiring into the conditions of social justice and fairness" (2010, 112). Moreover, he notes that in order to emphasize the practical nature of hermeneutics, including its ethical and political dimensions, Gadamer in his later writings re-emphasized that "hermeneutics should not be viewed simply as an abstract theory, for it always implies and implicates a reference to practical conduct. Since its beginnings, hermeneutical inquiry has always claimed 'that its reflection on the possibilities, rules and means of interpretation is somehow directly useful or advantageous for lived *praxis*'" (Dallmayr 2010, 112). Instead of the stabilization of knowledge and the modes of domination that could result from such stabilization, both of which have shaped our worlds of knowledge and politics, there is an openness to know and act in practical ways in concrete situations that could alter the course of practices of domination. This is why Bernstein explains that Gadamer is invested in reviving *phronesis* without turning it into a method or scientific approach, precisely because it brings us back to the concrete context for ethical politics beyond calculable ends, allowing us "the ability to do justice to particular situations in their particularities" (1983, 219). "We can read his [Gadamer's] philosophic hermeneutics," argues Bernstein, "as a meditation on the meaning of human finitude, as a constant warning against the excesses of what he calls 'planning reason,' a caution that philosophy must give up the idea of an 'infinite intellect" (Bernstein 1983, 159).

1.14 Conclusion

The ontological shift in hermeneutics forwarded by Gadamer frames hermeneutics as a dialogical modality with a linguistic orientation. This modality opens critical possibilities, especially in providing a new context for conceptualizing power relations in society. This has not always been obvious given the prominence of other approaches in critiquing the underlying principles of the Enlightenment and its power implications. Yet Gadamer's project opens up new hermeneutic possibilities for discussing power and our modes of knowledge, especially given the political dimensions as found in the ethics of his dialogic modality. According to Bernstein, Gadamer's investigation into the givenness of dialogue leads to an inescapable political conclusion. He thus argues that Gadamer places before us the task of fostering "the type of dialogical communities in which *phronesis* becomes a living reality and where citizens can actually assume what Gadamer tells us is their 'noblest task'—'decision-making according to one's own responsibility—instead of conceding the task to the expert'" (1983, 159).

The political orientation in philosophical hermeneutics therefore cannot be understood separately from Gadamer's dialogical modality, not only in rehabilitating our conceptions of power relations but also in strategizing for political solutions. In his book *Political Hermeneutics: The Early Thinking of Hans Georg Gadamer* (1989), Robert Sullivan emphasizes that the ethical shift in Gadamer's hermeneutics is indicative of his later political orientation as expressed, even if somewhat indirectly, in *Truth and Method*. Sullivan finds this reflected in Gadamer's return to the Socratic dialogical city. The modality of the Socratic dialogue captivates Gadamer early in his career, because "the Platonic Socrates reveals his awareness of the basic pluralism of society and thus appeals to anyone who is not narrow himself in his conception of justice" (1989, 170). This

early fascination with Socrates thus sets a certain political orientation in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics that never leaves him (Sullivan 1989, 7). In fact, the main thesis of Sullivan's book is based on the idea that Gadamer's early political orientation becomes the basis for the hermeneutics of *Truth and Method* (1989, 4). According to him, the Socratic shift from the poetic to the political is reflective of the shift from monologue to dialogue, and from philosophy to the polis. Gadamer's political orientation should therefore be viewed, argues Sullivan, within the larger ethical turn he takes early on in his philosophical career. Moreover, the way Gadamer rehabilitates Plato's politics is not meant to recover Plato's political framework as much as it is an attempt to read the political in Plato's dialogues. Accordingly, Gadamer's political orientation is not directed at returning to Plato's political idealism expressed in a dialogic form; rather, argues Sullivan, "dialogue itself is the ethical way of life because it is the manner in which we reflect on what we are doing and try to produce some normative, ethical conclusions about it" (1989, 14).

Simpson, in parallel to this, has continued exploring the critical and political potential of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, and has a new interpretation of Gadamer to be released this year. In his forthcoming book *Hermeneutics as Critique: Science, Politics, Race, and Culture* (2021), Simpson offers philosophical hermeneutics as an indispensable tool for critical theory and a valuable contribution to our recent philosophical inquiries about the hegemony of science and technology, as well as to pressing political discussions on social and racial justice. According to Di Cesare, Gadamer's sensitivity to ethical and political issues in philosophy, given his commitment to both application and practice, have been of great influence upon the general trajectory of post-foundational philosophy, and, moreover, have provided a *rehabilitation* of many ethical and political themes in Western thought. She argues in her biography of Gadamer that the "rediscovery in recent decades of the relevance of the Greek philosophers' ethics and politics is in large part due to philosophical hermeneutics. In particular, Gadamer's reading of Aristotle brought ethical questions back to the center of philosophical debate, and especially in Germany led to the 'rehabilitation of practical philosophy'" (2013, 110). Di Cesare thus believes that in order to grasp the significance of Gadamer's project, even though "his entire view of ethics has often been misunderstood," we need to become more cognisant of the ethical and political potential in Gadamer's dialogical reorientation of philosophy (2013: 110). She thus emphasizes the need to view the way Gadamer moves us away from both foundationalist assumptions *and* the problematic solipsism of Heidegger's existentialism (2013, 80).

In a similar vein, Walter Brogan discusses the impact of Gadamer's rehabilitation of Aristotle in his essay, "Gadamer's Praise of Theory: Aristotle's Friend and the Reciprocity Between Theory and Practice" (2002, 141). Brogan explains how Gadamer revived a genuine interest in the practical and political possibilities of philosophy:

> the enormous upsurge of interest in political and practical philosophy among Continental philosophers in the last two decades can certainly in part be attributed to the persistent and insistent claim that permeates the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, namely, the claim that philosophy can never fulfill its unique role unless it remains thoroughly committed to the uncovering of a practical dimension. (2002, 141)

For Brogan, the real implication of Gadamer's contribution to this area lies in his "recovery of the insight that genuine philosophy is rooted in the facticity of practical life," as "the very bifurcation of philosophy into theoretical and practical endeavors is shown by Gadamer to be a modern prejudice" (2002, 141). According to Weinsheimer, Gadamer's rejection of such bifurcations is not simply an attempt to combine two distinct things; rather, Gadamer sees beyond such modernist

dualities, because "Gadamer's phenomenology of language takes a nondualist form, one that runs quite counter to the familiar semiotic theories of the century" (2004, 162).

For this reason, Smith, Vilhauer, Davey, Bernstein, and Fairfield all insist that the primacy of dialogue as centralized in Gadamer's project is about concrete and real situations—not simply about abstract textual matters. But even in textual matters, Gadamer shows us, as Sullivan argues, that the ethical and political are inescapable and inseparable. As Vilhauer emphasizes, Gadamer shows us the inescapability of *the voice of other,* no matter when or where, and hence the inescapability of the political (2010, 85). As Smith points out, when people raise arms, the contexts of such conflicts are the very sites of their exclusion from the dialogic encounter. These agonies, struggles, and tactics of abolishing the *conquered* other, or resisting the *dominant* other, underscore *the political importance of philosophical hermeneutics*. Such conceptions of the agonies of dialogue make us rehabilitate the dialogical encounter in a new light and consider its urgency in our troubled world. Smith's political conception of the dialogic encounter casts Gadamer's conceptions of *the difficultly of encounter* as both relevant and urgently needed. For Smith, dialogue is not simply an intellectual exercise but rather a dynamic caught in agony, and thus he emphasizes dialogue as a political necessity. "Dialogue in the dialogical sense advanced here is increasingly necessary given the restrictions exerted by authorities in democratic as well as autocratic regimes. We would be hard pressed as scholars and citizens not to agonize over that" (2008, 180).

According to Brogan, Gadamer offers a whole new approach that moves beyond simple reductionisms, because after "the collapse of the modern Enlightenment project, there has emerged a great deal of interest in all philosophical circles in the need to rethink the question of the good life and, along these lines, the relationship between theoretical and practical life" (2002, 142). Davey also argues that Gadamer invites us to break the self-enclosure of our monologues by opening ourselves to life again, including its difficulties and negativities, so that we may act in more ethical ways in concrete situations. Although "Gadamer does not speak directly of *love*," writes Davey, "a notion of *eros* is evident in his thinking. He frequently talks of *being drawn into a meaning*, of being *captivated* by a desire for completeness" (2006, 218).

Davey, therefore, concludes that, for Gadamer, "Understanding, then, is a passion and passionate, something that we both passionately care about and are drawn toward" (2006, 218). Consequently, Sontag's discontent with hermeneutics, and her passionate counter invitation to "an erotic of art," in fact has a resonance in the underlying mood of philosophical hermeneutics, given its emphasis on *the power of encounter* and *the encounter of power* in the dialogical situation. In light of this discussion with Gadamer's interlocuters, we come to see that in place of dry interpretation and methodic approaches, hermeneutics is what defines our mode of being alive; it is the result of our direct experience and engagement with life. It unfolds in conversations and behaviors with everyone and everything, whether in the present or past, in ways that can transform us when we truly enter into an I-Thou encounter.

Chapter Two
The Relevance of the Beautiful in the Ruins of Ugliness: Gadamer and the 20th Century

Become simple and live simply, not only within yourself but also in your everyday dealings. Don't make ripples all around you, don't try to be interesting, keep your distance, be honest, fight the desire to be thought fascinating by the outside world.

–Etty Hillesum

The sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.

–Carl G. Jung

Gadamer's interest in the *relevance of the beautiful* reflects the way his own voice emerges in the midst of ugliness. To be sure, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics arises from within an extremely difficult terrain, and in some ways, literally from the rubble of the devastated landscape of Germany in the aftermath of World War II. Perhaps it should not be surprising, then, that Gadamer is one of the key figures in the "linguistic turn," and only started seriously writing and publishing around the time he was sixty. His later blooming testifies to decades of accumulative research and philosophical reflection. One could therefore read his project as his own hermeneutics of the 20th century. Gadamer dedicated his philosophical efforts to interpreting and making sense of the difficult and challenging landscape he survived. Consequently, in both his life and intellectual project, he attempted to understand, navigate, and interpret the tumultuous trajectory of his century.

This chapter deals with some of the major landmarks of Gadamer's own life, set in parallel with the emergence and evolution of his philosophical hermeneutics. The centrality of dialogue in his thought announces his *quiet rebellion*; his attempt to break through the shackles of the self-enclosure and domination he perceived as being deeply entrenched in Western thought. Gadamer's interest in hermeneutics cannot be separated from his interest in examining and identifying the underlying principles of modernity. By unpacking the philosophical assumptions underpinning modernity, he provided a new perspective for understanding the cascading events of devastation and destruction he witnessed during an epoch in which the ugly and difficult were largely present. After all, one of the main tenets of hermeneutics is the complexity of the processes of understanding, especially evident in our attempts to come to grips with that which defies our understanding and seems alien and apprehensive.

2.1 The German Methuselah of the Twentieth Century[16]

Gadamer was born in Marburg, Germany, at the beginning of the 20th century, on February 11th, 1900. He lived into the 21st century (he died in 2002), and came to witness many great historical upheavals, including two insane world wars, the events of the Holocaust, and the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan. In many ways, Gadamer's notion of historically *effective*

[16] Methuselah is a biblical figure whose long life of 969 years makes him a symbol of longevity and therefore of having both the privilege and difficulty of witnessing many historical events. He is mentioned in Genesis (5: 21-27). Although there are references to him in the three Abrahamic religions, in the Muslim tradition the Quranic scripture also gives Noah, who lives up to 950 years, the role of a temporal witness of many epochs (29: 14).

consciousness (*Wirkungsgeschichte Bewusstsein*) can be linked to his own sensitivity to the way such an epoch impacted him. The Canadian scholar Jean Grondin and the Italian scholar Donatella Di Cesare, Gadamer's last student, are considered to be the leading biographers of Gadamer. In their respective works, both situate him historically and politically to assess how his philosophical contribution is reflective of his attempts to really understand the major thresholds of the 20th century.

According to Grondin, "Gadamer became one of the premier witnesses of our century not merely because he developed philosophical hermeneutics but also because he was given *a life span like that of Methuselah*, with all the formative encounters and experiences it afforded him" (2003, 6, emphasis mine). Di Cesare also places Gadamer's importance for our times in his ability to be a witness of a special kind. "In an era that is becoming less and less philosophical, Gadamer bore witness to the necessity of philosophy as a critical vigilance and unconditional freedom of questioning" (2013, 1). But at the same time, Di Cesare emphasizes how philosophy "was never merely a profession for him," but rather a way of life that embodied the "Socratic harmony of *logos* and *érgon*, word and deed" (2013, 3).

As many of the aforementioned events Gadamer bore witness to took place in Germany, he was also well positioned to be a close witness to a variety of related events and developments. Both his hermeneutic mind and "his long life made him one of the most privileged observers of that century" (Grondin 2003, 2). He had the chance to witness exponential scientific progress and tremendous technological advances. Growing up mostly with his strict father, Johannes Gadamer (1867-1929), a famous German pharmaceutical scientist who was "deeply convinced of scientific progress," Gadamer was sensitized to both the *claims* and *limits* of the infallibility of science and the promise of technology (Di Cesare 2013, 4). In his own brief autobiography, *Philosophical Apprenticeships* (1985), Gadamer, recalling some of his early days in Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland), vividly remembers his first ride in a truck with his uncle. He tells of his elation during the 100 km ride, "the earthquaking jolts" the first automobiles gave, and how "breathtaking" the ride was (1985, 1).

In his interviews with Grondin, Gadamer shared his memory of the big shift from carts driven by horses to cars, as well as "the change from gas to electric lighting, the introduction of the telephone, the first zeppelin over Breslau, the first motion pictures, but especially and most memorably the sinking of the *Titanic* on 15 March 1912" (2003, 36). The incident was one of Gadamer's earliest and most vivid memories, and he discusses it on the first page of his autobiography. The event was very absorbing for him as a twelve-year-old, and imprinted upon him, at a young age, the fragility and vulnerability of the human condition despite our modern claims of control and inclinations to feign omnipotence. "Gadamer's memories of childhood were in general inflected by the 'progress of technological civilization,' to which he developed an ambiguous relation," argues Grondin, "partly in reaction to his scientifically inclined father," but also by the many events he witnessed at a young age. At a very young age Gadamer also experienced the loss of his mother, Emma Karoline Johanna Gewiese, who died of diabetes when she was only thirty-five and Gadamer was only four (Di Cesare 2013, 4). This left Gadamer to become the guardian and close friend of his older brother, who suffered from chronic epilepsy. But Gadamer also experienced the loss of his brother when his father insisted on institutionalizing him due to his illness during their adolescent years, increasing Gadamer's sense of loneliness. Grondin mentions how "at a very early age the young Gadamer had to work through the death of his mother, his brother's severe illness, and the inflexible Prussian discipline of his father, not to mention the First World War—all this during his most formative years" (2003, 7). Gadamer's

mother came from a background of Protestant pietism, explains Grondin, which had its own genealogy in the German intellectual landscape, having impacted many German philosophers and intellectuals including Kant and Hegel. Even in her absence, Gadamer's mother and her background remained present in Gadamer's life, perhaps in contrast to his scientist father, and consequently, even if indirectly, influenced his intellectual sensibilities. "Gadamer often voiced the opinion that his vaguely 'religious disposition' came from her," writes Grondin, and therefore also his "receptiveness to what exceeded the boundaries of reason and science" (2003, 21).

Both private and political events shaped Gadamer's interests and questions. At the beginning of his autobiography, Gadamer describes how the war "closed in" on their age group when the "highest classes dwindled in response to increased draft calls," remembering also the funereal of one of his teachers who had died in the war (1985, 2-3). During these formative years, the atmosphere in Germany was grim and full of angst as "the effects of the First World War soon made themselves felt. Germany emerged from the chaos of the war economically broke, politically unstable, disillusioned, and disoriented by a deep need of direction" (Di Cesare 2013, 4). Gadamer recalls how continuous fatality reports, years of shortage and hunger, *and* a republican revolution against the Prussian monarchy all happened before he even went to university (1985, 3). Given all that was unfolding around him, it is therefore no wonder that the image of a giant sinking ship completely fascinated him in his boyhood and captured his youthful imagination.

The return of Gadamer and his family to Marburg was a decisive turn for the shy and introverted young man's intellectual life. Due to his work, in 1902 Gadamer's father relocated the family to Breslau, the city of Gadamer's education during his youth until he finished university. In 1919 Gadamer's father received a new chair at the University of Marburg where, a couple of years later in 1922, he became rector (Di Cesare 2013, 5). Marburg had a lot to offer the young Gadamer. According to Di Cesare, during this period, through "a lucky coincidence the best of German intellectual culture had converged in this university town" (2013, 5).[17] This is clear from Gadamer's own autobiography. Most of the chapters and sections are devoted to the individuals who influenced him the most, like Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Natorp, Nicolai Hartmann and Paul Friedlander. He also discusses several important and enduring friendships, especially with Jakob Klein and Karl Löwith, in addition to his association with the Stefan George circle. Interestingly, all these individuals and groups happened to be in Marburg. The twenty years Gadamer spent in this picturesque town that had inspired the Brothers Grimm had a profound impact upon his thinking and philosophical evolution. The lifelong connections he made with academics and the friendships he formed there deeply shaped him for years to come, both personally and academically, and he maintained most of them throughout his life (Gadamer 1985).

Gadamer's tempered and wary interpretations of modernity—especially its claims of knowledge and progress—can be better understood when placed within these events and the influence of the characters he encountered. His own slim autobiography, then, is more about his historical and intellectual situatedness and the events and people that impacted him than his own achievements or academic accolades. His autobiography suggests that the figures that influenced him, and the events he came to witness, intensified his questioning and critiquing of our modes of being at a deeper level. Gadamer's interest in issues surrounding *the domination of being* and the primacy of scientific infallibility in our age can be understood as his own hermeneutic responses

[17] Through another coincidence, Marburg is again at the centerstage of international events—it is where the German company *BioNTech*, founded by two German scientists of Turkish ancestry, developed a Covid vaccine. In collaboration with the American pharmaceutical company *Pfizer*, the company in Marburg is estimated to produce 750 million dosages annually.

to the main questions that arose as a result of what he witnessed and experienced. The significance of questioning above content and answers is therefore at the core of his philosophical hermeneutics. As Gadamer himself explains, "philosophical hermeneutics is more interested in the questions than the answers" (2007, 241).

2.2 The Hermeneutic Priority of The Question

Gadamer's project is predicated on both questioning and openness. According to him, there cannot be openness without moving in a direction that goes against conventional thinking and behavior. He therefore stresses the notions of humility, risk, failure, and the capacity to admit our ignorance as means of opening ourselves to *seeking truth* rather than *claiming truth*. Thus the power of the Socratic dialogue for Gadamer lies in its emphasis on not knowing and questioning, because both the admission of ignorance and the act of questioning create the dynamics which expand the horizons of its interlocuters. Both questioning and openness require counterintuitive moves: the "admission of ignorance" and a high level of flexibility, as Gadamer points out (2013, 374). The significance of the Platonic-Socratic dialectic is not about creating a context of exchanging content and meaning to secure a truth. Rather, as Gadamer puts it, it is about committing to raising "the art of questioning to a conscious art" (2013, 375). As he states,

> The art of the dialectic is not the art of being able to win every argument. On the contrary, it is possible that someone practicing the art of dialectic—i.e., the art of questioning and of seeking truth—comes off worse in the argument in the eyes of those listening to it. As the art of asking questions, dialectic proves its value because only the person who knows how to ask questions is able to persist in his questioning, which involves being able to preserve his orientation toward openness. The art of questioning is the art of questioning ever further—i.e., the art of thinking. It is called dialectic because it is the art of conducting a real dialogue. (2013, 375)

It is normal, then, that any real seeking of truth has questioning at its center, something that Gadamer brings to any kind of text or conversation. Any text or philosophical project for Gadamer therefore conceals a question at its heart. A text is the attempted response to a particular question, which is why, for Gadamer, we should allow any text to speak to us—we may share in the question it is answering. A text that interests us is also a text that reads us because it engages us and helps us raise questions of our own.

> Then it becomes more important to trace the interests guiding us with respect to a given subject matter than simply to interpret the evident content of the statement. One of the more fertile insights of modern hermeneutics is that every statement has to be seen as a response to a question, and that the only way to understand a statement is to get hold of the question to which its statement is an answer. (Gadamer 2007, 241)

Gadamer's project thus offers new directions for pursuing the kind of questions that preoccupy those who have serious concerns about what underpins our modes of domination and violence. And it is precisely because Gadamer is not invested in providing final or full answers to the questions he raises that his project opens the possibility for further investigation. Because Gadamer lived through a century that brought about exponential explosions in scientific and technological advances with far-reaching political consequences, his questioning and critical sensibilities intensified. According to this Gadamerian perspective, it behooves any keen observer

committed to understanding our modes of domination in the modern age to have their curiosity piqued in raising critical questions, and to remain committed to questions rather than answers and theories. After all, Di Cesare argues, hermeneutics "certainly does not strive for absolute truth. It insists, rather, on human finitude" (2013, 103). Moreover, Gadamer himself acknowledges the finitude and situatedness of our own questions as well and the concrete contexts from which they arise. Discussing how questions arise in an interview with Palmer, he states:

> How do we come to pose our questions? When we pose them, how do we go about answering them? No problem just falls from heaven. Something awakens our interest—that really comes first! At the beginning of every effort to understand is a concern about something: confronted by a question one is to answer, one's knowledge of what one is interpreting is thrown into uncertainty, and this causes one to search for an answer. In order to come up with an answer, the person then begins asking questions. But no one asks questions *von sich aus* [just from oneself]—apropos of nothing. To think otherwise is simply to fall into scientific ideology. No, understanding is not something that takes place at the end of humanistic research about an object, it stands at the beginning and governs the whole process of questioning, step by step. (Gadamer 2001, 50)

By emphasizing the *hermeneutic priority of the question* while also emphasizing the finitude of any answer, Gadamer frames the nature of both understanding and domination as open to further elaboration. Throughout the corpus of his work, Gadamer deals with a variety of questions about the conditions of understanding and the underlying metaphysical and monological assumptions of the Western tradition and its drive for control. His project therefore announces itself more as a questioning hermeneutics than as a propositional hermeneutics. As noted above, Gadamer conceptualizes philosophical hermeneutics as the task of raising the activity of questioning into a conscious art (2013, 375). If we were to sum up his project in a sign, then Gadamer's philosophy represents a question mark rather than an exclamation mark. This hermeneutic interest in questioning is what frames both his critical and ethical concerns. Gadamer's project emphasizes the temporality and finitude of all our answers and findings. Hermeneutics does not claim a new philosophical stance, and hence its own self-understanding is also predicated on this historicity. "Hermeneutics, for its part," argues Di Cesare "knows very well that it cannot escape finitude, and it also knows that it is nothing more than a temporary answer to the question of absolute truth posed by its age" (2013, 103). Gadamer's early interest in art, literature, and philosophy—channelling a rebellion against his charismatic authoritarian father—combined with all that he came to witness for over half a century, compelled him to question many things and be concerned with the underlying philosophical assumptions that shaped the modern worldview.

While Gadamer's quiet questioning of things may come across as somewhat abstract or prosaic, this activity expands the horizons of any situation or school of thought towards new possibilities. The combination of both modern disasters and scientific progress helped Gadamer produce a body of work that seems tempered and reasonable on the surface, and yet is laden with philosophical paradigm shifts and profound critical perspectives about modernity's underlying philosophical assumptions. Gadamer's interest in the hermeneutic priority of the question cannot be read without considering the circumstances that gave shape to such profound questions, and, as I argue in this chapter, the impact of these circumstances, i.e., all the complex and compound realities of the 20th century, led Gadamer to find solace in ancient philosophy, particularly in the Socratic model of questioning of beliefs. The Greeks became his refuge and retreat in more than one way.

By seeking a different epoch, Gadamer was able to transport himself intellectually into another historic horizon away from things that not many human beings would be willing to face. During the rise of Hitler in Germany, and during the horrors of the Holocaust years, Gadamer retreated into the academy teaching Plato and Aristotle. And yet Gadamer's own questions, even if guided by ancient philosophy, were about his present and the nature of domination in his own historic time.

2.3 "A Terrible Awakening"

Although Gadamer is often conceived as an accommodating and acquiescent character given the calm Platonic undertones of his dialogical modality, his interest in ancient philosophy, his retreat into the academy during the Nazi period, as well as his own life and intellectual trajectory, actually represent *quiet rebellions*—or peaceful ruptures. His interest in the humanities is a drastic shift away from the expectations of his scientist father, and his interest in language, philology, and dialogue represents another drastic shift from the philosophical trajectory of his mentor, Heidegger. Grondin quotes Gadamer as having said, "The way I was raised when I was a child, I would wish on no one today. No child would be likely to get through it without a rebellion" (2013, 17). This also seems to be the case with respect to the way his mentor acted during the Nazi period; no disciple would be likely to get through it without a rebellion. Gadamer's earlier encounter with the circle of the poet Stephan George had influenced his intellectual and political orientations. "Of course the dissolution of my frame of values that was the result of my early education also manifested itself in a new political orientation," says Gadamer in his autobiography (Gadamer 1985, 4). And later, the same occurs when he pursues a different philosophical and political orientation than Heidegger. The main concern for Gadamer, argues Di Cesare, was "to outline a hermeneutic philosophy against the background of both classical hermeneutics and Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity" (2013, 1). In fact, Gadamer initially pursued classical philology because this "was his way of liberating himself from Heidegger" (Di Cesare 2013, 9). These political and intellectual shifts culminated in divergent paths, so that "their perspectives," argues Di Cesare, became quite different "and to a certain extent even opposed" (2013, 112).

Gadamer lived through difficult and trying times during the reign of the Nazis and the Second World War. During this time he tried to survive without confronting the authorities in power, but also without complying either. However, while he kept his distance from the Nazis, he inadvertently benefited sometimes. He was invited, for example, to fill in for his friend Richard Kroner in Keil, who had been suspended because of his Jewish background (Gadamer 1985, 76). But sometimes he lost too. Before moving to Leipzig, his recommendation to become a full professor at the faculty at Marburg was rejected by the Nazi authorities based on his well-known anti-Nazi inclinations and his social and political closeness with his Jewish friends (Schmidt 2002, 5). Despite the somewhat insulated atmosphere of the University of Leipzig at the time, in his autobiography Gadamer explains his reasons for welcoming the move, first to Keil, then onto Leipzig.

He discusses in detail how he wanted to move from the oppressive atmosphere in Marburg, where he and his friends felt themselves "to be a minority viewed with hostility" (Gadamer 1985, 94). The move benefited him, and Gadamer finally became a full professor and chair of the department of philosophy at the University of Leipzig in 1939. And later, his distance from Nazism served him too. After being vetted and recognized by the American authorities in Germany as not

having not been tainted by Nazim, he was appointed president of the university—unlike his mentor, Heidegger, who was dismissed from teaching or holding any office (Schmidt 2002, 5).

However, this is precisely the problem that Arendt raises about the history of Western philosophy as manifested in the retreat of the philosopher into the academy. Is it not possible to read Gadamer's choice to hide in the academy when the Nazis came to power as a form of political escapism? On the surface Gadamer seems to have used a quietist strategy in his retreat to the academy to survive the darkness of the Nazi period. But it is also clear from all that he wrote and did during this period that his choices require some hermeneutics of their own, especially given Gadamer's aversion to the ideology of National Socialism.

In his autobiography, Gadamer discusses the Germans' yearning for change after having endured difficulties for decades before the rise of the Nazis. The general mood of the Germans was caught up in anticipation and aspiration; in a desire to rise again after the devastation of first World War. Given the horrific economic and political crises they had just endured in the 1920s after the Republican revolution and the new Weimar period, they craved optimism. But Gadamer also stresses how such optimistic illusions were quickly put to rest, especially with the rise of vehement anti-Semitism. "Soon enough the fronts became clearer. The Nuremberg Laws put to an end any illusions one had with regard to the demise of anti-Semitism" (Gadamer 1985, 77). Gadamer also explains how the ridiculous politics of Nazism caused many to back off or fail to act soon enough, especially given how quickly they had to awaken to what was unfolding around them:

> It was *a terrible awakening*, and we could not absolve ourselves of having failed to perform adequately as citizens. We had underrated Hitler and his kind, and admittedly we made the same mistake as the liberal press in doing this. Not one of us had read *Mein Kampf* […] The theological faculty and the newly formed Confessional Church came out openly against anti-Semitism, but until June 30, 1934, we all believed that this gutter politics would soon disappear. (1985, 75, emphasis mine)

2.4 Retreat into the Academy, or Socrates Holding a Candle?

To remain a teacher and avoid being fired, Gadamer unfortunately signed a document in November 1933, in which academic professors declared their commitment to the National-Socialist State. Although Grondin stresses that Gadamer never compromised his political autonomy, he does say that the "single compromising document" was this signature (2003, 158). Gadamer also voluntarily enrolled in a Nazi indoctrination camp called the "Academy for Professors," without which he would not have been allowed to work as a professor (Schmidt 2002, 5). Richard Palmer attempts to put these events in perspective in his introduction to *Conversations with Gadamer*:

> While Heidegger's connections with the Nazis are well documented, Gadamer's are minimal; signing a statement of support of Hitler in 1933 when failure to do so would have led to his expulsion from Germany; attending an orientation camp for teachers in October 1935 with the hope of getting a job in philosophy [...] In all of these cases, we see that Gadamer, a nonmember of the Party with only scorn for its policies, a man whose closest friends were Jewish, was not an "ideological power" working in support of National Socialism, but rather a professor of ancient philosophy surviving and getting on with his life under the terror of a fascist police state. (2001, 21)

Palmer argues that Gadamer never did anything to support the National Socialists and that, instead, he did things that indicate the opposite. He discusses how Gadamer, while holding the chair at Leipzig, made use of his position to decline projects in collaboration with the Nazis on behalf of his university (2001, 21). Moreover, and to his credit, Gadamer cut all relations with his mentor, Heidegger, until after the war. Grondin insinuates that Gadamer's attitude, and those of others close to Heidegger, pressured Heidegger to resign as rector of Marburg University early on in 1934 (2003, 154). Di Cesare also argues that "one of the reasons for [Heidegger's] resignation in April 1934 may also have been his humiliating isolation" (2013, 15). As Grondin also mentions, despite the fact that many of Heidegger's friends, including some of his Jewish friends, maintained contact with him during these years, Gadamer cut him off completely and kept his distance. Heidegger did try to reach out to him by sending letters or sharing essays, to which Gadamer always refused to engage or answer (Grondin 2003, 154-155). Gadamer, however, did resume his friendship with Heidegger after the war, after the latter had withdrawn his membership from the party some years earlier.

Given Heidegger's influence and stature, Gadamer's choices and attitude show a high level of authentic integrity during a difficult time. "If one thinks of Heidegger's enormous influence, it is surprising that Gadamer was able to evade it," argues Di Cesare, especially given the fact that Heidegger was able to continue to influence many in their circle (2013, 15). The difficult conditions, relationships, and events that Gadamer had to navigate during those years cannot be separated from the development and evolution of his ideas and project. In viewing the circumstances of the time, we can see that his notions of both dialogue and *phronesis* emerged under tremendously challenging circumstances—dialogue and community action were completely stalled during the Nazi years. However, not everyone agrees with the choices Gadamer made.

In his essay "The Dark Side of *Phronesis*: Revisiting the Political Incompetence of Philosophy," Bruce Krajewski strongly argues that such justifications for Gadamer's choices are too facile. He criticizes Gadamer scholars such as Jean Grondin, Georgia Warnke, and Lawrence Schmidt, as well as numerous others, for being "utterly salutary and salubrious" (2011, 9). Krajewski criticizes Gadamer, who had been committed to reviving the Greek notion of *phronesis* as wisdom in action, of having failed to act ethically during the Nazi period. Krajewski asserts that those "are the moments one would expect to be exemplary for witnessing *phronesis* on display" (2011, 10). If Gadamer viewed himself as the disciple of Socrates and was deeply invested in revising the Socratic dialectic, in both its political and ethical dimensions, Krajewski wonders, why did he accommodate himself to the terrible circumstances and attempt to hide his resistance? Krajewski therefore concludes that "Gadamer, unlike Socrates, was not prepared to risk everything," and, accordingly, did not live up to his own ideas on *phronesis* (2011, 18). The question that arises in light of Krajewski's essay and accusations is whether Gadamer should have risked everything. But such a question also implies, as Krajewski intimates, that Gadamer never actually risked anything.

In viewing some of the events and choices Gadamer made during these challenging times it becomes clear that Gadamer actually did take risks, and dangerous ones at that, but only selectively and when he believed it was worth it. For example, Gadamer did not calculate the grave risk he was taking when he invited his friend, the Jewish philosopher Jakob Klein, to live with him and his family. "In difficult conditions, in which any contact with Jews was scarcely tolerated and was already a form of resistance, Gadamer sheltered his friend Klein in his house for almost two years, from 1933 to 1934," until arrangements were made for Klein to leave in safety for the United States (Di Cesare 2013, 13). This story emerged later because Gadamer did not view this act as

heroic, and in fact often expressed gratitude for the way in which Klein was central in helping him shape better political views, and also for the way his Jewish friends finetuned his political stance during these times (Di Cesare 2013, 14-15).

Gadamer often repeated, notes Di Cesare, that what helped him evade Heidegger's overpowering influence during this time was his closeness to some of his Jewish friends, whose understanding of things informed and shaped his political views. He therefore inevitably, "adopted their perspective and saw the events through their eyes" (Di Cesare 2013, 15). "Besides Löwith, it was above all Klein, a passionate reader of newspapers and attentive political observer, who gave the younger Gadamer decisive insights" (Di Cesare 2013, 15-16). Moreover, Gadamer's acceptance of the move to Leipzig, despite his roots and history in Marburg, was in many ways rooted in personal and political reasons. Gadamer, in one of his last interviews, expressed his gratitude for the way that the well-known German theologian Rudolf Bultmann, who had been a good friend and mentor, supported his move to Leipzig to become a full professor. But one of his main reasons for wanting to go had to do with hiding and protecting his friend, Klein. "All of this helped me not only to come to Leipzig as a full professor, but also to support and assist my friend Jakob Klein" (Gadamer 2004b, 107).

Given what Gadamer describes as the "moral terror" that loomed at large in Marburg, Leipzig gave him a chance to breathe, away from the pressures to conform to the dominating insanity of this period. Gadamer's description of the move and his language in pointing out the differences in the political atmosphere of the two campuses reveal a great deal about his own political leanings:

> After almost twenty years in the small world of Marburg, the last five under tremendous pressure, the move to a big city and to a university outfitted in a grand style was a great change. Of course, the political situation threw its threatening shadow over the scene. But it is understandable that the new beginning at Leipzig, partly with older colleagues and partly with contemporaries who had already made names for themselves, pushed the gloominess of the world situation into the background. Compared to the moral terror that had made the Marburg atmosphere so repressive, the Nazi party hardly put in an appearance at Leipzig University […]. In Marburg my friends and I had felt ourselves to be a minority viewed with hostility, but there was none of this in Leipzig […]. Political bending was not expected in Leipzig. (1985, 93-94)

There were various factors that made Leipzig somewhat bearable for Gadamer, including its rector who, although a party member, had an aversion to militant Nazism and helped academic life by holding off those in power to some degree (Gadamer 1985, 94). Gadamer's academic career was derailed when he was at Marburg, which, in his autobiography, Gadamer describes as a "penal colony," since it repressed academics who were not sympathetic to the party. However, Gadamer also explains how the lack of success in this period did not make them engage in self-doubt, because in this atmosphere it meant something completely else: "indeed, a lack of success became something of a mark of honour" (1985, 80).

Both Di Cesare and Grondin argue that Gadamer had many reasons to avoid confrontation with the Nazis. For one, Gadamer and his friends believed that Nazim would not last and were eagerly awaiting its downfall. "Inside the university, all or nearly all were convinced that the 'nightmare' would soon be over. The deep contempt for the National Socialists, mixed with a foolish arrogance, led to a false estimation of the political realities. Even the anti-Semitism, which seemed far too primitive to be true, was misunderstood as a campaign slogan in a time of serious economic crisis" (Di Cesare 2013, 11). Things however changed quickly and in shocking ways,

when "the events, which with considerable blindness could be misinterpreted as isolated occurrences, took quite a different course: they proved to be the long-planned and state sanctioned persecution of Jews, communities, political opponents, and all those taken by the Nazi regime to be foreigners and enemies" (Di Cesare 2013, 12). Perhaps it is fairer, then, to compare Gadamer's actual circumstances, not to ancient Greece depicted poetically by Plato, but to a modern police state like the Soviet Union, Syria, or North Korea.

The air of gloomy imprisonment and surreal levels of surveillance in Nazi Germany indeed evoke such states. In his autobiography, Gadamer shares an anecdote in passing that indicates the actual reality and intense pressure and fear they lived under. He explains how even if something slipped from him on a whim, it could have led to dire consequences, because even at Leipzig where things were somewhat "relaxed," he once used the logical example of 'all asses are brown,' to which the students responded with an "uproarious laughter" (1985, 98). The brown was of course heard as a reference to the brown Nazi uniforms. One of his female students shared this in a letter to a friend, which was then read by the friend's parents. Gadamer's student had to face a formal denunciation and was immediately put to work in a factory.

In a way, Krajewski acknowledges the particularities of the historic moment, but wants Gadamer to have pushed more. "If we are to accept Gadamer's description of the historical moment that included the years 1933-45, the conditions at the time could not permit a Socrates, a person interested in philosophy who could have said 'no'" to the various factors shaping that moment (2011, 16). Krajewski thus does not "permit" that Gadamer practiced his own situational *phronesis*. While there are also others who problematize Gadamer's choices during this time, Grondin and Di Cesare find these accusations distracting and baseless. Both scholars, in their respective biographies, engage in detail with these critics.

But returning to Gadamer's political quietism and whether he should have opted for more open resistance raises questions about the choices available to individuals living in such difficult terrains. These are not simple questions and there are no simple answers either. Gadamer's own approach to both dialogue and negative experiences creates contexts in which we can orient ourselves to seriously discussing possible political maneuvers and exit strategies under such severe conditions. It is obvious that his thinking about *experience*, *limits* and *dialogue* are reflective of such questions of his own. What behooves us all in the moment, including Krajewski, is to examine our complicity in the many things about which we remain silent and acquiescent, things that may escape us in the moment and yet that could be easily identified as important from other distant contexts. Gadamer's ideas on the importance of distance and time in hermeneutics is obviously connected to his own experiences of thinking and reflecting upon events from different perspectives years later. Many of the critics who scrutinize German intellectuals and scientists like Gadamer and the nuclear physicist Werner Heinsberg, both of whom were clearly opposed to the Nazis, do not examine their own complicities in regard to the atrocities their governments engage in. This is why one of Gadamer's main concerns, poignant in such contexts, is the importance of dialoging with the past, as it helps us to acknowledge our own problematic prejudices and blind spots.

Individuals caught in difficult and dangerous terrains will maneuver in variety of ways, both risky and non-risky, including resorting to self-isolation or other forms of passive resistance. One cannot dismiss such tactics and maneuvers by measuring them by the yardstick of one modality of resistance, as Krajewski does. Such measurements reify the normative standards in which a categorical imperative is perceived without attention to context, time, and concrete risks, which goes against the notion of *phronesis* that Gadamer proposes. According to Di Cesare:

> Gadamer's critique of Kant warns against an ethics at a distance from the situation in which the person who must act finds himself, and which subsequently cover over the concrete demands of the situation by abstracting […]. The philosopher who is concerned with ethics is thus not an expert who knows more than others and can give recommendations, construct new laws, or write new stone tablets—on the contrary, he is much more in danger of feeling the situation. Experts in ethics, bioethics, and business ethics create a problem, as indeed every other 'expert' does, too, because ultimately they claim the decision making for themselves and thereby take away responsibility from others. And it is far from evident that they are wiser. (2013, 111)

Questioning Gadamer's political integrity when considering the difficult choices he had to make, in which he never compromised on his basic principles, reveals a certain political naivety on the part of such critics. It raises questions about whether these critics fully understand the conditions of living in a police state, not to mention the politically nuanced position Socrates took, non-resistance but also non-compliance. Was Gadamer's own position that far off from Socrates, given his dire circumstances and the actual risks he took?

Gadamer never attempts to justify his actions, and repeatedly questions everything he and others did during this period. In many articles and essays Gadamer does reflect upon these challenges, and talks about the events of this period in an accountable manner. When Gadamer turned eighty-two, he delivered a paper at a conference in Vienna titled "The Idea of Tolerance" (1998). In his paper, he explains the exaggerated and uncritical sense of helplessness that overcomes individuals when living under such conditions, the underlying moral lapses that tend to lead to conformity, and the constant need to survive. He critically reflects on how acquiescence to a tyrannical power is the result of a specific *hermeneutics of fear* towards the illusory omnipotence of a terror state:

> What gives state power its total presence is not so much its external pressure as the inner reaction it produces. Pragmatism, conformism, and the rewarding of adaptability (as Schiller saw) become victorious over the cultivation of individual judgment and original imagination. That is the real 'terror' that comes from power. Anyone who has survived the time of a regime of terror, as I have, knows that we ourselves helped give immediate terror a kind of omnipresence: the real power of the state secret police lay in anxiety about its unpredictability. It is really a myth that a state secret polices knows everything. Its presence is probably always an extremely limited one. But there is something in this: domination that is based on force and not on consensus has to be feared, and is effective for exactly that reason. (Gadamer 1998, 93)

Gadamer chose to be committed to the role of a teacher in an extremely difficult context with the hope of outliving the wrongdoers, which actually came to pass, albeit in a devastating manner. It may have been heroic and romantic for our sake to witness Gadamer openly resist in the manner of the Lutheran pastor and theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was hastily executed on April 9th, 1945, by the Nazis, just days before the allied forces took over, when he was only 39 years old.[18] But such is the spectrum of political choices under duress. Should Gadamer have been more open, especially when in retrospect one sees the desire of the Nazis to rid themselves of all voices that did not support them? These kinds of questions, and the choices individuals are forced

[18] For more information on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, see Jens Zimmermann's book *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian Humanism* (2019), in which Zimmerman discusses Bonhoeffer's criticism of liberal Protestant theology as the backdrop of the ethical and political choices Bonhoeffer made during Nazism.

to make while having to maneuver and navigate the political realities during crises, are at the core of Arendt's book *Men in Dark Times* (1968). Arendt stresses that the concept of "Dark Times" can be applied to various periods, as such times "are not only not new," but "are no rarity in history" even if the "monstrosities" of the 20th century "indeed are of a horrible novelty" (Arendt 1968, ix). Arendt's book emphasizes the power of small actions undertaken by individuals who live in ways that illuminate other possibilities during times of darkness as forms of resistance of a different kind:

> That even in the darkest of times we have the right to expect some illumination, and that such illumination may well come less from theories and concepts than from the uncertain, flickering, and often weak light that some men and women, in their lives and their works, will kindle under almost all circumstances and shed over the time span that was given them on earth. […] Eyes so used to darkness as ours will hardly be able to tell whether their light was the light of a candle or that of a blazing sun. (1968, ix-x)

In such difficult political terrain, individuals are caught between difficult choices, and maneuver and resist in a variety of ways, none of which should be easily dismissed or ultimately singled out. "Gadamer, and not only Gadamer, can be reproached for not expressing his dissent openly. But in Germany at the time there were few alternatives between being a Nazi and keeping silent. The assumption that silence means agreement certainly did not apply in that totalitarian state" (Di Cesare 2013, 16). Police states are predicated on dispensing with intelligentsia and intellectuals, and hence life-affirming choices can also be seen as forms of resistance, even if they seem to be politically neutral or acquiescent. Di Cesare quotes Karl Jaspers, who puts it well, even if somewhat painfully: "We survivors did not seek death. We did not, as our Jewish friends were led away, go to the streets, we did not scream until someone killed us, too. We preferred to stay alive with the weak but valid reason that our death would not have helped anything" (Di Cesare 2013, 16).

Gadamer had the chance to leave Germany on two occasions during the war, when he attended conferences in Florence and Lisbon (1985, 100-101). But he chose to come back to a city that was under bombardment to be with his students. He recalls the sense of relief he felt in gaining "temporary release from the universal jail" for a few days, his experience of "the strange reality" of being free and at peace, but also how he also felt compelled to go back to his students in the almost leveled city of Leipzig. There is a poignant image that captures Gadamer's willingness to risk his life, holding on with his students to the light of a different German candle. During the last aerial bombardments of Leipzig, including carpet bombing of the entire city, Gadamer was purposefully teaching *Duino Elegies*, the ten poems of the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke:

> If there ever was anything that flatly contradicted the bombastic phraseology of the Nazis, it was the highbred mannerism of Rilke's language. I repeatedly interpreted the *Duino Elegies*, for the last time in 1943 as Leipzig was being bombed. Ten days or so after the nearly total destruction of the center of the city (on December 4, 1943), I sat in a still sound building—but without heating, light, or windowpanes—and continued with the third elegy. Students were there—of course not all of them—each heavily bundled up and with a candle. Darkness. (Gadamer 1985, 98)

Gadamer's project provides exactly the kind of hermeneutic consciousness that helps us discuss why such things happen. The critical questioning that underpins his work helps us navigate new paths which would allow us, not only to say *Never Again* while living in a world full of atrocities, but also to engage in modes of questioning the conditions that allow such things to

happen. Philosophical hermeneutics thus provides a frame of analysis that makes us think and interpret our modes of being and interacting in the world in ways that can prevent such conditions from arising in the first place. Gadamer's fascination and deep interest in probing the underlying principles of modernity and the modern obsession with controlling and dominating everything in his magnum opus *Truth and Method*, is his means of uncovering the conditions that create insane levels of self-enclosure, fear, and destructive inclinations. Violence towards the other, for Gadamer, especially organized systematic violence, is not about incidental physical acts, or simply the outcome of random historical events, but rather the result of a whole hermeneutic way of perceiving the world, self and other, and consequently acting in the world accordingly.

2.5 Truth and Method

In 1960 Gadamer published his magnum opus, *Truth and Method*, at the age of sixty, after what could be described as a decades-long writing hiatus. In discussing Gadamer's life after the war—when he moved to West Germany to work as a professor in a now-liberal society—Grondin states that it was during this period that Gadamer's life finally becomes relatively quiet and stable. This affords him time to concentrate on his work, which, until then, had been mostly comprised of lectures and sporadic short essays based on his class notes or seminars. "He contented himself with offering—or better practicing—a hermeneutics that could claim 'philosophical' relevance. Creating this theory was difficult; writing it down, however, was sheer torture for him. Gadamer had not written a real book since 1931, and then it was just his Habilitation thesis. Gadamer never made a secret of the torment that writing always signified for this pupil of Socrates" (Grondin 2003, 279).

Although the publication of *Truth and Method* is when his philosophy begins to take form and he starts to gain public recognition, as Di Cesare argues, the "fullness of what he went on to produce [after *Truth and Method*], over more than forty years, should neither be neglected nor ignored, for if it is, the rich unfolding and differentiation of his philosophical perspective will be overlooked" (2013, 1). In his introduction to a collection of conversations with Gadamer, Palmer also explains how "few could foresee that another four decades of scholarly work and a dozen other important books or collections of essays on various topics would follow the appearance of that masterwork, and that even in his nineties Gadamer would be publishing more books and conducting the interpretive conversations collected in this volume" (Gadamer 2001, 6).

Gadamer's contribution to recovering academic life in Germany gave him a context to deal with concrete political matters while also giving him the space to contemplate his own ideas in light of the changes and transformations Germany underwent over the decades. In his autobiography, Gadamer discusses how overwhelmed he initially felt when he became the rector of Leipzig University after the war and had to deal with reorganizing and restructuring several faculties, including its medical school. He explains how this faculty, in particular, posed both political and administrative challenges on several levels. The university had gone from an imperial administration to revolutionary republican chaos under the Weimer government, followed by the pressures of the Nazi era, and then the destruction and devastation of the war, not to mention the Russian domination in East Germany (Gadamer 1985, 104-105). But what struck him in this political context was how politics and public life were so intertwined with academic life: "What was happening here was not a matter only of university revolution but also of the woes and well-being of sick people" (Gadamer 1985, 105). Gadamer therefore mentions how the university was not only connected to the Ministry of Culture, but also to the Ministry of Health (1985, 105).

During these post-war years, Gadamer's experiences impacted his practical and political thinking. The administrative and political responsibilities he took on gave him new and concrete contexts to "understand" things differently. These experiences became actual testing grounds for his dialogical ideas and ethics, even if they included some frustrations and disappointments, especially in East Germany under Soviet domination. Gadamer's engagement in administrative and political matters while being a member of the political 'elite' of the Soviet zone helped fine-tune his political sensibilities around the actual "play" of power games. When he left East Germany, Gadamer came to realize how such power plays permeate everything, including academic life:

> In this period, I learned a good deal, and not only about the game of politics. There has always been something like this in the small world of academia, and the rules of the game have been known since Machiavelli and are everywhere the same. What I learned above all was the unfruitfulness and impossibility of all restorative thinking; and when I went over to the West two years later, as a professor at Frankfurt, I was more than a little perplexed by the illusions I still found in the academic politics there. (1985, 104)

In his big tome, Gadamer offers what he had meticulously developed as his own way of philosophizing, inspired by years of intense reading, encounters with scholars, as well as his own insights—all of which he turned into a whole new philosophical orientation. The book, despite its title, represents this innovative orientation, which he came to identify as *philosophical hermeneutics*. Gadamer's initial title was exactly that: *The Foundations of Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Grondin 2003, 282). However, his publisher felt that it was too abstract given that, at the time, the term *hermeneutics* was still unknown, and mostly evocative of textual interpretation. His second title was *Understanding and Events*, but eventually he and his publisher settled on *Truth and Method* (Grondin 2003, 282).

What is significant about the event of publishing *Truth and Method* is that the term "hermeneutics" never meant the same thing again. Richard Bernstein argues that the book "is one of the most comprehensive and subtle statements of the meaning and scope of hermeneutics to appear in our time" (1983, 34). For Bernstein, neither *method* nor *hermeneutics* ever meant the same thing again philosophically after Gadamer, especially given his emphasis on understanding as our mode of being in the world. "Hermeneutics, for Gadamer, is no longer restricted to the problem of Method in the *Geisteswissenschaften*; it moves to the very centre of philosophy and is given an ontological turn; understanding, for Gadamer is a primordial mode of our being in the world" (Bernstein 1983, 34).

This magnum opus, which encapsulates the conceptual directive of Gadamer's philosophical orientation, offers a fresh perspective on the relationship between knowledge and domination, truth and method, and experience and objectivity. It engages directly in mapping the Western philosophical thrust of both the Enlightenment and modernity. The book focuses on questions dealing with the underlying dynamics of domination that underpin the narrowing down of our modes of knowledge. To demonstrate this, Gadamer takes up the evolution of the human sciences and the ways they were "wholly governed by the model of the natural sciences" (Gadamer 2013, 3). This new relationship to human phenomena, Gadamer argues, "created alienation from the world of history. The spiritual creations of the past, art and history, no longer belong self-evidently to the present; rather, they are given up to research, they are data or givens (*Gegebenheiten*) from which a past can be made present" (Gadamer 2013, 59).

In the first third of the book we get to read Gadamer's way of rehabilitating aesthetic theory towards a new conception of intersubjective understanding. In the middle of the book, Gadamer

presents his own hermeneutics of the mode of scientific knowing with its emphasis on method and experiment as the means to securing firm foundations. Gadamer shows how the obsession with method is connected to creating foundational forms of knowledge as a means of *securing reality*, and by implication as a means of *controlling reality*. In the middle part of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer attempts to unpack the implications of the centrality of the scientific quest in the way it gave impetus and shape to the social sciences. Gadamer argues that the anxious rush to legitimate the social and human sciences by modeling them on "scientific knowledge obliges one to sever one's bond with life, to attain distance from one's own history, which alone makes it possible for that history to become an object" (2013, 6). Attempting to dwarf our entire spectrum of being and modes of knowing into such a tight methodological mold is something that Gadamer sees as a form of violence to self, other, and environment. The last third of the book is devoted to Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics and its linguistic perspective, hence his focus here on what he describes as *linguisticality*, or our inescapably linguistic mode of being in the world.

The reliance on method and scientific modalities for grasping human phenomena in the same manner as the natural sciences is directly connected, according to Gadamer, with the new sources of authority and legitimacy in the modern age. Gadamer therefore analyzes how, by borrowing from the scientific models of dominating nature, the underlying assumption of control and domination present in the natural sciences gets transferred into the social sciences. He looks at how nineteenth century scholars like Dilthey and Helmholtz found a new basis for the social sciences in "the old Baconian aphorism, 'to be conquered, nature must be obeyed'" which, Gadamer argues, is "a principle that flies in the face of the classical and romantic heritage" that these scholars were attempting to also retain (2013, 7). Gadamer is deeply aware of the attempts to control, dominate, and conquer all phenomena in the modern age. Consequently, the modern interest and commitment to "establishing similarities and regularities, and conformities to law" explains Gadamer, was done with the aim to "make it possible to predict individual phenomenon and processes" (Gadamer 2013, 4). Gadamer does acknowledge that we can achieve certain benefits and levels of success by using some of these methodic approaches, particularly in fields like social psychology, but what he really finds so naive is that "one has not rightly grasped their nature if one measures them by the yardstick of a progressive knowledge of regularity. The experience of the sociohistorical world cannot be raised to a science by the inductive procedure of the natural sciences" (Gadamer 2013, 4). Hence, for Gadamer, the emulation of the natural sciences without examining the underlying implications of the drive for controlling and dominating present in them, is politically and philosophically naïve.

Although Gadamer does not directly address power relations or political categories, the significance of his project lies in having created a politicized critique of Western philosophy and science that discloses the underlying assumptions that are reflective of *the will to dominate being*. While *Truth and Method* is the major work by which Gadamer is known, his Habilitation thesis, published in the 30s and posthumously translated into English as *Plato's Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to the Philebus* (2009), is also compelling. In it, Gadamer sets the ethical and political orientation of his subsequent work. Di Cesare argues that even his magnum opus should be viewed as a stage within a larger ethical trajectory, one initiated in the concerns he confronted in his thesis, which centered around questioning and dialoguing (2013, 3).

Gadamer's critique of the accumulative Western tradition comes with various implications. For him, the focus on creating methodic and calculated modes of knowing created orientations that turned away from the dialogical. For him, this turning away carried at its core the aim of

"controlling" and "regulating" reality. Gadamer therefore is interested in raising questions about why much of our knowledge, especially in its scientific forms, has become a "knowledge for domination," as he puts it (2013, 467). In other words, Gadamer's questions raise our curiosity for alternative possibilities to the epistemological monologue of control. It is no surprise then that dialogue is at the core of philosophical hermeneutics, where the very process of understanding is dialogically defined. This of course means that understanding happens as the direct result of *encountering otherness*, as the outcome of an intersubjective dialogical process that is always finite and yet also always unfolding. "Hermeneutics is this infinite dialogue," asserts Di Cesare (2013, 186).

2.6 The Relevance of the Beautiful to Understanding Power

Gadamer's interest in the "relevance of the beautiful" permeates all his work because *the beautiful*, for Gadamer, comes with profound implications that go beyond aesthetic theories. In his important book, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, based on a lecture series by the same title, Gadamer introduces a different kind of philosophical aesthetics by habilitating themes from Western art theory into a new dialogical modality. Since understanding, for Gadamer, is the result of an intersubjective process, understanding a work of art cannot be the product of a knowing subject observing external reality. It is the result of the interaction of two subjectivities: the work of art, and the one looking at the work of art. In other words, the observer and observed form a unity in which understanding takes place. Thus, Gadamer's emphasis on *the relevance of the beautiful* provides new grounds for discussing *the relevance of the political*.

Given his engagement with Plato's notion of the good and beautiful, *the relevance of the beautiful to the political* is central in philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer, however, rehabilitates these Platonic notions by extending them to our ability to discern for ourselves in social and political contexts. For him, the capacity to judge, evaluate, and think for ourselves when responding to beauty is directly connected to our critical abilities and capacity to discern:

> Art and the beautiful oblige us to use our own judgement. When we consider something beautiful, that in itself means we are ourselves making a judgement. It may be that we often deceive ourselves by just imitating and repeating instead of trusting our own senses and their judgement, but even then this imitating and repeating still follows somebody who really means to judge for themselves, and in the end everybody considers themselves called upon to judge. (1998, 121)

For Gadamer, then, the courage to stand out from the momentum of our cultural pressures, and the ability to create free political spaces, is directly connected to judgement, even when we deceive ourselves and fall prey to the collective judgement of our societies. As he states,

> Our capacity for judgement is limited because we are biased by our interests and prejudiced opinions, by our traditions and revolutions, as well as by the whole organized practice of mass manipulation. The automatism of our entire civilized life no longer so easily permits us to feel that we have judgement or that we must credit ourselves with judgement. […] But then, what politically free ways of ordering our lives remain? Only if we think and judge for ourselves about social and political questions and about all the decisions of our life-experience, despite knowing our limitations and biases, can we hope that the elected political powers […] might also be capable of real cultivated judgement. (1998, 121-122)

This capacity to judge arises in interaction and intersubjectivity. Hence, Gadamer's larger political, and even critical, frame cannot be understood without considering the relevance of the beautiful. In more than one way, this relevance of the beautiful represents his attempt to underscore his dialogical modality. The political for him is not just simply either opposition or acquiescence. It is, rather, the very context for discernment and practical wisdom, in which both critique and approval unfold. For him a free political society is one "whose members are willing to use judgement and are capable of critique as well as approval" (1998, 122). Gadamer's interest in the "beautiful," is therefore directly connected to his phenomenology of understanding and hence to his dialogical and interactive conception of the human condition. This means that, for Gadamer, the political dimension unfolds when the free movement of understanding, discernment, and judgement is allowed.

The structure and movement of human experience in its various expressions therefore occurs in the mode of interaction. For Gadamer, our experiences reflect the movement of understanding as always occuring in intersubjectivity rather than, as conventionally perceived, in the mode of a willful or one-directional activity. We do not will understanding. *Understanding happens to us*. Monica Vilhauer points out the centrality of the mode of interacting with art as Gadamer's main metaphor for understanding, a metaphor which is also *relevant* for understanding his conception of the political. "We must grasp Gadamer's vision of the relationship between art, reality and truth if we are going to grasp how our play-encounter with art can legitimately be considered a mode of understanding in which we come to know some truth" (2010, 37). Gadamer stresses the importance of considering how external reality asserts itself upon us in any encounter, as well as the importance of considering internal reality in the form of our inner reactions or ruminations. Gadamer uses the metaphor of "play" to emphasize this "back-and-forth communication of meaning, or interpretive play, which constitutes the process of understanding" (Vilhauer 2010, 36).

Given the interactive shift Gadamer introduces to aesthetic theory, it becomes clear why Gadamer's interest in experiencing the work of art goes beyond aesthetic issues and is more reflective of his challenge to the Cartesian understanding of the duality of subject/object and, of course, Kantian notions of aesthetic subjectivism. In an *encounter* that touches us, especially in aesthetic experience, we are caught in the grip of a disclosure that arises in intersubjectivity—the work of art as subject in interaction with our subjectivity. The world is revealed in a new manner and our will is suspended. We are captivated and connected to something larger and more expansive than our own limited egoistic sense of self. Gadamer argues that we are perpetually encountering the world in this manner, which is why we are also exposed to the possibility of being caught *in the grip of an occurrence beyond our full control*. For Gadamer, the will to power and our attempts to always control reality are far off from the actual way understanding occurs. Hence, Gadamer puts our attempts to control under a new critical lens when he introduces the phenomenology of understanding. Yet, according to Gadamer, despite the givenness of this dynamic nature, we attempt to deny the back-and-forth movement of understanding and struggle to arrest it.

This is why opening ourselves to real dialogue presents a risk. For Gadamer, understanding is not merely the acquisition of information to be integrated subjectively, nor is it simply the discovery of a final truth through the stabilization of our categories of knowledge. Rather, understanding is something that occurs to us, and therefore "understanding proves to be an event." (2013, 320). This presents understanding as an occurance with different implications, especially

when considering the connection between thought and action, and thus the connection between understanding and application as well:

> First of all, understanding, like action, always involves risk and is never the simple application of a general knowledge of rules to the statements or text to be understood. Furthermore, where it is successful, understanding means a growth in inner awareness, as a new experience enters the texture of our own mental experience. Understanding is an adventure and, like any other adventure, is dangerous. (Gadamer 2007, 243)

For Gadamer, then, *understanding is never fully within our control*. It is something that "occurs" to us, and can occur in ways that can change or even transform us. Thus, hermeneutics is risky business. We can never emerge from any particular event of understanding the same. Risk, in this sense, is not just negative. It is more about the openness to infinite possibilities. Gadamer, therefore, argues that understanding also presents opportunities for increased awareness and growth. He explains how "when one realizes that understanding is an adventure, one realizes that it affords unique opportunities as well. It is capable of contributing in a special way to the broadening of our human experiences, our self-knowledge, and our horizon, for everything that understanding mediates is mediated through ourselves" (2007, 244). Because understanding is never "satisfied with simply wanting to register what is there or said," argues Gadamer, "it goes back to our guiding interests and questions. One has therefore to concede that the hermeneutical experience has a far lower degree of certainty than that attained by the methods of the natural sciences" (2007, 244).

The conception of understanding presented above, along with its possible consequences when considering the risks involved or the opportunities present, reveals why Gadamer perceives understanding in ontological terms. Understanding is not a mental process or a psychological state, but rather an event of being. And because understanding is an event of being, any new understanding that enters our world is capable of affecting and influencing our world.

Gadamer's conception of understanding as an intersubjective process is influenced by the way dramatic events asserted themselves upon him beyond his control. He is thus interested in contrasting the mode of discovering truth through method in *the sense of experiment* and the reception of truth in *the sense of experience*. His interest in probing the phenomenology of understanding therefore underlies his keenness in parsing the structure of experience. For him, understanding occurs in the throes of experience. Just as experiment is central in the natural sciences, Gadamer recovers the importance of experience in human subjectivity, because, for him, it is at the edge of experience, especially difficult experiences, that our positions and strongly held beliefs are shattered and opened asunder to our finitude and to new possibilities.

A great deal of emphasis is placed on experience as a factor in shaping our understanding. He therefore writes about the etymological evolution of the German term *Erlebnis* from the word *Erleben*, and how the term *Erlebnis* then evolved to refer to something only when it becomes an acquired experience "not only insofar as it is experienced, but insofar as its being experienced makes a special impression that gives it lasting importance [...] Goethe more than anyone else tempts one to coin this word since in quite a new sense his poetry acquires intelligibility from what he experienced. He said himself that all his poetry had the character of a vast confession" (Gadamer 2013, 57). Thus, Gadamer's own project is also more intelligible when we consider what he experienced.

Gadamer's philosophy can therefore be conceived of as his own *Erlebnis*, his experience of events that resulted in a philosophical orientation as a response to the devastation he witnessed.

But just as understanding is finite, Gadamer also stresses the limited and finite nature of any *Erlebnis*. Gadamer argues that "being experienced does not mean that one now knows something once and for all and becomes rigid in this knowledge; rather, one becomes more open to new experiences. A person who is experienced is undogmatic. Experience has the effect of freeing one to be open to experience" (2001, 53). This reorientation towards openness, for Gadamer, is intensified by experiencing new situations (usually negative) that destabilize our beliefs and convictions. "Experience stands in an ineluctable opposition to knowledge and to the kind of instruction that follows from general theoretical or technical knowledge. 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" (2013, 364). Knowledge therefore hinders understanding when it becomes a dogmatic obstacle and blocks new knowledge from emerging when undergoing new experiences. Gadamer emphasizes that the "dialectic of experience has its proper fulfillment not in definitive knowledge but the openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself" (2013, 364).

The sense of urgency that underpins the trajectory of the entire corpus of Gadamer's work reflects his conviction that modernity's overconfident modes of thinking and acting are not only unsustainable, but also close us to new possibilities and experiences. Such modes of "knowing" can also blind us to the actual realities and experiences that are already occurring. For Gadamer, staying the course on the path of totalized control in a world organized by scientific hegemony is not simply a poetic error or some form of inexorable progress, but a really dangerous path set on a collision course.

Stefan Marino, when considering the implications of our nuclear capabilities and the undisrupted movement towards environmental destruction, highlights Gadamer's sense of panic and urgency regarding the illusion of the inexorable progress of science. "As a matter of fact, he [Gadamer] pessimistically observes that 'our world is at an end if it keeps going on this way, as if it were always about to 'move forward'" (2011, 79). Marino therefore discusses how Gadamer problematizes the dangers of "domesticated" publics who are absent from such vital debates and issues, and cautions against the "the trivial attitude of mass conformity" brought on by a certain "hedonistic-consumerist mentality" that has become dominant in "our industrialized, alienated, bureaucratized and administrated societies" (2011, 59). Marino emphasizes that, despite some differences, there are some "affinities between Gadamer and the Frankfurt School on the question of modern alienation and reification" (2011, 57). Gadamer strongly agrees with certain precepts of the Frankfurt School when it comes to the consequences of capitalism and consumerism. Marino quotes the harsh words Gadamer uses to highlight how these trends eclipsed the importance of living with a critical and ethical attitude, a situation exacerbated by the modern mass media's role in "'domesticating' the masses and putting to sleep' people's capacity for critical thinking and judgement" (Marion 2011, 58).

One can appreciate Gadamer's sense of urgency and alarm when considering the various disasters he witnessed. The dropping of two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the Americans in August 1945 was another terrible shock. This took place in the immediate wake of the Holocaust and the allied war on Germany, which also deeply affected Gadamer's conscience, giving new impetus to his hermeneutic thinking. Several scholars, like Arendt and Jaspers, also saw the development of nuclear weapons as a new threshold for humanity with profound new implications on several levels. Marino argues that "Gadamer belongs to that group of thinkers who have constantly reflected upon the atomic bomb and its effects on the human condition" (2011, 76).

However, Gadamer also emphasized the importance of both hope and struggle to affirm our confidence in life. He even considered falling into pessimism as a *hermeneutic trap*. To Gadamer, "pessimism always seemed insincere, almost inhuman," argues Grondin, because "humankind cannot live without hope, he often said" (2003, 329). Given Gadamer's emphasis on the need to struggle and strive to affirm life, this is where Grondin reads a political broadening of hermeneutics—in other words, we need to understand and interpret the world to act wisely when the stakes have become so high that humanity has acquired the means of its annihilation. In fact, it is such crises that make Gadamer stress the notion of *phronesis*, the ability to decide and act wisely in concrete situations aside from scientific and calculated or technical considerations. Gadamer argues that "the knowledge that gives direction to action is essentially called for by concrete situations in which we are required to choose the thing to be done; and no learned and mastered technique can spare us the task of deliberation and decision" (2007, 231). Gadamer saw his hermeneutics as the capacity to stand at such limits and ask new questions. As Grondin puts it,

> Gadamer glimpses some possibilities in the quasi-political broadening of his hermeneutics. If the basic insight of hermeneutics is that the other may well be right, that our will to domination must come to a halt before the other, then perhaps the destructive tendencies of the Industrial Revolution might be held in check. This was the ultimate message, the ultimate hope of his hermeneutics. (2003, 329)

The political implications and consequences of Gadamer's hermeneutics therefore offer new approaches for dealing with the dilemmas of our modern age and its inclination for control and destruction. Grondin quotes from a conversation with Gadamer, during which he says:

> So it may not be unjustified to conclude from our discussion a final political consequence. We may perhaps survive as humanity if we would be able to learn that we may not simply exploit our means of power and effective possibilities, but must learn to stop and respect the other as an other, whether it is nature or the grown cultures of peoples and nations; and if we would be able to learn to experience the other and others, as the other of our self, in order to participate with one another. (2003, 329)

Gadamer has a positive hermeneutics of negative experiences. He defines experience through negation. For him, it is not the particular content of experience that gives us our "experienced" wisdom, but rather the way the series of negations and negative experiences crack us open to possibility. Negative experiences break down our illusion of control. Therefore, for Gadamer, an experienced person is a person who has come to see her finitude—not one possessing a particular kind of knowledge. Experience for Gadamer is not as much about the content of a particular experience as much as the wisdom of flexibility and openness that arises as a result of experience. Philosophical hermeneutics is less interested in a critical approach than in a practical and ethical response that has the potential of altering and raising the bar on our current intellectual and cultural horizons, especially in responding to questions about the modalities of domination and proclivities for destruction. Gadamer's issue with modern critical approaches is in the assumption of knowledge, whereas, for him, any real attempt to understand and critique requires the assumption of ignorance. Georgia Warnke refers to Gadamer's insistence on this admission of ignorance, which "presupposes what Gadamer refers to as the *docta ignorantia*" (1987, 199). Warnke argues that, for Gadamer, "genuine conversation is based upon a recognition of our own fallibility, on a recognition that we are finite and historical creatures and thus we do not have absolute knowledge in Hegel's sense. *The knowledge we do not have is akin to that of Socrates: a*

knowledge that we do not know and hence an openness to the possible truth of other views" (1987, 100, emphasis mine).

2.7 The Fusion of Horizons in the Situation of Dialogue

If there were one notion that could encapsulate Gadamer's entire project, it would be his concept of the "fusion of horizons," a phrase that he coins in his book *Truth and Method*, and one that, in many ways, captures the trajectory of his thought. The phrase comes with various connotations, and functions as a key that unlocks Gadamer's complex concepts. It captures the dynamic movement of both understanding and dialogue while also maintaining recognition of limits, or prejudices. Horizon, for Gadamer, is something that is larger, wider, more encompassing, and yet one that is not fixed or stable. Like a real horizon, it is a kind of limit that is constantly receding as we ourselves move and look beyond what is immediate. Gadamer defines the term as follows: "To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand—not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion" (2013, 316). As Gadamer argues, the "concept of 'horizon' suggests itself because it expresses the superior breath of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have" (2013, 316).

This key phrase is central to unlocking philosophical hermeneutics, as it contains layers of vital conceptual references in Gadamer's philosophical project. It reveals Gadamer's own intellectual genealogy as well, including the influence of Husserl and the phenomenological approach. Di Cesare argues that, in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer returns to the concept of "horizon" because of the influence of Husserl. Yet, she emphasizes Gadamer's dynamic shift of the concept. "By inscribing itself into a horizon, intentionality is destined to move as the horizon moves. On the other hand, Gadamer also refers to the implicit horizon of understanding, which emerges from the subterranean temporality of conscious life that Husserl had spoken of as 'absolute historicity'" (2013, 77). The "fusion of horizons" therefore refers to Gadamer's conception of understanding as being the result of both our *temporality* and *situatedness* within a particular cultural and historical horizon. It also refers to the way meaning arises in an intersubjective manner, with "fusion" indicating the process of interaction between different horizons. This is the case for Gadamer because understanding always occurs in a historically specific horizon and is always the result of a dialogical fusion with another horizon, whether from the present or past. As discussed above, the phrase also points to the phenomenological approach of Husserl, who uses the word "horizon" to discuss the grounding of consciousness. As a result, the phrase captures both Husserl's original theory of understanding and Gadamer's dialogical conception of understanding.

Gadamer's choice of both "effective consciousness" and "horizon" therefore indicate his direct debt to the phenomenology of both Heidegger and Husserl, while also indicating his own reorientation of phenomenology. Di Cesare emphasizes that, for Gadamer, "Husserl was not radical enough" (2013, 77). She explains that although the *hermeneutic turn* takes place within phenomenology, Gadamer pushes the discussion in a direction where language is no longer seen as playing a secondary role. Phenomenology, argues Di Cesare, "did not recognize the role of language," because "phenomenology never relinquished the idea of an ultimate foundation" (2013, 77). Di Cesare therefor argues how Gadamer's *hermeneutic turn*, with its emphasis on language, set phenomenology on a new path, diverging from both Heidegger and Husserl. Gadamer shifted the ahistorical notions of both horizon and consciousness in Husserl's thought, while also moving to language and intersubjectivity in contrast to Heidegger's solipsism. Ultimately, then, Gadamer's

use of the phrase denotes a mode of knowing that is always historically effected, linguistically mediated, and culturally situated.

Moreover, the word "fusion" is something that Gadamer uses to refer to the dialogical structure of understanding, which points to the Greek impact on his thought, particularly impact of the Platonic dialogues. The "fusion of horizons," is therefore like a sample genetic code that packs the crux of Gadamer's project while also revealing his intellectual genealogy. Palmer highlights the philosophical significance of dialogue and conversation for Gadamer, whose earliest serious engagement with the philosophy of Socrates and Plato and their philosophical status as "masters of dialogue" profoundly impacted his philosophical journey. "For Socrates, as for Gadamer, dialogue was not just a means of passing the time in pleasant but aimless conversation; it was an intense restless, and unending quest for truth" (2001, 10). And it should be noted that this interest in the dialogical, nearly an obsession, is also what took Gadamer in a different direction. Gadamer almost gushes when describing his connection to the Platonic dialogues and the companionship of Socrates:

> So, I have to say that the dialogues of Plato, even more than the works of the great thinkers of German idealism, have left their stamp on my thinking. These dialogues are my constant companions, and what a unique company they are! However much we moderns may have been taught by Nietzsche and Heidegger about how Greek concepts have anticipated everything from Aristotle to Hegel to modern logic, so that they constitute a boundary beyond which our own questions remain without answers and our intentions remain unsatisfied, it is still Plato's dialogical art which serves as an antidote to the illusion of superiority which we think we possess as inheritors of the Judeo-Christian tradition. (Gadamer 2007, 29)

Throughout his own life, Di Cesare argues, Gadamer was deeply committed to all topics that revolved around encountering the "other." In fact, he rehabilitated the whole field of hermeneutics around relationality and inter-subjectivity, an expression of his obsession with the primacy of the dialogical (2013, 208). Even Gadamer's conception of truth was framed in intersubjective terms, argues Di Cesare. As opposed to turning things and others into objects to support a "truth" that we are trying to establish, for "hermeneutics the support [of truth] is not simply found in the other, in the otherness that cannot be appropriated, but in the Being with the other" (2013, 209). The centrality and primacy of the dialogical for Gadamer, therefore, is never an abstract thought or some distant antiquated practice by the ancient Greeks. For Gadamer, the very movement of understanding arises in the dynamic of dialogical intersubjectivity. And, as such, dialogue permeates all aspects of Gadamer's thought and his actual lived experience.

Gadamer's interest in the dialogical was always present in his life and teaching style. Grondin mentions some anecdotes that attest to this dialogical outlook in Gadamer's daily life. When Gadamer moved to Heidelberg to replace Karl Jaspers, the students of Jaspers had difficulty adjusting to Gadamer, who followed a Socratic style of teaching by creating a dialogical atmosphere in his classrooms in accordance with his preference for teaching and his reluctance to take on prestigious administrative positions. This started gossip about his disappointing teaching methods and shy character. Gadamer related to Grondin, with some humour, some of the funny gossip around his teaching style on campus. He described to Grondin "the disappointment that he represented for Jaspers's students," who were used to full lectures (Grondin, 2003, 274). So, for example, while Jaspers always gave his students elaborate and pointed answers to all their questions, "the Socratic Gadamer often answered unabashedly, 'I don't know'" (Grondin 2003, 275).

Dialogue for Gadamer represents the ceaseless condition of life, the constant and *inevitable encounter* with otherness. It is also directly connected to questioning. Gadamer's invitation to orient ourselves towards openness is not just about being merely open and flexible. For him the openness that allows difference and otherness is oriented toward the truth of being. Otherness and difference are already always part of the structure of being. By being open we allow the alien and different to challenge us, educate us, and to throw all that we take for granted into an open tension. Dialogue functions even better, according to Gadamer, when it creates confusion and uncertainty. "The Socratic dialectic—which leads, through its art of confusing the interlocutor, to this knowledge—creates the conditions for the question" (2013, 374).

Gadamer's notion of dialogue, then, is not about a verbal exchange between interlocutors or the content of such an exchange; it is, rather, a dynamic mode of being in the world. It is a modality whereby we open ourselves to an interactive universe in which we allow otherness and difference to converse with us, to shape and influence the destiny of a community. In other words, it is a mode of being that is aligned to our ontological standing in the world. Perhaps it should not be surprising then that David Bohm gives primary importance of the mode of dialogue. As Bohm, the well-known physicist and activist, argues in his book *On Dialogue*, there are modes of being in the world that we have not yet tried, and, despite the promising outlook of dialogical practices, we still underestimate *the possible radical consequence of a dialogical mode of being in the world and its capacity to bring "coherence" to our "fragmented" and conflictual existence* (Bohm 1996, 55). For him, the process of dialogue is what requires attention more than the content of any given dialogue:

> Dialogue is aimed at going into the whole thought process and changing the way the thought process occurs collectively. We haven't really paid much attention to thought as a process. We have *engaged* in thoughts, but have only paid attention to the content, not to the process. Why does thought require attention? Everything requires attention, really. If we ran machines without paying attention to them, they would break down. Our thought, too, is a process, and it requires attention, otherwise it's going to go wrong. (1996, 10)

The implications of this sentiment are far reaching. Bohm raises the importance of dialogue even in our relationship with nature, arguing "the continual emergence of something new that is common to the thought of scientists" is part of this dialogical interaction with the world around us (1996, 4). "It is clear," Bohm argues, "that if we are to live in harmony with ourselves and with nature, we need to be able to communicate freely in a creative movement in which no one permanently holds to or otherwise defends his own ideas" (1996, 4). This is exactly why, for Gadamer, our domineering *monologue about nature* within the scientific paradigm is flawed. "Nature can no longer be viewed as a mere object for exploitation, it must be experienced as a partner in all its appearances; but that means it must be understood as the other with whom we live together" (Gadamer 1992, 232). Gadamer argues that "controlling the development of our abilities and mastery over natural powers" has to be done "in such a manner that nature will not be destroyed and laid waste by us" (1992, 232). For Gadamer, then, the dialogical is ineluctable due to all the forms of "otherness" that surround us. The other is encountered in all our interactions and therefore the ethical demand of the "I-Thou" is inescapably present even in our relationship to the natural world. This is what, for him, makes hermeneutics more about encounter and ethics than about technical textual issues. As he argues, even the text is not simply about abstract ideas as much as it is about *the voice of the "other,"* coming through and making a demand. And because

even the natural sciences occur in language, Gadamer insists that they must be subject to scrutiny, especially given their goal to dominate and control:

> It will always remain a task of scientific self-discipline to not allow prejudices and biases to go uncriticized. Where one is not concerned with learning how to control something, we will always and again learn though experiencing our own biases, the otherness of the other in its other being. To participate with the other and to be a part of the other is the most and the best we can strive for and accomplish. (1992, 235)

Gadamer is critical of the notion of the "unity of science," developed by the Vienna Circle early in the 20th century, which for him is directly connected to an obsession with the "investigation and control of nature" (1992, 235). However, the way nature is interpreted in other cultures, for example, is different from the mainstream Western tradition. "Faced with the diversity of the various sciences, which live from traditions and treasures found in the cultural languages and in the linguistic cultures of all peoples, it is exactly the otherness, the recognition of our self, the re-encountering of the other, in language, art, religion, law and history, which is able to guide us toward a true communality" (1992, 235). This is precisely why, for him, language is an experience of such plurality. The "multiplicity of worldviews," for Gadamer, "does not involve any relativization of the 'world'" (2013, 464). This multiplicity is not about mental constructs, opinions, and judgements, but rather about an intensification of our relationships with the world, because "we are not dealing with relationships between judgements which have to be kept free from contradictions but with life relationships" (2013, 465). Gadamer emphasizes the presence of this plurality as a given. "Clearly, the intellectual culture of humanity originates from many roots and forces and carries everywhere the signs of its origin" (1992,163). He therefore urges us to acknowledge the diversity and richness of all cultural productions throughout the world and throughout the ages, because our modern epistemological pursuit should be viewed in connection to "the living cultures, to their historically developed being and to the otherness *which demand not only cognition but recognition*. So, they are much closer than wonderfully clear constructions which support the research process of the natural sciences" (1992, 235, emphasis mine).

Avoiding this encounter with otherness and attempting to suppress anything we find as alien, is, for Gadamer, simply an avoidance of life. But ultimately it is also a turning away from being oriented towards truth. "To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented. It requires that one does not try to argue the other person down but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion. Hence it is an art of testing. But the art of testing is the art of questioning" (2013, 375). One of the reasons questioning is at the center of dialogue is the question's capacity to unsettle the settled. When "a question occurs to us," argues Gadamer, it "breaks through into the open and thereby makes an answer possible (2013, 374). But the answer is not the aim for Gadamer; it is the question. The power of the question, in Gadamer's view, lies in its connection to the *desire to know*. "All questioning and desire to know presuppose a knowledge that one does not know; so much so, indeed, that a particular lack of knowledge leads to a particular question" (2013, 374).

In more than one way, the central concepts that underpin Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, especially as found in his phrase "fusion of horizons," always revolve around the dynamic of dialogical interaction which aims *to move that which is static and to open that which is closed*. This is clear in Gadamer's conception of understanding as the result of the fusion of horizons, the encounter of differences. The centrality of the question-and-answer model in his approach to understanding reflects this dynamic conception of dialogue as well—as a participatory

structure of play and interaction. Although dialogue, for Gadamer, is the dynamic that underlies our interaction with ourselves and the world, it is not something that we easily recognize and welcome. To enter into a dialogue consciously requires a certain level of openness, but also courage—where both the awareness of the fore-meaning and the receptivity to new insight are consciously allowed (2013, 375). Otherwise, it is a hermeneutic closure—where a fore-meaning is imposed upon a text or situation without receptivity from the "dialogical other"—which does not allow the text or person to reveal anything challenging or transforming.

Gadamer, whose dialogical modality was influenced by Hegel's dialectic, is nevertheless aware of some of the gaps in Hegel's modality. Although Hegel takes his dialectic from Plato, Hegel uses it to *stop* the movement of understanding, according to Gadamer. In contrast, Gadamer is critical of Hegel's use of the Platonic dialectic as a means of assimilating and stabilizing that which is always open and unfolding. He is particularly wary of the way the Hegelian dialectic is enlisted to end and overcome "all of experience which is attained in absolute knowledge" (Gadamer 2013, 364). Being suspicious of any finalities that stop the natural movement of dialogue, Gadamer looks elsewhere, and rehabilitates Hegel's dialectic by re-opening *the movement of dialogue infinitely*.

In order to re-activate the movement of language and open up dialogue again, Gadamer returns to the original Socratic model that precludes endings and resolutions. We are all familiar with how Socrates was more interested in making his students undo their convictions than in compelling them to arrive at new opinions or final resolutions to the dilemmas Socrates was raising. Gadamer is emphatic in stressing the movement of Socratic language, manifest in the lack of resolution in the dialogues and the dynamic openness that characterizes them.

Based on this Socratic modality, the conversation is the end in itself. In his book *Political Hermeneutics: The Early Thinking of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (1997), Robert Sullivan highlights the importance Gadamer places upon the form of dialogue over the content of dialogue (7-8). This emphasis can be understood when we consider Gadamer's interest in the movement of language within the dialogical situation as a dynamic that helps in expanding the critical possibilities given "the speculative structure" of language (Gadamer 2013, 472). This of course makes it clear that Gadamer's notion of *fusion* is not about assimilation or resolution, but a dynamic process for constant creation and constant questioning. Gadamer therefore defines knowledge in contrast to opinion by the very criteria of this speculative movement of dialogue. "Knowledge always means, precisely, considering opposites. Its superiority over preconceived opinion consists in the fact that it is able to conceive of possibilities as possibilities. Knowledge is dialectical from the ground up. Only a person who has questions can have knowledge" (2013, 373).

Linguistically formed and incapable of seeing its own content, each horizon is, therefore, in *need of fusion* with *another horizon* to break through its fore-meanings and its own self-understanding. For Gadamer, then, when it comes to dialogue, *the form is the content*. As Di Cesare argues, with "its dialectical interweaving of the logos, hermeneutics reveals the possibility of the reciprocal participation of the finite and the infinite, with which the one can be read in light of the other. In this logos, this dialogue without end, hermeneutics recognizes itself again and adopts the dialogue as the form of its own philosophizing. Hermeneutics is this infinite dialogue" (2013, 186).

Given the infinite nature of dialogue, we are always already in conversation—if not with the world, then within ourselves. Turning away from the world and closing ourselves up by resorting to a one-sided understanding with the aim of controlling the new and unexpected is a form of self-imprisonment. Di Cesare argues that Gadamer's ultimate ideal is the capacity to hold oneself open to the conversation, because hermeneutics does not understand itself as holding an

'absolute' position, but as a way of experiencing life. "This is possible only for a philosophy of finitude that is aware of its finitude, yet does not renounce the infinite and makes infinite dialogue the very form of its philosophizing" (2013, 2). Gadamer's emphasis on dialogue thus invites a new understanding, not just of understanding itself, but of our mode of being in the world. Accordingly, for Gadamer, any denial of encountering the "other" and the "different" is an artificially constructed mode of knowing that aims to control, but which ends up obstructing the very way understanding actually occurs to us.

Conversation for Gadamer therefore is the mirror that Socrates held up to his young students to finally allow them to unsettle their settled opinions. Of course, Gadamer is aware that, even for Socrates, language as a medium was not as clear of an issue. However, the way Socrates undid deeply held opinions supports Gadamer's own attempt to make us understand the medium through which we want to make this shift of understanding, and through which any movement, questioning, or openness becomes possible.

2.8 Language Speaks Us: Language as Our Hermeneutic Horizon

Gadamer is interested in our linguistic mode of being in the world because it is language that gives shape and expression to all our orientations—whether artistic, philosophical, or scientific. As Gadamer himself puts it, humanity's mode of "being-in-the-world is primordially linguistic" (2013, 459). Gadamer is thus among the pioneers tackling the ontology of language. For him, language is not something we do or have, but *is* our mode of being in the world; *it is the medium through which we have a world*. "Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world: rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all" (Gadamer 2013, 459). All living creatures live in physical environments, argues Gadamer, and so do human beings as well. But what distinguishes human beings from the rest of creation is that they live in a *world* and this world is linguistically constituted (Gadamer 2013, 460). "The world as world exists for man as for no other creature that is in the world. But this world is verbal in nature […]. Not only is the world only insofar as it comes into language, but language, too, has its real being only in the fact that the world is presented in it" (Gadamer 2013, 459). Language is, therefore, not a tool for human beings—it is the very medium through which they have a world. "It is from language as a medium that our whole experience of the world, and especially hermeneutical experience, unfolds" (2013, 473).

What is significant for Gadamer about our linguistic mode is the infinite variety of the modes of being that our linguisticality engenders, because, "unlike other creatures," argues Gadamer, a human being's "relationship to the world is characterized by *freedom from environment*. This freedom implies the linguistic constitution of the world" (2013, 460). This radical conception of our *linguisticality* that makes us conceive of our "world" and produce ideas and practices in so many variant ways, captures the revolutionary nature of Gadamer's hermeneutics. For him, our freedom is not about disconnecting from the physical environment as such, but about the infinite variety of ways we enter into interpretive relationships with our environment(s), and therefore "also the historical multiplicity of human speech in relation to the one world" (2013, 461). As he states,

> Our verbal experience of the world is prior to everything that is recognized and addressed as existing. That language and world are related in a fundamental way does not mean, then, that world becomes the object of language. Rather, the object of knowledge and statements is always already

> enclosed within the world horizon of language. That human experience of the world is verbal does not imply that a world-in-itself is being objectified. (Gadamer 2013, 466)

When considering Gadamer's ontological conception of language as having its own being, we come to realize that what we perceive as our own intimate utterances have their own being; our very own words and actions do not start with us, nor are they completely generated by us. The words we utter and the actions we perform possess us, employ us, and then depart from us and take a life of their own. That which we think we utter is already uttering us. The language we speak has its own being. According to Gadamer, the language we speak "hems us in." We do not think, we are thought. We do not speak, we are spoken. Language lives through us just like the way the human body outlives the millions of its dying cells. A language is a carrier of a long-accumulated tradition that lives through its members and outlives them:

> It is not just that the use and development of language is a process which has no single knowing and choosing consciousness standing over against it. (Thus it is literally more correct to say *that language speaks us, rather than that we speak it*, so that, for example, the time at which a text was written can be determined more exactly from its linguistic usage than from its author.) A more important point is the one to which we have constantly referred, namely that what constitutes the hermeneutical event proper is not language as language, whether as grammar or as lexicon; it consists in the coming into language of what has been said in the tradition: an event that is at once appropriation and interpretation. Thus here it really is true to say that this event is not our action upon the thing, but the act of the thing itself. (Gadamer 2013, 479, emphasis mine)

Gadamer's conception of our linguisticality therefore has practical implications. It is not an abstract concept. The ontological priority of language in Gadamer's hermeneutics is directly connected to emancipatory questions and the freedom of creativity to produce an infinite variety of hermeneutical stances with their various implications and consequences. "The truth is that because man can always rise above the particular environment in which he happens to find himself and because his speech brings the world into language, he is, from the beginning, free for variety in exercising his capacity for language" (2013, 461). But Gadamer is also aware that language is not always used in ways that enhances the free, creative, and emancipatory orientations.

Language is also the very medium in which our freedom and creativity are curtailed. According to Gadamer, by learning to speak our mother tongues, "we grow into language and into the world" (2013, 570). Our cultural "socialization" happens by being drawn into *the conversation*. Gadamer poignantly argues that "everything depends on the way we grow into the pre-schematization of our future orientation to the world when we learn a language and grow into everything we learn by way of conversation" (2013, 579). But Gadamer is aware of the implications of his linguistic argument and the possible judgements that are built into a given worldview, bordering on being dogmatic stances dominated by fixed propositions. Such socialization, which is inescapable in our childhood, is also necessarily a growth "into a social life regulated by conventions," and is therefore what defines us as human beings (Gadamer 2013, 579). However, in this pre-ordering of our worldviews, Gadamer is aware how "language is open to the charge of being an ideology" (2013, 579).

This issue, the way language can order the world to serve particular interests and lead to the problem of the will to dominate, is in some ways what is really at stake for Gadamer. Accordingly, Gadamer argues that problems arise when we conceive of language as a tool for molding our subjectivity into a culturally stabilized identity, a stabilization which makes us lose

touch with the reality of how language actually functions in real life. Gadamer stresses that domination is structured within language, because "in language we are trained in conventions and social norms behind which there are always economic and hegemonic interests" (2013, 573). But for Gadamer, language is also the medium that allows us to interpret our way out of such stabilized hegemonic interests, because "in it we rely on our faculty of judgement, that is, on the possibility of our taking a critical stance with regard to every convention" (2013, 573). By not understanding that our worldviews and hegemonic structures are linguistically mediated, we end up seeing language as merely a neutral tool that represents external reality, and hence become unaware of the very blindfolds that prevents us from constructing the world anew again and again.

Dialogue is a vehicle of movement for Gadamer; it is what preserves the dynamic nature of language, safeguards its free flow, and is therefore what also allows for *the possibility of critique* (2013, 573). From Gadamer's perspective dialogue is not something we choose to do, but is integral to the movement of language and its function. This is why in every encounter, even when decoding extinct languages, reading ancient texts, or deciphering what the dead have produced, we are in a situation of dialogue. The voices, present and past, come into being through the medium of language and assert themselves upon our consciousness. We are forever happening within language.

Is this linguistic condition inescapable? Can we ever leave this linguistic prison? According to Gadamer these are the wrong questions to ask, because language, for him, is not a prison, but the medium through which we have a world, and through which we have freedom to move and maneuver. But this does not mean either that we do not imprison ourselves in other ways. Gadamer does not see the learning of a new language as offering a way for exiting our worldview. Rather, for Gadamer, language is the ocean in which we swim. Even if we change our position in the water by entering a different language, our linguisticality remains the same. Linguistic ontology for Gadamer is about the universal phenomenon of language, not a reference to a particular language. As he states, we "cannot see a linguistic world from above in this way, for there is no point of view outside the experience of the world in language from which it becomes an object" (2013, 469). The broadening of our hermeneutic possibilities within even one language is where the widening of horizons happen, rather than merely learning a new language (although we do enrich ourselves by learning a new language, as Gadamer argues below). Gadamer therefore insists on the universality of hermeneutics precisely because *linguisticality* is our mode of being in the world. "Whoever has language 'has' the world," Gadamer affirms (2013, 469). As he states,

> To have language involves a mode of being that is quite different from the way animals are confined to their habitat. By learning foreign languages men do not alter their relationship to the world, like an aquatic animal that becomes a land animal; rather, while preserving their own relationship to the world, they extend and enrich it by the world of the foreign language. (Gadamer 2013, 469)

In accordance with this new direction, Santiago Zabala argues that, if our experiences are ultimately linguistic and our experiences and existence essentially historic, "then there is no way to overcome language and to accede to the 'whole' as reality. A passage from historical situatedness to a condition outside history is made impossible by the historicity of language itself, which always develops on the terrain of interpretation, in which there are no facts other than linguistic facts" (2005, 4-5). This way of conceptualizing hermeneutics has profound political implications for our age, in which the possibility of coexistence with competing or conflicting worldviews is what is at stake for democracy as well as for a world order based on equality and justice. Since our linguistic mode of being in the world is inescapable regardless of the languages

we speak, it behooves us to expand this world by allowing a variety of hermeneutic perspectives to widen our horizon and hence our "world." This expansion is available through dialogue, which is why Gadamer stresses the universal character of hermeneutics. The universality of our linguistic mode of our being in the world and the possibility of widening our horizons through encounter is what lies at center of Gadamer's conception of the universality of hermeneutics.

Gadamer's dialogical model is intrinsic to his ontological hermeneutics because, while hermeneutics is universal, particular interpretations and understandings are always historically and culturally effected. Bernstein argues that Gadamer goes further than other philosophers in "stressing the universality of hermeneutics and showing the historicity of all understanding and interpretation" (Bernstein 1983, 36). Awakening our hermeneutic consciousness to its linguistic and historic limits allows us to reflect and widen the scope of our self-understanding. And hence "the fact that human experience of the world is verbal in nature broadens the horizon of our analysis of hermeneutical experience [...] *the verbal world in which we live is not a barrier that prevents knowledge of being-in-itself but fundamentally embraces everything in which our insight can be enlarged and deepened*" (Gadamer 2013, 463, emphasis mine). Philosophical hermeneutics is therefore the kind of philosophizing that sees the other, the different, and the difficult as the very mirrors through which we come to see the cracks and darkness within. As Bernstein points out, this is what makes Gadamer so profoundly different from other critics and hence also increasingly relevant. Gadamer's critical project is not aimed at finding the incoherence of the other, but at finding, *through the articulations of the other*, *our own incoherence and limitations*.

From the Gadamerian perspective, language can also be described as a set of eyes. They are the medium through which I see the world, and yet I am unable to see them myself unless I hold a mirror to see the reflection of my own eyes. Equally, for Gadamer, I cannot see the very medium through which I am experiencing and understanding the world unless I allow the dialogical encounters to challenge my understanding that is mediated by language. "For language is by nature the language of conversation; it fully realizes itself only in the process of coming to an understanding" (Gadamer 2013, 463). Only then do I have the chance, and not even fully, to become aware of the limited perspective in which I stand. Gadamer's understanding of the movement of language in the dialogical situation is universally connected to the expansion of our hermeneutic horizon, and hence to the size of *our world,* regardless of our local situatedness. Thus, for Gadamer, our linguisticality is ultimately about the availability of other perspectives, traditions, and histories, and hence about the constant opportunity of growth of our own world, *temporally, mentally,* and *spatially*:

> The fact that human experience of the world is verbal in nature broadens the horizon of our analysis of hermeneutical experience […]. It is true that those who are brought up in a particular linguistic and cultural tradition see the world in a different way from those who belong to other traditions. It is true that the historical 'worlds' that succeed one another in the course of history are different from one another and from the world of today; but in whatever tradition we consider it, it is always a human—i.e., verbally constituted—world that presents itself to us. *As verbally constituted, every such world is of itself always open to every possible insight and hence to every expansion of its world picture, and is accordingly available to others.*" (2013, 463, emphasis mine)

It is therefore no coincidence that Gadamer uses a mirror metaphor to discuss the issue of the critical and speculative dimensions of language. Gadamer's emphasis on the speculative structure of language is connected to the capacity of language, when allowed to move and connect

to other perspectives, to prevent us from falling into the trap of facile dogmas and self-perpetuated convictions:

> If we now use the word 'speculative' as it was coined by philosophers around 1800 and say, for example, that someone has a speculative mind or that a thought is rather speculative, behind this usage lies the notion of reflection in a mirror. Speculative means the opposite of the dogmatism of everyday experience. A speculative person is someone who does not abandon himself directly to the tangibility of appearances or to the fixed determinateness of the meant, but who is able to reflect. (Gadamer 2013, 482)

Dialogue, for Gadamer, *offers a virtual world that provides a testing ground for profound transformations.* The *primacy of dialogue* in Gadamer's project becomes clear in light of his linguistic turn and dynamic reconceptualization of language and its speculative and critical functions. Since understanding is linguistically mediated, I can only develop speculative and critical abilities in real encounters with reality, with others, in genuine conversations; to truly increase the potential of making transparent my blind spots, faults, and contradictions. Gadamer argues that we owe the possibility of critical stances and transformative possibilities "*to the linguistic virtuality of our reason*" (2013, 573, emphasis mine).

In light of the discussion above, we can see why Gadamer stresses the primacy of dialogue and sees it as the locus of maintaining the essential functions of language—movement, contestation, *and* transformation. In encountering different views or experiences and perspectives that oppose our own, *a virtual reality* becomes available to us which can expand our intellectual and psychological horizons, and in which we could introduce new creations. It is not an overstatement to say Gadamer's conception of language is radical:

> The fact that we move in a linguistic world and grow up into the world through an experience performed by language does not at all remove *the possibilities of critique*. On the contrary, the possibility of going beyond our conventions and beyond all those experiences that are schematized in a dance opens up before us once we find ourselves, in our conversations with others, faced with opposed thinkers, with new critical tests, with new experiences. (Gadamer 2013, 573)

According to Gadamer's intersubjective reconceptualization, we are never the full authors of our utterances or actions, nor are we completely the objects. We are subjects perpetually caught in a dialogical situation, even with our languages. We act, but are at the same time being acted upon by other subjects, including language as an acting subject. Just as we make history, history is also making us. Just as we speak language, language is speaking us. We are always in a dialogical interplay, in a dance upon an intersubjective stage. Sullivan, in his introduction to Gadamer's autobiography *Philosophical Apprenticeships*, argues that Gadamer's "deconstruction of all privileged positions is a bold and unconditioned move to language" (1985, xvii). Sullivan therefore explains what Gadamer's linguistic turn entails:

> Language is not a 'tool' that the privileged consciousness may use to 'express' its positions. It is rather a phenomenon that speaks us before we speak it, and this means that we can never step outside of it and sand over against it. All privileges are temporary achievements, bound to be seen by a new generation as prejudices, and thus doctrine—the thinker's peculiar privilege—is always being dissolved back into the dialectical process. (1985, xvii)

Meaning therefore is always dialogical and contextual, always arising in intersubjectivity. In this, Gadamer is extremely close to Ludwig Wittgenstein's conception of the contextual nature of meaning—particularly notable is their parallel use of the metaphor of *play* and *game*. Gadamer himself acknowledges this proximity, and even considers the later part of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language as hermeneutical. As Gadamer says in an interview with Riccardo Dottori, "I am really in complete agreement with the late Wittgenstein, and I call that hermeneutics!" (Gadamer 2004b, 74). However, despite the parallels between Gadamer and Wittgenstein and their being among the first pioneers of the "linguistic turn," there are also some serious differences. In *History of Hermeneutics* (1996), the Italian scholar Maurizio Ferraris argues that Wittgenstein's conception of language and the process of understanding is antihistorical and more in tune with Dilthey's ahistorical hermeneutics. In contrast, Gadamer's unique contribution to the linguistic turn lies in his emphasis on the historicity of all linguistic utterances; in the need to be cognizant of how no language game or text can transcend its temporal situatedness.

Christopher Lawn is aware of both the proximity and contrast between Wittgenstein and Gadamer when it comes to their contributions to the linguistic turn. In his essay "Wittgenstein, History and Hermeneutics," Lawn argues that Wittgenstein's notion of "language-games" is a "bold reversal" of the Cartesian cogito, parallel to Gadamer's, and which also helps shift "the centre of gravity away from the privacy of consciousness to the public sphere of regulated practice" (2003, 281). However, Lawn suggests that what distinguishes Gadamer's conception of language from that of Wittgenstein is his conception of the *historicality of language* and the influence of tradition in the process of the fusion of horizons between past and present (Lawn 2003, 290). Lawn considers the turn Wittgenstein provides as seminal, but also as lacking when considering Gadamer's emphasis on the historicity of linguistic utterances. As this emphasis on historicality indicates, webs of meaning can never stand outside of cultural and historical contexts, because Gadamer sees language as both continuity and novelty (Lawn 2003, 292):

> The continuity of language, its capacity to absorb the endless novelty and change, brings everything within the ambit of tradition. Gadamer's vision of language as essentially historical and continuous runs against the idea of the language-games as both fragmented and discontinuous. (Lawn 2003, 291)

Gadamer's dynamic conception of language and its temporal flexibility, argues Lawn, responds to the gaps found in Wittgenstein's notion of language games (2003, 292). Yet, the creative philosophical shifts of both hermeneutics and dialogue in Gadamer's project show our modes of being in the world in a new light, in which our orientation in the world is defined through both *linguisticality* and *historicity*. This is what makes Gadamer's conception of language unique and multifaceted: it captures the capacity of language to allow for both *continuity of tradition* and *openness to the creativity and challenge of the new*. For Gadamer, there is no position that is outside language or outside time. Every intellectual stance is ultimately a linguistic articulation embedded in a historically specific consciousness.

2.9 The Past as an Alienated Other

Rehabilitating authority and tradition (*Die Rehabilitierung von Autorität und Tradition*) is another important and central theme in Gadamer's project, in which he achieves a temporal re-positioning of the dialogical encounter. The concept offers an invitation to an encounter of a

different kind (2013, 289). According to Gadamer, the past is not done. Although we are already steeped within a horizon that is shaped and informed by the past, the past is also an "other" that addresses us in the present, in which there is a fusion of horizons in the moment of encounter. However, the "otherness" of the past has been rendered inferior by modernity, except as an object of historical research. As Gadamer argues, this occurred because the Enlightenment developed its own prejudice towards tradition in its "predisposition to the overhasty rejection of truths simply because they are old and attested by authorities" (2013, 290). The romantics on the other hand gave weight to the authority of tradition without emphasizing the importance of the critical use of reason. Although Gadamer argues this was somewhat of a corrective, he is also aware of how adherence to tradition can be deeply problematic. Just as one must be wary of the Enlightenment's prejudice in favor of the new, Gadamer is emphatic about the necessity of also being equally wary of the prejudice in favor of the old. "The false presupposition in favor of what is old, in favour of authorities, is what has to be fought" (2013, 289). Gadamer therefore problematizes these two dualities that emerge in modernity: the Enlightenment prejudice in favor of the new, and the Romantic reaction to modernity in favour of the old. According to Gadamer, the distinction and division between tradition and reason is an unsustainable dichotomy because "the division is based on a mutually exclusive antithesis between authority and reason" (2013, 289).

The significance of Gadamer's discussion of these temporal prejudices lies in his ability to bring out the political dimensions and power implications in our abstract categories, in which the politics of domination are present even in our treatment of time. This is why, for Gadamer, the suppression of the past is another manifestation of the suppression of otherness as found in the treatment of *the past as a differential distant other*. Gadamer's solution for these sharp and mutually exclusive dualities is twofold; to become aware of our illusions of transcending history, and to reopen ourselves to dialogical encounters. The Enlightenment's faith in reason's capacity to transcend space and time is objectionable to Gadamer. "Is not, rather, all human existence, even the freest, limited and qualified in various ways?" (2013, 288). Hence, all forms of truth claims, even those based on reason and method, cannot transcend history. Gadamer argues that the "idea of an absolute reason is not a possibility for historical humanity. Reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms—i.e., it is not its own master but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates" (2013, 288). Gadamer therefore asserts that "overcoming all prejudices, this global demand of the Enlightenment, will itself prove to be a prejudice, and removing it opens the way to an appropriate understanding of the finitude which dominate not only our humanity but also our historical consciousness" (2013, 288).

The past is always co-present with us since meaning arises in the immediacy of present understanding, which itself is also historically situated. Gadamer re-introduces *the past as an immediate dialogical other* offering a differential otherness within a context of unfamiliarity and strangeness. For this reason, ethics cannot be avoided when reading the past, as when we objectify the voice of the distant other. For Gadamer, understanding begins, "when something addresses us. This is the first condition of hermeneutics" (2013, 310). When we fail to respond to the content and subject matter raised in an old text we are turning away from the other, because according to Gadamer one of the real requirements of a truly hermeneutic encounter is the awareness of our own historical situatedness and the need for "the fundamental suspension of our own prejudices" to at least allow the other voice to address us (2013, 310). Even our voice is not given full play when we silence the distant other. "Only by being given full play is it able to experience the other's claim to truth and make it possible for him to have full play himself" (2013, 310).

Encountering a voice from the past inevitably places us into a relational dynamic that is subject to all the ethical requirements that define any encounter in real time. This genuine dialogue with all forms of otherness re-establishes the natural movement of language, which allows for the fusion of horizons in any kind of encounter. What is significant in Gadamer's position, especially when considering his insistence on dialoguing, even with the past, is his awareness of the historicity of both sides of the encounter, and the need to free ourselves from what he describes as a *badly understood historical thinking.* We cannot ascribe historicity to the voice arising from the past while elevating ourselves beyond history, armored with the illusory confidence of an ahistorical scientific methodology. Even our methodic approaches are historically situated and can give us only finite and limited propositions:

> The naivete of so-called historicism consists in the fact that it does not undertake this reflection, and in trusting to the fact that its procedure is methodical, it forgets its own historicity. We must here appeal from a *badly understood historical thinking* to one that can better perform the task of understanding. *Real historical thinking must take account of its own historicity.* Only then will it cease to chase the phantom of a historical object that is the object of progressive research, and to learn to view the object as the counterpart of itself and hence understand both. The true historical object is not an object at all, but the unity of the one and the other, a relationship that constitutes both reality of history and the reality of historical understanding. (Gadamer 2013, 310, emphasis mine)

By focusing on our historical situatedness while also opening ourselves up to the possibility of dialoging with the past, Gadamer takes a position that is different from modernity's rupture with tradition as well as from the apologetic and reverential adherence to tradition found among the German romantics or other traditionalist stances. By doing this, Gadamer rescues our accumulative human tradition by securing it in a dialogical otherness *beyond both the reductionist polarities of rejection and reverence*. Gadamer often repeated that we should not appeal to the authority of the past, but recognize it as a voice addressing us and hence as having an authority stemming from its ethical demands rather than from merely being a tradition. Gadamer often said "whoever appeals to authority has no authority" (Gadamer 2004b, 85). What this implies is that our interaction should be allowed to be both critical and open to the claims made by the *subject matter* (*Die Sache*) arising in the situation of encounter (Gadamer 2013, 306). Moreover, for Gadamer, the past is neither static nor unified. "Even the most genuine and pure tradition does not persist because of the inertia of what once existed. It needs to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated. It is essentially, preservation, and it is active in all historical change" (2013, 293).

By restoring value to the accumulative historical heritage of humanity, whether in religious or literary texts, Gadamer does not advocate a return to or adoption of historic modes, let alone being nostalgic. Rather, it is another mirror we can hold to gain some reflection upon our own present. Because encountering alien and unfamiliar otherness is valuable in dialogue, an encounter with a classic or historic text is just as important as an encounter with the familiar and accessible. What we understand and what challenges us both become resources to widen our horizons and engender "speculative" interpretation. Gadamer ultimately arrives at seeing meaning as something that arises in inter-subjectivity, whether with another human being in the present, with the voice of a distant other coming from a text, or even as arising in our encounters with objects in nature.

Gadamer lived by his own recommendation of using a "rehabilitating" approach to tradition. He did not stop at rehabilitating Greek philosophy, or the dialectics of Hegel, but also proceeded to rehabilitate the thought of his own mentor, Heidegger. Despite the significant impact

Heidegger's ontology had on him, Gadamer rehabilitated Heidegger's innovative temporal orientation to bring to the surface dialogical and ethical questions, two things markedly missing from Heidegger's project. Grondin argues that despite Gadamer's dependence on Heidegger's ontological shift, he ended up redirecting it "toward a dialogical and ethical conception that can itself be read as a hermeneutical correction of Heidegger" (Grondin 2003, 135). Gadamer's ethical and political rehabilitation of hermeneutics also spared him many pitfalls. According to Grondin, this is precisely why "Gadamer managed to avoid the partly prophetic, partly self-glorifying excesses of Heidegger's late thought" (Grondin 2003, 5).

Nevertheless, this innovative approach to *dialoging with the tradition as an interlocutor/other* is another aspect of Gadamer's project that is more than often misunderstood. His interest in rehabilitating tradition is often misread as an attempt to recover tradition, and he is consequently misconceived as being a traditionalist or conservative. For example, Habermas initially thought along these lines, but completely changed his mind after his famous debate with Gadamer.[19] Contrary to what some critics think, Gadamer sees tradition through a dialogical lens, and therefore as another ineluctable ethical demand. For him, the past is an otherness that we cannot ignore or pretend does not exist. Tradition, for him, is not an abstract category. It is always *the voice of an other*. Gadamer therefore calls for overcoming the alienness of the past by means of dialogue and by reminding ourselves of our own temporal position, in which tradition is that which is handed down and already present in our understanding of the world (Gadamer 2013, 282). Gadamer points out the underlying prejudice of the Enlightenment when rendering the past as obsolete without considering the questions, subject matter(s), and ethical demands it makes—conceiving of the past only as an historical object rather than as a dialogical interlocuter. By believing in the neutrality of our methods and their ability to secure understanding, we become blind to our prejudice: "It is not at all a matter of securing ourselves against the tradition that speaks out of the text then, but, on the contrary, of excluding everything that could hinder us from understanding it in terms of the subject matter. It is *the tyranny of hidden prejudices that makes us deaf to what speaks to us in tradition*" (Gadamer 2013, 282, emphasis mine).

For Gadamer, understanding does not occur in a vacuum or as a mental process that can be secured through methodic means. Understanding occurs within the very structures and categories of our inherited languages and inherited traditions, hence the inescapable dimension of our effected historical consciousness, even if we use scientific methods. As "historical beings," Gadamer argues,

> our usual relationship to the past is not characterized by distancing and freeing ourselves from tradition. Rather, *we are always situated within tradition,* and this is no objectifying process—i.e., we do not conceive of what tradition says as something other, something alien. It is always part of us, a model or exemplar, a kind of cognizance that our later historical judgement would hardly regard as a kind of knowledge but as the most ingenuous affinity with tradition." (Gadamer 2013, 293-294, emphasis mine)

Simply put, we cannot speak language without speaking tradition. Our temporality is inescapable. Yet, for Gadamer, one of the means of domination and control is our obsession with methodic approaches that seek to avoid our temporality and claim a historically transcendent stance. As

[19] See Gadamer's informative discussion and reflections on this misunderstanding in his conversation with Riccardo Dottori in *A Century of Philosophy: Hans-Georg Gadamer in Conversation with Riccardo Dottori* (2004). The debate with Habermas and the issues of authority and tradition are elaborated on in the two chapters, "Ethics and Politics," and "Tradition and Emancipation."

Grondin argues, for Gadamer, our flights, even including science, are actually "motivated most essentially by the avoidance of temporality" (Grondin 2003, 2).

Gadamer is wary of our tendency towards self-closure to other ways of knowing and the denial of their legitimacy, as fostered by the truth claims of a single-sided process of understanding social and historic reality, modeled on the natural sciences. It is for this reason that he uses the example of religious studies to discuss the implications of this scientific objectification of the other's ways of knowing in his essay, "Reflections on the Relation of Religion and Science" (1999). Replacing the Christian self-reference, scientific approaches to the study of the "other" become the new self-reference, and hence "the science of religion comes to be the science of how consciousness is susceptible to illusion," which, for Gadamer, "means that it can and should become the science of what people in various religions, cultures, and times have 'believed'" (1999, 123). This of course leads to the objectification of other modes of being in the world and their being declared as "illusions" from the standpoint of the neutral observer. "This often leads to embarrassments, of course" argues Gadamer (1999, 123). Gadamer therefore considers such confidence and even "faith" in a single-sided way of dealing with other modes of subjectivity as naively overconfident and even ideological. Warnke argues that Gadamer elucidates such a mediated position in *Truth and Method*, where he shows that "hermeneutics is not as much a counterforce to methodical science as, instead, a reflection on the scope and meaning of its results" (1987, 137). She therefore writes that in his book, "he argues that the 'objectivity' of the methodical sciences is limited by their own hermeneutic situation and not that hermeneutics opposes the critical attitude they bring with them" (1987, 137).

Gadamer is not nostalgic for a glorious past as much as having a sense of melancholy over the landfill of eradicated modes of subjectivity and experience that could be engaged in an infinite variety of ways. This is especially expressed in his anxiety around the barricaded horizons of other cultures, other epochs, and their traditions from the "naïve self-esteem of the present moment" (2013, xxi). Gadamer's position on both tradition and science, if not taken from the larger and broader perspective of his philosophical hermeneutics and in light of his political and ethical concerns, can be misunderstood. He is, however, quite nuanced in his hermeneutics of both science and tradition. He neither advocates a return to the past nor demands the rejection of modern science. Rather, he is concerned about the eradication of the broader spectrum of our modes of knowing and living on this planet because of having settled within an inexorable narrow scientific paradigm. The underlying anxiety in Gadamer's project is the fading away of a dynamic variety in our relating to self, life, and the cosmos. "When science expands into a total technocracy and thus brings on the 'cosmic night' of the 'forgetfulness of being,' the nihilism that Nietzsche prophesied, then may one not gaze at the fading light of the sun setting in the evening sky, instead of turning around to look for the first shimmer of it return?" (Gadamer 2013, xxxiv). In this statement, we get a sense of two sentiments: melancholy, but also faith in an alternative future.

2.10 Conclusion

Gadamer's tone of melancholy is invoked by the deforestation of the bio-diverse forests on our planet in an environmental and physical sense, but also by the reduction of our world's diverse cultural ecology in a historical and political sense. Having witnessed a century that caused massive forms of destruction to the natural world and within human societies, modernity, for Gadamer, came to signal an epoch of crisis and malaise. In the wake of this scientific and technological stampede, Gadamer's approach is one that makes us extra aware of the dangers of modern cultural

genocide, of the disappearance of entire languages and ways of life in the shadow of the totalizing ways of our age. Although this is an inevitable consequence of modernity's totalizing economies and mass communication culture, Gadamer's project invites us to critically examine the ethical and political implications of the narrowing down of our world and the accompanying impoverishment of our choices as a loss to lament rather than a triumph to celebrate. There is a clear underlying anxiety in Gadamer's writings and lectures about the shrinking diversity of our world; a sense that the real hermeneutic richness of our world is not truly articulated or given free expression in modernity, whose plurality has been narrowed down and suppressed within a particular Western scientific and technological hegemony. *Modernity for Gadamer has not been a victory over the primitive other and the light upon the darkness of irrational cultures and religions,* but the will to destruction of an irretrievable wealth of human possibility and the rich and deep forests of diverse worldviews. It is no wonder that Gadamer was never enthusiastic about using any form of coercion or violence to respond to our malaise.

Some academics argue that Gadamer's project is somewhat of a paradox. They see Gadamer's "world" as European through and through, and argue that the entirety of his corpus is based on a Euro-centric philosophical and German humanist tradition. Palmer makes a comment about Gadamer's lack of interaction with other traditions in reaction to Gadamer's Encyclopedia piece on hermeneutics. The criticism that Palmer forwards, although it is in reference to this piece, is meant to point generally to most of Gadamer's work: "One could lament that in the classical portion of his encyclopedia article Gadamer omits considerations of non-Western forms of classical text interpretation, such as the rich Jewish tradition, and also the Buddhist, Hindu, Chinese, and Muslim traditions. Gadamer contents himself with returning to ancient Greece" (2007, 43-44). As Palmer points out, Gadamer did not make serious attempts to reach out to other traditions. Yet, despite this, it is curious how Gadamer's entire project is predicated on opening up the European self-enclosure. Grondin, however, has a different take. He argues that Johann Goethe and Hermann Hesse were among the main influences upon Gadamer, especially in his youth (2003, 247). And Hesse, after all, was deeply influenced by Buddhism and Eastern religions. Similarly, Goethe's work is largely impacted by his interest in Islam, the Quranic text, and the poetry of Hafiz. Moreover, during the war Gadamer was purposely teaching *Duino Elegies*, the ten poems of the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, while the allies were carpet bombing Leipzig as mentioned above. After the war, Gadamer gave a series of lectures on these authors, and Grondin argues that:

> in choosing these authors Gadamer was aiming at a wider public and basing his hopes on the best traditions of German culture. At least part of what it would take to recover from the German trauma could likely be found in the country's own culture. German culture per se could not be made responsible for the catastrophe in Germany. (2003, 247)

Grondin therefore scratches beyond the surface when situating Gadamer's interests, cultural commitments, and the influences that opened his thinking, even if Gadamer himself did not directly reach out to other cultures. It is obvious, especially in *Truth and Method*, with its clear emphasis on German culture, history, and philosophy, that Gadamer was making a political stance when he chose to commit to rehabilitating his own local culture and history. Gadamer's interest in the German heritage could therefore be interpreted as a political stance, and as a means of confronting a specific political period. As Grondin argues above, it was Gadamer's way of resisting the racist and Nazi orientations German culture had become trapped in by reclaiming and rehabilitating parts of his culture that had become supressed. This echoes Hannah Arendt's defense

of German language and culture (which will be discussed later) that had become leveled, narrowed, and stalled during the reign of the Nazis.

However, it is not all that surprising that such interests make Gadamer come across as elitist, or even as having a vested interest in the "high" culture of European art and literature. But Gadamer sees himself differently. He views himself as a rebel against the high arts and high culture of Europe. As he states,

> I myself belong to the generation that 'went into the woods' as members of the youth movement and utterly rejected the cultural life of the towns, especially the opera. These gestures of protest (even the costumes with the iridescent collars) were harmless. But in the affluent society of the second half of the century, these counter movements began to take on the forms of militant cultural revolution, and were directed just as much against the political order as a whole as they were against the domination of the church. (1998, 2)

Gadamer traces this revolutionary spirit all the way back to the initial critique of the domination of reason in the Enlightenment by Kant and Herder, while also highlighting the significance of Schopenhauer's later critiques of Western civilization (1998, 2). The rise of "high culture" and the separation of art from its political and ethical function in society is therefore seen as deeply problematic by Gadamer:

> With the rise of bourgeois society, that is with the ascent of the bourgeoisie to equality with the court and nobility, an almost religious culture of art arose. This movement provided the cultural furniture of so-called urban cultural life, whose theatres, museums, concert halls, and lecture halls reveal the enthusiasm for culture of the bourgeois centuries. Then, in the twentieth century, a counter-movement occurred that criticized this bourgeois cultural life. (Gadamer 1998, 2)

Gadamer welcomed many changes that occurred after the war, and he began to feel more at home. Considering the widespread belief that "because of their history Germans were not specially suited to Democracy," argues Grondin, and the "miracle of a functioning democracy in Germany surprised Gadamer" (2003, 277). In light of some of these challenges and the way Gadamer navigated them, we can perhaps see why his project is paradoxically one of the best approaches to dealing with the problematic questions of local identity, political crises, and the critical significance of rehabilitating one's culture and history.

Gadamer's hermeneutics provides a paradigm shift that can point out the limitations of any self-enclosure in any ethno-centric worldview. Despite the shortcomings and gaps of his own project, one cannot help but see how Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics highlights such problems and reorients us beyond them. Moreover, his own personal and emotional commitment to dialogue and his ongoing interest in the various implications of prejudice, especially our own, was always reflected in his ethics of encounter. Gadamer repeatedly said that he never wrote or taught anything that did not reflect a certain experiential truthfulness. "In fact, my development of a 'hermeneutical philosophy' can be traced back to nothing more pretentious than my effort to be theoretically accountable for the style of my studies and my teaching. Practice came first. For as long as I can remember, I have been concerned not to say too much and not to lose myself in theoretical constructions which were not fully supported by experience" (Gadamer 2007, 20). Through both its appeal to the universality of understanding and its emphasis on the limitations and particularity of our historically effected consciousness(s), Gadamer's project enables us to widen our horizons in ways that make us capable of encountering the difficult, different, and distant.

Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutics is inherently critical because it is always situated within a reflective ethics where encountering otherness allows us to internally examine the limitations and faults within. He therefore states that, "It is impossible to make ourselves aware of a prejudice while it is constantly operating unnoticed, but only when it is, so to speak, provoked" (2013, 310). The encounter with otherness, whether a person or a "traditionary text," Gadamer argues, "can provide this provocation" (2013, 310). Consequently, his understanding of ethics is never in the abstract. In one of his reflective essays during his last years, "On the Political Incompetence of Philosophy," Gadamer discusses the failure of German intellectuals to adequately respond to the ethical and political challenges under the Nazis due to a decades-long "depoliticization of the intelligentsia" in Germany (1998, 11). Gadamer stresses how "ethics is not a matter of simple conviction but refers to real behavior and taking responsibility for the consequences of that behavior and of any lapses from it" (1998, 10).

When Gadamer turned a hundred, Riccardo Dottori, one of Gadamer's students, conducted a series of interviews (Gadamer 2004b). In the introduction, Dottori writes that "Gadamer's realistic, skeptical, and tolerant demeanor, and his natural gift for diplomacy allowed him to survive three revolutions unharmed—namely, those of the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, and communism" (Gadamer 2004b, 12). Dottori therefore situates Gadamer's ethics within his life circumstances. "The small concessions that he was forced to make never touched the core of his personality. He never succumbed to flattery or careerism, and he never had to pay the high price of self-denial for the career that he nevertheless forged for himself in those years" (Gadamer 2004b, 12). Gadamer's interest in hermeneutics is ultimately motivated by ethical living and ethical acting, all of which culminates in his understanding of *phronesis*, which he considers to be the core of his project. As he tells Dottori in one of their last interviews, "*Phronesis*, or reasonableness, is nothing other than the conscious side of action, practical knowing. Whenever we take note of this conscious side of the distinction between I and thou, then we have *phronesis*. […] [M]y whole philosophy is nothing but *phronesis*" (Gadamer 2004b, 54).

But ultimately, for Gadamer, in order to truly orient ourselves to the horizon of *phronesis*, we need to sit with questions more than answers, with guilt more than innocence. Gadamer thus urges us to be vigilant about our claims of innocence if we want to think and act ethically and responsibly:

> In the last analysis each and every one of us experiences in himself or herself the responsibility which we all bear and which we conceal from ourselves. I have once again reread Kafka's *The Trial*. The marvellous and agonizing description found there shows how so-called innocence makes a person guilty. In such circumstances in life philosophers can perhaps help us formulate better the questions that concern us all, but they can only be of assistance if they are able to show other people how much we are faced with tasks whose resolution cannot be treated as the sole responsibility of others. It is never solely the other person who is guilty. (Gadamer 1998, 11)

Chapter Three
Power Play: A Dialogue Between Gadamer and Foucault

We are the Borg. You will be assimilated. Resistance is futile!

–Star Trek

The most common way people give up their power is thinking they don't have any.

–Alice Walker

Society is the total network of relations between human beings. The components of society are thus not human beings but relations between them.

–Arnold Toynbee

In this chapter, I construct the inevitable dialogue that arises from reading the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Michel Foucault, given some of the distinctly common philosophical themes that underlie their respective projects. These two philosophers are usually contrasted more often than compared in academic discussions. However, a closer reading of their projects reveals unavoidable intersections. Both critique modernity and the rise of science as a dominant paradigm that eclipses the legitimacy of other modes of knowing. Both bring to the surface the connection between modern epistemology and the ethos of domination. Their interest in parsing the ways domination and power occur in modernity offers new relational and dynamic modalities for understanding social phenomena. Moreover, Gadamer and Foucault revolutionize our understanding of our subjectivities and the modes of knowing through which we come to understand ourselves and interpret the world around us. It is for such reasons that Hans-Herbert Kögler was compelled to address the unavoidable parallels between the two in his book, *The Power of Dialogue: Critical Hermeneutics After Gadamer and Foucault* (1999). In his fusion of the horizons of the two scholars, Kögler comes up with his own approach of *critical hermeneutics*, in which he combines Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics and Foucault's innovative analysis of power (1999, 36). The two projects, according to him, meet in significant ways, especially given their unique approaches to raising critical questions that bring to the surface the underlying assumptions and dynamics that reveal and conceal our *will to power* (1999, 83).

Kögler invites us to pursue parallel readings for a variety of reasons, the main one being that the two projects provide "a *restructuring of hermeneutic theory* that radicalizes and strengthens its position by incorporating the valuable poststructuralist insights into a tenable interpretive theory" (1999, 6). For Kögler, the importance of Gadamer lies in his emphasis on "the liberating, problematizing, innovative, and unpredictable potential of conversation, which is capable of leading us to new insights and critical self-reflection through experiencing the other" (1999, 6). On the other hand, he locates the importance of Foucault in his poststructuralist idea of a symbolic order and the ineluctability of power in the formation of knowledge and social practices (1999, 6).

However, there is also a general inclination in academic circles to conclude that Gadamer's hermeneutics and Foucauldian critical theory are too far apart. In his essay "Foucault and Gadamer: Like Apples and Oranges Passing in the Night" (2000), Gary Wickham argues that "it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to successfully mix Foucauldian and Gadamerian insights into a framework," because, for him, "any attempt to read Foucault and Gadamer together, through a single lens, inevitably confronts the dilemma of how to bring them both into focus simultaneously"

(942-943). Wickham asserts that the divide between hermeneutics and critical theory cannot be so easily bridged, because "they are each dealing with a slightly different, although sometimes overlapping, set of problems" (2000, 943). Such readings of Foucault and Gadamer are not surprising when considering the typecasting of each philosopher. However, my aim in this chapter is precisely to find the lens from which to approach their projects and mix their insights into a productive framework.

In line with Kögler, I argue that the combined reading of Foucault and Gadamer has the potential to highlight new insights in their respective projects, insights that remain less salient for each side without such a dialogue. Their respective analyses about what happens when human beings encounter one another—especially their analyses of our subjectivities and the possibilities contained in both dialogue and power relations—enable us to theorize the dynamics of our interactions. This engenders possibilities for creative and new ways of responding and reacting to our cultural and social practices—and hence new strategies of resistance. In other words, their critical approaches to modernity allow alternative analyses on the nature of knowledge and social phenomena in ways that make us think differently (and possibly act differently) when we read them together.

The Canadian scholar and academic Paul Fairfield stresses the value and creative possibilities of bringing Gadamer's hermeneutics into dialogue different ideas. In his book *Philosophical Hermeneutics Reinterpreted: Dialogues with Existentialism, Pragmatism, Critical Theory and Postmodernism* (2011), Fairfield argues that his aim in creating such dialogues is not just to focus on ideas that agree with or oppose hermeneutics. Rather, in the spirit of Gadamerian dialogue, he emphasizes that, as "Gadamer and Ricoeur well knew and demonstrated in their practice as philosophers, ideas benefit from dialogical encounters with their respective others" (2011, 4). Kögler's project can thus be seen as the type of encounter that Fairfield anticipates in recommending such productive dialogues. This chapter therefore aims not to merely compare or contrast the two scholars through a narrow lens, but to find in their dialogue the new possibilities that arise when thinking about ourselves in relation to others. In fact, in reading them together, we go beyond their unique approaches, because, in combination, they push us to overcome our naivety when thinking of the political implications of knowledge, power, *and* hermeneutics.

Given the creative possibilities contained in considering how both Gadamer and Foucault undertake their unique intellectual journeys, the emphasis in this chapter will be placed on their ability to destabilize much of what we have come to take for granted about modernity. I show this through a dialogical intertwining of their projects by focusing on the intersection of four central themes in their respective work: 1) their similar interests in the implications of the rise of the natural sciences as a "totalizing order" and the impact this has had upon other forms of knowledge; 2) the *interpretive turn* both scholars adopt as *alternative counterpart strategies to the dominant methodic approaches*—"genealogy" in the case of Foucault, and "hermeneutics" in the case of Gadamer; 3) the compatibility of Foucault's *relational conception of power* with Gadamer's *dialogical conception of the nature of understanding*; 4) how these three themes culminate in providing different approaches to reclaiming various modes of subjectivity as tools of resistance and transformation.

Since the fusion of their horizons points to new political possibilities and orientations, it is important, when considering how Gadamer's ontological notion of *play* helps expand Foucault's idea of the *regime of power* as being external to the subject's control, to trace the parallels in their destabilization of our ingrained *metaphysics of subjectivity*. Although both give attention to the way transformation occurs within the play of power, both do it differently. Foucault expresses this

through the notion of "rupture" in connection with his questioning of discursive practices as historical inevitabilities, while Gadamer expresses it in the notion of "transformation" in his conception of the movement of dialogue and his ontological reframing of *understanding as an event*.

While both philosophers emphasize the connection between knowledge and power, they do this by conceptualizing the modes of being human in ways that are quite different from previous philosophical or psychological approaches. Such nuanced, complex, and dynamic conceptions liberate us from overly pessimistic and optimistic formulations of *the way social phenomena actually occur*. Their respective conceptions of our modes of knowledge and domination engender alternative forms of action that challenge and question our contemporary identities and practices. Foucault introduces the possibility of *a new economy of power relations*, while Gadamer introduces the possibility of *a new hermeneutics of intersubjective meaning*. Foucault does this through his genealogy, by launching historical and interpretive investigations into practices that suppress other forms of knowledge. Gadamer achieves this through his ontological hermeneutics, which bring into the open the transformative power of our interpretive practices. In other words, a parallel reading of their projects demonstrates the interconnections between *Foucault's hermeneutics of power and Gadamer's power of hermeneutics.*

3.1 An Archeology of the Artificial Narrowing of Knowledge: Modernity and the Ascendency of Science

To fully appreciate the scope and possibilities of the political potential in reading Gadamer and Foucault together, we have to understand the way they revisit the concept of modern knowledge. By looking at the various implications of this concept, the two philosophers end up *politicizing the nature and content of our ways of knowing*. In their critiques of modern conceptions of knowledge and truth we come to see the relevance of power. Gadamer usually discusses this problematic as our modern tendency toward, and desire for, "the growing domination of being" (2013, 492). Foucault, on the other hand, discusses this through his reconceptualization of power at the micro level of social phenomena (1997b, 329). Through parsing power implications and providing a new hermeneutics of the inherent political dimensions in our knowledge paradigms, both offer a critical perspective for seeing anew our modern world as well as our modern subjectivities. If the feminist movement coined the phrase "the personal is political" to unpack power relations in the private realm, one could say that Gadamer and Foucault have also pushed the conversation to make us understand that *hermeneutics is political*.

Both Gadamer and Foucault urge us to examine and pursue the evolution of the human sciences as an exemplary reflection of *the narrowing down of the larger spectrum of knowledge.* In reading them both, our understanding of the nature of modern knowledge becomes much more comprehensive and nuanced, especially in understanding the ubiquity and ineluctability of power. Their projects indirectly indicate the inescapability of the political, especially in light of their respective investigations into the nature of modern epistemology. Both present the trajectory of knowledge as the movement of interpretive practices within historical contexts, against the conception of knowledge as the discovery of objective truth. Gadamer and Foucault therefore urge us to situate our pursuit of knowledge *temporally*, and to view the trajectory of various knowledge(s) as historically specific modes of knowing. Epistemology for both thinkers is thus temporal and always already shaped by historical, cultural, and political circumstances.

Although both philosophers do not directly deal with political theory, their respective analyses of the evolution of our modern knowledge paradigms reveal underlying power dynamics that easily lend themselves to political theorizing. As Gadamer argues, "We must pursue this context a little if we want to liberate the problem the human sciences present for philosophy from the *artificial narrowness* in which nineteenth-century methodology was caught. The modern concept of science and the associated concept of method are insufficient" (2013, 17, emphasis mine). Both Gadamer and Foucault raise the need to understand our historical situation from a critical lens by focusing on the connections between knowledge and domination.

The way both highlight the will to "dominate" as underlying the "will to know" brings the analysis of knowledge and power to new horizons. Gadamer, for example, is critical of the claim that knowledge is neutral, as this "implies a highly abstract concept of coercion-free discourse which totally loses sight of the actual conditions of human praxis" (2007, 29). Foucault, for his part, admits that his interest in power was indirectly piqued by his investigations into the forces that construct our subjectivities and the "modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects" (1997b, 326). According to Foucault, the goal of his work "has not been to analyze the phenomenon of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (1997b, 326). Foucault discusses the difficulty he faced in formulating his questions about power, given the way the concept of power had been fixed by both the Right and Left within the historical evolution of the political spectrum (1997a, 117-119).

In a similar vein, Gadamer also deals, albeit sometimes indirectly, with tendencies of domination by offering the alternative of a dialogical modality. The underlying problematic Gadamer is attempting to resolve is the issue of the *growing domination of being* as manifested in our techno scientific civilization, or what he describes as the "arrogant confidence of modernity" (1998,1). In moving beyond traditional modalities of conceptualizing power—which focused on issues of sovereignty and economics—their projects invite us to rethink some of our old categories and ways of conceptualizing of domination and power. Gadamer and Foucault make us see power and domination in the modern age differently when they rethink such issues through the ascendency of science and reason. One of the main concerns in Foucault's project is to challenge the simplistic view of science as the innocent pursuit of truth. His interest in parsing modern epistemology, which had been narrowed down within a scientific and methodic paradigm, is to show the "inhibiting effect of global, *totalitarian theories*," because for him, "the attempt to think in terms of totality has in fact proved a hindrance to research" (1972, 80-81). Gadamer also goes to great lengths to understand the modern obsession with a positivistic epistemology that promises systematic domination and control over both social and natural phenomena, or what he refers to as "optimistic progressivism" (1999, 19). He therefore advocates for a hermeneutics that is open to other epochs, and cultures, and modes of knowledge, "to serve as an antidote to *the illusion of superiority* which we think we possess as the inheritors of the Judeo-Christian tradition" (2007, 29, emphasis mine).

Even though Gadamer and Foucault do not directly tackle the issue of power as a central concern in their projects, the workings of power and domination frame the entirety of the way they problematize the project of modernity and its epistemological standards. As Foucault explains in his essay "The Subject and Power" (1997b), he ended up dealing with power because he wanted to study the "objectivizing of the subject" through what he calls "dividing practices" (1997b, 326). "Thus, it is not power, but the subject, that is the general theme of my research," he affirms (1997b, 327). Both scholars end up engaging in critiques of power and domination when unpacking the

trajectory of the social sciences and the central role of the natural sciences as the guiding model in their evolution. They do this by examining the underlying assumptions that shaped the modern worldview, assumptions with far-reaching social and political consequences. Foucault's aim to understand the thick layers that went into the evolution of the social and human sciences is undertaken in his well-known book, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of The Human Sciences* (1989). Gadamer, on the other hand, undertakes this task by doing his own philosophical archeology in the first third of his magnum opus, *Truth and Method* (2013). In the early chapters of the book Gadamer's main argument revolves around the way the natural sciences became the model for the social sciences. He also urges us to re-examine the historical "self-understanding" of the social sciences; how they were pressured to reshape themselves after the methodic approaches in the hard sciences as a means of gaining an unshakable legitimacy (2013, 7). By tracing the philosophical underpinnings that paved the way for the ascendency of science, Gadamer examines how it ended up shaping and molding other fields. He also traces the impact of the natural sciences in compressing and dwarfing the legitimacy of other forms of knowledge, or what he refers to as "the artificial narrowness" of the methodologies that reshaped them (2013, 17).

Foucault, like Gadamer, is aware that the social sciences' attempt to emulate the natural sciences was not the innocent pursuit of truth it seemed to be. Rather, as they both argue, the insistence on gaining reliable methods for discerning truth by acquiring methodic tools modeled after the natural sciences, is in fact a revelation about the political status of science in the modern age. This naturally indicates the need to recognize the relevance of the question of power in knowledge. The separation between knowledge and power therefore seems to be naïve for Foucault, and even blinding in some sense. "Philosophers or even, more generally, intellectuals justify and mark out their identity by trying to establish an almost uncrossable line between the domain of knowledge, seen as that of truth and freedom, and the domain of the exercise of power" (1988, 106). Just as Gadamer does in *Truth and Method*, Foucault also attempts to explicate the relationship between knowledge and power, and takes as its sight of investigation the human sciences. Foucault asserts that "the birth of the human sciences goes hand in hand with the installation of new mechanisms of power" (1988, 106). In fact, it is through the evolution or development of the human sciences that the issue of power becomes more apparent for Foucault. "What struck me, in observing the human sciences," Foucault argues, "was that the development of all these branches of knowledge can in no way be disassociated from the exercise of power" (1988, 106).

The reason for this association, Gadamer argues, was the desperate attempt by the social sciences to legitimate their field of inquiry through modeling themselves upon the "methodological ideal of natural sciences" which are aimed at controlling being (2013, 5). He examines, in much detail, the influence of John Stuart Mill's *Logic*, the general inclinations of English empiricism and German transcendental philosophy, as well as the attempts of Wilhelm Dilthey and Helmholtz to establish and defend the epistemological independence of the human sciences on the basis of method (2013, 5-6). Speaking to this trajectory, he states:

> Characteristic of the development of the human sciences in the nineteenth century is that they not only acknowledge the natural sciences as an extrinsic model but that, coming from the same background as modern science, they develop the same feeling for experiment and research. Just as the age of mechanics felt alienated from nature conceived as the natural world and expressed this feeling epistemologically in the concept of self-consciousness and in the rule, developed a method,

> that only 'clear and distinct perceptions' are certain, so also the human sciences of the nineteenth felt a similar alienation from the world of history. (2013, 59)

In examining the evolution of the social sciences, Foucault, like Gadamer, aims to explore the various elements that shape knowledge. His main concern is therefore the character of epistemology in the modern age, seen from a larger historical lens. To situate his interest in the archeology of knowledge, Foucault explains that his concern is not "to describe the progress of knowledge towards an objectivity in which today's science can finally be recognized" (1989, xxiii). Rather, Foucault is attempting to map the trajectory of science by situating our modern epistemology within the historical factors that shaped science, not as the perfection and securing of truth, but as a mode of knowing which is always already subject to various influences.

> [W]hat I am attempting to bring to light is the epistemological field, the *episteme* in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility; in this account what appear are those configurations within the space of knowledge which have given rise to the diverse forms of empirical science. Such an enterprise is not so much a history, in the traditional meaning of that word, as an 'archeology' (1989, xxiii-xxiv).

Gadamer, in his attempt to excavate the layers of this "archeology," revisits certain junctures that have shaped Western modern epistemology. While Foucault compares the classical age to the modern one in order to highlight such sharp junctures, Gadamer chooses Kant's obsession with formalizing knowledge. He therefore examines Kant's keen interest in the model of the natural sciences, as well as his consequent attempt to formalize and methodologize aesthetic consciousness, leaving art disconnected from its historical and cultural context. Kant introduced a way of seeing and understanding art in abstracted ways by focusing only on the content of art, and by formalizing aesthetic experience in his attempt to create a methodic approach to art. Kant, as Gadamer repeatedly argues in his various works, wanted to create methodologies parallel to science by separating specific human phenomenon and turning them into units for observation. For Gadamer, this was a significant and profound development, because in methodologizing artistic consciousness, *Kant also radically subjectivized artistic experience*, and this, in turn, severed the connections between art, community and ethics. For Gadamer, this was one of the major turning points in dwarfing the larger spectrum of knowledge, or what could be understood as legitimate knowledge. "Above all," Gadamer argues, "we are influenced by Kant's achievement in moral philosophy, which *purified ethics from all aesthetics and feeling*" (2013, 37, emphasis mine).

To help us really appreciate the impact of Kant on the trajectory of the social sciences, Gadamer shows how Kant's move to provide aesthetics with a transcendental philosophical basis created a significant epistemological shift. "We must say that his giving aesthetics a transcendental philosophical basis had major consequences and constituted a turning point. It was the end of a tradition but also the beginning of a new development" (2013, 37). Gadamer argues that this shift, subtle as it may seem to us today, was in fact cataclysmic, because it restricted traditional conceptions of taste, judgement and *common sense* (*sensus communis*) to private and subjective dimensions. "By so doing," Gadamer asserts, Kant "limited the concept of knowledge to the theoretical and practical use of reason […] and shifted the more general concept of the experience

of taste, and the activity of aesthetic judgment in law and morality, out of the center of philosophy" (2013, 37-38).

In a similar vein, Foucault argues that his "archeological inquiry has revealed two great discontinuities in the *episteme* of Western culture," and counts the classical age in the seventeenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century as major turning points (1989, xxiv). Even if, as Foucault argues, there is "quasi-continuity on the level of ideas and themes" in historical scholarship's examination of the evolution of science, it nevertheless remains a surface examination (1989, xxiv). However, according to Foucault, when the history of modern knowledge is examined on an "archeological level," we encounter the turning points responsible for shifting the way we perceive and frame things. Foucault argues that, on this archeological level, "we see that the system of positivities was transformed in a wholesale fashion at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. Not that reason made any progress; it was simply that the mode of being of things, and of the order that divided them up before presenting them to understanding, was profoundly altered" (1989, xxiv).

This is the reason Gadamer focuses on specific historical moments—to underscore the archeological shifts that led to the nature of modern epistemology. He therefore focuses on Kant's radical reconceptualization of the categories of knowledge in philosophy, undertaken at a historic moment, when the human sciences were increasingly being placed in a volatile position due to their need to secure legitimacy in the modern era. Modern science and the orientation towards method, argues Gadamer, aided in rejecting many modes of knowing as unverifiable by formal methods. As a result, such forms of knowledge were pushed to the subjective realm, a consequence of the stark delineation between subjective and objective forms of knowledge. Gadamer emphasizes the need to understand the significance of this historical shift, which resulted in denigrating certain modes of knowledge; to pushing them outside measurable methods where they could no longer be considered serious epistemological categories. "The radical subjectivation involved in Kant's new way of grounding aesthetics was truly epoch-making. In discrediting any kind of theoretical knowledge except that of natural science, it compelled the human sciences to rely on the methodology of the natural sciences in conceptualizing themselves" (2013, 38). For Gadamer, the discrediting of other kinds of knowledge created a cascading effect. All the ancient and classical interconnections of the good, the beautiful, and that which serves the communal wellbeing, were evacuated epistemologically and relegated to radical subjectivity, which, in the context of empirical science, rendered them private, unreliable, and relative—and hence, in more than one way, also irrelevant.

Gadamer's critique of Kant highlights Gadamer's political interests, especially the connection between knowledge and community. In focusing on the historical role of Kant in helping to disconnect the ethical and beautiful from knowledge and communal interests, Gadamer brings to our attention the larger political implications of our epistemological obsessions in the modern era. Thus, for Gadamer, all these classical categories that had been recognized as modes of accessing truth within a larger and more fluid spectrum of knowledge, suddenly became obsolete and not defined "positively by what grounds commonality and creates community" (2013, 40). The classical notion of "*sensus communis*," within the Roman and scholastic paradigms, had been its own category of knowledge and carried its weight in philosophy. "Sensus communis was understood as a purely theoretical faculty: theoretical judgement, parallel to moral consciousness (conscience) and taste. Thus, it was integrated into a scholasticism of the basic faculties" (2013, 25). Gadamer discusses how Henri Bergson appealed to '*le bon sens*' in 1895 as a way of questioning the reliance on the model of the natural sciences, and also discusses how Bergson

emphasized "the importance of classical studies for the development of this bon sens" (Gadamer 2013, 24-25). "Le bon sens, for Bergson, is, as the common source of thought and will a 'sens social,' which avoids both the mistakes of the scientific dogmatists who are looking for social laws and those of the metaphysical utopians" (Gadamer 2013, 24). Gadamer argues that despite such questioning and the ideas of other European Enlightenment philosophers and thinkers such as Giambattista Vico and Lord Shaftesbury, the new orientation towards verifiable methods maintained a strong momentum (2013, 25). Gadamer is critical of the role played by German philosophers in maintaining this momentum, especially philosophers like Wilhelm Dilthey and Kant. According to him, the increasing belief in method points to the way the social sciences proceeded, "not under the influence of [the] moral philosophy [of other European philosophies and schools], […] but under the influence of the German philosophy of the age of Kant and Goethe" (2013, 25)

The rising German influence, in contrast to other streams of European moral philosophy, signified a shift in the field of humanities, disconnecting the field from the concept of le bon sens as a form of knowing. "In being emptied out of all political content," Gadamer adds, "it lost its genuine critical significance" (2013, 25). This disconnection in the quest for totalizing, universal, and methodic knowledge, and the accompanying implications of control, are the main issues raised by Gadamer in his criticism of the evolution of the social sciences. He therefore focuses on the German philosopher and historian Dilthey as being one of the leading "positivist" scholars obsessed with grounding the social sciences within a scientific methodology. For Gadamer, Dilthey's desire "to legitimate the work of the human sciences epistemologically," as well as his emphasis on method, reveal how his concepts are motivated by this blind epistemological purpose and the need to rise above communal and political concerns (2013, 59).

These developments did not only shift the loci of ethics and its connection to aesthetics from the spectrum of knowledge and the well-being of community, but, according to Gadamer, also fragmented our historical consciousness and own our self-understanding. As he states, the "unities of meaning" were broken down against "data of experiment and measurement" (2013, 59). Suddenly, we found ourselves in an epoch where entire modes of knowing, understanding, and ways of consolidating community became suspect; where data, numbers, and methodic research were taken seriously as the dependency on verifiable evidence escalated. Consequently, as Gadamer argues, the human sciences of the 19th century went through a tremendous alienation from world history and the products of human imagination across time. In this new era, Gadamer writes "[the] spiritual creations of the past, art and history, no longer belong self-evidently to the present: rather, they are given up to research, they are data or givens (*Gegebenheiten*) from which a past can be made present" (2013, 59). This trend still impacts the way we perceive of what is "subjective" and "objective." It also impacts our modern distance when it comes to *the different other*, whether we encounter them physically in the present, or their "voice" as the historical other from the past. According to this view, the disconnection from life and the objectification of history means *the objectification of all forms of otherness*.

For Gadamer, the complications of modernity were not only the big consequences unleashed by the Industrial Revolution, but also included the new "distanced attitude that historical consciousness takes to tradition." This distanced attitude brought our *conversations* with the past to a halt, imposing a one-directional monologue in which the past is a dead object to be studied. Therefore, for Gadamer, this kind of "scientific knowledge obliges one to sever one's bond with life, to attain distance from one's history, which alone makes it possible for that history to become an object" (2013, 6).

The problematic Gadamer raises in his discussion of the ascension of science over all other modes of knowledge is echoed by the Australian academic Christopher Falzon, who also examines the philosophical assumptions of modernity. Falzon focuses on the consequences of the Cartesian duality, since, for him, the Cartesian cogito, established around an isolated, ahistorical, autonomous subject observing external reality, removed us from our connections to life. Given this metaphysical paradigm, Falzon argues, we do not exist within a material and temporal context in modernity, but rather exist as autonomous rational subjects in a transcendent state beyond historical forces, because "in Kant's moral thinking, bodily existence is something that we have to struggle to overcome or rise above, if we are to be truly human, to attain our true status as self-sufficient, rational subjects" (1998, 27). Falzon considers this desire for a metaphysical position above history, space, and time, to be form of intellectual pathology:

> It is more useful to the totalized, self-enclosed way of thinking as representing a pathology of thought, in which thought has come to be trapped in, and blinded by, its own categories […]. On this reading, metaphysical claims to be able to grasp the world in its totality represent a paradigm case of pathological self-deception. We blind ourselves to all that is other, all that goes beyond our view of the world, at the cost of becoming trapped in a closed form of thinking. (1998, 32)

To probe this fear, Falzon examines aspects of the human condition that makes us susceptible to wanting to control external reality, as found, for example, in

> the child's jarring recognition that it is not all-powerful, that it exits in the midst of a wider world which does not simply obey or fall in with its desires and fancies, and this experience is something we repeat whenever we come up against something that is beyond the horizon of our experience, whenever we are surprised by the world, shocked by the unexpected, forced to reckon with the new. (Falzon 1998, 33)

According to the view of Gadamer and Falzon, humanity disconnects itself from the world in its ceaseless obsession with dominating the world. By stepping out of history and turning the content of history into objects for methodic study by a transcendental subject seeking dominion and control, humanity removed itself from the world and fell into a closed solipsism. "Totalizing thought, and its solipsistic self-enclosure, are at the very heart of modern philosophical reflection, of metaphysical subjectivism" (Falzon 1998, 20). Falzon thus helps us understand the main problematic Gadamer raises in the evolution of the social sciences. He highlights how all our attempts to connect to the world and recover and secure objective access to reality paradoxically trap us into more self-enclosures, isolating us in a deeper solipsism. Falzon identifies, in the works of Kant, Hegel, and Marx, successive attempts to move beyond this ahistorical and removed standpoint and recover access to modes of knowledge congruent with reality. However, he argues that all these attempts made "the problem of solipsism emerge, now in the form of the self-enclosure of transcendental idealism" (1998, 22). As he states:

> The ironic and paradoxical result of this, however, is that humanist thought presents us with an inhuman conception of human being. To be a humanist subject, standing above the world and its influences, we have to deny, to downgrade, rise above or overcome, everything about us that is corporeal, everything about ourselves in so far as we are finite, socially and historically particular and situated beings. (Falzon 1998, 26)

Kant's attempt at recovering the world, argues Falzon, sought to break free from the external influences of authority or knowledge and transcend the forces of history through the moral reasoning of a "knowing subject" (1998, 27). Hegel and Marx, on the other hand, attempted to overcome the autonomous subject by focusing their attempts on finding the underlying forces that explained history, whether in Absolute Mind or the economic structures (1998, 30). Falzon also notes the profound implications of the systematic attempts to stabilize understanding by finding secure foundations. He argues that the attempt to secure knowledge of the world paradoxically removes us further from the world. "The unworldly metaphysical subject, standing above history, is also remote from the actual human beings who exist in the midst of history. It has none of the concreteness, finitude or material existence. In short, the metaphysical subject lacks embodiment" (Falzon 1998, 26).

In examining the epistemological anxieties and concealed motives underlying modern forms of knowledge, Foucault raises his provocative questions about the problematic nature of the relationship between knowledge and power. To explicate the complexity of this relationship, Foucault, like Gadamer, questions the status and legitimating power science garnered in the modern era. He does this by meticulous and detailed excavations of the historical trajectories and evolutions of specific fields of knowledge and their self-legitimating tactics. Foucault, for example, takes a jab at the Marxist claim that their economic and political perspective is scientific in nature. He uses this as an example of the self-legitimating tactic—the trap of self-legitimation through science: "If we have any objection against Marxism, it lies in the fact that it could effectively be a science" (1972, 84). Foucault argues that "it is surely necessary to question ourselves about our aspirations to the kind of power that is presumed to accompany such a science" (1972, 84). But he is also looking at the reverse. Because if we affirm something by claiming its scientific nature, then by default we are disqualifying other modes of knowledge as not living up to the standards that would qualify them as "science." Foucault underscores the underlying dynamics in such loaded questions and inquiries:

> What types of knowledge do you want to disqualify in the very instant of your demand: 'Is it a science'? Which speaking, discoursing subjects—which subjects of experience and knowledge—do you then want to 'diminish' when you say: I who conduct this discourse am conducting a scientific discourse, and I am a scientist'? (1972, 85)

By delving into the implications of such attempts, Foucault exposes their political nature and will to power. Self-legitimizing a given knowledge by holding it up as a science is also a way of diminishing another modes of knowledge as unscientific. As he states:

> When I see you straining to establish the scientificity of Marxism I do not really think that you are demonstrating once and for all that Marxism has a rational structure and that therefore its propositions are the outcome of verifiable procedures; for me you are doing something altogether different, you are investing Marxist discourses and those who uphold them with *the effects of a power which the West since Medieval times has attributed to science and has reserved those engaged in scientific discourse*. (1972, 85, emphasis mine)

The search for transcendent categories of knowledge outside space and outside time, and the straining to secure knowledge within scientific and methodic terrains, is connected to issues of control and domination, because, as Falzon writes, "the standpoint from which such thinking proceeds is removed from and unconditioned by any concrete historical context," and consequently, "is abstract and unworldly" (Falzon 1998, 25). From a Gadamerian perspective the

obsession with achieving a metaphysical stance outside history cannot be separated from the obsession with the epistemological goals of the foundationalist paradigm and the forgetfulness of ontological and linguistic questions. This leads to *the privileging of epistemology and its eye on objective knowledge at the expense of hermeneutic flexibility and movement.* In view of Gadamer's analysis of the evolution of the social sciences, one can see such successive attempts to regain access to our world and secure foundations for objective knowledge as stemming from an epistemological desire to stand above history and secure control over a fluid, complex, and constantly shifting reality. One of Gadamer's main mandates, therefore, is to question the self-understanding of the social sciences as methodic forms of knowledge and the consequent narrowing down of other forms of knowledges.

3.2 The Two Sides of Interpretation: Hermeneutics and Genealogy as Alternatives to Methodology

Neither philosopher rejects science or the many beneficial advances of the modern age, nor do they dismiss or belittle the positive contributions and achievements made in a variety of scientific fields. They even acknowledge the role of modernity in disrupting certain oppressive practices or belief systems. Gadamer even accredits science for warning us about our illusion regarding unbound freedom and the limits and end to our natural resources: "Science tells us that if we continue as we are doing, this end will befall us just as surely […] as if it had been predicted that the earth were going to collide with a star. This is especially what we learn from modern biology and everything known today as the problem of ecology" (1998, 80). Nevertheless, both thinkers do insist on the need for a critical perspective from which we can *also* come to see the *limits* of the dominant and universalizing paradigms of modernity and the concrete and material consequences of the ascendency of science, especially given the multiple levels of impact we have come to witness in many areas of life.

In order to navigate and maneuver these newly established dividing practices, Foucault argues for the need to come up with fresh and innovative strategies of resistance. Thus, to break through the shackles of the supremacy of science when considered from an archeological perspective, Foucault introduces an alternative strategy that stands in contrast with methodic approaches, which in some respects aligns him with Gadamer's hermeneutics, especially when considering Gadamer's own critique of the methodologization of knowledge(s). Foucault puts forward a *critical interpretive strategy* that is not subject to the constraints of methods and measurements, but is, rather, strongly hermeneutic in its orientation. He gives his historical investigations, interpretive in character, the name *genealogy*, a term he borrows from Nietzsche. "Genealogy," Foucault states, "is gray, meticulous, and partially documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times" (1997c, 369). It is also an undertaking that has its demands. "Genealogy," Foucault explains, "requires patience and a knowledge of details, and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material […]. In short genealogy demands relentless erudition" (1997c, 370). At the origins of Nietzsche's strategy of genealogy, argues Fairfield, is "a mode of interpretive analysis that looks to the historical origins of phenomena in order to uncover their moral significance" (2002, 39). Genealogy, Fairfield also adds, "is a profoundly suspicious mode of interpretation that detects the interests operative behind all ostensible impartiality, the affectivity behind all seeming objectivity, and the will power behind the will to justice" (2002, 39).

Foucault's genealogy, like that of Nietzsche, is therefore a critical approach to uncovering power dynamics, not just in particular historical settings, but in the conditions that shape historical knowledge at large. Like Gadamer's hermeneutics, Foucault's genealogical approach is not restricted to textual or historical documents. Instead, Foucault sees genealogy as a versatile strategy for historically excavating the various modes of being human. By using the metaphors of both *archeology* and *genealogy*, Foucault attempts to capture the historical and temporally framed character of any epistemological endeavor. In his book *Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault* (1993), Todd May considers the shift from archeology to genealogy, not as an incoherence or contradiction in Foucault's project, but as a natural progression. May situates Foucault's archelogy as his critique of foundationalism—i.e., as a prognosis of modern forms of knowledge—and situates his genealogy as offering strategies of resistance (1993, 32). Foucault himself frames *archeology* and *genealogy* as strategically distinct investigative approaches. "If we were to characterize it in two terms, then, 'archaeology' would be the appropriate methodology of this analysis of local discursivities, and 'genealogy' would be the tactic whereby, on the basis of the descriptions of these local discursivities, the subjected knowledges which were thus released would be brought into play" (1972, 85).

In parallel to this is Gadamer's philosophical parsing of our dominant categories of knowledge, an analysis aimed at tracing the way modernity limited the epistemological freedom and fluidity of a much larger terrain of knowledge. This is precisely what Foucault investigates with his genealogical approach—how different forms of knowledges were sidelined with the rise of systematic totalizing knowledge, as discussed above. Foucault is fascinated with the slow return and rise of some of these repressed knowledges, a phenomenon he terms the "*insurrection of subjugated knowledges*" (1972, 81). Another way of seeing how Foucault parallels Gadamer's emphasis on the narrowing down of knowledge is directly connected to the way he defines *subjugated knowledges*:

> By *subjugated knowledges* I mean two things: on the one hand, I am referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systematization […]. On the other hand, I believe that by subjugated knowledges one should understand something else, a whole set of *knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges located low down on the hierarchy*, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity (1972, 81-82, emphasis mine).

Both Gadamer and Foucault stress the importance of critically assessing the consequences that have arisen from the ascendency and elevation of science, especially the process of *subjugating* other knowledges. They both examine the dwarfing processes that took place in modernity, and how entire forms knowledge were, as Foucault explains, "disqualified from the hierarchy of knowledges and sciences" (1972, 82). In parallel, Gadamer argues that "science attempts to become certain about entities by methodically organizing its knowledge of the world. Consequently, *it condemns as heresy all knowledge that does not allow of this kind of certainty* and that therefore cannot serve *the growing domination of being*" (2013, 492, emphasis mine).

The shared interest of Gadamer and Foucault in examining the compression and marginalization of entire areas of knowledge underscores some of the significant intersections in the general thrust of their interpretive strategies. Their hermeneutic turn, as found in their interpretive strategies, therefore comes across as a form resistance to the supremacy of science and its methodic confines. Foucault's interest in pursuing "disqualified knowledges" is done to explore

the "*historical knowledge of struggles*" (1972, 83). By examining how some forms of knowledge are pushed to the margins of what is respected, we begin to see, as Foucault points out, the different struggles that underpin modern epistemology.

For Foucault, marginalized forms of knowledge reveal the dynamics of suppression, not just of physical bodies, but of also of the body of knowledge. In exploring disqualified knowledges in the shadow of the evolution of the totalizing order of methodic science, Foucault points out "the memory of hostile encounters which even up to this day have been confined to the margins of knowledge" (1972, 83). It is for this reason that Foucault chooses genealogy to pursue critical research that revisits and marks these historical sites of struggle, subjugation, and defeat—all in order to insert new and alternate interpretations and narratives into a history that casts a unified perspective. Genealogy, for Foucault, means a journey of *rediscovery*, a way of reframing suppressed struggles and forgotten memories, and even of resurrecting "the memory of hostile encounters which even up this day have been confined to the margins of knowledge" (1972, 83). "What emerges out of this" Foucault says, is "a multiplicity of genealogical researches, a painstaking rediscovery of struggles together with the rude memory of their conflicts" (1972, 83). This is why he champions genealogy as a means of treading on roads less travelled—it "record[s] the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality [and…] seek[s] them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history" (1997c, 369).

It is therefore obvious that the narrowing down of the larger spectrum of knowledge, a processes of disqualifying other knowledges, is a central problematic in modernity for both Foucault and Gadamer, albeit in slightly different terms. Foucault is interested in investigating the edges of town, in going to the peripheries of what is at the center of our attention. He is interested in historical scholarship and explores the evolution of the penal system, medicine, and the history of madness, all in order to explore the limits of currently established and legitimated forms of knowledge and practice. Foucault does this by looking at the "mechanisms of exclusion" in our modern polarities, which are prevalent in discursive practices, social structures, and institutions (1972, 101). Gadamer on the other hand looks elsewhere. Although Gadamer stresses the issue of "limits," he does not go directly to the peripheries to examine those knowledges that have been narrowed down and castigated away. Instead, Gadamer examines how our science-centered modern age came to deny the epistemological legitimacy of already formal areas of study, like literature, mythos, the poetic word, and religious themes (1998, 12). In fact, as discussed below, Gadamer presents a more radical approach to expanding the spectrum of knowledge.

Foucault's genealogy is Nietzschean in more than one way, especially given its emphasis on interpretive strategies. "Foucault's genealogical project borrows more than its name from Nietzsche, and includes a number of premises and interpretive methods derived from the latter" (Fairfield 2011, 175). This, of course, means there are linguistic and hermeneutic dimensions in Foucault's definition of genealogy. In fact, Foucault himself emphasizes these interpretive and linguistic dimensions in contrast to *method* and transcendental categories: "In short, genealogy *demands relentless erudition*. Genealogy does not oppose itself to history as the lofty and profound gaze of the philosopher might compare to the molelike perspective of the scholar; on the contrary, it rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies" (1997c, 370, emphasis mine). It is obvious that Foucault here is not setting up genealogy as a method of investigation, but rather as an activity that does not claim transcendental knowledge. This echoes Gadamer's own emphasis on the situated nature and perspectivity of any interpretation. Moreover, Foucault does not consider his genealogy as merely pertaining to actual events—it also extends possibilities in a manner that brings him closer to Gadamer's notions of dialoging with the past.

Foucault argues that "genealogy must define even those instances when they are absent, the moment when they remained unrealized" (1997c, 369). Foucault therefore positions his brand of genealogy as *a critical interpretive strategy in direct opposition to systematized, universalized, and totalizing forms of knowledge*, but also as a strategy of liberating various forms of knowledge—even recovering them:

> By comparison [to the methodic sciences], then, and in contrast to the various projects which aim to inscribe knowledges in the hierarchical order of power associated with science, a genealogy should be seen as a kind of attempt to emancipate historical knowledges from that subjection, to render them, that is, capable of opposition and of struggle, against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse. (1972, 85)

This is why, for Foucault, *genealogy* is an important critical strategy. It is not merely a form of historical research or analysis, but rather a tool of resistance in the manner it conducts itself. Since genealogy questions the supremacy of science and the centrality of one legitimate mode of knowledge, it inadvertently proposes new venues and other modes of knowing and being. By positioning his genealogy against the supremacy of science and the methodic worldview, which had hierarchized and differentiated our modes of knowledge, Foucault presents *genealogy as possibility*. For him genealogy helps undo static and solidified interpretations of historical inevitabilities, because *genealogy should be seen as a strategy that aims to liberate the besieged forms of historical knowledge* that have been pushed to the side. Its aim, according to Foucault, is to render them as being "capable of opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse" (1972, 85). Foucault therefore argues that genealogy is a stance against the hierarchy that science imposed on the nature of knowledge. He therefore asserts that even "discorded and fragmentary genealogies" are based on "a reactivation of local knowledges—of minor knowledges, as Deleuze might call them—in opposition to the scientific hierarchization of knowledges and the effects intrinsic to their power" (1972, 85).

Foucault uses a variety of terms to raise the issue of knowledge as a terrain of struggle. He uses "popular knowledge," "commonsense knowledge," "deferential knowledge," "buried knowledges," and "disqualified knowledges," in addition to others (1972, 82-83). On this rugged terrain "lay the memory of hostile encounters which even up to this day have been confined to the margins of knowledge" (1972, 83). Foucault, therefore, as indicated above, situates genealogy as "a multiplicity of genealogical researches" whose main function is the "rediscovery of struggles together with the rude memory of their conflicts" (1972, 83). Such statements stand in close proximity to Gadamer's own questioning of the supremacy of the scientific method and the whole orientation of *philosophical hermeneutics* as a means of re-expanding the spectrum of knowledge. It also echoes Gadamer's suspicion of "coercion-free discourse" (2007, 29).

Like Gadamer, Foucault questions the blind adherence to methodic or scientific approaches in the study of history or human phenomena. Foucault's vehement opposition to the use of methodic approaches to re-strengthen or re-empower discarded histories, local memories, and other supressed knowledges, lies in the tendency of methodic approaches to perpetuate the totalizing systems that pushed off such disqualified knowledges from the hierarchy of legitimacy to begin with. While the forms of marginalized knowledge Gadamer and Foucault refer to might be different, the process of the narrowing down of knowledge is held in common. Both philosophers question the applicability of scientific methods in the study of human phenomena, and champion other "hermeneutic" and "speculative" forms of research. Foucault problematizes methods that rely on "a disqualification of the speculative dimension […] in the name of some

kind of scientism, the rigour of well-established knowledges" (1972, 83) This is precisely what is at the core of *Truth and Method*. As discussed above, for Gadamer, the attempt to confine all of our interpretive practices and knowledge within some methodic standard has had serious consequences: "The alienation of the interpreter from the interpreted by the objectifying methods of modern science characteristic of the hermeneutics and historiography of the nineteenth century, appeared as the consequence of a false objectification" (Gadamer 2013, 324). It is therefore not surprising at all when Foucault announces his genealogy as a means of escaping these forms of "scientism," because, for Foucault, we cannot confront such systems of power through method:

> It is not via an empiricism that the genealogical project unfolds, nor even via a positivism in the ordinary sense of that term. What it really does is to entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchies and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects. Genealogies are therefore not positivistic returns to a more careful or exact form of science. They are precisely anti-sciences (1972, 83).

The intersections in the respective projects of Foucault and Gadamer provide creative possibilities for rethinking both knowledge and power, while their differences invite us to reflect on the way *interpretation* (genealogy/hermeneutics) becomes a site of resistance, towards whose horizon each philosopher points. In more than one way, they have common ancestors in their own intellectual genealogies. In his chapter, "Genealogy and Suspicious Interpretation," Fairfield stresses this common lineage. "Foucault's archeological and later genealogical project both invoke a concept of interpretation that owes a great deal to Nietzsche and Heidegger" (2011, 173). Gadamer, whose project bears some genealogical roots from this school, also charts a path in hermeneutics that departs from essentialist and objectivist claims. "Gadamer explicitly repudiated the notion of a text or interpretive object of any kind having an objective or essentialist meaning. Nietzsche and Heidegger had both demolished this idea and Gadamer never sought to rehabilitate it" (Fairfield 2011, 184).

However, it is also obvious that Foucault, despite his rich textual legacy of genealogical and interpretive investigations, views struggle and strife in more corporal and material terms. "History is the concrete body of becoming," argues Foucault, "with its moments of intensity, its lapses, its extended periods of feverish agitation, its fainting spells; and only a metaphysician would seek its soul in the distant ideality of the origin" (1997c, 373). Gadamer, on the other hand, pushes towards *linguisticality*, where the possibility of undoing certain patterns of domination in our world lies within language. Although Gadamer thinks more in linguistic terms, he also emphasizes our actual embeddedness within history and culture, hence his notion of "historically effective consciousness" (*Wirkungsgeschichte Bewusstsein*) (2013, 311). But, according to Gadamer's perspective, our world is the function of our understanding. In other words, our understanding, which is temporally situated and which also constructs and forms our world—including the material aspects—is in a state of constant becoming through language. Gadamer argues that "the event of language corresponds to the finitude of man in a far more radical sense than is brought out in Christian thinking about the Word. It is from language as a medium that our whole experience of the world, and especially hermeneutical experience, unfolds" (2013, 473). According to Gadamer, then, hermeneutics is not simply a separate mental activity or a subjective state, but our very mode of being human within the movement of history. Gadamer therefore emphasizes examining and questioning our mode of being in the world and argues that "understanding is not just one of the various possible behaviors of the subject but the mode of

being of Dasein itself. It is in this sense that term 'hermeneutics' has been used here [referring to his book, *Truth and Method*]. *It denotes the basic being-in-motion of Dasein that constitutes its finitude and historicity, and hence embraces the whole of its experience of the world*" (2013, xxvii, emphasis mine).

Gadamer completely shifts our conception of hermeneutics from being a mere textual activity to one that characterizes the very mode of being in the world in ways that define the human condition in hermeneutic terms. Obviously Gadamer's definition of hermeneutics is wider, with deeper existential implications, than Foucault's critical genealogy. And yet the parallels between *hermeneutics* and *genealogy* are so pronounced that they beg a conversation. No one who is familiar with both schools can help but notice the centrality of interpretation in the project of Foucault, and equally, the issues of truth and power that are so prominent in Gadamer's project. Fairfield considers the unavoidably apparent parallels between hermeneutics and genealogy to be a "question of special relevance," and wonders "whether genealogy is an interpretive, and therefore hermeneutic, mode of reflection" (2002, 55). He ends up concluding that genealogy actually is hermeneutic given the way Foucault situates his endeavor, especially since he "is careful in distinguishing genealogy from scientific discourse and from certain traditional forms of historical scholarship which construe events as subsumable under totalizing explanatory systems" (Fairfield 2002, 55).

In *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (1983), Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow aptly title their chapter on Foucault's genealogy "Interpretive Analytics." However, as the title of their book suggests, they frame the larger conversation of Foucault's project, despite his emphasis on an interpretive genealogical approach, as being *beyond hermeneutics* (1983, 104.) In the introduction they do mention Gadamer in passing, noting that *Truth and Method* gave "deep hermeneutics a more positive direction as a method for reappropriating a profound understanding of Being," thus framing Gadamer as a scholar who is only interested in ontology (1983, xxiii). Aside from the problem of putting the term "method" in the same sentence with Gadamer, their reference reveals a lack of engagement with Gadamer's work. Both scholars refuse to engage with Foucault's interpretive approach from a hermeneutic perspective, and, by implication, fail to acknowledge its rich parallels with Gadamer's hermeneutics. However, had they seriously examined the premises and implications of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, their book could have been easily called *From Structuralism towards Hermeneutics*, given the interpretive trajectory they paint of Foucault's philosophical project. Their choice to label genealogy an "interpretive analytics" is a somewhat amusing avoidance of the deeply hermeneutic dimension of genealogy. In fact, Foucault's genealogy could be more aptly described as a "diachronist hermeneutics," given what Foucault is aiming to accomplish in his interpretive historical analytics.

Fairfield argues that, while Dreyfus and Rabinow "point out the obvious fact that genealogy is an interpretive practice, they insist on separating this from hermeneutical interpretation for the reason that the former renounces the quest for fixed and objective meaning behind the phenomena it investigates" (2011, 183). There are obviously various reasons for the avoidance of hermeneutics by these two poststructuralist thinkers, who choose to understand hermeneutics in its 19th century conventional and textual sense, as Foucault himself does. They see hermeneutics in its nineteenth century incarnation as a dated mode of textual interpretation, and thus fail to acknowledge its modern re-emergence with Heidegger and Gadamer, a re-emergence which increased its scope and philosophical implications. Fairfield therefore argues that "Dreyfus and Rabinow's claim that genealogy is interpretive but not hermeneutical raises a

question of definition" (2011, 184). The notion of hermeneutics the two scholars are employing, according to Fairfield, refers to old textual definitions of hermeneutics, which had aimed to uncover original meaning, in contrast to Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics and his insistence on the situated nature of any interpretation (2011, 184-185).

Fairfield challenges the widespread tendency towards understanding "these two schools of thought […] in largely oppositional terms, with postmodernism asserted to represent an advance over hermeneutics" (2011, 191), and touches upon some of the reasons behind such perceptions and misunderstandings. He notes that one reason is due to Paul Ricoeur's distinction between a *hermeneutics of suspicion* and a *hermeneutics of recovery*, with the former being associated with Foucault's genealogy and the latter with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics (2011, 174). Fairfield questions the validity of Ricoeur's neat distinction, and ultimately argues that "the gulf between philosophical hermeneutics and Foucauldian genealogy has been dramatically overstated" (2011, 174).

Fairfield, accordingly, endeavours to highlight the problem with this type of facile distinction, and offers a more complicated and intertwined framing of these two interpretive approaches. From his perspective, part of the problem is the perceived radicalness of genealogy—it is seen as an innovative critical strategy, while hermeneutics is seen as a continuity of a scholastic practice invested in protecting and recovering tradition. However, Fairfield argues that Gadamer's notion of *rehabilitating tradition* adopts a critical approach to the past, thus emphasizing a hermeneutics of suspicion, while Foucault's later research and his notion of *the care of the self* includes a return to tradition, and thus emphasizes a hermeneutics of recovery. "Foucault's ethical interests led him to return to a variety of Greek and Roman sources and to recover an ethics oriented far less by the ancient imperative to know thyself than by the imperative to cultivate or take care of oneself for one's own sake" (2011, 187). Fairfield therefore brings to the surface the problematic questions these facile distinctions raise in our understanding of both Gadamer and Foucault:

> If Foucault did not advocate any simple return to classical notions, but a more creative appropriation via Nietzsche, it remains an appropriation of ancient ideas divested of their metaphysical trappings, and an appropriation that has been well received by many of Foucault's readers. How does this ancient appropriation differ from Gadamer's recovery of Platonic dialogue or Aristotelian *phronesis*? (2011, 188)

Kögler, for his part, points out the problematic character of a genealogy that is not self-reflexive, especially of its own genealogy, given some of the parameters set by Foucault. How can a genealogist do critical work, asks Kögler, without paying attention to the order of his own symbolic world? Noting this contradiction in Foucault, he argues that "if every possible thought or reflection is accordingly seen as prescribed by contextually defined patterns, the possibility of the reconstructive work undertaken by the 'archeologist' of discursive rules or by the 'genealogist' of social power remains unaccounted for" (1999, 6). The blindness of the genealogist towards his own discursive rules and context is not accounted for when the critic claims to assume a neutral critical position. Fairfield also highlights the impossibility of such a neutral critical positioning. "A further question regarding the status of genealogy," argues Fairfield, "concerns the standpoint of the critic. In reading Foucault's texts, one wonders from what perspective he himself speaks as an historian and critic of the disciplinary society […]. If it is not from the perspective of any universalist theory or principled standpoint, then from the standpoint of which local practices, discourses, or traditions?" (2002, 57). Fairfield argues that Foucault "claims for himself a kind of

quasi-neutrality of the kind that his premises forbid" (2002, 58). The dilemma arises when the critic's position is seen from a universal lens while the object of observation is local and therefore temporally and culturally situated. The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor also points out this issue, which he refers to as the "paradox," which he explains as "the impossible attempt to stand nowhere" (1985, 183).

Kögler thinks that Gadamer's hermeneutics suggests a productive dialectic for resolving this dilemma or paradox. For him, "a hermeneutic conception of linguistically mediated experience allows for a productive dialectic between the universal and the particular within the act of interpretation itself" (1999, 6). According to the Gadamerian perspective, Kögler argues, no conception of the 'universal' can "exist apart from, or 'as the ground' of, concrete contextual configurations, but rather is exemplified and operative in the hermeneutic capacity to understand a cultural order different from one's own" (1999, 6). A critique, therefore, can only be operative by acknowledging that it is situated within some concrete, linguistically mediated situation, which then allows engagement with other symbolic orders from an equal and humble stance. As is the case with Fairfield, hermeneutics, for Kögler, is not something that simply parallels genealogy, but is, rather, an approach which provides wider critical possibilities that might even be capable of resolving some of genealogy's dilemmas. For Kögler, Gadamer's hermeneutics is based on a dialectic linguistic model that insists on the temporality and situatedness of any interpretation, including that of the critic. Consequently, this provides something that is closer to the ground of actual situations and their concrete details. Kögler therefore argues that "a 'hermeneutic reason' of this kind does not provide a meta-order that can be expressed and reified as something above the interpretive experience. Rather it expresses itself fully in the very process of transcending one's own's horizon in order to enter into a dialogue with the other" (1999, 6).

Fairfield points out another reason for Foucault's avoidance of hermeneutics, despite Gadamer's insistence on the situated nature of interpretation. He argues that Foucault did not always discuss his dialogical partners, whereas Gadamer was keen on engaging in such fusions; even seeking them. Fairfield asserts that Gadamer was not hesitant to acknowledge his dialogical partners because,

> Gadamer was inclined to acknowledge his philosophical debts more often than many do, habitually preferring to situate his own views in the context of tradition rather than present them as historically unprecedented. There is nothing conservative in this. It is a requirement of intellectual inquiry to acknowledge one's debts and to know the history and sources of one's own position rather than give the appearance of fashioning ideas from scratch, as Gadamer might have done had he wished to strike a more radical pose. (2011, 190)

Foucault's avoidance of hermeneutics actually has its own amusing genealogy. In her essay "Hermeneutics as Project of Liberation: The Concept of Tradition in Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer," Andreea Deciu Ritivoi relates the circumstances under which Foucault was given a chair at the College de France (in preference over Ricoeur), and situates Foucault's underhanded remarks about hermeneutics over the ensuing years within the context of academic politics and power relations among competing scholars. She discusses how this academic power struggle ended up creating a conception of hermeneutics as being "unable to account for the ideological forces that create meaning through discourse and, thus incapable of explaining language use in its more ubiquitous and insidious manifestations" (2011, 64). Ritivoi considers this an unfortunate historical development, and hence the main goal of her chapter is "to present a hermeneutical project anchored in concepts that make it less vulnerable to the sort of criticisms adduced by

Foucault and Habermas," which makes her advocate the kind of "critical hermeneutics" that Kögler has also puts forward (Ritivoi 2011, 64-65). Ritivoi emphasizes the critical nature of hermeneutics by reiterating Ricoeur's conception of hermeneutics as emancipatory. "Hermeneutics without a project of liberation is blind, but a project of emancipation without historical experience is empty," and therefore Ritivoi ends up stressing the role of critique in hermeneutics, and equally the role of tradition in critique (2011, 65).

Nevertheless, Foucault's *genealogical* investigations represent a form of *resistance* that aligns his project with Gadamer's ontological conception of language, as Kögler seems to suggest above. There is obviously more common ground between *Foucauldian genealogy* and *Gadamerian hermeneutics* than meets the eye. "The substantive similarities between hermeneutics and genealogy," argues Fairfield, "run deep" (2011, 190). He proposes that despite "evident difference of vocabulary, rhetorical strategies and attitudinal postures, and while pursuing quite different lines of inquiry, Foucault and Gadamer remained decisively within the trajectory of Heideggerian phenomenology" (Fairfield 2011, 190-191). Such substantive similarities are evident in the hermeneutical way Foucault, for example, defines the task of philosophy. He recasts the role of philosophy as questioning *what we are in the moment*, which lends us the ability to resist who we are and introduce new ways of being. Foucault states that "the task of philosophy as a critical analysis of our world is something that is more and more important. Maybe the most certain of all philosophical problems is the problem of the present time, and of *what we are, in this very moment*" (1997b, 336, emphasis mine). Examined closely, Foucault's invitation to question our subjectivities in *genealogical investigations* seems to be deeply a *hermeneutical task*. If, for Foucault, the mere act of questioning and re-interpreting our subjectivities represents possibilities for resisting the status quo, then this is exactly what is implied in Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics.

Gadamer sees hermeneutics as the hidden gateway to new possibilities, because a new interpretive turn has the potential of recreating the world anew. This is truly what is at stake in Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is not simply some sort of textual activity, but rather an actual event, because for Gadamer a new interpretation means a new being. Gadamer acknowledges that "the hermeneutical experience is linguistic in nature," but he also points out that the "fundamental thing here [in the act of interpretation] is that *something occurs* (*etwas geschieht*)" (2013, 477, emphasis mine). Gadamer's ontological shift of hermeneutics therefore places him in closer proximity to Foucauldian critical genealogy than is usually acknowledged, while Foucault's genealogy and interest in recovering supressed forms of knowledge brings him closer to Gadamer's treatment of *the past as a dialogical contemporaneous other*. Fairfield therefore emphasizes the significance of reading these two scholars dialogically: "Apart from small disagreements that too often become magnified out of proportion, genuine differences between Foucault and Gadamer pertain far more to strategy than substance, and less to interpretive than rhetorical strategy, less to how these two figures actually stood to tradition than how they spoke of it" (2011, 191).

Ultimately, both philosophers provide *interpretive strategies* to confront and resist the *epistemological supremacy of the natural sciences*. As discussed above, Foucault suggests the use of *genealogy as a form of resistance*—a genealogy of subjugated knowledges as a means to provide new modes of research and knowledge that move beyond the very systematic and methodic forms of knowledge. Gadamer, on the other hand, suggests *the use of hermeneutics as a means of re-expanding the nature of knowledge* itself beyond systematic and methodic forms of knowledge. Foucault urges the need to pursue such genealogies, to resist the "unitary theories,"

and therefore to "proceed to multiply the genealogical fragments in the form of so many traps, demands, challenges" (1972, 87). And yet, he is also somewhat reticent and cautious about the true potential of such tactics. (1972, 87). Foucault thinks that, "in the long run, it is probably over-optimistic, if we are thinking in terms of a contest—that of knowledge against the effects of the power of the scientific discourse" (1972, 87). But undertaking them constantly and in multiple forms, he argues, could create aggregate and ubiquitous "traps" and "challenges" in the various contexts in which power is exercised (1972, 87-88).

Gadamer suggests something far more radical and yet more subtle. Since Gadamer is more interested in excavating the roots of the problem, his solutions are also aimed at the roots. Examining the margins of knowledge or launching multiple investigations to challenge power externally is not his main concern. Gadamer does something altogether different. He completely turns the table on science, and by implication all modes of systematic knowledge in which we attempt *domination of being*. He does this by *redefining hermeneutics as the central mode of understanding in any area*, including science itself. Starting with a *rehabilitation of the notion of literature*, he ends up turning the epistemological pyramid on its head, and puts *literature*, *rather than the natural sciences*, *as the base of all our knowledge*. Gadamer broadens the concept of "literature" to include literary, scholarly, *and* scientific forms of writing and coding.[20] Just as he frees hermeneutics from the confines of textual concerns, he also frees literature from the confines of art. He uses this shift as yet another radical strategy to re-broaden the nature of all intellectual pursuits. In introducing these shifts, Gadamer is asserting linguisticality as the dimension in which various cultural activities and forms unfold.

By rehabilitating literature and thereby widening its scope, he is asserting that any form of interpreting reality—or, put differently, any attempt to make *a truth claim within language—is a form of literature*, regardless of the form it takes:

> The concept of literature is far wider than that of the literary work of art. All written texts share in the mode of being of literature […]. Moreover, all scholarly research takes the form of literature insofar as it is essentially bound to language. […] The difference between a literary work of art and any other text is not so fundamental. It is true that there is a difference between the language of poetry and the language of prose, and again between the language of poetic prose and that of "scientific" or "scholarly" prose. These differences can certainly also be considered from the points of view of literary form. But the essential difference between these various "languages" obviously lies elsewhere: namely in the distinction between the claims to truth that each makes. All written works have a profound community in that language is what makes the contents meaningful […]. And it is not mere chance that the concept of literature embraces not only works of literary art but everything passed down in writing. (Gadamer 2013, 162-163)

Despite some of their obvious differences, the intersection between power and knowledge is one of the central themes that align both thinkers. Foucault is bold when inviting us to move beyond

[20] See also "Poetry and Possibility" by Paul Ricouer (1991). Gadamer's emphasis on the width and depth of language, narrowed and flattened due to the instrumentalization of the language of science and technology, is echoed by other philosophers like Paul Ricoeur, who discusses the subversive and rebellious role of the language of poetry and its capacity to challenge this narrowing down of scientific language. Ricouer uses the term "univocity" to refer to the narrowing of linguistic possibilities, and coins the term "plurivocity" to retract and retain the width of language and the sense of the possible.

the naivety of pure and neutral knowledge, and Gadamer is visionary in making us see through our fear of otherness and difference. This is why Foucault urges us

> to abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands, and its interests […]. We should admit, rather, that power produces knowledge […] that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relations without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (1984,175)

Gadamer puts the problem of domination and knowledge slightly differently, albeit within the same larger critical framework. He sees that, although we are inescapably situated in a dialogical universe, we manage to arrest this interactive dynamic and avoid it by creating other one-directional—and dominating—ways of knowing. We bracket external phenomena, according to Gadamer, because we are obsessed with a kind of "certain knowledge, which permits us to control reality" (2013, 467). This, he argues, has resulted in a mode of knowing and relating to external phenomena that blocks *the way understanding phenomenologically occurs*. Thus, for Gadamer, *the one-sided movement of knowledge is an escape mechanism to assure ourselves control.* In other words, due to our anxiety around encounter, we impose our own categories of knowledge and act in dominating ways so that we do not have to take on the risk involved in real encounter. As discussed in the preceding chapter, for Gadamer, any encounter carries a certain level of danger, because no dialogue is ontologically free from the full control of its participants; it happens in the in-between space. "No one knows in advance what will 'come out' of a conversation. Understanding or its failure is like an event that happens to us. Thus, we can say that something was a good conversation or that it was ill fated. All this shows that a conversation has a spirit of its own, and that language is in which it is conducted bears its own truth within it" (2013, 401).

For Gadamer, then, there is always risk in any real encounter, because any genuine interaction always comes with the possibility of transformation and the coming of newness into being as a result of the fusion of more than one horizon. Our anxiety and fear around encounter thus manifests in arresting our interactions with each other, not just across space, but also across time. Accordingly, by reading Gadamer and Foucault's projects in parallel, we arrive at a more nuanced, aggregate, and complex understanding of the way power functions, and the risks that are always endemic to any encounter. Gadamer's ontological conception of hermeneutics gives a certain impetus to Foucault's project and to his interpretive genealogy, precisely because Foucault's conceptualization of power is easily framed as a hermeneutic strategy.

3.3 Dialogical Rehabilitation of Power: Towards a New Hermeneutics of the Play of Power

Given the dialogue unfolding between Gadamer and Foucault on these pages, the problem of power arises in a radically new perspective. The combination of their critical approaches to human subjectivity and human action entirely shifts our understanding of both power and dialogue. Power is cast in a dialogical form for Foucault, and, for Gadamer, in a manner that stresses opposition and tension. Gadamer's dialogical conception of the human condition and of our linguistically mediated world provides a new context for approaching and conceptualizing power.

Our notions of self, for Gadamer, have been constructed around the dominant Western *metaphysics of subjectivity*, in which we have locked ourselves in self-perpetuating monologues. For him, this directly relates to our anxieties around control, expressed in science's "fundamental attitude" in regard to the search for truth while trying "to reach its goal—the domination of being—in a more subtle way" (2013, 495).

Each scholar reconceptualizes both power and dialogue by questioning the old facile conception of the Cartesian duality of subject/object. In place of this duality, both scholars offer nonbinary, fluid, and dynamic notions that go beyond the simple dualities of modernity. In place of contractual, military, and economic notions of power, Foucault offers a relational, dynamic conception of power that goes beyond the stable and reified notions of power. In place of the poetic and literary conception of dialogue, Gadamer offers an intersubjective framing of dialogue in which our will to power is constantly challenged. From a static and dualistic conception of ourselves and our actions emerges a new *non-dualistic, dynamic, and constantly unfolding relational activity that is pregnant with potential and different possibilities.*

The undoing of *Cartesian subjectivity* is one of the specific angles in which the respective projects of Gadamer and Foucault align in a compatible manner. Their treatment of the concept of the subject, and the implications of power and domination in our prominent epistemological categories, bring to the open the embedded subjugation practices of modernity on several fronts. The way both Gadamer and Foucault rethink the category of the *metaphysics of subjectivity* has significant ethical and political implications. Gadamer emphasizes seeing the individual as a result of "supraindividual powers" (1999, 16). Foucault, on the other hand, argues that "the individual is an effect of power (1972, 98). Both scholars present notions of the subject as embedded in history. They see the individual as an effect of external factors—an effect of power in the case of Foucault, and an effect of historical consciousness in the case of Gadamer. In some ways, this places them both in close proximity to the notion of "no-self" found in Buddhist philosophy or other mystical traditions. However, in their case, they achieve this by their close probing and questioning of the Western metaphysics of subjectivity, particularly the Cartesian conception of an autonomous and ahistorical universal subject.

Gadamer therefore achieves the undoing of subjectivity by examining the phenomenology of understanding—in particular the phenomenology of understanding and interacting with a work of art—and how it occurs in an intersubjective manner. Foucault does this, however, by examining the phenomenology of power and how it occurs in a diffused interactive manner. Both thinkers unpack our facile notions of "self" in light of the rise of the scientific paradigm and its underlying ethos of domination and control. Gadamer questions our facile notions of freedom and naïve beliefs about power and domination, and therefore argues that it is "precisely the experience of *the limits of freedom—of ability and of knowledge, the fact that all of us are determined by supraindividual powers, which bring into question the modern presupposition that the individual, and preeminently the individual person, represents the ens realissimum of all beings*" (1999, 16, emphasis mine).

Gadamer achieves such paradigm shifts by challenging the facile subject/object dichotomy that had dominated Western philosophy. He destabilizes the Cartesian duality by *ascribing subjectivity to the work of art (to objects, patterns of play, or practices), and by problematizing the objectification of human subjects.* This of course goes against modern epistemological categories and the one directional mode of knowledge where an autonomous knowing subject observes an external, separate, and objective reality. Gadamer therefore explains this de-centering of subjectivity by arguing that "the work of art is not an object that stands over against a subject

for itself. Instead, the work of art has its true being in the fact that *it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it.* The 'subject' of the experience of art, that which remains and endures, is not the subjectivity of the person who experiences it but the work itself" (2013, 107, emphasis mine).

This de-throning of the subject by both philosophers has profound implications for our understanding of power and the way power functions in society. This, in turn, leads us to re-think the "field of events," and by implication, to re-think agency. Foucault does not only decentralize subjectivity, but also power, and in the process arrives at something quite close to Gadamer's notion of play (*Spiel*) —where the "mechanisms of power," Foucault argues, "enter into *play* at the most basic level" (1972, 99).

Can we, then, think of power as a game in which we get caught and become absorbed, in which something "powerful" takes over us, regardless on which side of the game we are on? To think about possible answers, we need to examine Foucault's conceptions of power and his *reversal* of some of our usual and prevalent conceptions in light of Gadamer's notion of play. From Gadamer's perspective, our dialogical mode of being in the world is best understood through the dynamics of a "game" which is always beyond the complete and full control of its players.

Gadamer decentralizes human subjectivity and widens the meaning of "subject," not just in terms of its loci but also in the capacity of a "subject" to act, influence, and impact other "subjects." This creates other implications as well, especially in the back and forth movement, or play, between subjects. Gadamer gives the notion of *play* a new horizon. He wrests the notion from its limited and subjectivist connotations by grounding philosophy in actual living, and utilizes modern aesthetic theory to widen our understanding of our dialogical condition. "Grounding philosophy in life," argues Gadamer, "defends it against the metaphysics of individuality," especially given the limiting formulations of subjectivity that traditionally dominated philosophical discussions (2013, 229). Gadamer's attempts to rehabilitate dominant notions of subjectivity, what he refers to as "transcendental solipsism," are related to his emphasis on our historically effective consciousness (2013, 249). For him, we always perceive our "life-world […] in which we live as historical creatures" (2013, 248).

He therefore uses the experience of the work of art to question the facile duality of subject and object. Gadamer unpacks the subject as standing above and beyond history, by re-examining both the subjectivizing of the artistic experience and the objectifying of the work of art. The meaning in such an encounter, according to Gadamer, does not arise solely in the subjectivity of the person perceiving the work, nor is there a stabilized meaning inherently residing in a piece of art awaiting discovery. Rather, for Gadamer, the mode of this form of artistic perception and experience is akin to the dynamic of play in which two subjectivities interact back and forth. Gadamer locates the work of art's agency in its ability to affect us, and, in doing so, removes the center of subjectivity from the human inner world, as Kant and Schiller had done in the past. Given such a reconceptualization, the work of art is no longer a separate object standing outside of us just waiting to be perceived. "The movement of play as such has, as it were, no substrate. It is the game that is played—it is irrelevant whether or not there is a subject who plays it. The play is the occurrence of the movement as such" (2013, 108). Gadamer makes the linguistic observation that "play is not to be understood as something a person does" (2013, 108). For him, as far as language is concerned, the actual subject of play is not the subjectivity of the individual who plays, but is, rather, the activity of play itself, where one both plays and is played. According to Gadamer, then, the "'*primacy of play over the consciousness of the player*' is what defines the dialogical interaction between the player and the activity of play, since the "structure of play absorbs the

player into itself, and thus frees him from the burden of taking the initiative which constitutes the actual strain of existence" (2013, 109).

Foucault's deconstruction of the individual as *the effect of power* is parallel to Gadamer's deconstruction of the "player" as *the effect of play*. Gadamer is therefore interested in "defining play as a process that takes place 'in between'" (2013, 113). And by this he means that "play does not have its being in the player's consciousness or attitude, but on the contrary play draws him into its dominion and fills him with its spirit. The player experiences the game as a reality that surpasses him" (2013, 113-114). Gadamer is therefore suggesting that the general characteristic of the nature of play, as found in its various expressions, whether in art, sports, or communal and religious rituals, *is a process that takes over its participants*. Play, Gadamer argues is "independent of the consciousness of those who play" because "the "players are not the subjects of play" (2013: 107). Therefore, for Gadamer, we are not the players; we are being played. The game itself is the subject, and we are its objects:

> *All playing is being played.* The attraction of a game, the fascination it exerts, consists precisely in the fact that *the game masters the players*. Even in the case of games in which one tries to perform tasks that one has set oneself, there is a risk that they will not 'work,' 'succeed,' or 'succeed again,' which is the attraction of the game. Whoever 'tries' is in fact the one who is tried. *The real subject of the game* [...] *is not the player but instead the game itself. What holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there is the game itself*. (2013,111, emphasis mine)

It is obvious here that Gadamer is moving beyond the individual as subject. Foucault, in parallel, also wants to move beyond the subject. This is echoed in his strong rejection of the independent ahistorical subject that had arisen in various forms since the Enlightenment, or what he refers to as the process of "fabricating a subject that evolves through the course of history," and therefore suggests, in order to go beyond such ahistorical projections, that we "*dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself,* that is to say, to arrive at an analysis that can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework" (1997a, 118). The subject represents a record of history, for Foucault, because for him, it is "a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, and so on, without having to make reference to a subject that is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or run in its empty sameness throughout the course of history" (1997a, 118).

Obviously, Foucault does something similar to Gadamer here when implying that historical "power games" produce subjects. Foucault frames this shift away from the ahistorical autonomous subject residing above and beyond history as being part of his "genealogy" (1997a 118). This parallels the re-interpretation of play as subject over the players by Gadamer as part of his hermeneutics (2013, 111-112). Therefore, the relational conception of power by Foucault and the tensional play of dialogue by Gadamer can be better appreciated when mixing their respective understandings of *power* and *play*. In other words, in reading them both, we come to understand *power plays*.

3.4 Foucault: A New Hermeneutics of Power

There have been various theoretical conceptualizations of power and domination.[21] In *Power: A Philosophical Analysis* (2002), Peter Morris that argues one of the main distinctions that needs to be made is between power as the ability to achieve ends or control objects and power as the control of one subject over another. Although there has been a rising interest in discussing power through concepts of agency and in structural terms (Hearn 2012, 9), in general, power has traditionally been conceived in one of two ways: as a form of control that is imposed over others, or as a form of control that is given up—as in those entering a contract and coming to an agreement. But Power can also, especially in theoretical discussions of power in political contexts, be seen as a certain entity or essence that is concentrated at the top of social structures, hence the talk about issues of symmetry, as in the balanced distribution of power or the asymmetry of power (Wrong 2002, 248). Such conventional conceptions imply that power is always *in the possession of a sovereign autonomous subject*, whether an individual, institution, or even a class of people (multiple subjects)—in other words, it is a possession that is either relinquished or acquired.

In his book *Power: Its Forms, Bases and Uses* (2017), Dennis Wong identifies some of the academic problems that arise in trying to define power, particularly in choosing appropriate approaches to study the forms power takes in society. Given the various problems in identifying and defining power around conceptual issues, he presents the issue as being one of hermeneutics rather than methodology. Wrong argues that power is an essentially contested notion, "meaning that people with different values and beliefs are bound to disagree over its nature and definition" (2017, viii). He therefore argues that we should accept that there is no final definition, because "there cannot be any commonly accepted or even preferred meaning so long as people differ on normative issues as they are likely to do indefinitely, if not forever" (2017, viii). Wrong, in fact, uses Foucault as an example of one of the major shifts in interpreting and understanding power. He acknowledges that we have started thinking about power differently in more recent years, "as a result of the influence of Michel Foucault and the Nietzsche revival" (2017, viii). After being "treated both as a quality or attribute possessed by individuals, groups, or larger social structures and as an indicator of an active or interactive process of relation between individual or collective actors" Wrong argues, "in recent years power has tended to become an even more diffuse and far-ranging notion in social and political theory" (2017, viii).

Despite the theoretical variety in conceptions of power, especially in more recent years, Foucault's approach, Wrong argues, represents a major turning point. Given the kind of turn he produces, the intersections with Gadamer's dialogical ontology become worthy of examining. Moreover, because Foucault approaches power differently—and therefore asks different questions—he also provides a succinct example of the hermeneutic nature of our philosophical and scholarly pursuits. By completely shifting away from traditional and conventional conceptions of power, Foucault introduces *a new hermeneutics of power*. He not only shifts definitions of power, but also the loci of studying power and thus the very nature of the questions around defining power. Foucault's new interpretation of power demonstrates that *power can be understood*

[21] See the studies by Jonathan Hearn in his book, *Theorizing Power* (2012), which maps the landscape of the various conceptualizations, metaphors and theories of power over the centuries, from different scholarly and political perspectives, *Power: A Radical View*, by Steven Lukes, which also examines ways of thinking of and conceptualizing power, including Foucault's approach, and *Power: Its Forms, Bases, and Uses*, by Dennis Wrong, who examines in details various philosophical schools in their conceptions of different forms of power with the use of historical examples.

differently if it is examined more closely in all its actual and concrete manifestations, beyond the theorized and classical philosophical notions, whether liberal or Marxist (Foucault 1997a, 115-119).

However, some critics wonder whether Foucault does not fall into an essentialist trap when he emphasizes the ubiquitous nature of power. Does this emphasis not present power as an anthropological constant? Gary Wickham, for example, argues that "Foucault has not gone far along the road towards the construction of a truly non-essentialist framework for power analysis" (1986, 151). Others, like Jeff Minson, are critical of the "untenable 'Nietzschean' ingredients of his position" (1986, 106). Such critiques reveal that Gadamer's more dynamic and dialogical conception of social interaction is helpful in recovering a more nuanced and non-essentialist conception of power in Foucault's thought.

To observe power's actual functioning, Foucault suggests that we should go beyond thinking of autonomous intentional subjects exercising or releasing power, as has been conventionally held, or even of conceiving of power as being concentrated at the top. He proposes, instead, that "power is neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather *exercised, and that it only exists in action*" (1972, 89, emphasis mine). *Foucault therefore does not essentialize power* into an entity or a specific ahistorical constant that operates independently over society. He is wary of locking power in a specific dynamic or direction, hence his pursuit of a *multi-layered phenomenological approach*. His departure from the conventional way of studying power is due to his interest in observing the effects of power; in observing its circular winding movements and productive capacities. He therefore repeatedly emphasizes that,

> power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege,' acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions—an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated. Furthermore, this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who 'do not have'; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure on them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them. (1984,174)

Rather than seeing individuals or even institutions as being in direct possession of power, or tracing the histories in which they either had power or lacked it, as has been traditionally done, Foucault, in contrast, traces *the way power operates and works within the social body* in concrete situations with actual effects. In his essay "The Subject and Power," Foucault focuses on the *mechanisms of power*, because "what characterizes the power we are analyzing is that it brings into *play* relations between individuals (or between groups)" (1997b, 337, emphasis mine). By highlighting a relational and dynamic conception of power, Foucault ends up giving us a *new hermeneutics of power*, which aligns him directly to Gadamer's dialogical ontology. In fact, examined more closely, it becomes obvious that Foucault's approach is much more *phenomenological* than *genealogical*. Foucault usually distances himself from the phenomenological approach—according to his comments on phenomenology—just as he does with hermeneutics. And yet one could easily argue, especially given his meticulous study and interpretation of the *mechanisms of power*, as well as his tracing of the contours and *effects of power*, that his approach is far closer to both phenomenology and hermeneutics than the usual Marxist or liberal notions of power, from which he distances himself (Foucault 1997a, 118).

Although Foucault prefers a genealogical approach, we can see that this approach has a large phenomenological influence, especially given his emphasis on observing the way power functions and runs through the social body. Thus, one can argue that Foucault's conception of

power is neither closed nor static. His hermeneutics of power develops through multiple modalities, starting with metaphors of war and slavery and then moving gradually in his later writings towards more interactive and intersubjective dynamics, with the repeated use of the word "play" to refer to a "field of possibilities" in which a back-and-forth and play-like dynamic takes place (1997b, 342). Foucault's innovative and multi-angled conceptions emphasize the more material manifestations of the way power runs through the social body:

> I would say that we should direct our researches on the nature of power not towards the juridical edifice of sovereignty, the State apparatuses and the ideologies which accompany them, but towards domination and the material operations of power, towards forms of subjugation and the inflections and utilizations of their localised systems and towards strategic apparatuses. (1972, 102)

Being influenced by Nietzsche's genealogical and interpretive critical approach, as argued above, Foucault examines the grooves and trails of power to expose the historicity of its manifestations and effects. He delineates the effects of power from the lofty conceptions of the centralized and asymmetrical notions of power. By examining the evolutions and winding paths of its actual workings, he achieves a new interpretation of power—possibly even a paradigm shift.

Foucault studies power's economy of control, and is concerned "with power at its *extremities*, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes *capillary*, that is, in its more regional and local forms and institutions" (1972, 96, emphasis mine). With these shifts, it becomes obvious that Foucault is vested in examining the spread-out and diffuse functioning of power that runs throughout the entire matrix of the social body:

> Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a company or pieces of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. (1972, 98)

The conventional contractual paradigm is completely turned on its head when Foucault objects to the "spirit of Leviathan" which is at the heart of sovereignty. He therefore wrests power from such politically limited definitions, and, in their place, proposes a different modality in which power is diffused and spread out, as argued above. For this reason, Foucault demands "that we must attempt to study the myriad of bodies which are constituted as peripheral *subjects* as a result of the effects of power" (1972, 98). By decentralizing the notion of power, Foucault ends up moving beyond the traditional Hobbesian notion which revolves around contractual and static definitions that have dominated Western political and philosophical discourses. By widening the sphere of its impact, Foucault redefines power though the way it directly forms and impacts bodies and individuals. In other words, by including the productive effects of power and not just its prohibitive or controlling mechanisms.

Foucault thus departs from traditionally-established theoretical, economic, and classical liberal conceptions of power, and proceeds to study power in its actual manifestations and material functioning in society. He focuses on the regimes of power that affect and shape all social contexts. "What is needed," Foucault argues, "is a study of power in its real and external visage, at the point where it is in direct and immediate relationship with that which we can provisionally call its object, its target, its field of application, there—that is to—where it installs itself and produces its real effects" (1972, 97). This, of course, provides us with more tools to re-think and re-conceptualize the power asymmetries that manifest in society—political, religious, medical, and economic.

Consequently, Foucault's approach creates *a new horizon of re-interpreting power and power asymmetries in concrete actual situations*. In doing this he destabilizes our narrow and linear teleologies, where things had seemed inevitable and already the result of some sort of historical determinism. Foucault's earlier works establish this decentralized notion of power beyond economic and political conceptions:

> My general project over the past few years has been, in essence, to reverse the mode of analysis followed by the entire discourse of right from the time of the Middle Ages. My aim, therefore, was to invert it, to give due weight that is, to the fact of domination, to expose both its latent nature and its brutality […] but also to show the extent to which, and the form in which, right (not simply the laws but the whole complex of apparatuses, institutions and regulations responsible for the application) transmits and puts in motion relations that are not relations of sovereignty, but of domination. (1972, 96)

For Foucault, the movement and circulation of power spread throughout the social body creates and recreates specific effects. He therefore presents institutions and individuals—but *especially* individuals—as *the effects of power*, or as the by-products of power relations and discursive practices, rather than as *the subjects of power*. In other words, neither institutions nor individuals possess power; rather, they are the result and effect of a dynamic field of power relations. This represents a paradigm shift because, for him, the issue is *not about subjects possessing power, but rather about power constituting subjects*:

> The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle. (1972, 98)

How, then, is power exercised in the light of this understanding, if the subjects and agents of power are constituted by power and the question of "who" is in power has been eliminated? This is precisely the question that Foucault asks in his essay "The Subject and Power," in which he shows the primacy of the question of the "how" of power, over and above questions of the "what" and "why," or even the "who" of power. In order to understand the implications of his shifted emphasis we also need to see the consequences of it. Foucault says that he grants "a certain privileged position to the question 'how,'" not because he wishes to eliminate the questions of 'what' and 'why" (1997b, 336), but because he wishes "to present these in a different way […] to introduce the suspicion *that power as such does not exist*" (1997b, 336, emphasis mine). Hence, by changing the very nature of the questions about power, Foucault also shifts our understanding of power. By replacing both the "who" and "what" of power, Foucault therefore shifts our attention to the "how" of power and introduces a less essentializing hermeneutics of power that shifts the emphasis from agency to the function of power (1997b, 346). He thus presents power, not as an essence, but as a dynamic that arises in interaction. Foucault uses the question of "how" to put forward his relational notion of power as a back-and-forth dynamic, as something that circulates, manifesting itself, not as an entity or a "mysterious substance," but as an interactive dynamic that does not reside anywhere (1997b, 336).

In this shift to questioning the *how*, Foucault unpacks, through critical interpretive strategies, the ways the subject is both formed and forming. The subject is neither completely formed by power nor in complete control of it. Foucault therefore argues that when it comes to power relations "not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application" (1972, 98). Foucault's conception of the subject as both affecting and being affected by power is thus obviously dynamic and dialogical. This is why Gadamer's notion of *historically effective consciousness* echoes these new directions, especially when characterising subjectivity as the result of an interactive process. By examining the temporally and historically formative elements that combine to produce our subjectivity, while also emphasizing how subjectivity acts upon history, both scholars introduce a more interactive and intersubjective notion of ourselves. They move beyond the two extremes of viewing subjectivity as either a transcendent essence or a passive and static effect. Instead, they bring us back into a historicized and interactive notion of self where we are both the subjects and objects of the movement of history.

In moving beyond the metaphysics of subjectivity, both Gadamer and Foucault come to see our subjectivity as culturally mediated and historically contingent, existing within the network of the social body. "Power," argues Foucault, "is conceived not as property, but as a strategy; that its effects of domination are attributed not to 'appropriation,' but to dispositions, maneuvers, tactics, techniques, functionings; that one should decipher in it *a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity*, rather than a privilege that one might possess" (1984, 174, emphasis mine). Accordingly, *power is defined relationally*—not conceived as a substance to be possessed or exchanged, but rather as a kind of tension that is endemic to any interactive process or context. "[T]here is no such entity as power, with or without a capital letter; global, massive, or diffused; concentred or distributed. Power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action" Foucault argues (1982, 340). Consequently, "what defines a relationship of power," for Foucault, "is that it is a mode of action that does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: *an action upon an action*, on possible or actual future or present actions" (1982, 340, emphasis mine).

Foucault's imperative to understand power in relational terms invites us to see the inevitable intersections between power, dialogue, and interpretation. To reconceptualize power as an interactive process within a dialogical frame of movement, existing as a ubiquitous tension that arises in any relational context, means that Foucault's project is already in conversation with that of Gadamer. Since both Gadamer and Foucault stress relationality as our ontology, then this implies that *intersubjective relationality is always already relevant to all our modes of being in the world*. We are always ineluctably situated in dialogue and hence also caught in relational tensions of varying degrees. By introducing *a new hermeneutics of power*, Foucault manages to undo the old conceptions of power and, in their place, offer a multi-layered phenomenological approach to understanding the actual and multiple forms and ways in which power functions, what he refers to as "the polymorphous techniques of subjugation" (1972, 96). As Foucault says,

> in speaking of domination I do not have in mind that solid and global kind of domination that one person exercises over others, or one group over another, but the manifold forms of domination that can be exercised within society. Not the domination of the King in his central position, therefore, but that of his subjects in their mutual relation; not the uniform edifice of sovereignty but *the*

multiple forms of subjugation that have a place and function within the social organism. (1972, 96, emphasis mine)

Foucault achieves his reversal of our old conceptions of power by describing power as *decentralizing, activating, diffusing, and temporalizing.* By offering these re-interpretations of the phenomenology of power, Foucault provides a paradigm shift on several levels. He turns the table on already established ways of theorizing about power. Moreover, he resists any systematization of his own approach, insisting instead on keeping it within *a localized and interpretive critical lens*. In this way, he moves towards a more hermeneutical, and historically situated, approach in understanding power.

Based on such reversals and dynamic re-reconceptualizing of power, Falzon considers Foucault to be the philosopher who puts forward "dialogue" as an alternative to the modality of domination. In contrast to "the abstract, ahistorical foundationalist subject as the indispensable basis for socio-political understanding," which had dominated Western thought, argues Falzon, "Foucault conceptualizes the social field in terms of a multiplicity of 'force relations,' of shifting, mobile, opened-ended interplays of forces" (1998, 44). He therefore concludes that Foucault offers "dialogue" as a strategy against domination (1998, 43). Although Falzon's hermeneutics of Foucauldian power analysis help in highlighting Gadamer's indispensable contribution, Falzon strains a bit too much to turn Foucault's relational definition of power into a dialogical modality. After all, we need to be cognisant that Foucault underplays both dialogue and hermeneutics. For example, on more than one occasion he rejects the model of dialogue to conceptualize human interaction, and instead, shows his preference for a modality of *warfare*. Foucault states that "one's point of reference should not be to the great model of language [*langue*] and signs but, rather, to *that of war and battle*. The history that bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language—*relations of power*, not *relations of meaning*" (1997a, 116, emphasis mine).

Foucault actually demands new genealogical investigations for exploring and understanding the discursive practices and various social and economic institutions that uncover the concealed state of war. For him, the contemporary state of politics masks war by hiding the power relations that permeate dimensions of the social matrix. This, in fact, compels Foucault to define power relations as "the continuation of war by other means," an inversion of the well-known statement of the German political theorist Carl von Clausewitz about war being the continuation of politics by other means. Foucault explains that the inversion of Clausewitz's aphorism "consists in seeing politics as the sanctioning and upholding the disequilibrium of forces that was displayed in war" (1972, 90). He even goes so far as saying that even "when one writes the history of peace and its institutions, it is always the history of this war that one is writing" (1972, 91). Yet, this state of war in the realm of the political is perceived as a pragmatic—even realist—necessity in our contemporary world, as though our will to dominate and destroy were inevitable and an inescapable anthropological constant.

Foucault's reversal of our conventional ways of conceiving of power, including the historicized manner of his multifarious re-interpretations, can be *compared* to Gadamer's dialogical ontology and even placed within the larger aims underpinning Gadamer's critique of our modern modes of being in the world. But this does not necessarily mean that Foucault's relational conception of human interaction is exactly dialogical.

Since Foucault introduces *a dynamic and relational conception of power*, Gadamer's notion of *play* is perhaps more helpful in capturing the relational tension Foucault identifies as arising in interactive contexts. When viewed through the lens of play, Foucault's relational conception of power gains a more dialogical edge. The notion of play in Gadamer's project, given its practical

and political implications, becomes a key concept that captures both the similarities and differences in the thought of these two philosophers. It can thus be used as a key concept that further underscores the relational modalities common to both without comprising their differences.

3.5 Gadamer: The Power of Hermeneutics

Just as Foucault's *relational conception* of power gains a dialogical edge, Gadamer's notion of *play* also gains a political edge in light of Foucault's reversal, especially in undoing the subject as possessing power. Yet there are not many scholars who pay attention to the *political* and *ethical* dimensions of Gadamer's notion of play, especially when considering its profound implications for conceiving power in dialogical terms. In fact, Gadamer's notion of play is one of his key philosophical concepts, and helps us understand the dynamic movement and functioning of power from a more dialogical angle.

The political implications of Gadamer's dialogical and dynamic conception of human interaction—a conception that resists finalized resolutions—is usually overlooked in studies of Gadamer's project. However, in her book *Gadamer's Ethics of Play: Hermeneutics and the Other* (2010), Vilhauer stands as an exception, and insists on the necessity of initiating a new conversation on Gadamer. She draws our attention to the centrality of the concept of play in Gadamer's project to emphasize the underlying ethical ethos in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics—and for our purposes in this chapter, i political implications. Most scholars of Gadamer are interested in his notion of the "fusion of horizons" and our "historically effective consciousness," but, for Vilhauer, these concepts can be misleading and might even lead to a misreading of Gadamer's ethical and political inclinations if they are not understood in relation to his dynamic notion of play.

Vilhauer is invested in *retrieving* and underscoring the phenomenology of understanding that underlies Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, precisely because it brings Gadamer's ethical stance and concern for the way we relate to "otherness" to the foreground. "Retrieving the concept of play and offering its full development" argues Vilhauer, "will make it possible to revive the ethical heart of philosophical hermeneutics in the face of Gadamer's most influential critics" (2010, xiv). Vilhauer therefore shifts the emphasis from Gadamer's well-known concept of "fusion" to the much-neglected notion of "play" to open up Gadamer's phenomenology of understanding as a dynamic and open process. In her article, "Beyond the 'Fusion of Horizons': Gadamer's Understanding as 'Play,'" Vilhauer shows the limitations of most of the debates around Gadamer, including those leveled by his critics. She argues that most of these debates are too focused on the "fusion of horizons": "Every introduction to Gadamer's philosophy places a heavy emphasis on this phrase, and Gadamer's most influential critics tend to focus closely on the notion as well" (2009, 359). Although the fusion of horizons is a mesmerizing metaphor, argues Vilhauer, "the image considered alone is much too susceptible to misinterpretation" (2009, 359). To avoid such reductionist readings of Gadamer, Vilhauer stresses the need to bring Gadamer's notion of play into the conversation as a means of unlocking the political and ethical implications of his project.

Vilhauer underscores the "global relevance" of play as a central concept in philosophical hermeneutics, since, for Gadamer, understanding is "an interactive, multivocal, and ongoing process of engagement" (2009, 363). For her, "this dynamic of understanding stretches through all our hermeneutic experience, including our encounters with art, with text, with tradition in all its forms, with others in dialogue, and which even constitutes our very mode of being-in-the-world"

(2010, xiv). What Vilhauer means is that the notion of play is useful in conceptualizing all forms of relational dynamics, including power relations. While Gadamer is sensitive to the context and specificity of any event, and, consequentially, to the perspectivity of any interpretation, he sees play as a universal dynamic. "If we examine how the word 'play' is used and concentrate on its so-called metaphorical senses, we find talk of the play of light, the play of the waves, the play of gears or parts of machinery, the interplay of limbs, the play of forces, the play of gnats, even a play on words" (Gadamer 2013, 108).

The notion of play is key to understanding Gadamer's project, argues Vilhauer, because Gadamer is interested in exploring the mode of experience; what happens to us when we encounter external reality or works of art. "Gadamer sets out in the first part of *Truth and Method* to do justice to the real experience (*Erfahrung*) of a work of art, and offers a phenomenological account of the genuine knowledge of genuine truth that takes place in this experience" (2010, 31). Gadamer takes this from his observation of the way play is phenomenologically part of life itself, and hence a dynamic that should be taken into consideration when attempting to understand other phenomena. As Gadamer says, "inasmuch as nature is without purpose and intention, just as it is without exertion, it is a constantly self-renewing play, and can therefore appear as a model for art" (2013, 110).

Gadamer, however, does not restrict the notion of play to explaining how works of art externally assert themselves upon us by inviting a response. Rather, he focuses on the theory of aesthetic experience to unpack the process of our interaction with the work of art to help explore the phenomenology of human interaction. By focusing on encountering the other, beyond our self-enclosures, this encounter also becomes the pathway to self-understanding:

> Our experience of the aesthetic too is a mode of self-understanding. Self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self, and includes the unity of an integrity of the other. Since we meet the artwork in the world and encounter a world in the individual artwork, the work of art is not some alien universe into which we are magically transported for a for time. Rather, we learn to understand ourselves in an through it, and this means that we sublate (aufheben) the discontinuity and atomism of isolated experiences in the continuity of our existence. (Gadamer 2013, 88)

For Gadamer, this interaction with external phenomena and the arising of internal responses when encountering an external other take the form of play. Vilhauer explains how "Gadamer finds artwork and spectator to be participants in a continuous to-and-fro play of presentation and recognition in which meaning is communicated, and a shared understanding of some subject matter takes place" (2010, 31). In a small essay, as a means of elaborating and explaining his original thoughts on play in his book *Truth and Method*, Gadamer himself makes reference to the wider implications of play. He argues that play

> is indeed so universal a structure of human existence that we might consider the directedness of play to be characteristically human. We are used to talking about the element of play proper to all human culture. We discover a form of play in the most serious kinds of human activity: in ritual, in the administration of justice, in social behavior in general, where we even speak of role playing and so forth. A certain self-imposed limitation of our freedom seems to belong to the very structure of culture. (1986, 124)

Gadamer enlists the notion of play to provide a more nuanced understanding of our subjectivity, one that explains and expands Foucault's relational conception of power. The *intersubjectivity of*

play in Gadamer's thought allows us to move beyond fixed and structuralist paradigms. As argued above, both Gadamer and Foucault resist all social scientific attempts to stabilize and fix human behaviour within specific repeatable dynamics. These attempts, of course, reflect the legacy of the social sciences' effort to emulate the natural sciences, as Gadamer always stresses; to establish fixed structures and measurable units when examining social phenomenon. Foucault is also wary of creating facile singular causalities or presenting an event within a structural framework, as this could repeat the way "structuralism formed the most systematic effort to evacuate the concept of event" (1997a, 115). This is because, for him, "the important thing is to avoid trying to do for the event what was previously done with the concept of structure. It is not a matter of locating everything on one level, that of the event, but of realizing that there is actually a whole order of levels of different types of events differing in amplitude, chronological breadth, and capacity to produce effects" (1997a, 115-116).

Against the momentum of such scientific aspirations, both thinkers push towards approaches to studying social phenomena that are more investigative, interpretive, and hermeneutic. The impetus for introducing a more interpretive and critical framework for understanding social phenomena has to do with their interest in pushing towards observing and interpreting reality in its actual manifestation in concrete situations, beyond fixed assumptions. In contrast to structuralist readings, Foucault urges "a recourse to analyses in terms of the genealogy of relations of force, strategic developments, and tactics" (1997a, 116). Thus, their respective emphasis on the dynamic interplay in various concrete encounters is undertaken by paying close attention to the uniqueness of each event and situation—even in repetitions of certain social practices.

Foucault's relational and dynamic conception of power aligns with Gadamer's understanding of play as a suggestive of a field of action where our subjectivities are not completely in control, and a back-and-forth play-like movement takes place. This is precisely why Foucault uses the term "vehicle," since it denotes a capacity for being subject to power while remaining its object as well. This is almost the exact conceptualization that Gadamer sets down for the mode of play:

> The movement of playing has no goal that brings it to an end; rather, it renews itself in constant repetition. The movement backward and forward is obviously so central to the definition of play it makes no difference who or what performs this movement. The movement of play as such has, as it were, no substrate. It is the game that is played—it is irrelevant whether or not there is a subject who plays. The play is the occurrence of the movement as such. (2013, 108)

As this quote indicates, play, for Gadamer, always needs the playing of players. This is why he says that "all playing is a being played" (2013, 111). It thus becomes clear in this context that Gadamer, in a similar manner to Foucault, is moving away from the "who" to focus on the "how." In other words, just as Foucault affords "a certain privileged position to the question of 'how'" in his analysis of power (1997b, 336), Gadamer, too, chooses to focus on the "how" of the dialogical process rather than "who" of the players/interlocutors.

Moreover, when conceptualizing power Foucault also thinks of "games," and in doing so his interpretation closely approaches the Gadamerian concept of play, albeit with some hesitation. The idea occurs to him when he attempts to capture what takes place in networks of power, and although it occurs to him to compare power to a game, he instead chooses to describe it as an *ensemble of actions*:

> What characterizes the power we are analyzing is that it *brings into play relations between individuals* (or between groups) [...]. [I]f we speak of the power of laws, institutions, and ideologies, if we speak of structures or mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others. The term 'power," designates relationships between 'partners' (and by that I am not thinking of a game with fixed rules but simply, and for the moment staying in the most general terms, of an ensemble of actions that induce others and follow from one another). (1997b, 337, emphasis mine)

Although Foucault is reticent here to conceive power in terms of the dynamics of a game, it is precisely the "ensemble of actions" beyond the subjectivity of those involved that makes Gadamer identify play as a useful metaphor for describing the mode of being of our interactive experiences. Nevertheless, Foucault comes back to using the terms "play" and "game" to underscore the dynamics that captures the functioning of power.

Even though Foucault insists on differentiating between "power relations" and "relationships of communication," he does acknowledge that "the production and circulation of elements of meaning can have as their objective or as their consequence certain results in the realm of power" (1997b, 337). When differentiating between power relations and relations of slavery, for example, Foucault emphasizes the element of freedom in this dynamic and describes the field of power relations as always having the elements of variety and freedom:

> Power is exercised only over free subjects and only insofar as they are "free." By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behavior are available […]. Consequently, there is not a face-to-face confrontation of power and freedom as mutually exclusive […] but a much more complicated interplay. *In this game, freedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power* […]. At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential antagonism, it would be better to speak of an 'agonism'—of a relationship that is at the same time mutual incitement and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation that paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation. (1997b, 342, emphasis mine)

As this excerpt indicates, Foucault's conception of power as "agonistic," as the tension of the interplay of different sides within a field of action beyond the full control of any particular subject, is thus well-aligned with Gadamer's notion of dialogical understanding being structurally analogous to open-ended "play."

The kind of ontological relationality both thinkers propose comes with real risks and real possibilities. No control or mastery is ever complete for Foucault since no defeat or repression is final either. The possibility of reversal is always present and waiting. In other words, agency is not a zero-sum game between non-equals, but rather a relational tension in which all sides have a role even if the influence of each side is subject to variation. Gadamer goes further by underscoring the impossibility of complete knowledge, as well as the impossibility of the full and finalized suppression and objectification of the other. "It is an illusion to see another person as a tool that can be absolutely known and used. Even a slave still has a will to power that turns against his master as Nietzsche rightly said" (2013, 368). Gadamer's notion of play therefore enhances Foucault's conception of power as being a dynamic and self-perpetuating movement that transcends the subjectivity of those engaged and is therefore itself subject to new reconfigurations.

In these inevitable parallels a new horizon emerges between these two philosophers, one that puts forward a more complex and dynamic notion of the way social phenomena occurs. We

see Foucault moving increasingly towards defining power as a form of play in a field of open possibilities, in which strategies of winning are employed in contexts with no guaranteed outcomes. Moreover, as Gadamer notes, in a field of possibilities there is always "the freedom to decide one way or the other [...]. On the other hand, this freedom is not without *danger*. Rather the game itself is a *risk* for the player. One can play only with serious possibilities […]. The attraction that the game exercises on the players lies in this *risk*" (2013, 110, emphasis mine).

For Foucault, what defines power to a large extent is precisely this lack of certainty, precisely the elements of *danger* and *risk* that Gadamer describes and which lead to *possible reversals*. Foucault acknowledges that situations of confrontation occur in "wars or games—where the objective is to act on an adversary in such a way as to render the struggle impossible for him" because, for Foucault, this is how a winning strategy designates "the way in which *a partner in a certain game acts with regard to what he thinks* should be the action of the others" (1997b, 346, emphasis mine). Here, Foucault sounds almost exactly like Gadamer, especially when he discusses the context of power through the lens of game terminology. However, Foucault also invokes a metaphor of war, in which movement is hijacked and arrested. When relational movement is arrested—i.e., when there is no longer any play, no longer any possibility of reversal—a power relationship *ends*, for its dynamic is arrested. Instead, it becomes coercion. As Foucault puts it in his essay "The Subject and Power," "a relationship of confrontation reaches its term, its final moment (and the victory of one of the two adversaries) *when stable mechanisms replace the free play of antagonistic reactions*" (1997b, 346-347, emphasis mine).

Although the inevitability of encounter brings out the more latent political dimensions of Gadamer's larger project, given the inevitability of the ethical in any dialogical situation, Gadamer recognizes that not all encounters are equal or dialogically balanced. Like Foucault, he pays specific attention to the way power circulates within the dialogical situation. There are always variations in our relating—whether we enter into an I-Thou style of orienting ourselves to the "other," or we degrade the other through an I-It objectification (2013, 367-370). Therefore, for Gadamer, any form of action should be viewed in the degree of its attempts to control and arrest this inescapable dialogical condition of life. This concern for arresting the movement of dialogue is similar to Foucault's concern with putting an end to a relational context.

However, the reason Gadamer goes further than Foucault in this regard is because he, unlike Foucault, insists upon the agency of all involved subjects. Gadamer emphasizes the ineluctability of agency no matter the degree of tension or repression, and no matter the degree of unawareness to one's latent power in the dialogical situation, even including in the context of slavery. In fact, Gadamer points out that part of the problem in the imbalance of the I-Thou relationship has also to do with the unawareness of one's power, where a master might seem to have full control over the slave. However, for Gadamer,

> the dialectic of reciprocity that governs all I-Thou relationship is inevitably hidden from the consciousness of the individual. The servant who tyrannizes his master by serving him does not believe that he is serving his own aims by doing so. In fact, his own self-consciousness consists precisely in withdrawing from the dialectic of this reciprocity, in *reflecting himself out of his relation to the other* and so becoming unreachable by him. (Gadamer 2013, 368, emphasis mine)

Just as Foucault insists on the ineluctability of power in all contexts, Gadamer insists on the ineluctable agency of all players, regardless of their level of awareness regarding their capacity to affect the outcome, no matter how stalemated the relational context may seem. Gadamer's notion of play therefore stresses the relational and dynamic aspect in all social phenomenon, even when

it seems arrested. This means that Gadamer refuses to wrest agency away from anyone, even if one side may seem fully subjugated, withdrawn, or *reflecting themselves out of the dialectic* of the inevitably relational context.

When taking into account Gadamer's characterization of play and Foucault's account of power, we come to realize that it is not only understanding that unfolds in intersubjectivity as "the mode of being of play" but *that the mode of being of power is also play*. Gadamer's dialogical conception of any interaction, including even slavery, expands Foucault's ideas about power and gives his strategies of resistance more impetus. Moreover, since the dialogical is the condition of life for Gadamer, the interactive dynamic is bound to emerge in the social matrix with unavoidable political implications. And since, for Foucault, power relations are always already present in any interaction, power is revealed to be ineluctable and ubiquitous in Gadamer's dialogue as well. In other words, the ubiquitous presence of power spread throughout the social body is present in any social interaction, because the encounter with the other and the different, is constant, inevitable, and always comes with varying degrees of tension. In understanding these similarities and differences, we can thus also come to appreciate how the ethical dimension of human interaction is equally ineluctable.

The variations in the degrees of meeting the other, seen within a spectrum as an equal or object, imply these hidden and varying dynamics of power within the dialogical situation. The Foucauldian tensional conception of power brings to the surface the political implications of Gadamer's project. Moreover, Gadamer's ethical concern for the I-Thou relationship comes more to the foreground when read in parallel with Foucault's emphasis on the imbalances of power within the field of interaction. The political dimension therefore emerges through an exploration of the very different ways both philosophers conceive of the kinds of interactions that take place in their respective models of relationality. As a result, we come to understand how *the very ineluctability of power for Foucault itself is the very inevitability of the ethical for Gadamer*.

Through linking his discussions of limits and freedom to the notion of play, Gadamer offers an intersubjective map of play as both a process of playing and of being played in any concrete situation. The notion of play therefore offers an exit strategy from the confines of intentional and transcendent subjectivity that has lingered in our philosophical traditions. In many ways, this conception of play saves social phenomena from reductionist and structuralist conceptions, making more room for creativity and movement. Play also aids Foucault's corrective of the misconception of power as an entity, or essence, by stressing the dynamic and interactive nature of social phenomena. Together, both introduce a more nuanced relational ontology, given the way they highlight interactive dynamics among players as occurring within a field of open-ended possibilities.

3.6 Conclusion: Revolution or Transformation?

When viewed from Gadamer's lens of the ontological horizon of our linguistically mediated world, Foucault is *not* merely providing an understanding of power. Rather, Foucault's *hermeneutics of power* is itself a *language event*. By introducing a whole new reinterpretation of power, Foucault engenders new potential strategies for resisting and re-negotiating within power relations. Anyone who understands power in the traditional sense, as concentrated, possessed, and centralized in a state or legal system, would act and react in particular ways, whether in resisting this power or protecting it. Equally, anyone who understands power in Foucault's diffused, relationally circulating, and spread-out model, would act and strategize in completely different

ways from those who conceive power according to its conventional definitions. Even though Foucault never outlines prescriptive modes of resistance, he is quite aware of the possible consequences of his polymorphous and diffused approach to power:

> If one wants to look for a non-disciplinary form of power, or rather, to struggle against disciplines and disciplinary power, it is not towards the ancient right of sovereignty that one should turn, but towards the possibility of a new form of right, one which must indeed be anti-disciplinarian, but at the same time liberated from the principle of sovereignty. (1972, 108)

When viewed from Foucault's lens of the ineluctability of power, we realize the significance of Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics: it allows us to perceive relations of meaning as occurring within a field of action, and, accordingly, to *perceive meaning as a form of action*. Although Foucault differentiates between relations of meaning and relations of power, with Gadamer we come to see that understanding and interpretation are not merely subjective process or mental activities that remain hidden.

Gadamer's famous statement to which Kertscher refers, "When we understand, we understand differently," emphasizes this ontological dimension of understanding. A shift in meaning shifts reality and affects our actions and the actions of others; the world is thus created anew because "the object of reference is constituted in a way that is dependent on the activity of speaking" (2002, 141). Gadamer's ontological intervention in trajectory of hermeneutics allows us to see power as a form of play, because, for Gadamer, "action" is understood not only through limited physical definitions, but also through a hermeneutic lens as well. Hence Gadamer's ontological paradigm shift of the power of meaning and the consequent claim that any new understanding is not merely a subjective state, or solely a linguistic statement, but rather an "event" and a form of "action" that has its own being. According to Kertscher, Gadamer perceives language as "the paradigm of a fundamental horizon while simultaneously being an indispensable medium of understanding. The famous and often quoted principle of Gadamer's ontology of language ('*Being that is understood is language*') can be interpreted in just that sense" (2002, 143).

Given this Gadamerian shift, understanding thus has its own ontological presence, with real and concrete consequences in the world. For Gadamer, as for Foucault, actions are not narrowly and exclusively defined as the intentional, or merely physical, movement of autonomous subjects upon other subjects (or objects), but rather, for both of them, any action, utterance, or dynamic, that impacts another action represents a certain power dynamic, in which even subjects are the points of its application. For Gadamer, a new interpretation is like a new action; it is an event that has entered into being, beyond the full control and direction of the subjects involved. Thus, the dialogical situation is a field in which "action upon action" takes place in an "open field of possibilities." This means, according to Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics, that relations of meaning are inherently relations of power and vice versa. The interaction with self and other shifts because of our newly reconfigured and linguistically mediated world, and this, by default, engenders new consequences. *Awakening to both the power of hermeneutics and the hermeneutics of power, therefore, could radically change the way we think and act in the world.* Through these new definitions, the two projects unfold by underscoring the ineluctable power implications of our interpretive practices—making clearer, and more realistic, the relevance of hermeneutics in any undoing, negotiating, or reversing of power relations.

Foucault's later definitions and his increasing interest in the "how" of "the exercise of power," as taking place in a field of possibilities, lands him far closer to the dialogical modality than is commonly acknowledged, especially given Foucault's own reluctance to conceptualize his

interactive modality in dialogical terms (Foucault 1997b, 336). This is why Falzon attempts a dialogical reading of Foucault, precisely to highlight Foucault's relational and dynamic conception of power. Although Foucault, over the years, increasingly re-defines power relations in a more interactive manner, especially in his later writings, he struggles to find an appropriate term to capture the process and dynamic of this interplay in such an open "field of possibilities" with unpredictable consequences (1997b, 342). It is unfortunate that he ends up choosing the word "government" to describe the "conduct" of those engaged in a given interaction. While he attempts to wrest the term "govern" from its political connotations in order to give it a wider application as a means of referring to how people "act upon the possibilities of action of other people" (1997b, 341), the term 'govern' ultimately lacks the interactive and back-and-forth connotations that Foucault underscores in his later and more nuanced conceptions of power as a relational dynamic.

Even though Foucault manages, to some extent, to finally move beyond the metaphors of war or law, he still gets stuck in a term that does not fully capture the scope of what he is attempting to frame. By choosing the terms '*govern*' and *'government*' to characterize the interplay that takes place in the field of power relations, he tends to arrest the very movement he wants to highlight. "To govern, in this sense," Foucault insists, "is to structure the possible field of action of others. The relationship proper to power would therefore be sought not on the side of violence or struggle, nor on that of voluntary contracts […] but, rather, in the area of that singular mode of action, *neither warlike nor juridical*, which is government" (1997b, 341, emphasis mine). Searching for a dynamic that is "neither warlike or juridical," especially given his focus on acting upon others without guaranteed results, actually points towards more dialogical modalities. Moreover, this mode of action, one could easily argue, is *play* in the Gadamerian intersubjective and dialogical sense, where there is a concerted effort at the management of the actions of others within a field of possibilities, and yet which are not fully subject to the control and wishes of any player.

Foucault's admission of the need for a more neutral notion to explicate and delineate the nature of interaction within a field of possibilities, and with possibilities of reversal, means that he moves us towards viewing power relations in a more dialogical form. Therefore, it is not too surprising that he moves his definition away from the modality of confrontation in battle and warfare, which concludes with a finalized and stabilized victory, towards an open interplay with uncontrollable results. Foucault himself, as discussed above, removes finalized dominations from his more dynamic and dialogical definition of power relations, especially when considering his idea of *possible reversals*. Given such a new orientation, Foucault seems to be suggesting that the momentum of our histories has been mostly locked in a series of dominations with closed possibilities, and therefore have been less in the shape of power relations and more in the shape of coercive one-way subjugations. It is for this reason that Foucault delineates between relations of violence and relations of power:

> A relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks, it destroys, or it *closes off all possibilities.* Its opposite pole can only be passivity, and if it comes up against any resistance it has no other option but to try to break it down. *A power relationship, on the other hand, can only be articulated on the basis of two elements that are indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that "the other" (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results and possible inventions may open up*. (1997b, 340, emphasis mine)

Foucault's project can therefore be conceived as an undertaking interested in transmuting domination into power relations within a relational dynamic.

By examining these thinker's conceptual re-definitions of both power and play we come to think of the nature of, and interaction within, the social body in completely different terms. These re-definitions raise new questions and hence new possibilities for approaching issues of domination that arise within the social body. Foucault, for example, challenges the conventional understanding of revolution as a means of creating real transformation. In fact, he suggests that confrontations with the state by means of violence seem to perpetuate the same codifications of power that a revolution seeks to undo. In his essay, "Truth and Power," he argues that "revolution is a different type of codification of the same relations [of power]. Roughly speaking, this implies that there are many different kinds of revolution, as many kinds as there are possible subversive recodifications of power relations—and, further, that one can perfectly well conceive of "*revolutions that leave essentially untouched the power relations* that form the basis of the functioning of the state" (1997a, 123, emphasis mine). Gadamer is not far from such a conception of revolution: "Even where life changes violently, as in ages of revolution, far more of the old is preserved in the supposed transformation of everything than anyone knows" (2013, 293).

Foucault is thus careful not to prescribe facile forms of resistance with the aim of transmuting power relations, as this might simply perpetuate the same power codifications. This aligns perfectly well with Gadamer's notion of play as being its own subject that draws the subjectivity of players into its dynamics. Gadamer argues that this does not mean that play "acquires a definite meaning only through the particular persons representing it," but rather, "in relation to them all, the play has absolute autonomy" (2013, 115). Power games can therefore be reconceptualized from this Gadamerian perspective as forms of action that take a life of their own, with the possibility of renewing themselves even if the players change. Accordingly, even if violent revolutions seem on the surface to be challenging those in power, they can, even in cases when victory occurs, keep essentially untouched the power relations that formed the very opposition and that motivated resistance, as Foucault argues above.

Gadamer, therefore, differentiates between "change" and "transformation"—players and circumstances can change, while the play remains the same. However, for him, there are certain things that can lead to transformation. "Transformation is not alteration [*Verwandlung ist nicht Veränderung*]," argues Gadamerchange always means that what is changed "remains the same and is maintained" (2013, 115). In contrast, "transformation means that something is suddenly and as a whole something else," asserts Gadamer (2013, 115). Transformation, for Gadamer, is thus closely connected to his notion of play, since he examines the idea of radical rupture in contrast to mere changes or shifts where things remain the same within the play—where the game maintains itself.

This delineation between change and transformation is, of course, in alignment with his own understanding of history. Gadamer does not conceptualize history as an inevitable teleology progressing gradually, but rather as the function of hermeneutics, which can suddenly transform our conception of our inner and outer realities. Naturally, the introduction of any new idea, interpretation, or action has the potential to affect the field of possibilities. Reality, argues, Gadamer, "always stands in a horizon of desired or feared or, at any rate, still undecided future possibilities. Hence it is always the case that mutually exclusive expectations are aroused, not all of which can be fulfilled" (2013, 117). Warnke underscores the possibilities of such shifts in the structure of a game, based on Gadamer's redefinition of *transformation*, precisely because nothing

completely repeats in the same exact manner and events and actions always possess distinctness and uniqueness, even when taking place within a certain repeated dynamic:

> If a game takes on a concrete existence only by being played, then clearly its concrete existence is capable of changing. Indeed, games are rarely played the same way twice. Instead, they involve different particular actions, the use of different strategies, an encounter with different circumstances and reactions and finally different results. Thus, although a game remains the same game in some sense it can also be entirely different each time it is played. (1987, 51)

Gadamer's reading of the human condition provides a kind of hermeneutics that is less subject to essentialist categories and anthropological constants. For him, our desire to control the world and coerce reality to fit our expectations and desires must be seen as the illusion that feeds the mechanisms we use to escape the given dialogical interaction that defines and underpins our mode of being-in-the-world. We do not possess total power, nor do we have full access to reality. We feign and attempt to control and seize in our illusory *power trips* when interacting with a world that is constantly already interacting with us. For Gadamer, then, the *domination of being* lies in our attempts *to stabilize that which is in constant flux*. And instead of interacting we attempt to control and dominate a reality that is always beyond human control. Gadamer explains that "real experience" is the state of consciousness in which we awaken to the finitude of our subjectivity, and where we come to truly see the futility of our illusory attempts for total control. "Real experience is that whereby man becomes aware of his finiteness. *In it are discovered the limits of the power and the self-knowledge of his planning reason.* The idea that everything can be reversed, that there is always time for everything and that everything somehow returns, proves to be an illusion" (2013, 365, emphasis mine). We attempt to possess something that can never be possessed, because it is always already "in between," in the very tension that arises in the interplay of all our encounters. Gadamer's notion of play captures this dynamic that engages us beyond our individual wills, individual agency, or individual control. *We are the conduits of many games within the social matrix, in which we may be at a more advantaged side than another, but never fully in control of the totality of the game or its outcomes.*

Unlike Foucault, it is not the will to power that is ineluctable for Gadamer. For Gadamer domination operates more in the open, and what is usually hidden and avoided is the dialogical condition of Dasein. For him, power is not a hidden dimension that we need to disclose or unmask, but rather the mechanism, right in the open, by which we avoid and turn away from our dialogical mode of being within an interactive order of being. We attempt to escape our dialogical ontology by arresting the movement of the back-and-forth dynamic in which understanding occurs, and in which reality unfolds. Both Gadamer and Foucault therefore move us beyond the conventional oppressor/oppressed dyad by understanding human agency within a relational, interactive, and horizontal modality, within historically concrete contexts. Foucault's relational understanding of power creates a new phenomenology of social relations, where being is always inescapably caught in a dialogical back-and-forth movement. As such, power is also presented as a series of actions and tensions circulating within the social body. When combined with Gadamer's nuanced dialogical ontology of play, we can see all those involved as influential interlocutors who are both active and passive within a dialogical interplay—even if caught in asymmetries of power. Moreover, by understanding Foucault's conception of power in dialogical terms, we also open Gadamer's work to questions of power and the political. Such a combined reading helps uncover the deeply ethical and political nature of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, while also

strengthening Foucault's project by making Foucault's analysis of power more immune to accusations of nihilism, essentialism, or a lack of exit strategies.

Gadamer's revolutionary ontological hermeneutics and Foucault's analysis of the relational way power functions do not aim to offer facile prescriptive solutions. Rather, their projects have the potential for radically transforming our thinking of resistance, activism, and dialogue. They offer serious and real possibilities for coexisting with others while negotiating power in ways that have the potential to level the playing field through a more balanced re-distribution of power in the social body. More importantly, they open points of entry to transform such relations at the most local and concrete contexts. *In combination, a promising, multi-layered, critical approach emerges from Foucault's interpretation of power and Gadamer's power of interpretation.*

The limits of violence and the dead-end represented by bloody conflicts and revolutions will be discussed in the next chapter, in which the "rehabilitation" of the category of the political emerges an increasingly ethical imperative and another possibility for transformation. Arendt starts from where Foucault finishes, especially in discussing power and the political, by arguing that politics, if it is to be possible at all, has to move beyond the modality of war *and re-align itself with the forgotten dialogical interaction inherent to the human condition*. Where Foucault presents a phenomenology of power, Arendt creates an ontological shift of the political. By re-examining our dialogical ontology in light of the crisis modernity has created, Arendt provides a new hermeneutics of the political. Our technological advancements have given us the capacity for total self-annihilation, and forced us, according to Arendt, to face the dead-end of violence. Therefore, for her, our "position of insanity" in this techno military age is deeply connected to what Foucault refers to as "the paradox of the relations of capacity and power" in his well-known essay "What is Enlightenment" (1997d, 317). Foucault seriously wonders if "the growth of capabilities [*capacités*] could be disconnected from intensification of power relations?" (1997d, 317). This is the issue that is really at stake in the next chapter—and for both Gadamer and Arendt in our increasingly techno-scientific age—which is why Arendt poses the necessity of redefining the category of the political in dialogical terms, as it has urgently become a survival issue in our age of insanity.

Chapter Four
The Resurrection of Socrates:
The Ineluctability of Dialogical Plurality in Arendt's Thought

I am not a philosopher; I am just in a state of questioning.

–Jawdat Said

If philosophical theories seduce you, sit down and go over them again and again in your mind. But never call yourself a philosopher, and never allow yourself to be called a philosopher.

–Epictetus, Discourses, III, 21, 23

Words are events, they do things, change things. They transform both speaker and hearer; they feed energy back and forth and amplify it. They feed understanding or emotions back and forth and amplify it.

–Ursula K. Le Guin

Hannah Arendt conceives of our modern lives as being caught in dynamics that block relationality. She sees modernity as a mode of being that makes us blind and forgetful of our existential dialogical condition. According to her, we are the creatures of *oases* who have been forced and domesticated to live in *the desert*. This is how she paints the challenge of domination in the human condition, particularly in its modern forms. While there have been different diagnoses of modernity, for Arendt, "the modern growth of wordlessness, the withering away of everything *between* us, can also be described as the spread of the desert" (2005, 201). Instead of honouring our curiosity and desire for connection, we are caught up in desperate, fragmented lives. Instead of appreciating difference and diversity, we have become programmed to collapse the world into dwarfed images of ourselves. Instead of creating spaces of peacefulness, we guard our security with the terror of nuclear annihilation (1970, 17). Arendt thus chooses the metaphor of desert to describe the historical momentum of domination and coercion, and refers to the exceptional modalities that emerged in defiance to desert conditions as "oases" (2005, 201-202). "Modern psychology is desert psychology," Arendt asserts, in that "it helps us 'adjust' to those conditions, taking away our only hope, namely that we, who are not of the desert though we live in it, are able to transform it into a human world" (2005, 201). As a result, one of her main strategies for exiting desert conditions is to redefine politics by reclaiming its dialogical character.

This chapter aims to continue the conversation about domination and hermeneutics begun in the last chapter, by capturing the "in-between" space that arises between Gadamer and Hannah Arendt in their analysis of *the forgetfulness of our dialogical mode of being in the world*. Their projects intersect in their respective, albeit different, emphases on dialogue. Although there is not much scholarship that addresses their projects in parallel, a dialogue between them is urgently needed. Jennifer Gaffney, in her essay "Solidarity in Dark Times: Arendt and Gadamer on the Politics of Appearance" (2018), stresses the importance of a parallel reading of these two thinkers as a means of overcoming many hurdles in our political thinking. As she states, "though Gadamer and Arendt are not considered together, the moment is opportune for increased scholarly engagement in their respective discourses" (8). This type of engagement, for her, offers unique ways of conceptualizing both collectivity and singularity, without repressing either. Moreover,

Gaffney argues that, by reading them together, a conception of solidarity and collective identity emerges that "requires a revision of our assumptions regarding the power of identity for motivating movements of resistance, no less than our pretenses regarding the safeguard that calculative rationality provides against prejudice and error" (2018, 8).

Lawrence Biskowski is another scholar who sees the need for a dialogue between Gadamer and Arendt. In his essay "Reason in Politics: Arendt and Gadamer on the Role of the 'Eide' (1998), Biskowski argues that Gadamer offers an angle that highlights the non-foundationalist elements in Arendt's political project. He even argues that some of the gaps in Arendt's attempts to develop a political theory that is neither foundationalist nor authoritarian can be "completed with the help of such an alternative interpretation," and points out that Gadamer's ideas "may form the basis of a non-foundationalist, democratic theory of political judgement that recaptures for reason and morality central places in public life" (1998, 217).

One of the central aims of this chapter, therefore, is to discuss how both scholars revise foundationalist and authoritarian assumptions in ways that inspire us to think and act *critically* and *creatively*. Much of their revision revolves around their respective attempts to *resurrect the dialogical modality of Socrates as a political alternative*. Hence, they empower us to think of practical approaches for transforming the desert back into a world and reclaiming our rightful place within the oasis. At the very least, they help us awaken to the inhumane conditions of the desert so we can resist adjusting to it too easily. Despite the many parallels in the thought of Gadamer and Arendt, this chapter mainly focuses mainly on four areas: 1) Ardent's diagnosis of the modern conditions that make the need for a new redefinition of the political inevitable; 2) the flight of the philosopher from the polis, which is discussed as the central metaphor that captures the importance of hermeneutics as a political activity, especially given the critiques by both scholars against the denial of the givenness of plurality; 3) a discussion of how Arendt's notion of the miraculous aligns with Gadamer's emphasis on our *linguisticality*; of how their projects align in viewing language and dialogue as sources of creativity and possibility; 4) a discussion of the ethical and practical dimension of politics that comes to light when considering both philosopher's respective emphasis on the ancient Greek notion of *phronesis* (practical wisdom).

Arendt did her Ph.D. thesis under the supervision of Karl Jaspers, which she ended up publishing much later as *Love and Saint Augustine* ([1929] 1998). She initially had to rescue and salvage the work in its dissertation form during her escape from Nazi Germany in 1933. The book, based on her thesis, is centred around the notion of neighbourly love in the thought of Saint Augustine, and its potential in providing a different way of theorizing the political (Arendt 1998). But in general, Arendt is more known for her studies on totalitarianism, antisemitism, and her emphasis on *action* over thought. In her major philosophical works like *The Human Condition* (1958), or *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), both of which she is well known for, Arendt defends political action (*the vita activa*) over the life of thought (*the vita contemplativa*). The French philosopher Julia Kristeva, in her recent biography *Hannah Arendt: Life is a Narrative* (2020), highlights the circumstances and life events that influenced Arendt's intellectual journey, despite the original themes of her doctoral thesis. "Having thought about becoming a theologian, then devoting herself to studying and 'dismantling' metaphysics, life came instead to be the essential domain of the young philosopher's thought" (Kristeva 2020, 3). Kristeva's biographical sketch emphasizes that Arendt never became disconnected from the realities around her, and argues that her escape from the Holocaust expanded her intellectual landscape, given what was unfolding in the political landscape of Europe. Kristeva argues that Arendt "fled across a ravaged Europe, stayed in Paris at first, and finally left for New York in 1941, where she obtained American

citizenship ten years later," all which consequently impacted her intellectual evolution (2020, 3). "Caught up from the outset by this passion in which *life* and *thought* are one and the same, her varied yet profoundly coherent intellectual odyssey never ceased to place life—in and of itself, and as a concept to be elucidated—at the centre" (Kristeva 2020, 3).

It is therefore worth noting how Arendt's later shift towards the mental life, and her increased interest in language, dialogue, and the power of thinking, aligns her to Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics. In *The Life of The Mind* (1971) and the *Promise of Politics* (2005), both published posthumously, Arendt returns to emphasizing the transformative power of thinking, *the vita contemplativa*. Like Gadamer, Arendt comes full circle in recognizing thought as a form of action, especially when it is not pursued as a means of disconnecting us from life or the present.

Given these shifts and detours, critics of Arendt see contradictions in her thought. One great example is Margret Canovan, who entirely shifted her thinking of Arendt's work over the years. As Canovan argues in *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought* (1994), much of the misunderstanding around Arendt's thought stems from a lack of a comprehensive and chronological look at the entire corpus of Arendt's project. Canovan, who had initially been more critical of Arendt, especially in her work with Charles Frankel and John Bennett and particularly in her earlier book *The Political Thoughts of Hannah Arendt* (1974), acknowledges how she herself revised many of her ideas when she read more of Arendt's corpus. She ended up seeing Arendt in such a different light that she felt compelled to write a new book on Arendt twenty years after her earlier one. It was only after Canovan started studying Arendt's then-unpublished writings, which had been preserved in the Library of Congress, that her thinking on Ardent took a sharp turn. "I began to realize just how much more there was to explore. Reading Arendt's published work in the light of these writings, I found myself obliged to revise my previous understanding of many aspects of her thought, and to suspect that what was needed was a full-scale reinterpretation" (1994, vii).

What may seem like contradictions to some critics, when they do bother to read Arendt comprehensively and chronologically, appear more clearly as detours that she undertook in response to real life circumstances unfolding around her, as Kristeva emphasizes above. If anything, Arendt's shifting emphases show her hermeneutic responses to be situated within real and concrete historical contexts, rather than in metaphysical presuppositions and speculations. Arendt's later orientation towards the significance of "thinking" over "action"—in, for example, her book *The Life of the Mind*—looks back to the trial of Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi German-Austrian SS-Obersturmbannführer, who was one of the key figures in organizing the Holocaust. Arendt paints this event as a main turning point in *her thinking of thinking*. The way the trial unfolded raised profound questions for Ardent about the nature of action and thought, and *particularly the question of evil*. Arendt herself acknowledges how this event shifted the direction of her thought, and how "occupation with mental activities" was sparked by being a witness to this trial (Arendt 1971, 3):

> The immediate impulse came from my attending the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. In my report of it I spoke of the 'the banality of evil.' Behind that phrase, I held no thesis or doctrine, although I was dimly aware of the fact that it went counter to our tradition of thought—literary, theurgical, or philosophic—about the phenomenon of evil. (Arendt 1971, 3)

The paradigm shift towards thought, the *vita contemplativa*, in Arendt's project is underscored by the Canadian political philosopher Leah Bradshaw, one of the academic authorities on Arendt's life and political theory. Bradshaw argues that Arendt continued to hold strong views

about the primacy of political action until she reported on the trial. "This was a turning-point in her thinking," Bradshaw asserts, because

> Eichmann's 'banality' appeared to Arendt to have been the result of his inability, or *unwillingness to think*. His crime consisted in the fact that he simply drifted with the tide of political change in the Germany of the 1930s, *never pausing to think critically about his own actions.* Arendt was convinced by the example of Eichmann that *thinking autonomously* – that is, detaching oneself from the world of appearances – was absolutely essential for acting morally. (1989, 7, emphasis mine)

This implies that in order to make ethical judgements that may go against the cultural thrust of one's society, a person has to step away, contemplate, interpret events, and make judgements outside the dominant political realm. In other words, they must engage in the action of thinking.

These kinds of questions and issues are what inspired Arendt into different and innovative directions, *philosophically* and *politically*. Throughout her life, she contemplated the ways human beings carve out contexts of intellectual freedom and creativity—and therefore spaces of resistance. Arendt avoids apodictic philosophical formulations and the envisioning of idealist utopias—rather, she is mostly concerned with understanding, thinking, and interpreting the world in which she found herself. She even connects her habits of reading and writing to this *need to understand*. In one of her last interviews, she stresses the importance of the thinking process, and how at an early age, reading and writing opened a window for her (2013, 15). "What is important for me is to understand," stresses Arendt. "For me, writing is a matter of seeking this understanding […]. What is important to me is the thought process itself. As long as I have succeeded in thinking something through, I am personally quite satisfied. If I then succeed in expressing my thought process adequately in writing, that satisfies me also" (2013, 6).

Writing, thinking, and interpreting the world are the very actions which allowed Arendt to resist the silencing of Jews and women in the past century. This is why Bradshaw poignantly identifies Arendt's writing as a form of action and a political struggle for freedom. "Arendt manages to conceptualize thinking in such a way as to preserve the integral worth of political freedom. She does this by evoking for us the ground that unites the thinking and acting being" (1989, 8). According to Bradshaw, Arendt shows us that living a life of struggle requires us to live a life of thinking. And this is precisely what Bradshaw sees as "Hannah Arendt's achievement" (1989, 8).

The intellectual trajectory of Arendt's life and contributions is itself evidence that *a hermeneutic life is a life of action.* As Kristeva argues, the example of Socrates, for Arendt, is where the themes of *thought* and *action* are reconciled. "Socrates leaves to Arendt the historian the example of *a thought that is in movement*," argues Kristeva, because Socrates emphasized a dynamic search for truth "within a perpetual interrogation of himself and others, without ignoring a polis within which differing opinions and lives clashed" (2000, 42, emphasis mine).

Arendt's less known work (part of the then-unpublished work that Canovan refers to above) *The Promise of Politics* ([1993] 2005), is predicated on the dialogical character of the political as exemplified by Socrates. In it, Arendt views the execution of Socrates and Plato's flight from the polis as indicative of the forgetfulness of the political in the Western tradition (2005). The book contains a collection of the last essays Arendt had been working on, which capture the last phase of her political thought. In general, Arendt's later writings present the importance of both thinking *and* action, solitude *and* community, and reconciles the tensions and dilemmas between them by stressing the value of living responsibility in solidarity. Bradshaw argues that Arendt "was able to

provide an account of the relationship between thinking and acting that avoids both the dualism between politics and the search for truth, and the subsumption of thinking and acting under the progressivist conception of history that so dominant among modern political thinkers" (1989, 8).

Given Gadamer and Arendt's shared interest in the themes of thought and action, the significance of their projects can be said to lie in their desire to *resurrect the Socratic dialogue*, in whose model *thought is also action*, which both perceive as relevant and urgent in today's world. Together, the two scholars create a critical space in which the past is both at the root of our current crises while being, at the same time, a rich resource for new inspirations and possibilities. Yet the two scholars tend to be on the margin of the critiques of modernity, or altogether out of the political conversation, as in the case of Gadamer, who is usually relegated to areas related to literary and textual matters. Arendt is also not easily placed as a critic of modernity. This is, for example, evident in Seyla Benhabib's book title, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (1996). Benhabib's excellent book captures the unique intellectual position of Arendt, a position which defies facile classifications. Even if Gadamer and Arendt are not part of the "postmodern" critical approach, both scholars, at the core of their projects, offer strong critiques of the dynamics of domination that underpin modernity in unique, creative, and nuanced ways. They also offer creative new directions that do not fit any mold easily.

4.1 The Death of War and the Birth of the Political

Arendt's emphasis on the *forgetfulness of the political* echoes Gadamer's emphasis on the *forgetfulness of the dialogical*. Because the dialogical for Gadamer has political and ethical implications, and the political for Arendt has dialogical and relational ones, the respective emphases of their projects intersect. The political, for Arendt, is both an ancient problem and a contemporary crisis. In her view, the Greek philosopher's disdain for politics, perceived as being one of the mundane necessities of life, lies at the root of our contemporary political crises. The problem seems persistent according to Arendt. Our current age, in which there is a deep *distrust of politics*, can be said to reflect such ancient attitudes. Consequently, in this context, anything that has to do with politics becomes equated with force, corruption, domination, and the danger of nuclear arsenals. "Political philosophy never recovered from this blow dealt by philosophy to politics at the very beginning of our tradition. The contempt for politics, the conviction that political activity is a necessary evil […] runs like a read thread throughout the centuries that separate Plato from the modern age" (2005, 84). Given such prejudice against politics, there is a popular belief, Arendt also argues, that doing away with politics might secure our future and spare us destruction. "Ever since the invention of the atomic bomb, our mistrust has been based on the eminently justifiable fear that politics and the means of force available to it may well destroy humanity. Out of this fear arises that hope that *men will come to their senses and rid the world of politics* instead of humankind" (2005, 153, emphasis mine). But Arendt's own relational conception of politics argues exactly the opposite. She redefines the political, which is discussed below in more detail, as what can spare us destruction.

In more than one way, Arendt redefines the category of the political against a heavy and momentous tradition that had equated the political with force and violence. Just as Foucault struggles to wrest the notion of power from previous conceptualizations, Arendt also pushes towards wresting the concept of politics from its traditional definitions. Arendt underscores *re*defining the political as a needed response to exit from the desert landscapes of our histories. As she states,

> [T]he idea of a political order beyond the borders of one's own nation or city, is solely of Roman origin. The Roman politicization of the space between peoples marks the beginning of the Western world—indeed, it first created the Western world as *world*. There had been many civilizations before Rome, some of them extraordinarily rich and great, but what lay between them was not a world but only a desert, across which, if things went well, ties like fragile threads or paths through untilled fields, might be established. If things didn't go well, however, the desert spread, expanding into wars and destroying whatever world did exist. (2005, 189)

Arendt does not deny the momentum of war in human history. What she attempts to question is whether war is an anthropological constant, and whether there cannot be new conceptions of politics that challenge such violent definitions.

Although Arendt does not reject tradition wholesale, she is wary of its dated notions and advises her reader to tread carefully. What she does to the notion of the political echoes Gadamer's desire to "rehabilitate tradition" by providing new hermeneutics in concrete situations (2013, 341). And this is what Arendt precisely does. She rehabilitates the notion of *the political* in response to our present needs by insisting on the need to examine the political implications and connections between our advanced sciences/technologies *and* the will to dominate and rule. Arendt argues that the "technical development of the implements of violence has now reached the point where no political goal could conceivably correspond to their destructive potential or justify their actual use in armed conflict" (1970, 3). This of course echoes Foucault's emphasis, as discussed in the previous chapter, on correlating issues of power, violence, and what he refers to as the "acquisition of capabilities" in contrast to the "struggles of freedom" (1997, 317). One of the mains issues at stake for Foucault towards the end of his life was precisely this question: "how can the growth of capabilities [*capacités*] be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?" (1997, 317). Arendt does not disconnect these issues. She redefines the political by acknowledging these very connections.

Although Arendt argues that the evolution of technology has halted war among powerful nations, for Foucault, the underlying dynamics of warfare have not ceased. He argues that this state of suspended war is not exclusive to the military or even the political, but reflective of a certain dynamic of power relations that permeate all aspects of the social body. Both Arendt and Foucault contemplate the evolution and development of our institutions and technologies and their consequences for politics. For Arendt, this evolution in capacities has changed the nature of war forever, because, for or her, it brought war to a dead-end, shifting with it the definition of politics. On the other hand, for Foucault, the relationship between "capabilities" and "power relations," is where war is concealed in the form of power relations. What is at stake for both, at least initially, is thus indicated by what Foucault calls "the paradox of the relations of capacity and power" (1997, 317).

Foucault argues that "throughout the entire history of Western societies [...] the acquisition of capabilities and the struggle for freedom have constituted permanent elements" (1997, 317). However, for Arendt, the paradox is poignant. The very evolution in capabilities and technologies has completely changed the nature of war, and, as a result, created a whole new context for rethinking our definitions and traditions. According to Arendt, the way modalities of war have subsumed the concept of the political and suppressed the dialogical for centuries is no longer adequate. But for Foucault, politics conceal another form of war, not dialogue—in other words, politics conceal "relations of power, not relations of meaning" (1997, 116). How can we resolve this tension?

One way to begin answering this question is by underscoring the importance of Arendt's redefinition and re-conceptualization of the political. Just as Foucault attempts to redefine and re-conceptualize power against the momentum of Western thought and its reductive and narrow definitions of power, Arendt also redefines and reconceptualizes politics against the momentum of Western thought. In fact, Arendt's dialogical redefinition of the political is not too far from Foucault's own definition of power, especially if we take into consideration its relationality. In "The Subject and Power," Foucault delineates between contexts of direct coercion where there is one-way subjugation, and contexts in which an agonistic back-and forth tension exists, where the possibility of a two-way movement, or even points of "possible reversal" arise (1997, 346). Despite such parallels, Foucault, as we have seen above, inverts the politics/war problem by viewing modern politics and the relations within the modern social matrix *as a form of war*, whereas Arendt views the possibility of politics *as the cessation of war*. This is precisely where Arendt's argument is revealing and relevant. Arendt is wary of the quagmire that has completely tarnished politics and muddled the concept with many other issues. She too, therefore, returns to the archeology of Western political thought to salvage the notion of the political by exploring its potential for addressing our current needs. Considering Gadamer's emphasis on the dialogical and his interest in the Socratic model, this is precisely where his project is relevant—it helps underscore Arendt's dialogical definition of politics.

Gadamer's perspective, which defines the political in a broader manner, thus offers a wider lens for examining these issues, one which compliments and strengthens Arendt's later orientations and her interest in the power of the collective. This is the case because Gadamer pushes the conversation towards an ethical orientation. In fact, Gadamer sees *politics as a continuation of ethics.* This is not an ideal to aspire to, for him, but a recovery of the larger scope and potential of the function of politics, which has been narrowed down in our times. Gadamer is critical of the instrumental narrowing down of thought in modernity, and the grave consequences this has had in the world of politics. In his introduction to Gadamer's autobiography, Robert Sullivan argues that Gadamer saw the focus on power in studying politics in the modern period as a continuation of the obsession with instrumentality and method, hence the disconnection of politics from ethics. Sullivan therefore argues that, for Gadamer, "The modern privatization of ethics leaves politics in the lurch. The public realm deprived of its ethical dimension is necessarily a war of all against all, a realm in which the reasonable person must learn how to do evil for the sake of survival. In this context 'political science' arises as a study of power and power relationships, and its tendency to fall back on *method* is a consequence of its loss of classical *truth*" (1985, xvi). Sullivan therefore argues that, for Gadamer, "the modern dichotomy between ethics and politics finds no counterpart in the classical world. Politics is there a continuation of ethics by collective means, and the ethical life of the individual is a microcosmic restatement of the agreed-upon results of the discourse community" (1985, xvi).

Given the prioritizing of survival and force in politics, Arendt sees how they still shape our contemporary political world. So, although nuclear capacities and other mass destruction capabilities brought war among industrialized nations to a screeching halt, the underlying cultural dynamics of war have not ceased. However, Arendt challenges the connection between politics and war at its root. She sees Western philosophical traditions, especially as manifest in modern political theory, as reflective of our "old loyalty to the past," a loyalty that prioritized force and violence in understanding of politics (1970, 23). Her book *On Violence* is therefore staked around the urgent need for a new political theory in light of the evolution of our warfare technologies. By refusing to separate questions of domination from the modern progress of science and technology,

Arendt raises the question of politics in a manner that goes beyond Foucault. From her perspective, we cannot afford to ignore the ways scientific and technological evolution, which produced the means for mass destruction, have created profound philosophical and political turning points for our age. In other words, our old paradigms no longer fit our current needs. As she states, "today all these old verities about the relation between war and politics or about violence and power *have become inapplicable*" (1970, 9, emphasis mine).

Arendt's main argument in *On Violence* is centered on the way the nuclear age ushered humanity into the prospect of complete self-annihilation and therefore *also* into a new possibility of peace (1970, 4). Her later work, *The Promise of Politics*, can therefore be viewed as a response to the earlier dilemmas she raises about the modern impossibility of warfare and mass destruction. The promise referenced in the title is thus the "promise" of reclaiming the political in ways that could begin to reorient humanity away from the threat of self-annihilation:

> Hence, warfare—from time immemorial the final merciless arbiter in international disputes—has lost much of its effectiveness and nearly all its glamour. The 'apocalyptic' chess game between the superpowers, that is, between those that move on the highest planes of our civilization, is being played according to the rule 'if either 'wins' it is the end of both': it is a game that bears no resemblance to whatever war games preceded it. Its 'rational' goal is deterrence, not victory, and the arms race, no longer a preparation for war, can now be justified only on the grounds that more and more deterrence is the best guarantee of peace. (Arendt 1970, 3-4)

For Arendt, *war has become obsolete* in the modern age in a concrete way, and yet the will to domination and destruction are still the substratum of our cultural ethos, permeating the social nexus in most of the world, despite the self-evident impossibility of continued armed conflict. This is not far from Foucault's statements. However, Arendt aims to reorient our thinking to conceive of politics in a completely different way, given the way modern warfare has arrested of any possibility of a back-and-forth maneuvering. The nuclear age, according to her, has clearly brought an end to war as a functional institution, resulting in an *arms race* that is currently more about *a balancing of fears* than the possibility of *actual victory*. Arendt is quite aware of the objections that could be raised against such a thesis, especially given that any quick look at our world reveals various forms of ongoing armed conflict. She does not deny that regional proxy wars undertaken by those who have not become aware of this dead-end of war will continue and be played out in the peripheries of today's world. While she acknowledges that war is still the *ultima ratio* at a certain level, she also asserts that "the old continuation of politics by means of violence, in the foreign affairs of the underdeveloped countries is no argument against its obsoleteness, and the fact that only small countries without nuclear and biological weapons can still afford it is no consolation" (1970, 6).

Consequently, she argues that the peace that is promised among the powerful in *deterrence theory* due to the practical impossibility of a nuclear war is not necessarily real peace. The "rational" goal of nuclear armament is deterrence, argues Arendt, and therefore the arms race is irrationally justified "only on the grounds that more and more deterrence is the best guarantee of peace" (1970, 4). Yet this form of false peace, according to Arendt, conceals a state of intense war, and thus reveals the insanity of the modern world: "To the question how shall we ever be able to extricate ourselves from *the obvious insanity of this position*, there is no answer" (Arendt 1970, 4, emphasis mine).

Although there are no easy or clear answers for exit strategies from the nuclear threat, as Arendt argues, she also believes in the possibility of new directions. To be sure, Arendt spent most

of her life reflecting on *The Human Condition* (1958), the title of one of her major works, and always resisted being cornered into a nihilistic position. Arendt, in fact, is also well known for her insistence on "human initiative" and the possibility of *the miraculous* that occurs against what she calls "infinite improbabilities" (2005, 112). But most importantly, she insists on questioning and reflecting upon finding possibilities amidst our grave contemporary challenges. Arendt implores us to exercise our ethical responsibility, or at least not to adapt too well to the conditions of the desert. The extremeness and insanity of our current position is the very context in which we need to question and think anew, Arendt insists. After all, the seriousness of our situation should not escape us for a moment, since "never before have we had at our disposal the possibility of putting an end both to humanity and to all organic life" (2005, 145). Thus, Arendt examines the implications of these *possibilities* by questioning the very *impossibility of war* in today's world:

> [W]ar has now ceased to be the *ultima ratio* of negotiations, whereby the goals of a war were determined at the point where negotiations broke off, so that all ensuing military actions really were nothing but a continuation of politics by other means. What is now at stake is something that could, of course, never be a matter for negotiation: the sheer existence of a nation and its people. It is at this point—when war no longer presumes the coexistence of hostile parties as a given and no longer seeks simply to put an end to the conflict between them by force—that war first truly ceases to be a means of politics and, as a war of annihilation, begins to overstep the bounds set by politics and to annihilate politics itself. (2005, 159)

Arendt insists that, as the old historical and conventional parameters by which we measured force and theorized power have shifted so dramatically, such outdated modes of thinking can no longer contribute to our current political thinking or respond to the urgent present needs. In other words, although politics and force were traditionally equated—or at least understood as having some sort of relationship—this has now completely shifted. "The question of the meaning of politics today, however, concerns the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the public means of force used for such ends. What ignites that question is the simple fact that brute force, which was supposed to safeguard life and freedom has become so monstrously powerful that it threatens not only freedom but life as well" (2005, 146-147). She therefore argues that it is no longer adequate or applicable for modern understandings of politics to still be connected to force, and hence "the already highly dubious answer that the modern world provided as to the meaning of politics has itself become doubly questionable" (2005, 147).

Arendt asserts that our nuclear age has dramatically shifted the old paradigms of power and politics in what seems like quantum leaps, such that we need to re-think many of our conceptual categories and approaches. She therefore courageously pushes towards new theoretical and conceptual frontiers, given how dated and expired—even obsolete—our current analytical tools have proven to be in the face of such dramatic shifts. Arendt is willing to go so far as to question all that we have at hand in the face of such destructive technologies, especially given the possibility of annihilation: "There is in fact hardly a single political category or a single political concept that has been passed down to us that, when measured against this latest possibility, does not prove to be theoretically obsolete and practically inapplicable, precisely because in a certain sense what is now at issue for the first time in foreign policy is life itself, the survival of humankind" (2005, 145). Arendt is thus convinced that our theoretical conceptions of the political have become dated in the nuclear age, and, accordingly, can no longer meet our urgent crises and needs. Just as Foucault is convinced that conventional (i.e., centralized or contractual) analyses of

power are no longer adequate ways of understanding power and its functioning in the modern context, Arendt also arrives at a similar position, albeit more radical, in relation to politics.

Based on her analysis of these historic shifts, Arendt insists on delineating violence and politics, and urges a redefinition of the nature of the political as a category that stands in stark contrast to domination and violence. The Israeli academic Annabel Herzog, a leading expert on Arendt and Levinas, focuses on the significance of the distinction Arendt draws between violence and the political. In her essay, "The Concept of Violence in the Work of Hannah Arendt," Herzog argues that Arendt "maintained that violence is not part of the essence of the political" (2017, 165). Herzog therefore argues that Arendt, given her vested interest in creating a violence-free definition of the political, *uses the concept of violence as a catalyst*,. In light of this function of violence in Arendt's project, Herzog proposes that "the concept of violence allowed Arendt to make important distinctions serving to catalyze the categories that constitute her political philosophy" (Herzog, 165).

4.2 How to Re-define the Political

As Herzog argues, despite Arendt's nonviolent definition of the political, much of her work revolves around violence and domination. In fact, two of Arendt's major contributions on these topics carry these themes in their titles: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, her magnum opus and first published book (1951), and *On Violence* (1970), her other smaller but well-known book. Arendt's interest in highlighting exceptions to domination and destruction led her to a lifelong fascination with the conditions that give impetus to coercion and violence, and, by implication, also a fascination with the exceptional modalities that have stood in contrast to such historical momentum(s) of domination. This is why she uses the metaphor of "oasis" to refer to exceptional modalities and the metaphor of "desert" to refer to the momentum of domination and violence (2005, 202). The insistence on the need for a new dialogical political modality therefore emerges in the midst of the modern landscape and its capabilities of mass destruction and annihilation. In order to understand the political significance of Arendt's project, then, we need to historically contextualize her interest in the concept of the political.

The phrase "*concept of the political*" was initially coined by the Nazi political philosopher and jurist Carl Schmitt, and is also the title of the main philosophical work he has become known for—first published in 1932.[22] In his book, Schmitt defines the political along violent categories by reducing the political to an existential deferential between *friend* and *enemy*. Schmitt's political treatise garnered widespread reception among various political perspectives, even opposing ones, and is currently experiencing a renewed revival. Arendt's project is thus a brave political objection when viewed from the context in which it arose. In such a male-dominated and military intellectual age, Arendt's project itself stands like an oasis in the middle of the desert of traditional political theory—to use one of her own metaphors.

Being Jewish during the Holocaust and a female political theorist in a male-dominated intellectual world, it is not surprising that Arendt's project stands against the grain of the political currents of her time. She daringly pushes the question of the political in a completely different

[22] Carl Schmitt not only joined the Nazi party in 1933, but he also actively published anti-Semitic material in which he openly defended the policies and actions of the Nazi regime. He was also imprisoned for eighteen months by the Allied forces after the war but was never formally charged with crimes. After this, he was not allowed to resume any university position for the rest of his life. For an excellent critical analysis of his role, and the redefining of the geography of racism through the Nazi space imaginary, see Trevor J. Barnes and Claudio Minca (2013), and also *Carl Schmitt: The End of Law* by William E. Scheueman (2019).

direction. Being deeply aware of her positionality and of how being a woman, in particular, makes her think and write differently, Arendt once acknowledged that her thinking and writing differed from that of men. When asked whether she wanted her ideas to become influential, Arendt's answer was revealing in more than one way: "You ask about the effects of my work on others. If I may wax ironical, that is a masculine question. Men always want to be terribly influential, but I see that as somewhat external. Do I imagine myself being influential? No. I want to understand. And if others understand—in the same sense that I have understood—that gives me a sense of satisfaction, like feeling at home" (2013, 6). It is therefore not surprising that Arendt pulls away from the traditional idea of politics as animosity, force, and warfare, an idea which was reified by Schmitt in modern discourse. Instead, Arendt reorients the conversation towards a dialogical and relational conception of politics. She does this by returning to the past, particularly ancient Greece and the early Christian community, to get to the root of the problem as well as to find inspiration for the present.

There are significant implications in the fact that the violent definition of the concept of the political by the Nazi political theorist Carl Schmitt is still globally influential while Arendt's nonviolent and dialogical definition of the political is marginalized and rarely discussed, if ever understood. In a forward to Schmitt's well-known book *The Concept of the Political* (2007), Tracy Strong situates Schmitt on the political spectrum, and discusses his level of influence and appeal in the contemporary political theoretical spectrum—from the far left to the far right (2007). As she states,

> from the beginning of his career, Schmitt was taken seriously on all parts of the political spectrum. The young Carl Friedrich (later to become a central author of the postwar German constitution, a Harvard professor, and president of the American Political Science Association) cited him approvingly, in 1930, on Article 48 of the Weimar constitution, which permitted commissarial dictatorship […]. Indeed, all of the Frankfurt School (especially Water Benjamin) spoke highly of him, often after 1933. More recently the Italian and French Left, as well as those associated with the radical journal *Telos*, have approvingly investigated his nonideological conception of the political. The European Right, as well as American conservatives of a Straussian persuasion, find in his work at least the beginnings of a theory of authority that might address the supposed failings of individualistic liberalism. (Strong 2007, x-xi)

In more than one way, Arendt and Schmitt represent a political polarity that is evocative of modernity and the critiques of modernity. The interest in Schmitt's notion of the political within such a wide political spectrum is indicative of significant questions. Strong herself asks, "What do we learn about our intellectual interests and problems in the attention now being paid to Carl Schmitt?" (2007, xiii). She provides an answer via an analysis that points to the crisis of ethics in modern politics, where the centrality of the notion of "enemy" in foreign affairs renders Schmitt's political paradigm compatible with the political ethos of our times.

The strikingly opposing views of these two intellectuals are reflective of modernity's destruction, yet the contrast they illustrate represents the promise of an alternative. In his essay, "Revolutions and Constitutions: Hannah Arendt's Challenge to Carl Schmitt" (1997), William Scheuerman discusses how these two figures represent the political polarity of the 20th century, the justification of senseless violence and the critique of totalitarianism:

> No two names better recall the polarized character of political life in mid-century Europe than Carl Schmitt and Hannah Arendt. Like many of his peers in the Weimar intelligentsia, Schmitt eagerly polemicized against the Weimar Republic and actively sought its destruction. In 1933 he sold his

> soul to the Nazis and soon became one of their most impressive intellectual apologists. In striking contrast, Arendt risked her life to help antifascist and fellow Jews struggling to escape Germany in the immediate aftermath of the Nazi takeover. (1997, 141)

When Schmitt's widespread influence, especially the recently revived interest, is viewed in light of the general dismissal of Arendt's definition of the political, we come to see more clearly how contemporary political paradigms, in their Right and Left orientations, are more compatible with a Nazi theorist than with Arendt's nonviolent and dialogical redefinitions. Moreover, the disparity in the attention paid to these two strikingly different German political theorists is reflective of the ethos of domination that underpins modern political paradigms. Such reverence for Schmitt's authoritarian and violent definitions of the political also echo the execution of Socrates, as Arendt argues. Although Arendt never directly addresses Schmitt, it is obvious that she is mounting a response and challenge to him, particularly to his justification of political violence and the centrality of the "enemy" in his definition of the political (see Scheuerman 1997). Arendt, in contrast, defines the political on the basis of friendship. Because a community is not made of equals, Arendt explains that a "community comes into being through equalizing, *isasthenai*" (2005, 17). Friendship, for Arendt, is beyond material exchange or survival needs. Rather, on the contrary, for her, the "political, noneconomic equalization is friendship, *philia*" (2005, 17). But at the core of the political implications of friendship lies the notion of dialogue and the capacity to put language and opinions in motion. Arendt argues that "the political element in friendship is that in the truthful dialogue each of the friends can understand the truth inherent in the other's opinion" (2005, 17-18). Arendt's conception of the political on the basis of friendship thus stands in stark contrast to Schmitt's conception on the basis of animosity:

> This kind of understanding—seeing the world (as we rather tritely say today) from the other fellow's point of view—is the political kind of insight par excellence. If we wanted to define, traditionally, the one outstanding virtue of the statesman, we could say that it consists in understanding the greatest possible number and variety of realities […] as those realities open themselves up to the various opinions of citizens and their opinions so that the commonness of this world becomes apparent. (2005, 18)

For Arendt, Socrates is the figure who represents this kind of horizontal and dialogical world of politics, in which the opinions of the people of the polis move and intersect in diverse directions on an equal basis. Arendt thus argues that "Socrates seems to have believed that the political function of the philosopher was to help establish this kind of common world, built on the understanding of friendship, in which rulership is needed" (2005, 18). In emphasizing the equalizing power of friendship, Arendt evokes the model of Socrates as a political archetype given his mode of dialogue as a means of doing politics. The centrality of the notion of "friendship" in the political understanding of Socrates helps Arendt redefine the concept of the political as a challenge to the hierarchical values implicit in conventional definitions of politics. Consequently, Arendt frames the execution of Socrates as being representative of the historic shift that defines the trajectory of the Western tradition and the forgetfulness of the dialogical modality of the political. Arendt's emphasis on friendship in redefining politics parallels Gadamer's later writings. Gadamer emphasizes friendship as a way of presenting a dialogical and relational conception of

modern politics that does not repress difference or otherness.[23] In her essay "Solidarity and Tradition in Gadamer's Hermeneutics" (2012), Warnke explains why Gadamer takes up the notion of friendship in his discussion of solidarity. She argues that "Gadamer rejects the idea that the life together that friends have either begins or ends in identification. If friends are at home with one another it is not because they share affinities or similarities with one another […]. Rather, they acknowledge and appreciate one another's distinctiveness" (2012, 9). Gadamer himself says, "We *grant to one another our being as other* […] in brief that is true friendship" (1999, 9, emphasis mine). For both Gadamer and Arendt, the suppression of dialogue in the Western tradition implies the suppression of otherness. The execution of Socrates is thus understood by both as representing a seminal moment that signifies *the forgetting of dialogue and the repression of the political*. The widening gap between the Academy and the Marketplace in our tradition(s), according to Arendt, has had profound consequences for the place of politics in the Western tradition resulting in the forgetting of *the political* in our thinking.

One could argue that the notion of the political advanced by the Belgian political theorist Chantal Mouffe stands in parallel to the dialogical ontology that Gadamer and Arendt propose. Mouffe's notion of the political not only allows room for difference and agonism, but is actually defined around such intersubjective and interactive dynamics. Mouffe (1996) sees democracy as a mode of being and a mode of ordering being. For her, democracy "is not the application of the democratic model to a wider context," as in the conception of democracy as a form of government or political style (1996, 245). Rather, for her, democracy is a "regime" that "concerns the symbolic ordering of social relations" (1996, 245). Moreover, this symbolic ordering of social relations is not a reincarnation of *liberalism's* pluralist values and worldviews. Rather, it is a kind of *pluralism*, along Arendt's lines, "at the axiological level," which Mouffe sees as a kind of agonistic matrix that occurrs within a concrete context, is always predicated on tension, and hence is in a state of constant flux. Mouffe's redefinition of the political around a relational situatedness aligns her in more than one way to both Gadamer and Arendt.

By redefining the political along the lines of a relational tension, Arendt's later writings align with Gadamer's emphasis on the primacy of dialogue and the inescapability of encounter. Sullivan, in his introduction to Gadamer's autobiography, highlights Gadamer's radical re-conception of politics. Although Gadamer does not directly engage with politics or political theory in *Truth and Method*, for example, Sullivan argues that the earlier philosophical orientations in Gadamer's career "stand out as way stations for a new and startingly radical way of conceiving politics" (1985, xvi). Both Gadamer and Arendt make us think of power, politics, and dialogue in completely novel ways, and their respective emphases on both dialogue and difference offer creative responses to the political impasses at which many of our outdated political paradigms have arrived. Arendt, for example, forwards her intersubjective conception of politics by emphasising the notion of the "in-between." She does this by undoing two of the biggest and most central assumptions in Western political philosophy. The first assumption Arendt unpacks is the conception of the human being as a "political animal" (2005, 95). Arendt questions there being "something political *in* man that belongs to his essence," and refutes this by insisting that "man is apolitical," and that politics is that which "arises between men and so quite outside of man" (2005, 95). Just as Gadamer defines understanding as an intersubjective process, Arendt redefines the political in an intersubjective manner, as arising in active relationality. "There is therefore no real

[23] See also Gadamer's essay on "Friendship and Solidarity" (1999), which presents a different kind of political solidarity based on friendship, and which, according to the modality he presents, does not repress difference and otherness.

political substance. Politics arises in what lies *between men* and is established as relationship" (2005, 95).

The second assumption she tackles is the denial of our plurality and the illusion of our singularity as individuals. Arendt argues that this assumption is rooted in a certain anthropomorphic projection of God's unity and singularity onto human subjectivity, which, consequentially, leads to the idea that there can "be only man, while men become a more or less successful repetition of the same" (2005, 95). Arendt shows how this individualistic conception forms the basis of much of our political and economic thinking, and how the concept of the lone individual "lies at the basis of the Hobbesian 'state of nature' as a 'war of all against all'" (2005, 95).

Moreover, Arendt opposes traditional/conventional definitions of politics by challenging the ways we tend to view and discuss politics within violent parameters, or with respect to lying and conniving as she discusses in her book *Lying in Politics* (1972). Thus, given Arendt's perspective, although various things (like violence and lying) can occur within the realm of politics, they do not necessarily define politics. The conflation of politics and violence, for her, is therefore incidental. "For Arendt," Herzog argues, "violence is non-political not because it is never part of the political space of appearance, but because, as instrumentality, it is not a necessary part of that space" (2016, 171). This is one of the main reasons Arendt urges us to view the development of capabilities as the dead-end of modern warfare and as a new context for rethinking politics. Arendt does this by differentiating between the kind of politics (or forms of ruling) that are more or less a continuation of war and coercion, and the kind of politics that have the shape of language and dialogue. In doing so, Arendt answers Foucault's conundrum regarding the idea that "the history that bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language" (1997, 116).

Arendt thus redefines the political by offering a new hermeneutics of the dialogical *and* the political. *Just as Foucault differentiates between domination and power relations, Arendt also differentiates between ruling and politics.* This is why she insists that the political has to be released and untangled from conventional and reductive conceptualizations that delimit it to ruling and governance. Arendt therefore not only redefines the political, but she also widens the scope of the dimension of the political. For her, *not all forms of ruling can be considered political in the sense in which she defines the political, and not all fields outside of conventional politics can be considered apolitical*. In fact, as Arendt argues when discussing modalities of ruling in which the dialogical is completely repressed, "there are "plenty of historical examples of people being shunted aside as active agents" (2005, 57). She is aware and wary of these modalities, "whether in the form of what seems to us old-fashioned tyranny, where the will of one man is given free rein, or in the modern form of totalitarianism, in which alleged higher, impersonal 'historical forces' and processes are unleashed, and human beings are enslaved to their services" (2005, 98). Arendt is thus clear about her views on modalities that are based on force and coercion: "The nature of this form of domination," she asserts "is truly apolitical" (2005, 98).

Arendt thus contends that it is the equation between politics and force that gave impetus to the false utopian hope that we can rid ourselves of politics to save ourselves—a view she finds less than naïve. She therefore attributes the contemporary widespread global prejudice against politics and politicians to the linking of politics to war, tyranny, and destruction. Arendt writes that people "fear that humanity could destroy itself through politics and through the means of force now at its disposal, and, linked with this fear, the hope that humanity will come to its senses and rid the world, not of humankind, but of politics" (2005, 97). Such a naïve understanding of politics, for

Arendt, is connected to both our philosophical tradition of disdain for politics *and* to our historical and conventional way of conflating politics with brute force. In undoing our forgetting of the political, Arendt is attempting to delineate a new space for politics by disconnecting it from the use of force. This is why she pushes the issue of the paradox of technology to its logical end and asserts the end of war. According to her perspective, the nuclear age has, paradoxically, given rise to a transformative moment in which politics can be re-defined apart from violence.

Since, for Arendt, war has run its course in the nuclear age, politics is no longer the other face of war. For her, politics is *not* the continuation of war by other means, as Foucault argues in his inversion of the well-known saying of Clausewitz; rather, politics has been deformed ever since philosophy distanced itself from the "necessitates of life" and transcended the need for involvement in the polis. While Foucault's inversion of Clausewitz's statement frames the modality of politics as a continuation of war, both Gadamer and Arendt push in ethical directions by creating a modality of politics as a relational the oasis that appears within the desert of brutality and force. Although there is currently tension in the discussion on community and identity politics, Gadamer and Arendt offer views of community that do not repress singularity or diversity. Biskowski stresses the importance of bringing Gadamer and Arendt into a dialogue precisely because "Arendt and Gadamer share a commitment to make explicit theoretically, and to nurture practically, forms of communal life that concretely embody dialogue and speech, understanding and judgment" (1998, 230).

Gadamer in fact stresses the need to examine violence separately from politics, since it is through the symbolism of a culture that violence and peace take on certain significance. He therefore argues that the kind of violence that humans inflict or are capable of goes beyond biological animalistic survival inclinations: "Culture is not the organization of our free time: it is all that stops men from assaulting one another, and from being worse than any animal. Worse. For animals, unlike men, know no war: no other species fights with its own kind to the point of annihilation" (1998, 10). Gadamer therefore stresses the function of language in forming cultures that orient us towards specific collective value systems and behaviors. He argues that *the word* achieves community because it helps "recognition of oneself in another, and recognition along with others of what is affirmed by everyone—in our cooperation, in our goals, in our bringing about what is just—even if it is difficult and demanding for each individual to concede or renounce certain things" (1998, 10). Because the word achieves community, Gadamer thus argues that "the word is the highest form in which mankind can shape its world and its fate, the great final syllable of which is called death, and its hope, God" (1998, 11). By highlighting the relational and intersubjective in an ontological manner, both Gadamer and Arendt depart from our dated conceptions of violence and politics. Their deconstructions and redefinitions thus end up providing possible exit strategies from our contemporary predicaments.

The promise of a new kind of politics for Arendt thus lies in recognizing the fact of human plurality within the polis, and in working together to organize this plurality into a hospitable condition for coexistence. She argues that people "organize themselves politically according to certain essential commonalities found within or abstracted from an absolute chaos of differences" (2005, 93). But to the question, what are the conditions that repress the appearance of such a world, Arendt has her own diagnosis.

4.3 The Flight of the Philosopher: The Denial of Plurality and the Example of Socrates

Arendt directly traces the suppression of the dialogical to the great rift that opened between *thought* and *action* in Greek philosophy, manifest in Plato's disdain for dealing with matters in the *polis*. For Plato, Arendt argues, politics represented the unverified opinions of ignorant citizens. The problem, according to her, arose from Plato's disgust for the ignorance of the masses after the execution of his mentor, Socrates. Following this, Plato abandoned the polis and retreated to the Academy, leaving the "herds" in the "market-place" to mind their mundane affairs in the polis. Arendt poignantly argues that the "spectacle of Socrates submitting his own doxa [opinion] to the irresponsible opinions of the Athenians, and being outvoted by a majority, made Plato despise opinions and yearn for absolute standards" (2005, 8).

Given the tension she points out between philosophy and politics, it is not surprising that, throughout her life, Arendt refused to assume the title of *philosopher* and always chose—if she was pressed to identify her work—to say that she was engaged in *political theory*. The disdain for politics is exactly the concern, even the accusation, that Arendt raises *against the philosopher*. In an interview, Arendt explains why she declines being called a "political philosopher" when the interviewer addresses her as such:

> The expression "political philosophy," which I avoid, is extremely burdened by tradition. When I talk about these things, academically or nonacademically, I always mention that there is a vital tension between philosophy and politics. That is, between man as a thinking being and man as an acting being, there is a tension that does not exist in natural philosophy, for example. Like everyone else, the philosopher can be objective with regard to nature, and when he says what he thinks about it he speaks in the name of all mankind. But he cannot be objective or neutral with regard to politics. Not since Plato! (Arendt 2013, 4)

Jean Grondin, the main biographer of Gadamer, mentions something similar in referencing Gadamer's reluctance concerning the label "philosopher" and the idea that philosophy was his main pursuit—he thus names his approach philosophical hermeneutics rather than referring to it as a hermeneutic philosophy. Grondin argues that some critics attribute Gadamer's reluctance to the fact that his earlier career was overshadowed by towering philosophical figures (2003, 4-5). Grondin underscores Gadamer's interest in artistic, literary, ethical, and dialogical issues as reason for his desire to maintain a certain distance from philosophy as an exclusive field. (2003, 5). For Arendt the reasons are different, but are not too far from Gadamer's. Arendt says: "I do not belong to the circle of philosophers. My profession, if one can even speak of it at all, is political theory. I neither feel like a philosopher, nor do I believe that I have been accepted in the circle of philosophers" (2012, 3)

Nevertheless, given the centrality of Socrates for both Gadamer and Arendt, it is not surprising that the two scholars would decline declarations of being wise philosophers. After all, Socrates defined wisdom as the recognition of the finitude of our knowledge by *redefining knowing as knowing not*. As Gadamer writes, "a knowledge of our own ignorance is what human wisdom is" (1985, 185). Being interested in reviving the Socratic "art of refutation," which drives opponents into dead-ends, Gadamer argues that the interlocutor "with whom Socrates carries on his conversation is convicted of his own ignorance by means of his 'knowledge'" (1985, 185). Gadamer therefore asserts that *knowledge is condemnation* and leads to a "life of illusions" (1985, 185).

The Socratic interest in openness stands, of course, in complete contrast to Plato and his legacy of creating secure foundations for truth and desiring the tyranny of the philosophers in his Republic. Arendt, in parallel to Gadamer's idea, writes that the "conflict between the philosopher and the polis had come to a head because Socrates had made new demands on philosophy precisely because he didn't claim to be wise. And it is in this situation that Plato designed his *tyranny of truth*, in which it is not what is temporally good, of which men can be persuaded, but eternal truth, of which men cannot be persuaded, that is to rule the city" (2005, 11-12, emphasis mine). This is one of the gulfs that still haunts philosophy, according to Arendt—the disdain for interacting with our fellow human beings in the polis. This is also one of the main reasons for the forgetfulness of the political, because, for Arendt, we fall back into Plato's "tyranny of truth" when we view perspectivism and plurality as sins (2005, 12). Equally, for Gadamer, we have already fallen into the "tyranny of truth" when we fell into the tyranny of method. However, for Gadamer, the gulf occurs with the ascendency of science, as discussed in preceding chapters. The narrowing of questions of truth to methodic and scientific measures, in contrast to the Socratic dialogical openness, is therefore a deeply political matter and not merely an epistemological one. This *tyranny of truth* is echoed in the way Arendt locates the blind spot of Western philosophy in its *forgetfulness of the political*:

> The gulf between philosophy and politics opened historically with the trial of condemnation of Socrates, which in the history of political thought plays the same role of a turning point that the trial and condemnation of Jesus plays in the history of religion. Our tradition of political thought began when the death of Socrates made Plato despair of polis life and, at the same time doubt certain fundamentals of Socrates' teachings. (2005, 7)

Plato drew several conclusions from the death of his mentor, Arendt argues, especially the stark distinction between truth and opinions. Plato was convinced of the need to secure truth on firm foundations (2005, 8). There were other conclusions, too, with far reaching consequences, including *the futility of dialogue*, *the plurality of opinions*, and *the danger of living in the city*. These ideas were not simply post-Socratic conclusions, but stood in striking contrast to the basic tenents of Socratic teaching "The opposition of truth and opinion was certainly the most anti-Socratic conclusion that Plato drew from Socrates' trial," argues Arendt, because "Socrates, in failing to convince the city, had shown that the city is no safe place for the philosopher, not only in the sense that his life is not safe because of the truth he possesses, but also in the much more important sense that the city cannot be trusted with preserving the memory of the philosopher" (2005, 8). In contrast to the failed, punished, and cosmopolitan reformer, Plato wanted to become a philosopher, in search of truth, secure from the city and the chaos of its ignorant masses.

Arendt's main aim is to challenge the political paradigm that emerges from this rift between thought and action. She wants to seriously reconsider the conventional conception of politics that has been constructed under the weight of this burdensome tradition that has endured over the centuries and is still haunting us in the present. The *disdain for politics* is mainstream, and very old, as Arendt argues above, to the point that politics is vilified and looked down upon even by the public in the present (2005, 114). However, this is inevitable, according to her, given the deep philosophical roots that underpin the contempt of the masses, as well as the Western tradition's underlying belief in the need to control and patronize "ignorant" citizens. Yet, for Arendt, the history of our deep anti-political inclinations is itself political. "Any talk of politics in our time has to begin with those prejudices that all of us who aren't professional politicians have against politics. *Our shared prejudices are themselves political* in the broadest sense" (2005, 96, emphasis

mine). According to Arendt, an aversion to the political, to action, and to the dialogical, has thus plagued the Western tradition, and led to defining the political as merely "the relationship between the rulers and the ruled" (2005, 97).

For Gadamer, too, the blind spot of domination in Western philosophy is an issue that runs deep, to the very assumptions that underlie the core of our epistemological categories and that justify a monologic attitude towards the world. Gadamer considers it an urgent task to reclaim the political as a means of increasing our ethical responsibility. "The hermeneutic task of integrating the monologic of the sciences into the communicative consciousness includes the task of exercising practical, social, and political responsibility" (1985, 182). This, of course, according to his perspective, is a reference to the deeply rooted self-enclosure in our Western traditions, more recently fuelled by the monologue of science. Like Arendt, Gadamer sees in antiquity, starting from Plato's metaphysics, the anxiety to produce knowledge on secure foundations. However, for him, the obsession with securing verifiable knowledge has never been as intense as in modernity (2013, 579). For Gadamer, as for Foucault, the issues of domination and the will to control are not exclusive to contexts conventionally defined as political, but are also pertinent to our modes of knowing and understanding the world. We can better understand the forgetfulness of the political that Arendt highlights when recognizing the forgetfulness of the dialogical that Gadamer raises.

If, for Gadamer, the malaise of modernity lies in the ascendency of science and its supremacy over other modes of knowing, which also had roots in antiquity, Arendt's main dilemma with modernity is a problem that had already started in antiquity. Arendt's main contention has to do with *the treason of the philosopher*. In the *Promise of Politics*, Arendt centres her critique of Western philosophy around the philosophical aversion to the Socratic commitment to remain firmly rooted in human affairs—engaged in an open dialogue, right in the center of the marketplace, in conversation with equals, exchanging opinions. For her, the rejection of Socrates and the trajectory of a political philosophy modeled after Plato's duality between the transcendent *idea* and the life of *action* implies *the rejection of the political*, given the necessity and *indignity of action* within the polis. When given the choice in such a dualistic paradigm, one escapes the polis, as did Plato himself.

4.4 The Denial of Plurality and the Metaphysics of Subjectivity

One of the main parameters in Arendt's conception of politics, as mentioned above, is the fact of human plurality, which goes against the grain of the *metaphysics of subjectivity* and the primacy of the singular self in modern philosophy. The duality of subject/object and the attempt to transcend the world as an observing subject are illusions for Arendt, because the "worldliness of living things means that there is no subject that is not also an object and appears as such to somebody else, who guarantees its 'objective' reality'" (1971, 19). Arendt brings living being back into an interactive dynamic of both perceiving and being perceived, even at the most basic level of life. "Living beings, men and animals, are not just in the world, they are *of the world*, and this precisely because they are subject and objects—perceiving and being perceived—at the same time" (1971, 20). We understand the significance of what she is attempting to undo when we see how she considers conceptions of subjectivity and self as being directly connected to issues of politics and domination. The forms of duality that underpin our modern forms of domination are directly linked to the Cartesian duality, for both Gadamer and Arendt, according to which our subjective perception stands in contrast to an objective external reality.

Arendt defies, as does Gadamer, one of the most persistent assumptions underlying the modernist worldview: the metaphysics of subjectivity. This metaphysics cannot easily be separated from other modern assumptions, particularly those surrounding our notions of agency, objectivity, and truth. Gadamer's main thesis rests on questioning such assumptions, which is why Richard Bernstein describes Gadamer's project as being aimed at "exorcis[ing] the Cartesian Anxiety by moving beyond objectivism and relativism […]. Gadamer's project—and all of the bypaths that he has followed—can be interpreted as being addressed to this issue" (1983, 165). Given Gadamer and Arendt's respective interest in questioning and undoing the metaphysics of transcendent subjectivity, it is natural that their projects of are predicated on questioning issues of domination and control, because for both of them our understanding of subjectivity cannot be disconnected from questions of domination.

By referring back to the understanding of Socrates regarding our internal dialogue, Arendt succeeds in undoing the illusion of our unified singular subjectivity. She draws fresh political and ethical conclusions by emphasizing our inner plurality from an experiential perspective. Culturally and psychologically we are so accustomed to our singularity, and yet, "the fundamental discovery of Socrates," Arendt contends, is our internal plurality, "because in thought I am two-in-one; therefore I do not live only with others, as one, but also with myself" (2005, 20). For Arendt, as it is with Gadamer, this plurality occurs in language. Plurality is always experienced in language, whether in conversation with others or in our experience of plurality in a polyphonic internal conversation. "The factuality of speech and the fact of human plurality correspond to each other, not only in the sense that I use words for communication with those with whom I am together in the world, but in the even more relevant sense that speaking with myself I live together with myself" (2005, 20). This is echoed in Gadamer who sees our experience unfolding within language. "It is from language as a medium that our whole experience of the world, and especially hermeneutical experience, unfold" (2013: 473). Gadamer also emphasizes the inner dimension of pluralistic thinking, or what he refers to as "the unending dialogue of the soul with itself, which is what thinking is" (1985, 189-190).

According to both scholars, our internal linguistic and hermeneutic experience is therefore the very context of such an internal dialogue. In other words, inner contradictions, multiple hermeneutics, and contrasting perspectives are experienced all within the landscape of our linguistic subjectivity. This is why, for Socrates, the ethical condition is connected to finding inner harmony in the midst of this cacophony. Describing this, Arendt explains that, to become ethical, one is required to "be of one mind with himself, in agreement with himself (*homognomonei heauto*), because somebody who contradicts himself is unreliable" (2005, 20). Arendt builds on this in-depth analysis the connection between harmony within inner plurality and the necessity of ethical conduct within an external plurality. Plurality, which is dialogically defined for Arendt, thus becomes the anthropological constant that characterizes human existence.

Arendt therefore establishes the ethical as connected to the inescapability of plurality within the self and without. She uses the Socratic conception of virtue to examine the ethical implications of our inner plurality. By emphasizing the practice of dialogue among equals as it arose in the Greek agora, Arendt aims to highlight the ethical limits within a society. She draws profound political implications from this discovery on several levels. She establishes inner and outer plurality as an inherent feature of the human experience, and thus affirms that our struggle with difference and diversity is already experienced within. She therefore establishes internal plurality as the dynamic that defines our innermost intimate subjective experience. "This is also the reason why," argues Arendt, "the plurality of men can never entirely be abolished and why the

escape of the philosopher from the realm of plurality remains an illusion" (2005, 20). Most importantly, Arendt highlights the dynamic of dialogue as the activity that frames this plurality. She writes that "even if I were to live entirely by myself I would, as long as I am alive, live in the condition of plurality. I have to put up with myself, and nowhere does this I-with myself show more clearly than in pure thought, *which is always a dialogue* between the two-in-one" (2005, 20, emphasis mine).

In *On Dialogue*, David Bohm, a theoretical physicist who wrote and worked extensively on the notion and practice of dialogue, underscores the need to redefine dialogue. He understands dialogue differently than is generally understood by its uses in the vernacular or in literary studies. Bohm, like Arendt and Gadamer, also places the dialogical within plurality and within a linguistically constituted mode of being. He writes:

> I give a meaning to the word 'dialogue' that is somewhat different from what is commonly used. The derivations of words often help to suggest a deeper meaning. 'Dialogue' comes from the Greek word *dialogos*. *Logos* means the 'word,' or in our case we would think of the 'meaning of the word,' And *dia* means 'through' – it doesn't mean 'two.' A dialogue can be among any number of people, not just two. Even one person can have a sense of dialogue within himself, if the spirit of the dialogue is present. (Bohm 1996, 6)

Plurality and *the polyphonic conversation* (i.e., dialogue) according to Arendt, are the features that define the human condition both subjectively and objectively. They are the most inescapable experiences of the human condition no matter how much we delude ourselves with the assumed singularity of a unified autonomous subjectivity or with the "illusion" of the "tyranny of truth." Arendt, as a result, questions the capacity of any philosopher who thinks himself capable of escaping the plurality of the polis. The philosopher, according to her, is paradoxically in need of external plurality to experience inner unity, or singularity of self:

> The philosopher who, trying to escape the human condition of plurality takes his flight into absolute solitude, is more radically delivered to this plurality inherent in every human being than anyone else, since it is companionship with others that, calling me out of the dialogue of thought, makes me one again—one single, unique human being speaking with but one voice and recognizable as such by all others. (2005, 21)

By establishing the relationship between dialogue and the promise of a new foundation of the political, Arendt paves the way for a new conception of the political, away from the modality of politics as the continuation of war. It is not war and battle that are inescapable anthropological constants, for Arendt, but our dialogical condition within a plurality. Arendt is also well known for redefining power apart from categories of force and violence—even as opposites. Power, for Arendt, is connected to the dialogical rather than to violence. "Indeed, one of the most obvious distinctions between power and violence," writes Arendt, "is that power always stands in need of numbers, whereas violence up to a point can manage without them because it relies on implements" (1970, 41-42). As Herzog argues, "Power and violence belong to different categories" for Arendt, because she redefines power through notions of legitimacy, which "relates to the act of association which grounds any political community" (2016, 169). "Violence has nothing to do with power," argues Herzog, because, for Arendt, "in no way is violence intrinsically related to the process of group formation" (2016, 168-169).

Arendt's conception of the political is therefore directly connected to the dialogical condition of humanity, and as a result she redefines politics through this given plurality, manifest

in collective power, "namely, through people living together" (2016, 171). Arendt emphasizes the ability, not just of simply living together, but of living with *difference*. "Politics is based on the fact of human plurality," Arendt contends, because it "deals with the coexistence and association of *different* men. Men organize themselves politically according to certain essential commonalities found within or abstracted from an absolute chaos of differences" (2005, 93).

Since politics, for Arendt, is defined around the collective power of a people coming together and living together with all their *difference*s, she argues that violence is not a given in politics. "Violence," for Arendt, argues Herzog "is neither essentially political nor inherent to the necessities of life" (2016, 174). Arendt's distinction between politics and violence goes against the grain of traditional political theory. "Arendt unequivocally contends that violence is not natural, and that she does not understand politics as reflecting a state of monopoly over the legitimate use of force, which puts an end to generalized violence. Therefore, violence exists but is not a natural stage, and is not inherent to the private and public spheres" (Herzog 2016, 176).

The interconnectedness between the dialogical and political is central in understanding Arendt's new political hermeneutics. Her communal, dialogical, and pluralistic definitions reorient the discussion in a way that marks a departure from traditional political theory, particularly in its conflations with war and violence. As a result, Arendt's new political hermeneutics benefits Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics in more than way. The equation of the political with dialogical and communal implications directly points to the ineluctability of political implications in the dialogical condition. On the other hand, Gadamer's shift of the dialogical to an ontological frame helps in raising the bar when dealing with Arendt's problematic of the philosopher hiding in his ivory tower. The inescapability of the dialogical horizon, when addressed from the perspectives of both Gadamer and Arendt, moves the discussion to a different level and raises new questions about the tension between the political and ethical, and, by implication, the impossibility of escaping either.

When Gadamer re-introduces the primacy of the dialogical in its actual functioning as the ontological mode of the human condition, he presents the problematic of *the avoidance of the political* as a bigger and deeper problem. The denial of our dialogical ontology is not simply a tension between philosophy and the political, because, for Gadamer, the avoidance of dialogue is more than the avoidance of the tension with politics or the fear of action. It is rather the complete and full *repression of the other and of difference.* For Gadamer, openness towards the "other" is not limited to encountering physical others as much as it is a mode of being in the world. His notion of dialogue is always an encounter with a "Thou." It is not about the verbal exchange between interlocutors, but a modality in which we open ourselves to an interactive universe (2013, 366-367). Through this modality, Gadamer seeks to overcome the finalized positions of Western philosophy. As Bernstein puts it,

> overcoming the Cartesian Anxiety is learning to live without the idea of the 'infinite intellect,' finality, and absolute knowledge. The approach that pervades so much of Gadamer's thinking and helps to give it unified perspective, his practical-moral orientation, is directed toward reminding us, and calling us back to, an understanding of what it means to be finite historical beings who are always 'on the way' and who must assume personal responsibility for our decisions and choices. (1983, 166)

Although on the surface Gadamer's project may seem like an approach for dealing with ancient texts or literary forms, or even a new aesthetic theory, it is more of a philosophical paradigm shift—a philosophical mode of questioning with profound political and ethical implications.

Bernstein therefore argues that, although Gadamer may seem "initially concerned with the analysis of works of art, texts and traditions," what he is ultimately doing is showing us that we are "truly dialogical beings—always in conversation," and, moreover, that it is wrong to think in ways that "dichotomiz[e] the world into 'objects' which exist *an sich* and 'subjects' that are detached from and stand over against them […]. We are always *in medias res*: there are not absolute beginnings or endings. Experience is always anticipatory and open" (1983, 165-166). Gadamer himself argues that going beyond a fixed subjectivity and liberating ourselves to experience our dialogical condition opens us to the world in a whole new way, beyond our fixed notions or even theoretical categories: "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" (Gadamer 2013, 364, emphasis mine).

Therefore, given Gadamer's perspective, which is like that of Arendt, the main question about dialogue is *not* an epistemological one. Gadamer is not concerned with how to enter a dialogue, the know-how of techniques, or the content of each side. The main question about dialogue that concerns him does not relate to the methodology of conducting a good or bad dialogue, but is, rather, about the denial of the ontology of language and the intellectual monologues that we have imprisoned ourselves within. For him, dialogue is about encountering otherness and the movement of language; about how we are *always already* in a state of dialogue and how dialogue is ontologically separate from the control of its participants.

Gadamer's emphasis on the *risk* we take in encountering *the other* highlights the underlying fears and anxieties around allowing the other her being as a dialogical partner. Hence, Gadamer is aware of the tension that is endemic to dialogical interaction, and, by implication, the power relations present in it. This is what makes the political ineluctable and inescapable for both parties in the "in-between" space that occurs among people. The notion of the "in-between" is a central concept for both Arendt and Gadamer because it captures in more than one way their "intersubjective" and dynamic conception of the human condition. Arendt brings the concept to the surface with her relational conception of the political, which in turn highlights the dialogical dynamic within the political. Gadamer, in a similar fashion, emphasizes the notion of the "in-between" in the process of *play*, where our subjectivity is taken up.

Since the dialogical, for Gadamer, is a relational dynamic that takes place in the *play* of its interlocutors, he highlights the importance of the concept of the "in-between" in his understanding of the dynamic of play. Gadamer defines play as "a process that takes place 'in between'" (2013, 113), and therefore argues that "the more genuine a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner […]. [I]t is generally more correct to say that we fall into conversation, or that we become involved in it" (2013, 401). "No one knows in advance what will 'come out' of a conversation," Gadamer insists (2013, 401). For Arendt, this is precisely where the possibility of the political arises, in the in-between space where tension arises between presumed equals. Moreover, for Gadamer, this is also where the possibility of the ethical arises. Sullivan, in his introduction to Gadamer's autobiography, underscores Gadamer's dialogical rehabilitation of Plato's ethics as found in the Socratic dialogues. Away from fixed notions of truth, Gadamer, like Arendt, shifts the emphasis to the movement of dialogue and away from doctrine:

> Ethics is not a matter of imposing otherworldly doctrine upon life, but rather a matter of submitting privileged doctrine to the testing ground of lively discourse. The Platonic Socrates is always willing to do this. He privileges none of his 'cloudy' ideas and thereby reveals that they are hypothetical rather than doctrinal. What then begins is a *play* of hypothetical ideas, and it is in the play of or relatedness of ideas that the ethical life is lived." (1985, xv)

For Gadamer, then, the "in-between" space requires courage, since it involves risk taking. We cannot control outcomes, or the content of what others contribute. We are not simply the "doers" of a conversation; we are also done to. "Understanding or its failure is like an event that happens to us. Thus, we can say that something was a good conversation or that it was ill fated. All this shows that a conversation has a spirit of its own, and that the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth within it" (Gadamer 2013, 401).

Ontological hermeneutics is therefore relevant to Arendt's later relation of thinking and acting. Arendt, after all, is compelled to also revisit the Socratic dialogues in a different manner because, for her, dialogue is not simply a linguistic abstract exchange, but rather a mode of being in the world. This echoes Gadamer's own conception of hermeneutics as an *occurrence*. For Gadamer, "understanding itself is a historical event" (2013, 324). In other words, new thoughts are new events, which means Gadamer casts thought as an activity. Gadamer wants to push his ontological conception even further than the usual religious emphasis on the Word. For him "the event of language corresponds to the finitude of man in a far more radical sense than it is brought out in Christian thinking about the Word" (Gadamer 2013, 473).

Both scholars widen our understanding of *thought* and *action* by transcending such a reductionist duality. In her later writings, Arendt re-evaluates the power of thought *as a form of action*, paralleling Gadamer's ontological shift of hermeneutics. Moreover, because meaning arises in plurality and intersubjectivity, newness is more likely to emerge in dialogue. Gadamer argues that "in genuine dialogue, something emerges that is contained in neither of the partners by himself" (2013, 478). This is why, for both Gadamer and Arendt, a new hermeneutics that helps us undo the dominant hermeneutics of a mainstream culture is far more threatening than physical acts of resistance.

Arendt is aware of the power of language and the possibilities it offers for more radical shifts in the undoing of our underlying assumptions (more so than mere physical acts), which is why she uses the metaphor of miracle. This is precisely why the dialogical is far riskier and more dangerous than any physical act of resistance. After all, Socrates was executed, not because he was engaged in action as conventionally defined, but because he opened the gates of the linguistic fortress without even getting up. Arendt, in her later reflections, affirms the storm-like power of thought in its active ability to awaken people:

> The Athenians told him [Socrates] that thinking was subversive, that *the wind of thought was a hurricane sweeping away all the established signs* by which men orient themselves, bringing disorder into the cities and confusing the citizens. And though Socrates denies that thinking corrupts, he does not pretend that it improves anybody either. It rouses you from sleep, and this seems to him a great good for the city. (1978, 178, emphasis mine)

Arendt thus acknowledges that the aim of Socrates was not to spoon-feed his fellow Athenians established truths or a particular way of thinking. "The meaning of what Socrates was doing lay in *the activity itself*. Or to put it differently: *To think and to be fully alive are the same*" (1978, 178, emphasis mine).

This is why, for both Gadamer and Arendt, an alternative hermeneutic perspective that helps undo the dominant orientation of a mainstream culture is far more threatening than physical gestures of resistance. In fact, Arendt comes to see resistance as *doing nothing*. However, we should also notice that she sees Socrates as *the man who does nothing but who leaves nothing undone*. Arendt's nothing is revealing. She describes Socrates as "a thinker who always remained

a man among men, who did not shun the marketplace, who was a citizen among citizens, *doing nothing, claiming nothing* except in what his opinion every citizen should be and have a right to" (1971, 167, emphasis mine). And hence, for Arendt, Socrates represents "the actual thinking activity" because he was a man who "would not have left a body of doctrine behind"—in other words, his main activity was thinking itself (1971, 167-168).

Arendt's emphasis on the *activity of thinking*, the *vita contemplativa*, has to do with her paradigm shift after witnessing the trial of Eichmann, as discussed earlier. In the introduction to *The Life of the Mind* she acknowledges how she came to rethink evil, subjectivity, and agency in a new way. She acknowledges that the cause behind this shift had been her lifelong evolving "preoccupation with mental activities" (1971, 3):

> The immediate impulse came from my attending the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. […] Evil, we have learned, is something demonic; its incarnation is Satan […]. However, what I was confronted with was utterly different and still undeniably factual. I was struck by a manifest shallowness in the doer that made it impossible to trace the uncontestable evil of his deeds to any deeper level of roots or motives. The deeds monstrous, but the doer – at least the very effective one now on trial – was quite ordinary, commonplace, and neither demonic no monstrous. There was no sign in him of firm ideological convictions or of specific evil motives, and the only notable characteristic one could detect in his past behavior as well as in his behavior during the trial and throughout the pre-trial police examination was something entirely negative: it was not stupidity but *thoughtlessness*. (Arendt 1971, 3-4)

Arendt's own hermeneutics of the trial brings out new dimensions in her analysis of evil, but most importantly in *the political significance of language*. Her approach complements the notions of subjectivity and power relations in the analyses of both Gadamer and Foucault. Arendt's thesis on the *banality of evil* in response to the trial is not a way to absolve individual responsibility, as some critics have perceived it. Rather, it is a way of analyzing *the danger of not thinking*. Hence, Arendt's approach is rather useful in parsing the complex notions that both Gadamer and Foucault undertake when critiquing the metaphysics of subjectivity. Her understanding of the withdrawal of a proactive thinking subject expands our understanding of the play of power and domination, and how specific forms of behavior take over the subjectivity of individuals when caught within pressing external dynamics. This echoes, as discussed in the previous chapter, Gadamer's critiques of the Cartesian conception of an autonomous independent subject. Through his notion of the dynamics of *play*, Gadamer explicates how external dynamics take over the *subject of the scene*, and the *doer* becomes an *effect of the structure of play*, a mere object caught in the play of power dynamics (2013, 113).

Arendt's contributions to this discussion are extremely significant, because she adds new nuance to Gadamer's arguments that underscore important ethical dimensions. Arendt asserts that such acts of evil occur within a certain context or setting in which the subjectivity of the individual is seized. By using the example of Eichmann, she shows how "routine procedures" take over in certain settings. Arendt discusses how in the setting of the "court and prison procedures he functioned as well as he had functioned under the Nazi regime but, when confronted with situations for which such routine procedures did not exist, he was helpless" (1977, 4). However, Arendt also brings linguistic and dialogical angles to the discussion of evil, and hence points out ethical and philosophical implications which will be discussed in the upcoming section on language. Arendt explains the usurpation of individual responsibility somewhat differently than Foucault and Gadamer. Arendt's analysis of the trial elucidates the political significance of language in contexts

when internal dialogue is arrested. For her, it is the *lack of movement in thinking* that delivers the individual to external and routine procedures. In other words, the *lack of the will to interpret and dialogue internally* with what is going around us, which requires the exertion to *think through procedures*, result in a complete relinquishing of one's subjectivity.

Arendt revisits the Socratic subjective plurality in her later essays, collected in *The Promise of Politics* and *The Life of the Mind*, to underscore the importance of internal dialogue and the *act of thinking* in relation to ethics. She argues that, for Socrates, virtue is contingent upon our ability to create an inner accord between our various internal voices. For Socrates, Arendt argues, "the reason why you should not kill, even under conditions where nobody will see you, is that you cannot possibly want to be together with a murderer. By committing murder, you would deliver yourself to the company of a murderer as long as you live" (2005, 22). The inner dialogue is thus an act of creating conversations to arrive at resolutions for peace in our inner world. Therefore, and perhaps not in a conventional sense, it is at this level that *our need to think of politics and ethics is not so easily escaped.* A person who commits a harmful act "will live in a world of potential murderers. It is not his own isolated act that is of political relevance, or even the desire to commit it, but this doxa [opinion] of his, the way in which the world opens up to him and is part and parcel of the political reality he lives in. In this sense, and to the extent that we still live with ourselves, we all change the human world constantly, for better and for worse, *even if we do not act at all*" (2005, 23, emphasis mine).

Arendt thus establishes the category of the political on the basis of the inner and outer tension that is endemic to our relationality. Seen from another angle, Arendt redefines politics around the ineluctable plurality of the human condition. Moreover, she also delineates between the *givenness of plurality* and the *electiveness of politics*. As argued above, plurality does not automatically translate into what Arendt defines as politics, which is sometimes even denied or crushed. Rather, politics emerges, according to her own definitions and requirements, when there is a conscious and proactive recognition of the *ineluctability of plurality*. The political, for her, is that which gives expression to plurality in an affirmative and organizing manner without also obfuscating or repressing difference. It is important to notice how Arendt's critiques of Western philosophy are aimed at the illusion of unity and the denial of plurality. Arendt, in fact, discusses how we collapse this ineluctable plurality in abstract notions of humanity: "In the idea of world history, the multiplicity of men is melted into *one* human individual, which is then also called humanity. This is the source of the monstruous and inhuman aspect of history, which first accomplishes its full and brutal end in politics" (2005, 95).

Gaffney explains how Arendt conceives of political plurality in a notion of solidarity that is rooted in accepting singularities and differences: "Whereas solidarities grounded in fixed and obvious similarities are fundamentally anti-political, a notion of solidarity rooted in *respect for the demands of human plurality is crucial for political life*, enabling us to act in concert in order to bring a common world into appearance" (2018, 8, emphasis mine). And when this happens it borders on being miraculous, because the miraculous, for Arendt, is the possibility of newness against odds that press in other directions.

Arendt thus establishes plurality as a linguistic, dynamic, and dialogical activity that is reflective of our pluralistic ontology. Her definition of the political is therefore both numerical and linguistic. It is based on the inherit plurality of the human condition and the power of numbers, defined through a ceaseless dialogical back-and-forth relational movement. "Politics is based on the fact of human plurality" for Arendt, because "politics deals with the coexistence and association of different men. Men organize themselves politically according to certain essential

commonalities found within or abstracted from an absolute chaos of differences" (2005, 93). The appearance of modalities that allow human beings to recognize this plurality—and thus and organize themselves on the basis of a conceptualized equality—is therefore a rather miraculous event for her. Despite the given distinctions and differences among human beings, Arendt offers a definition of politics as an abstracted and conceptualized notion of equality, used to create a world (2005, 94). Hence, according to her, the possibility of politics arises when human beings choose to organize their plurality "in the equal rights that those who are most different guarantee for each other" (2005, 94).

The appearance of the world as arising with thinking and interpreting is where Arendt's later writings intersect with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, in which thought and action are no longer delineated, let alone cast as opposites. For Arendt, the desert conditions that acclimate us to the use of force and coercion cannot be questioned or escaped without the act of thinking and critical interpretation. Any strategy to question the force of sandstorms requires a certain measure of distance, solitude, and the capacity to think for oneself. Therefore, it becomes clear that, for Arendt, like Foucault and Gadamer, our exit strategies are directly connected to our genealogical and hermeneutic efforts. The solution for Arendt therefore lies in the ability to think and understand; in other words, it lies in the power of hermeneutics. The way language and dialogue create our world is where the fusion of horizons occur in the projects of Gadamer and Arendt. "To Socrates, man is not yet a 'rational animal,' a being endowed with the capacity of reason, but a thinking being whose thought is manifest in the manner of speech" (Arendt 2005, 23). For both Gadamer and Arendt, this thinking being, who must think through language, creates a world, and the possibilities for both good and bad lie within this creative capacity for creating.

4.5 Language as World and the Possibility of the Miraculous

Gadamer redefines the concept of "world" within linguistic parameters. According to him, we are distinctly linguistic beings. Although all biological forms live in a physical environment, what distinguishes us as human beings, according to him, is that we *also* live in a *world* and this world is *linguistically constituted*. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer discusses how all living creatures need certain environments to survive, but argues that the human being "unlike all other living creatures, has a 'world,' for other creatures do not in the same sense have a relationship to the world, but are, as it were, embedded in their environment" (2013, 460). Gadamer thus contrasts the *concept of the world* "to the concept of *environment*, which all living beings in the world possess" (2013, 460). Gadamer is *not* arguing that human beings are independent of this need for physical environment, but rather that we have *relationship(s)* to the world that expand our freedom and mental movement.

This parallels Arendt's emphasis on our capacity for *movement within the mental realm*. She argues that language offers more than a "treasure of words," and agrees with Wittgenstein's dictum that *Die Sprache ist ein Teil unseres Organismus* (language is a part of our organism) (Arendt 1971, 52). She explains how in the mental realm, metaphorical language is the only way the mind has to make an "outward sensible appearance – even silent, non-appearing activity already consists in speech, the soundless dialogue of me with myself" (1971, 31). This capacity for language offers movement of meaning and hence hermeneutic creativity for Gadamer as well. For him, a human being "can always rise above the particular environment in which he happens to find himself, and because his speech brings the world into language, he is, from the beginning, *free for variety in exercising his capacity for language*" (2013, 461, emphasis mine). This capacity

to interpret the world in a variety of ways is also indicative of a larger world. *Consequently, the breadth of the world, for both Gadamer and Arendt, is reflective and proportionate to the flexible expanse of our hermeneutic horizons, allowing freedom of movement within a variety of perspectives.*

Arendt's emphasis of the dialogical gains momentum when we examine her analysis of the way language actually functions in political contexts. This is evident in her analysis of the way Eichmann in his physical prison was caught in another kind of prison; being incapable of moving beyond an official kind of jargon. Arendt's emphasis on a plurality of perspectives and the capacity for movement within language is directly connected to her understanding of totalitarianism and to her conception of politics. One can not fully appreciate Arendt's redefinitions of the category of the political without taking into consideration the linguistic dimensions of her political thinking. There have been critiques of Arendt's conception of language, especially in the light of the comments she made in her last interview with Gunter Gaus about the importance of the "mother tongue" in reference to her affinity and love for the German language. Jacques Derrida (1998) and Donatella Di Cesare (2012) are among the main critics of her conception of language as the abode of meaning.

Jennifer Gaffney offers a response to such critiques by inviting us to understand the larger political implications of Arendt's comments about the mother tongue in that interview. In her essay, "Can a Language Go Mad? Arendt, Derrida, and the Political Significance of the Mother Tongue" (2015), Gaffney explains Arendt's more nuanced political argument about language. Even though Eichmann's first and primary language was German, "the case Arendt makes for Eichmann's banality" argues Gaffney, had to do with Eichmann's "inability to speak the German language" (2015, 531). This means that Arendt's references to the mother tongue have to be contextualized as they are references to a larger problem. Arendt never offers an essentialist view of language, nor does she make a nostalgic appeal to safeguarding one's own native tongue, despite her clear love and respect for her own mother tongue. What she is offering is a new conception of language as the realm in which our movement as critical and political agents occurs. What many misread in Arendt's discussion of language and the "mother tongue" can be easily answered by examining her comments on the trial of Eichmann, *who spoke German as a mother tongue but who failed to move freely and actively within the German language*. The main point of Arendt's argument about Eichmann was his incapacity to think, move, and navigate meaning. Arendt argues that Eichmann was stuck in his native German and that, "Officialese became his language because he was genuinely incapable of uttering a single sentence that was not a cliché" (1977, 48).

By revisiting Arendt's analysis of the language of Eichmann during his trial in Jerusalem, Gaffney thus highlights the political significance of Arendt's analysis. She draws our attention to Arendt's analysis as an example of the close connection between politics, language, subjectivity and ethical responsibility in Arendt's larger project. "When taken together with her analysis of Eichmann's empty talk, Arendt's remarks in the interview suggest that just as our radical singularity arises from our thrownness in language, so too does our responsibility for the world or the nexus of relations that grants us this singularity" (2015, 529-530). This is precisely Arendt's main argument about the trial. Eichmann's inability to maneuver and navigate various perspectives internally and externally about what is unfolding around him reveals a linguistic crisis. It captures a context in which language is arrested within a narrow prison—the leveling of language into a unified deceptive mass discourse and the hijacking of its productive movement.

In light of this, for Arendt, the failure to rise above one's environment during oppressive times happens when language is leveled and narrowed down into clichés and empty slogans. It is

a context when dialogue is arrested, as happened in Germany under Nazi rule. Contrary to Derrida's (1998) critique, which argued that Arendt appealed to some purist perception of language that repressed difference, it is actually Arendt who pushes the idea of destabilizing meaning through dialogue against the static and arrested language of totalitarianism; against becoming halted and stabilized in oppressive contexts. In fact, Arendt's keen interest in resurrecting Socratic dialogue is not some idiosyncratic interest in some ancient philosophy, but rather a serious concern about the connection between *the movement of language in dialogue and the capacity for taking ethical stances*. Arendt's interest in the Socratic dialogue lies precisely in this—in its ability to move meaning and destabilize strongly held opinions without arriving at finalized conclusions. It is the process of dialogue itself, for Arendt, that sets language into motion:

> The thing that strikes us in Plato's Socratic dialogues is *that they are all aporetic*. The argument either leads nowhere or goes around in in circles. […] None of the *logoi*, the arguments, ever stays put; they move around. And because Socrates, asking questions to which he does *not* know the answers, sets them in motion, once the statements have come full circle, it is usually Socrates who cheerfully proposes to start all over again and inquire what justice or piety or knowledge or happiness are. (1971, 169-170, emphasis mine)

What happened during Eichmann's trial, according to Arendt, shows that the inability to think, reflect, and interpret one's environment is directly connected to the inability to dialogue with oneself. The avoidance of questioning the sway of opinions around oneself, or the utter disability to probe into the consequences of commands undertaken, is the result of the inability to move and destabilize static meaning for oneself, which ultimately leads to ethical blindness. After all, Socrates is held as someone who "believed in the teachability of virtue," according to Arendt, "for the simple reason that he had nothing to teach" (1971, 172). *The main aim of Socrates was to destabilize and uproot his listeners, to infect them with the capacity to question*. Arendt quotes him when he says in the dialogues, "It isn't that, knowing the answers myself, I perplex other people. The truth is rather that I infect them also with the perplexity I feel myself" (1971, 172).

Arendt's interest in ethics and the capacity for questioning one's own transgressions is not established in relation to some static doctrine or the greatness of a particular philosophical school, let alone a particular language. For her, rather, the very capacity to move within language, to question, to be willing to encounter variety, is the very context where the possibility of a higher consciousness lies. "In brief, the specifically human actualization of consciousness in *the thinking dialogue between me and myself suggests that difference and otherness*, which are such outstanding characteristics of the world of appearances as it is given to man for his habitat among a plurality of things, are the very conditions for the existence of man's mental ego as well, for this ego actually exists only in duality" (1971, 187). Ethical blindness is therefore directly connected to the inability to move or encounter difference. It is in the willingness to encounter variety and difference, Arendt argues, that we can actually "*see* and understand it without bias and prejudice," that we can "be generous enough to bridge abysses of remoteness until we can see and understand everything that is too far away from us" (1994, 323).

It is also clear that the very capacity for encountering variety implies movement for Arendt. Her emphasis on the plurality of our hermeneutic perspectives is her way of underscoring the importance of the movement of dialogue within language. By doing so her argument parallels Gadamer's conception of our linguistic capacity for variety. She argues that "there must always be a plurality of individuals or peoples and a plurality of standpoints to make reality even possible and to guarantee its continuation. In other words, the world comes into being only if there are

perspectives" (2005, 175). For Arendt, like Gadamer, this is directly connected to freedom and politics, because a world in which there is mental freedom and plurality is a world that is "free for variety" and can thus can expand and grow to exercise different possibilities, as Gadamer puts it above. "To put it another way," Arendt argues, "the more peoples there are in the world who stand in some particular relationship with one another, the more world there is to form between them, and the larger and richer that world will be. There are more standpoints there are within any given nation from which to view the same world that shelters and presents itself equally to all, the more significant and open to the world that nation will be" (2005, 176).

As language plays a pivotal role in the philosophical projects of both Gadamer and Arendt, both thinkers can be considered among the philosophers who provide further impetus to the "linguistic turn." They offer a shift from conceptualizing language as a tool for representing an external world to viewing language as being constitutive of the world. Sullivan explains Gadamer's contribution to this linguistic turn by discussing Gadamer's linguistic conception of our being. "Language is not a 'tool' that the privileged consciousness may use to 'express' its positions. It is rather a phenomenon that speaks us before we speak it, and this means that we can never step outside of it and stand over against it" (1985, xvii). Gadamer and Arendt both refrain from any static or essentialist conceptions of language. They view the constitutive process of language in terms that are dialectical and dynamic. As seen above, Gadamer defines the very process of understanding in a dialogical manner, and thus argues that *meaning arises in intersubjectivity.* In a similar vein, Arendt defines the very process of the political in a dialogical manner.

Gadamer defines understanding as a hermeneutic activity; it is always interpretive and interactive, whether internally with self, or externally with others. As he argues,

> understanding and the interpretation of texts is not merely a concern of science, but obviously belongs to human experience of the world in general. The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically not a problem of method at all. It is not concerned with a method of understanding by means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigations like all other objects of experience. It is not concerned primarily with amassing verified knowledge, such as would satisfy the methodological ideal of science—yet it too is concerned with knowledge and with truth. (2013, xi)

Gadamer therefore urges us to come to terms with our ontological condition in the world as defined by his dialogical conception of our mode of being. Gadamer's sense of urgency in his ontological shifting of the meaning of hermeneutics can not be separated from his ethical concerns. By shifting hermeneutics from being a technical term related to textual interpretation to becoming a philosophical concept designating our mode of being in the world, Gadamer pushes us to rethink politics, albeit indirectly. After all, the issue of the *domination of being* is a central subtheme that underpins the entire corpus of his work, because for him, in any encounter the "other, whether a person, or the voice coming from the text, addresses us and hence raises an ethical demand upon us:

> Hermeneutics is a word which most people do not know and do not need. But they are nevertheless affected by the hermeneutic experience and not exempted. They too try to take something as something and finally to understand everything around them and to act accordingly. And on top of this, that something is mostly somebody who has his own demands to press. Such hermeneutic behavior seems to have its essential character in the fact that the other first appears as other. The other is not my dominion and I am not sovereign. (1992, 233)

In their respective projects Gadamer and Arendt succeed in highlighting how, in modernity, the *rational* overtakes the *relational.* This is why both problematize the *rational monologue* of modernity, because they argue that it comes at the expense of the potential riches of *relationality*, diversity, and plurality. Although the values of plurality can be embraced as positive ones in any culture, it does not necessarily mean that all perspectives have access to a dialogical position within a given culture, especially in our contemporary world—hence the significance of Gadamer and Arendt's questioning of the primacy of a unified worldview, because in their questioning of the tendency towards totalitarianism in the modern age we come to see more clearly the character of our collapsed and dwarfed world, even if we espouse values of diversity. Their projects are therefore relevant to our increasingly globalized world, and the rising tensions around freedom and equality found therein, as well as to the prospects of religious and ethnic diversity in the modern context. In her book *A New Religious America: How a Christian Country Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (2002), Diana Eck explores the drastic shifts that have occurred in the cultural and religious landscape of the United States, which apply equally to Canada as well. However, this diversity is precisely what Gadamer and Arendt draw our attention to in discussions about the nature of the dialogical and political. Diversity is not simply about the physical presence of the "other" with all their cultural and ritual practices. It is more about their level of access to mainstream cultural conversations as equal and contributing productive agents of a given culture and its political destiny. The issue of accepting the "other" is therefore not simply about sparing them physically or tolerating their world; it is, rather, more about the extent to which we can achieve what Gadamer calls a "fusion of horizons"—in other words, it is about including their *hermeneutic perspectives in ways that expand the world for all of us.* "In fact, the horizon of the present," argues Gadamer, "is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices" (2013, 317).

Gadamer considers any encounter that violates the "I-Thou" of relationality as an escape from the ethical implications of the inevitability of encounter. This explains his issue with the modern study of religion, in which the voice of tradition is turned into an object instead of an "I-Thou" dialogue. In other words, when religion becomes object of study and is denied a voice as a dialogical partner with content to offer and ethical demands to make, we have denied the inescapability of hermeneutics and the dialogical openness it demands of us. The *highest level of hermeneutic experience* for Gadamer is that which occurs *in a context of equality*, in the "I-Thou" relationship. Gadamer argues that our "openness to tradition" has "a real analogue in the experience of the Thou" (2013, 369). Put differently, we must treat the voice coming from tradition as a dialogical partner. With his notion of "rehabilitating tradition," Gadamer appeals to dialogue to carve out a new modality of relating to tradition, especially its religious forms, which allows us to move beyond either rejection or reverence. This, according to him, "calls for a fundamental sort of openness" (2013, 369): "I must allow tradition's claim to validity, not in the sense of simply acknowledging the past in its otherness, but in such a way that it has something to say to me" (2013, 369). When I objectify the traditional source as historical, Gadamer argues, when I read its text merely as historical object, then it can no longer say anything to me, nor am I really open. The ethical and political dimensions are therefore always already present in Gadamer's dialogical modality, given the ever-present tension with otherness.

The destruction of the "other," for both Gadamer and Arendt, is therefore *not* only about the physical destruction of other human beings—it is also about the destruction of their hermeneutic world when it is rendered irrelevant by the dominant party. This is not just about the physical other, but about the worldview of the other, because we can live in societies *where the*

other is physically and legally spared, but culturally absent and intellectually irrelevant—invisible at worst, or fully integrated at best, but only after the destruction of their hermeneutic and linguistic world. Plurality for Arendt is therefore not just about the plurality of our physical presence or the superficial recognition of diversity, but about the *plurality of our hermeneutic perspectives*. Hence, for both thinkers, the destruction of another hermeneutic world represents a *reduction in the meaningfulness of our very own world*. Hence, for Arendt, the destruction of an others' hermeneutic view of the world is a destruction of our own world:

> If a people or nation, or even just some specific human group, which offers a unique view of the world arising from its particular position in the world—a position that, however it came about, cannot readily be duplicated—is annihilated, it is not merely that a people or a nation or a given number of individuals perishes, but rather that a portion of our common world is destroyed, an aspect of the world that has revealed itself to us until now but can never reveal itself again. Annihilation is therefore not just tantamount to the end of a world; it also takes its annihilator with it. Strictly speaking, politics is not so much about human beings as it is about the world that comes into being between them and endures beyond them. To the extent that politics becomes destructive and causes worlds to end, it destroys and annihilates itself. To put it another way, the more peoples there are in the world who stand in some particular relationship with one another, the more world there is to form between them, and the larger and richer that world will be. (175-176)

It is obvious that, for both scholars, the rejection of *other modes of knowing within our own cultural contexts* and the suppression of dialogue and exchange between these perspectives, whether in the present, or across time, is *a reduction of our own world*. By giving primacy to the dialogical because of its ineluctable ethical demand, Gadamer perceives that the avoidance of the political is a bigger and deeper problem than simply being a tension between philosophy and the political. For him, the avoidance of dialogue is not just the avoidance of philosophy's tension with the political, or the fear of action, but rather the complete and *full repression of otherness and of difference.*

Sullivan (1985) highlights the *radical nature of Gadamer's political thinking*, which is also connected to his evolving interest in language and dialogue. Although Gadamer does not directly engage with politics in *Truth and Method*, his intellectual pursuits, Sullivan argues, stem from a profound political thinking that shaped the entire trajectory of his philosophical thinking and critique of modernity. "Gadamer's early writings, with their emphasis on philology, thus contain a political dimension that is not to be found in *Truth and Method*. The high points of the thinking of these years stand out as way stations for *a new and startlingly radical way of conceiving politics*" (Sullivan 1985, xvi, emphasis mine). Sullivan thus emphasizes the importance and radicality of Gadamer's new hermeneutics of politics, which sometimes goes unnoticed. Just as Arendt redefines politics in a manner that stands in contrast to the tradition of political theory, Gadamer also pushed the boundaries of our modern conception of politics, in which ethics and community have been sidelined. Gadamer's central point, argues Sullivan, "is that the modern dichotomy between ethics and politics finds no counterpart in the classical world" (1985, xvi). The modern compression of the spectrum of knowledge therefore has a profound political implication for Gadamer that extends beyond epistemological issues. Politics for Gadamer is therefore "a continuation of ethics by collective means, and the ethical life of the individual is a microcosmic restatement of the agreed-upon results of the discourse community" (Sullivan 1985, xvi).

For Gadamer, as with Arendt, politics is not limited to *running or managing the affairs of of physical others, but also about a solidarity which is achieved through dialogue in our ability to*

bond and include alternative worldviews. This is why, for both Arendt and Gadamer, our linguistically constituted world becomes larger and richer when we guard cultural ecology and engage with other worldviews. "Our verbal experience of the world," Gadamer asserts, "has the capacity to embrace the most varied relationships of life" (2013, 465). This is why he goes as far as to discuss the partiality and relativity, even of the scientific view, within the larger linguistic and varied spectrum of knowledge, and hence shows our world to be the function of our hermeneutic experiences. For him, "the truth that science states is itself relative to a particular world orientation and cannot at all claim to be the whole" (2013, 465). He even uses the shift in physics to highlight the constant reinterpretation of the world. "In today's physics we know that although they speak of atoms, they have had to abandon the image that there are corpuscular, final, elementary particles; following the exigencies of their scientific activities, they have changed to the completely different images of symmetry and symmetrical equivalences" (1992, 235). Gadamer therefore reverses the relationship between our epistemological categories and language, and thereby identifies "linguisticality," as being the ground of all our worldviews, the vast horizon and container of all our hermeneutic bubbles.

The emphasis on embracing plurality is not about relativizing the world. On the contrary, for him, as for Arendt, it is about increasing our access to reality and raising our levels of objectivity. Recognizing the plurality of perspectives is not simply about having the freedom to "say whatever [one] pleases," Arendt says. "The point is, rather, that we know from experience that no one can adequately grasp the objective world in its full reality all on his own, because the world always shows and reveals itself to him from only one perspective […]. Only in the freedom of our speaking with one another does the world, as that about which we speak, emerges in its objectivity and visibility from all sides" (2005, 128-129).

To Arendt's emphasis on the various perspectives which enrich our "world," Gadamer adds the various modes of knowing, including science, within the larger hermeneutic horizon of language because, for him, "what really opens up the world of our world orientation is language" (2013, 465). Gadamer also argues that "it is exactly the otherness, the recognition of our self, the re-encountering of the other, in language, art, religion, law, and history, which is able to guide us toward a true communality" (1992, 235). As a result, for both Gadamer and Arendt, the inescapability of the diversity of worldviews, and the plurality of our modes of knowing, are part of what is being denied and dwarfed by modernity. Ironically, the modern insistence on the primacy of "objectivity" and the supremacy of "method" supresses the real plurality of perspectives and the aggregate of human knowledge, thereby decreasing objectivity and our access to reality.

The linguistic orientation towards the world also creates, for both scholars, the possibility of the new. Arendt looks at the power of language as related to the miraculous in its capacity for natality, for bringing something new into life. It is through language and hermeneutics that both Gadamer and Arendt show us how we can come to move in realms and planes that may seem impenetrable to us. When taking into consideration Gadamer and Arendt's understanding of hermeneutics as an *occurrence*, we better understand their ideas of newness and possibility. The introduction of a new hermeneutic dimension has the potential to transform our world and create a new beginning—and hence a miracle. Arendt's view of history does not proceed in a teleological manner. Rather, she conceives of history as unfolding against infinite improbabilities. She therefore likes to use the concept of miracle "as a metaphor for what actually happens in the realm of human affairs," because "the process of history has arisen out of human initiatives and is constantly interrupted by new initiatives" (2005, 112). This is why, for her, "every new beginning,

whether for good or ill, is so infinitely improbable that all major events look like miracles" (2005, 112).

Our freedom of movement in space is contrasted with being helplessly bound within time, given our inability to move within the temporal lane. Yet, because we conceptualize time in language, Arendt argues, our religious traditions revolutionized our temporal understanding. She sees the *act of forgiving* as a whole new *form of action that affects the temporal lane*. "Forgiving is the only strictly human action that releases us and other others from the chain and pattern of consequences that all action engenders; as such, forgiving is an action that guarantees the continuity of the capacity for action, for beginning anew" (Arendt 2005 59).

Arendt therefore sees our *hermeneutic moves as integral to freedom*, not only to the freedom of physical movement defined in a conventional sense, but to a new kind of freedom that is expressed in the way religious traditions transform the past and the "in-between" space. She defines it as the capacity for a miraculous new beginning: "The great boldness and unique pride of this concept of forgiveness as a basic relationship between humans does not lie in the seeming reversal of the calamity of guilt and error into the possible virtues of magnanimity of solidarity. It is rather that forgiveness attempts the seemingly impossible, to undo what has been done, and that it succeeds in making a new beginning where beginnings seemed to have become no longer possible" (2005, 58). This is precisely the kind of access that Gadamer refers to in his discussions on *rehabilitating tradition*, in which we may catch a glimpse into other modes of perceiving the world and specific truth(s) that we may not otherwise have.

Arendt provides two concepts for helping us remedy this silencing and objectification of tradition, both of which she draws from religious traditions. She offers a *rehabilitation* of these concepts with an eye to transforming our world and possibly even saving us. These concepts are the Abrahamic notions of *forgiveness* and the *miraculous*. Arendt introduces a different way of conceptualizing the movement of history through her notion of the 'miracle of natality,'[24] which places emphasis on human creativity and initiative. As will be argued below, by wresting the notion of "miracle" from its religious and supernatural connotations—i.e., by *rehabilitating it*—she thus underscores the human capacity to disrupt the mundane and regular.

We can read Arendt's notion of the miraculous in parallel with Foucault and Gadamer. A history of miracles is a history of the "discontinuous" when viewed from a Foucauldian lens, which also echoes Gadamer's objections about historiography and his notion of *transformation*. In other words, Arendt's emphasis on natality is her way of underscoring sudden shifts in history, something that is akin to Gadamer's notion of transformation and Foucault's interest in the "discontinuous," which he explains as "these sudden take-offs, these hastenings of evolution, these transformations which fail to correspond to the calm continuist image that is normally accredited" when viewing human history (1997, 114). Given Arendt's similar interest in the discontinuous, her conception of the notion of "miracle" takes on a whole a new meaning: "In order to free ourselves from the prejudice that a miracle is solely a genuinely religious phenomenon by which something supernatural and superhuman breaks into natural events or the natural course of human affairs, it might be useful to remind ourselves briefly that the entire framework of our physical existence—the existence of the earth, of organic life on earth, of the human species itself—rests upon a sort of miracle" (2005, 111). She examines, from the angle of "calculable probabilities," the formation of the earth and the appearance of life as being a series of "infinite improbabilities":

[24] For a more detailed discussion of the political significance of Arendt's ideas on *natality* and *birth* in relation to her rehabilitation of the religious notion of "miracle," see "The Pregnant Body and the Birth of the Other: Arendt's Contribution to Original Ethics" by Jennifer Gaffney (2015).

> It is clear from these examples that whenever something new occurs, it bursts into the context of predictable processes as something unexpected, unpredictable, and ultimately causally inexplicable—just like a miracle. In other words, every new beginning is by nature a miracle when seen and experienced from the standpoint of the processes it necessarily interrupts. In this sense—that is, within the context of processes into which it bursts—the demonstrably real transcendence of each beginning corresponds to the religious transcendence of believing in miracles. (2005, 111-112)

Arendt extends this understanding of the miracle of new beginnings to the possibility of creating an oasis of politics in the midst of the desert of domination and violence. The ability of a collectivity of human beings to come together, for Arendt, as they did in the ancient city states of Greece, to create spaces for the political and dialogical, represents this kind of miracle. "The miracle of freedom is inherent in this ability to make a beginning, which itself is inherent in the fact that every human being, simply by being born into a world that was therefore before him and will be there after him, is himself a new beginning" (2005, 113). In these contemplations, it becomes clear that, for Arendt, the political mainly rests on our ability to create new ways of interpreting our world that help create the conditions of freedom.

According to Arendt, a miracle is therefore the very capacity for transformation and beginning anew. This capacity to begin anew is her definition of freedom, which she identifies as the very basis of politics. However, it is also worth noting here that, conventionally in our Western traditions, in both philosophy and religion, "freedom not only does not lie in action and in politics, but, on the contrary, is possible only if man renounces action and withdraws from the world and into himself, avoiding politics altogether" (Arendt 2005, 113). This is contrasted, she argues, by our actual experiences, whether private or public, where we come to equate the ability to act or start something different with freedom.

In the *Life of the Mind*, Arendt argues that the concept of *freedom* connotes movement and ability. "According to Greek etymology," Arendt argues, "the root of the word for freedom, *eleutheria*, is *eleuthein hopos ero*, to go as I wish, and there is no doubt that the basic freedom was understood as freedom of movement. A person was free who could move as he wished; the I-can, not the I-will criterion" (1972, 19). This is precisely why Arendt redefines the political within the realm of possibility and the miraculous. "If the meaning of politics is freedom, that means that in this realm—and in no other—we do indeed have the right to expect miracles. Not because we superstitiously believe in miracles, but because *human beings, whether or not they know it, as long as they can act, are capable of achieving, and constantly do achieve, the improbable and unpredictable*" (2005, 114, emphasis mine).

4.6 *Phronesis* and the Political

As seen above, both Gadamer and Arendt are critical of abstract thought that is disconnected from the actual conditions of life, self, and community. In other words, what matters for them is anything that is aligned to our ontological condition and deals with practical matters, hence their interest and investment in excavating and rehabilitating the ancient Greek notion of *phronesis*—practical wisdom. Arendt's critique of the Western tradition is captured in the retreat of the philosopher into the academy, and the resulting primacy of thought over action—the primacy of the theoretical over the practical. Gadamer's critique is captured in his exploration of

the problem of compressing our entire world into the lab of the scientist, and the resulting primacy of calculated experiment and method over the vast spectrum of human experience and knowledge. Both thinkers are therefore challenged by the conditions and elements that sustain domination, coercion, and war in human history. Because they are also intrigued and disturbed by the forgetfulness of dialogue in our intellectual traditions, they see this forgetfulness captured, in the the retreat of the philosopher and isolation of the scientist, both of whom remain disengaged from the polis and its problems.

Bradshaw discusses how Arendt was able, in her later writings, to bring together the power of thought and action in a way that avoids the excesses of either. This is why, even when Arendt returns to the power of thinking, she is still wary of excessive abstraction and ideological disconnections from reality. "Madness comes from excessive abstraction," Bradshaw writes. "We must remember that Arendt criticized Plato precisely for his having dwelled on eternal, rather than temporal, matters" (1989, 34). Arendt's understanding of the process of thinking, argues Bradshaw, was closer to Karl Jaspers, who saw the impossibility of reducing the "real to the object of thought," in contrast to Heidegger's emphasis on thought (Bradshaw 1989, 34). "For Arendt, Heidegger was the extreme example of thought gone mad […]. Heidegger pushed thought to its most desperate conclusions. He tried to rely solely on thought to reconcile the diremption between Being and thought, and ended by denying the substance of both" (1989, 33). Like Gadamer, Arendt is able to go beyond the simple reverence of tradition or the total rejection of it. "In fact, Arendt went further to suggest that the contemporary (post-traditional) world afforded man a unique opportunity to start over, to begin a new and better tradition unfettered by any of the philosophical baggage of the past" (1989, 34).

In parallel, Gadamer raises this problem when he explores the theme of the social scientist who has conveniently modeled his or her methods upon the methods of the natural sciences, and, as a result, disengages when "studying" human beings, despite their already being in a dialogical relationship. Gadamer considers this abstraction of the other into an object to be delusional, and argues that it represents a kind of madness, as Bradshaw puts it. Gadamer thus argues that the modern method of understanding the other is misguided when it treats the other as an object (2013, 366). Here, Gadamer raises a similar problem to Arendt. Although the social scientist may seem engaged with others, the dilemma remains the same, or rather worse. Although the social scientist chooses to interact with other fellow human beings and not retreat into solitary thinking, he is nevertheless objectifying them. Gadamer is critical of this "false objectification" that started with the rise of the social sciences, which were the result of the "objectifying methods of modern science, characteristic of the hermeneutics and historiography of the nineteenth century" (2013, 324). Gadamer, referring to Aristotle, contends that moral knowledge is not this kind of methodic and objective knowledge: "moral knowledge, as Aristotle describes it, is clearly not objective knowledge—i.e., the knower is not standing over against a situation that he merely observes; he is directly confronted with what he sees. *It is something he has to do*" (2013, 324, emphasis mine). For Gadamer, then, the *vita activa* cannot be separated from the *vita contemplativa.* Both understanding and acting are intertwined and cannot be easily disentangled.

Gadamer raises the serious problem of the suppression of the I-Thou relationship in the encounter with the "other" in the context of social sciences. He sees this suppression as a naïve confidence in the methodology of modern science and its applicability to human affairs. "If we relate this form of I-Thou relation—the kind of understanding of the Thou that constitutes knowledge of human nature—to the hermeneutical problem, the equivalent is a naïve faith in method and in the objectivity that can be attained through it" (2013, 367). Gadamer argues that the

social sciences therefore represent the lowest level of the I-Thou, given this objectification of the other and the retreat of the scientist into an abstracted disconnected positionality.

Despite some of the misconceptions surrounding philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer argues for the primacy of action and ethics as the solution to the problem of objectification. He clearly conceives of the human being as an acting being, hence his emphasis on the centrality of *phronesis*, which also further aligns him with Arendt's ideas on the importance of the *vita activa*. The social sciences, and all fields of knowledge that deal with human matters, are, for Gadamer, moral sciences, because "human sciences stand closer to moral knowledge than to that kind of 'theoretical' knowledge" (2013, 325):

> Their object is man and what he knows of himself. But he knows himself as an acting being, and this kind of knowledge of himself does not seek to establish what is. And active being, rather, is concerned with what is not always the same but can also be different. In it he can discover the point at which he has to act. The purpose of his knowledge is to govern his *action*. (Gadamer 2013, 325)

For Gadamer and Arendt, the retreat of the philosopher and the disinterested objectivity of the scientist is captured in the centuries-old neglect and overshadowing of *the concept of phronesis*. Given the multiple tensions both scholar's raise, the notion of *phronesis* is where the gaps close in more than one way. *Phronesis*, for Arendt, is connected to the movement of language and plurality within and without, and cannot be separated from the practical insight that is gained through accessing a multiplicity of perspectives and experiences. It is therefore a mode of wisdom that captures the very process of the dialogical. Arendt, in light of the political modality within the Greek polis, chooses to define *phronesis* in political terms:

> The crucial factor is not that one could now turn arguments around and stand propositions on their heads, but rather that one gained the ability to truly *see* topics from various sides—that is, politically—with the result that people understood how to assume the many possible perspectives provided by the real world, from which one and the same topic can be regarded and in which each topic, despite its oneness, appears in a great diversity of views. (2002, 167-168)

Similarly, for Gadamer, *phronesis* is about "right living in general," about knowing what action is right within one's own lived context (2013, 330). For him, a human being is "always already involved in a moral and political context and acquires his image of the thing from that standpoint. He does not himself regard the guiding principles that he describes as knowledge that can be taught. They are valid only as a schemata. They are concretized only in *the concrete situation of the person acting*" (2013, 330).

For Arendt, the dialogical activity within the polis and the ability to absorb and understand other perspectives is not a literary or rhetorical exercise, but the very thing that defines political activity and creates possibilities of freedom and movement. "Being able to persuade and influence others, which was how the citizens of the polis interacted politically, presumed a kind of freedom that was not irrevocably bound, either mentally or physically, to one's own standpoint or point of view" (2002, 168). This is why, for Arendt, the "Greek's unique ideal, and thus their standard for an aptitude that is specifically political, lies in *phronesis*, the insight of the political man. […] Such insight into a political issue means nothing other than the greatest possible overview of all the possible standpoints and viewpoints from which an issue can be seen and judged" (2005, 168). But Arendt raises the problem of the West's historic disdain for the political—for having to deal with living with others in the polis—which eclipsed the significance of *phronesis*. "Over the

ensuing centuries, hardly anyone speaks of *phronesis*, which for Aristotle is the cardinal virtue of the political man" (2005, 168).

It is precisely for this reason that, for Arendt, at the core of our forgetfulness of the dialogical lies a forgetfulness of the political, which also implies a denial of the plurality and perspectivity of our views. For Gadamer, on the other hand, this neglect is a result of the Western obsession with the modern scientific monologue. Gadamer's emphasis on *phronesis* therefore has to do with its potential for dealing with practical matters in concrete situations and its capacity for re-widening the spectrum of knowledge. By rehabilitating Aristotle's conception of *phronesis*, which emphasizes the element of application in knowledge in a manner that is different from both "techne" or "episteme," Gadamer attempts to revive the centrality of this forgotten notion (2013, 325). In a way, Gadamer's interest in retrieving the notion of *phronesis* could be construed as a response to the dilemma that Arendt raises in the separation of *thought* and *action*, for he too sees *phronesis* as transcending the duality of understanding and application. Summarizing Aristotle's definitions of *phronesis*, Gadamer writes,

> if we relate Aristotle's description of the ethical phenomenon and especially the virtue of moral knowledge to our own investigation [into the implications of phronesis], we find that his analysis in fact offers a kind of model of *the problem of hermeneutics*. We too determined that application is neither a subsequent nor merely an occasional part of the phenomenon of understanding but codetermines it as a whole from the beginning. (2013, 333)

This, of course, refers to Gadamer's ontological conception of hermeneutics, where understanding is not merely a mental activity but rather an *event*, even a form of activity—hence his interest in a concept that frames thought and action as being conflated and co-determinant. Of course, given Arendt's political definition of the term, we also see parallels with Gadamer's emphasis on the issue of application and action in any hermeneutic activity. In their parallel discussions of *phronesis*, then, *action is retrieved, not as a separate activity from thought, but as the very nature of thought.*

Nicolas Davey uses Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as a response to the long philosophical tradition of rejecting *the herd*. In his critique of Western philosophers' disdain for the masses, Davey uses the example of Nietzsche's aversion towards, and suspicion of, the delusions of the public and the loss of truth in the marketplace. Davey invokes Gadamer's pluralistic and dynamic conception of hermeneutics to close this gap:

> Nietzsche is undone by one of his own metaphors. Philosophical hermeneutics reverses the metaphor of the marketplace to telling effect, exposing the substantial difference between its celebration of language's speculative capacity and Nietzsche's suspiciousness of its expressive capacity. The linguistic 'marketplace' is not just a site for the herd and the commonplace. It is also a place of exchange, a place where everything I can construe about myself-understanding is dependent upon entering into a process of dialogical encounter. (2006, 153)

This is precisely why the avoidance of dialogue, for Gadamer, is fraught with bigger implications, namely political ones—because the denial of the dialogical represents an avoidance of the *other* and the *different*. This is the problematic that Gadamer raises, and where the significance of philosophical hermeneutics lies—*in the forgetfulness of the other.*

Gadamer's insistence on *the primacy of the dialogical* and the need to awaken our hermeneutic consciousness brings to the open radical political implications and possibilities. Gadamer relocates the philosopher back in the marketplace because, for him, the philosopher is

always already in the world, always already within a concrete context of space and time—even if he is under the illusion of escape. Claiming distance from the marketplace is a form of denial of our inescapable ontological condition, according to Gadamer. The dialogical encounter with difficult and different experiences is therefore the very gateway that ushers us into different modes of being. For similar reasons, Arendt raises the precipice that humanity has arrived at in the nuclear age as a possibility for allowing ourselves to welcome new ways of thinking.

The primacy of dialogue within Arendt's conception of the political is where the projects of Arendt and Gadamer intersect in productive ways. Like Gadamer, Arendt sees a tension between Western philosophy and action, since action has come to be conceived as being outside of philosophy, even as being limited to the mundane necessities of human affairs. The promise of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is predicated on his emphasis on the notion of *phronesis* and the inescapabilty of the dialogical condition of life. These emphases are his answer to the philosophical refusal to return to the marketplace, and expresses his commitment to a *practical dialogical philosophy* in which the political is the default grounding. To be sure, Gadamer's project gains a different weight in light of Arendt's daring questions about the escape of the Western philosopher from dialogue and the polis. Gadamer is clear about the inseparability of the ethical and the political, and about the need to situate both in concrete experience, beyond the abstractions of methodic theory and measures: "Ethics proves to be a part of politics. For the concretization of ourselves—whose circumference is sketched out in the forms of virtue and their being ordered toward the highest and most desirable form of life—reaches far into what is common to us all, which the Greeks named the polis, and to the true form of which everyone is at all times answerable" (Gadamer 1999, 32).

Gadamer's work provides potential answers to the dilemmas of power and domination, and also reveals new possibilities for ethical analysis (especially regarding the dilemma Arendt raises with respect to the avoidance of the political in the Western philosophical tradition), which renders his project a rich resource for contemplating and exploring such themes. This is precisely why Fred Dallmayr, in his book *Critical Encounters: Between Philosophy and Politics* (1989), insists that the category of the political is better explored in the light of the themes of dialogue and interpretation as found in Gadamer's project. If we neglect these themes, he argues, we risk perpetuating the same illusions and assumptions that already underpin most of our political thought (Dallmyr, 1989).

Although Gadamer's work may at first seem to only be dealing with tensions in textual interpretation between theory and method, or with aesthetic concerns, his project is actually a philosophical response, like that of Arendt, to the devastating violence, insanity, and destruction he came to witness in Germany and the rest of the world throughout the 20th century. As Sullivan explains, Gadamer's sense of political crises shaped his intellectual trajectory. The new interpretations of Plato, especially by some of Gadamer's mentors, like Paul Natorp, revealed that the later Plato, as found in his *Seventh Letter*, "chooses philosophizing as the preferred way of doing politics because of the profound political crisis in which Athens found itself" (1985, xvi). Similarly, the philosophical impulses that drove Gadamer's philosophical trajectory, argues Sullivan, "were essentially the same as those that motivated Plato. *Philosophical hermeneutics was first of all a different way of doing politics*" (1985, xvi, emphasis mine).

The political and ethical concerns that underlie Gadamer's project frame all his attempts to answer difficult questions concerning our mode of being in the world, and, in general, his response to the crisis of modernity. This is reflected in his insistence on adopting a new critical

consciousness when we relate to ourselves, each other, and the rest of the world in concrete contexts:

> The conceptual world in which philosophizing develops has already captivated us in the same way that the language in which we live conditions us. If thought is to be conscientious, it must become aware of these anterior influences. A new critical consciousness must now accompany all responsible philosophizing which takes the habit of thought and language built up in the individual in his communication with his environment and places them before the forum of the historical tradition to which we all belong. (Gadamer 2013, xxiv)

In light of this discussion, we come to realize that Gadamer's dialogical conception of the human condition allows for a radically alternative political paradigm in which the ceaseless interplay of social forces and the exercise of power among people provides new ways of thinking of freedom and resistance. This recognition of the human condition as ontologically dialogical creates a dynamic understanding of social transformation in contrast to more static modalities. This new paradigm thus points to possibilities within impossibilities, and allows alternative projections for the future, because the world in which we live today is predicated on a kind of forgetfulness of self and other. In other words, the "truth of remembrance" is something that invites us to remember the ceaseless play in which we exist, and thus also our finitude (2013, xxxv).

By reorienting the trajectory of Western philosophy in a practical direction, and by recognizing our relational standing in the world, both Gadamer and Arendt create a new context for conceptualizing politics. As a result, they both broaden very horizon of our philosophical investigations.

4.7 Conclusion

Although Gadamer and Arendt are not always seen in the same light, a dialogue between them brings to the surface what might remain hidden in each without such comparative engagement. Moreover, the fusion of their horizons responds to some modern dilemmas in a fashion that transcend many other schools. Gadamer's notion of *philosophy as an ethical practice, his ontological shift of hermeneutics, and his dialogical model as the inescapable mode of our being in the world, offer responses to the dilemmas raised by Arendt*. He rehabilitates dialogue as a form that is not only compatible with, but in fact inherent to, both ethical and political action—for Arendt, dialogue is already inherently at the core of what constitutes politics. As a result, in reading them both together, we come to see the dialogical as the ultimate political alternative in the face of war and violence, the proactive choice in a world full of "political" models that repress dialogue, and hence the very "in-between" space that always arises ontologically.

Like Gadamer, Arendt's project also revolves around the way our mental constructs of the world arise in intersubjectivity, in the "in-between" space *with others* she defines as political and in which we organize our affairs. Gadamer's insistence on the primacy of the dialogical and the need to awaken our hermeneutic consciousness brings to the open radical political implications and possibilities. He brings the philosopher back to the marketplace, precisely because the philosopher *is always already in the world, situated within space and time, in an inescapable interaction with self and other.*

In reading Gadamer and Arendt together, we encounter a political vision of a world that is based on dialogue, language, and the plurality of hermeneutic perspectives. Their projects create new dimensions that widen our theoretical and historical horizons, making us better able to critically assess our contemporary crises. This is why both are interested in historical anomalies

that stand like islands in a vast desert of violence and coercion, and which do not stand merely as historical events, but also provide an echo from the past promising modalities for contemporary needs. It is therefore not surprising that Socrates is a central figure, even an archetypal modality, for both scholars.

Gadamer and Arendt offer their own critical archelogies of repression and amnesia in order to dig up *forgotten* treasures. They do this by *rehabilitating* themes from the Western tradition. They do not achieve this by revering the tradition or rejecting it wholesale. Instead, both tread in a nuanced manner. While Arendt re-reads and re-interprets our tradition(s) with *contemporary eyes*, Gadamer *rehabilitates the tradition* as a dialogical partner. Arendt argues that in the age of science, "following the demise of metaphysics and philosophy," we are in a privileged position, because this demise permits us to "*look on the past with new eyes, unburdened and unguided by any traditions*" so we are able to freely choose "how to deal with these treasures" (1978,13, emphasis mine). Gadamer, on the other hand, suggests that we take the past as a dialogical interlocuter, and describes how it is "necessary to fundamentally rehabilitate the concept of prejudice" even in our temporal dialogues across time (2013, 289).

In the "fusion of horizons" between past and present, and between the projects of Gadamer and Arendt, our understanding of power dynamics and the dialogical are taken in a completely new direction. Although their respective projects stress power issues less directly, they bring out the relational and intersubjective character of social phenomena in ways that reshapes our thinking of power and the political. In stressing the implications of relationality, they provide critical philosophical tools which are applicable to various fields. Each philosopher highlights practices of marginalization and forgetfulness; the ways the *other* is pushed out of dialogue, or altogether denied presence within the already relational character of our social lives. Their interest in digging up forgotten aspects of the Western tradition is itself a vehicle for expanding the possibilities for breaking our self-enclosures, temporally, culturally and politically.

It is not a coincidence that both Gadamer and Arendt, after everything they came to witness and experience in 20th century Germany—from the rise of Hitler to the destruction of almost all they had known—were haunted by questions about the nature of domination, destruction, and resurrection. Hence their interest in the subtle questions about *limits* and *possibilities*. Both of them think of destruction, failure, and thwarted experiences in novel ways that challenge our conventional thinking about defeat and the possibility of beginning anew. Their projects invite us re-think the plurality of our hermeneutic worlds—to think of both the victors and the defeated, and of the voice and silence of the vanquished. They are critical while also offering hope. They invite us to the fecundity of the oasis by offering the *miracle of language*, *the power of phronesis*, and *the oasis of politics* as exit strategies from the brute forces of the desert and its sandstorms.

Conclusion
The Hermeneutic Circle:
The Relevance of Gadamer to Critical Theory and Other Political Possibilities

The nature of God is a circle of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference is nowhere.

—*Empedocles*

Our knowledge is a receding mirage in an expanding desert of ignorance.

–Will Durant

In our age, the mere making of a work of art is itself a political act.

–W. H. Auden

Schism in the soul, schism in the body social, will not be resolved by any scheme to return to the good old days (archaism), or by programs guaranteed to render an ideal projected future (futurism), or even by the most realistic, hard-headed work to weld together again the deteriorating elements [of civilization]. Only birth can conquer death—the birth, not of the old thing again, but of something new.

–Arnold Toynbee

There is a scene in the movie *Arrival* where world peace hinges upon the interpretation of a single word (Villenauve 2016). In more than one way, this scene underscores the idea that that hermeneutics could actually save us—which, in turn, underscores the significance of Gadamer's ontological shift of hermeneutics. Gadamer emphasizes the impossibility of finalized conclusions, and indeed, none will be given here. These concluding pages announce the end of this open-ended conversation by coming back full circle to the power of hermeneutics—and the *arrival* at the admission of ignorance. Despite its shortcomings, this dissertation's aim has been to invite us to better comprehend the significance of Gadamer's opening up of the hermeneutic circle—an opening up, not just towards self and other, but also towards other modes of knowing and being.

In Gadamerian epistemology, the act of re-widening of our spectrum of knowledge gives a different and more central role to art. Gadamer is critical of the way modernity defined the character of "aesthetic existence in a way that constructed it outside the hermeneutic continuity of human existence" (2013, 87), and therefore he insists that "we must adopt a standpoint in relation to art and the beautiful that does not pretend to immediacy but corresponds to the historical nature of the human condition" (2013, 88). Gadamer posits that the "historical nature of the human condition" is dialogical, and, moreover, that our dialogical experience of art represents a model for widening our epistemological horizon—in other words, that "art is knowledge and experiencing an artwork means sharing in that knowledge" (2013, 88). He is therefore critical of the way art's political function was reduced when in modernity it took on elitist connotations and became confined to the realm of the purely aesthetic. Such a political and epistemological conception of art is the reason I would like to conclude this dissertation by using the artistic medium of the movie *Arrival*—it is a way of paying tribute to Gadamer's attempt to re-widen the spectrum of knowledge through art and the dialogical modality.

Directed by Denis Villeneuve, a Quebecois filmmaker, *Arrival* artistically captures the core of philosophical hermeneutics, especially its focus on the relational tensions within concrete

situations of encounter. The film's main themes are centred around the ontological dimension of the linguistic turn and the violent and political dimensions of our contemporary monological mode of being in the world (Villeneuve 2016). Given the movie's emphasis on the political character of language, perhaps it should not be surprising that Villeneuve is from Quebec. As Gadamer argues, art is political precisely because it unfolds within linguisticality, not in the narrower sense of language, but in the larger sense of linguisticality as the wider spectrum in which we communicate: "language is not only a language of words but must also be seen as a form of communication. That means that there is a broader concept of language as well as the narrower one" (Gadamer 2000, 9).

Arrival deals with what seems like an alien invasion, yet it is more about the human condition. The movie's themes revolve around the relationship between language, hermeneutics, and the violence of our technological age. The plot is predicated upon the arrival of an advanced civilization that is reaching out to dialogue with humanity using a language with circular symbols—but humanity is chained in domination and violence, beyond the dynamics of the hermeneutic circle. All that humans can perceive is fear and terror at the prospect of the arrival of the other—the absolutely and fully other, the distant and different. Despite the lack of any signs of hostility or aggression, the world comes together to prepare an internationally coordinated military defense. At the center of these events is the courageous and reflective linguist Dr. Louise Banks (played by Amy Adams), a woman who welcomes the challenge of dialoguing with the new arrivals. Desperately trying to interpret and understand their language, she delves into studying and deciphering their semasiographic circular graphemes in which entire sentences are written in palindromes. As she learns to understand their language, she also begins to experience reality differently. Villeneuve's *Arrival* is therefore self-conscious about the centrality of the constitutive dimeson of language, evidenced in its direct references to linguistics and anthropology, including to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.[25] In other words, the trajectory of the movie moves along the hermeneutic horizon of language.

The climax of *Arrival* occurs around the high-stakes translation of a particular alien word, whether it means "weapon" or "gift." As the movie progresses, we slowly begin to realize that, despite their advanced civilization, the aliens have not come to share their advanced sciences or technology, or to fight for that matter. They have come to offer the power of their language, which is written in circular palindromes. It is a language that makes us conceive of reality differently and experience time in a nonlinear manner. The film smoothly brings hermeneutics to the fore, not as something abstract, but as the very dimension of being human, as both struggle and redemption. The movie therefore gives an artistic and concrete form to Gadamer's notion of *linguisticality* (*Sprachlichkeit*) as the terrain in which conflict and reconciliation, understanding and misunderstanding, and creativity and dogma all unfold.

Gadamer expands Hegel's movement of Spirit to accentuate the movement found in encountering the alien. To explain the power of dialogue and hermeneutics, Gadamer argues that *Bildung* [the culturally forming effect], the ability to find ourselves, happens in contexts of encountering the alien, different, and new. "To recognize one's own in the alien, to become at home in it, is the basic movement of spirit, whose being consists only in returning to itself from

[25] This is one of the early linguistic hypotheses of the "linguistic turn." The hypothesis, first proposed in 1929 by the anthropologist Edward Sapir and later developed by Benjamin Whorf, highlights the constitutive dimension of language, It is also known as the hypothesis of linguistic relativity, suggesting that a given language has a structuring mechanism that affects the speaker's worldview and her conception of reality. Ealy aspects of this orientation were initially articulated by the German thinkers Wilhelm von Humboldt and Johann Gottfried Herder, both of whom are engaged by Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (2013, 455).

what is other. Hence all theoretical Bildung, even acquiring foreign languages and conceptual worlds, is merely the continuation of a process of Bildung that begins much earlier" (2013, 13).

This is why Dallmayr, in *Dialogue Among Civilizations* (2002), situates Gadamer as the hermeneutist whose project has given us the gift of navigating difficult terrains on a planet steeped in hegemonic relations and global injustices. In the chapter, "Globalization and Inequality: A Plea for Cosmopolitan Justice," Dallmayr argues that "what is important in the present context is that, for Gadamer, the cultivation of human agency and public justice is an urgent concern not only in European (or Western) societies, but in the contemporary international arena marked by the relentless process of globalization" (2002, 80). Dallmayr stresses the relevance of Gadamer in conversations on inequality and knowledge because, according to him, "it is precisely in the global arena that inequalities of knowledge today are becoming increasingly pronounced" (2002, 80). The objectifying and instrumentalizing nature of modern knowledge, as Gadamer perceived it, should not be separated from his broader perspective, argues Dallmayr, in which "the near-monopoly wielded by Western (or Western-trained) elites […] [is] an aspect linking expert knowledge with the broader issue of cultural hegemony or supremacy" (2002, 80). This is the reason that Dallmayr values Gadamer's emphasis on the situated and concrete character of dialogue: "It is this broader cultural asymmetry that raises profound problems for cross-cultural encounters, and particularly for a 'dialogue among civilizations'" (2002, 80).

The problems around dialogue and encounter as presented in *Arrival* articulate the high risk of encounter in a visceral manner. There is an *event of truth* that emerges in the work of art that gives us an experiential dimension of difficult, abstract, and conceptual ideas—art is thus among the various angles through which we gain access to reality by orienting ourselves towards truth. For this reason, Chris Dawson emphasizes the role of art in Gadamer's attempt to re-widen our spectrum of knowledge. In his introduction to Gadamer's book *In Praise of Theory* (1998), Dawson says, "The encounter with a true work of art is supposed to bring us face to face with ourselves and so to lift us momentarily out of our everyday concerns and allow us to experience an event of truth" (xxiv). As the British academic Bran Nicols notes, our sense of global consciousness impacts our artistic and cultural production, and therefore "*Arrival* also clearly articulates the sense of global peril which is typical of much of the cultural production of our current times" (2019, 123).

The political and power implications of modern knowledge are also addressed in the movie by making us conscious of the competing worldviews of the humanities and natural sciences. The movie takes the side of Gadamer, since its plot stresses the necessity of reincluding the humanities in modern epistemology, and, by implication, highlights the survival value of language and hermeneutics. After all, argues Mathilde van Dijk in her essay "Living with Time: Spirituality and Denis Villeneuve's *Arrival*," it is the female linguist rather than the male natural scientist/military figure who saves the world in *Arrival* (2021, 1). Nicols, on the other hand, situates the movie in the shadow of Brexit and American politics by viewing the movie as a good promotion of the humanities in an era that prioritizes science and technology, often at the expense of the arts and humanities. True to Gadamer's political perception of the role of art, Nicols sees *Arrival* as an artistic and political response to the rise of less tolerant politics, and therefore highlights how "this is a movie which uses science fiction tropes […] to convey a message about the restorative potential of a concerted transnational, indeed transplanetary, feat of translation in the face of a new global threat" (2019, 123). The words of Nicols still resonate, especially considering the ongoing perils facing our world, which, unfortunately, finds itself in a state of worshipping domination and constantly bowing to the idols of weapons—case in point, I am finishing this dissertation while

the Russians are making preparations to invade Ukraine. *Arrival,* therefore, as Nicols argues, is about our present world and its politics of domination, captured in the metaphors and tropes of science fiction.

The theme of *art as politics* is what leads the Belgian political theorist Chantal Mouffe to employ the phrase "artistic activism" (2013). Since she also defines the political within a relational and agonistic dynamic, Mouffe conceives of art as a political medium. Given the "great variety of ways" in which art could be expressed, Mouffe argues, art is particularly well positioned to "aim at challenging the existing consensus" of any cultural or political context (2013, 97). Mouffe even goes further by emphasizing the radical nature of hermeneutics and artistic interventions *in challenging hegemonic structures and practices*. She thus coins the term "artivist" to refer to art as an agent of political transformation: "We can better grasp the political character of these varieties of artistic activism if we see them as counter-hegemonic interventions whose objective is to disrupt the smooth image that corporate capitalism tries to spread, thereby bringing to the fore its repressive character. But as artistic forms at the service of political activism, these 'artivist' practices represent an important dimension of radical politics" (Mouffe 2013, 98-99). Art in this sense is both an agent of transformation as well as a catalyst for articulating the high-stake issues of power relations. In their respective emphasis on the political agency of art, Gadamer and Mouffe therefore both point to ways of hacking the cultural and political codes of our societies.

During the process of researching and drafting this dissertation the profound problems around *encounter* and the *voice of the other* have taken on a whole new level of urgency, as raised by major global and local movements. In addition to several ongoing conflicts following the Arab Spring, when waves of protests against military doctorships swept the Middle East, there also appeared strong movements of protest within Western societies. A profound sense of desperateness had echoed in the *Me Too* campaign, initiated by women in North America, the *Black Lives Matter* movement, initiated by African-Americans in the United States, and the *Every Child Matters* initiative, initiated by the First Peoples of Canada in the aftermath of discovering mass graves of indigenous children in residential schools. These voices have assumed the givenness of dignity, and hence have attempted, through various campaigns and initiatives, to emphasize the pressing need to re-enter the political and cultural conversations as equal interlocutors. In the resurgence of such repressed voices from the darkness, the plight of violence, abuse, and power relations seems to shed light upon the shadows of modernity and the hefty price many peoples have paid for "progress." The human toll and suffering that has been mostly concealed as unmentionable collateral damage in the progress and metastasizing of modernity starts to seem too costly to remain hidden in some backyard grave.

For Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) as well as Wael Hallaq (2018), the politics of colonialism are not happening at the periphery—they are, rather, an enterprise that is at the centre of Western modernity. Both Spivak and Hallaq show how the domination and annihilation of the other tends to remain within the blind spot of Western critical thought, mostly treated as extraneous to the rise of the West, or as a forgotten marginal irrelevance. Yet, the forgetfulness of the other, for Spivak, remains at the heart of the Western production of knowledge, or what she articulates as "the sanctioned ignorance that every critic of imperialism must chart" (1988, 291).

Although Gadamer's project may come across as simply another philosophical approach critical of modernity, or as a new school in literary criticism, in fact, his philosophical hermeneutics represents a *quiet revolution*, precisely because it stresses the inescapability of the voice of the other, and hence emphasizes the ethical imperative of turning the critical gaze back to oneself. For this reason, Dallmayr, in his more recent book *Horizons of Difference: Engaging with Others*

(2020), again situates Gadamer's dialogical modality right in the centre of difficult terrain. Here, almost twenty years after his 2002 book honouring Gadamer, Dallmayr reiterates the centrality of Gadamer's horizontal dialogue as a viable alternative to the contemporary predicament of domination and inequality. Dallmayr highlights Gadamer's dialogue once again, not only because it offers a way of navigating new challenges in a critical manner, but also because it allows openness to the potential gifts of encounter in our increasingly globalized world.

The trajectory of Gadamer's project escapes facile dichotomies. It is based neither on metaphysical foundations nor on rupture and discontinuity with rationality or truth. Between the static foundationalism of Enlightenment ideals, and the muteness of rupture and deconstruction, stands philosophical hermeneutics. This is so, not only because Gadamer opens alternative possibilities for the future or engenders a critical engagement with the past, but also because he pushes us towards revitalizing the function of language in ways that enhance both construction and deconstruction, the critical and imaginative, the political and artistic, while also acknowledging the finitude of any position. Gadamer himself discusses why philosophical hermeneutics offers an in-between position in these polarized debates:

> Perhaps it would clarify matters if I present the motivation behind my approach as it actually developed. It might thereby become clear that the method fanatics and the radical ideology critics are the ones who do not reflect enough. The former treat the uncontested rationality of trial and error as if it were the *ultima ratio* of human reasonability. The latter recognize the ideological bias of this kind of rationality but then do not give a sufficient accounting for the ideological implications of their own ideology critique. (Gadamer 1985, 177)

This dissertation has therefore attempted to show the political significance of Gadamer by highlighting his indispensable relevance to conversations on power, marginalization, and the ethos of domination underpinning our modern epistemology and civilization. Gadamer's unique philosophical position, with its emphasis on our dialogical ontology, recasts questions of power and politics differently. Even if they remain latent, such angles necessitate a new hermeneutics of Gadamer's project. Gadamer's own intellectual and personal commitment to dialogue, especially his deep conviction that creativity occurs in the fusion of different horizons, seems to create a natural invitation to place him in dialogue with other thinkers. Since Gadamer pushes the meaning and significance of hermeneutics to wholly different levels, both Foucault and Arendt provide evidence, in their respective projects, to support Gadamer's emphasis on the power of hermeneutics. Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics thus emphasizes the concrete contexts in which hermeneutics takes place, and thus the political ramifications of any hermeneutic perspective. The power of hermeneutics that Gadamer brings to the surface in his ontological shift is further validated by the kind of *hermeneutics of power* Foucault introduces, as well as the kind of *hermeneutics of the political* that Arendt advances.

This dissertation could have engaged with other projects that place more focus on dialogue and relationality, especially works like *I and Thou* by Martin Buber (1970), or *Humanism of the Other* by Emmanuel Levinas (1972). To be sure, such philosophical orientations align more smoothly with Gadamer's dialogical ontology, especially given the political implications underpinning their humanistic ethics. However, given Gadamer's own insistence on difference, the power of negative experience, and his recognition of the difficult nature of dialogue, I found myself compelled to demonstrate the productive and creative character of philosophical hermeneutics. In other words, I wanted to draw attention to the sides of Gadamer's project that are not usually engaged in critical conversations on power and the political nature of knowledge. But

mostly, it was my hope that, by putting Gadamer in conversation with two scholars who are not generally discussed in the context of philosophical hermeneutics, new horizons would arise. True to Gadamer's own faith in the productive and creative nature of tensional dialogue, new horizons have arisen, and our own has been expanded to new frontiers. The fusion of these three thinker's horizons brings out the more latent dimensions of their projects. Gadamer comes across far more political, Foucault more dialogical, and Arendt more linguistic.

The main purpose of this dissertation has therefore been to underscore the political implications of Gadamer's project, and to bring to light the potential new directions it contains for dealing with our current dilemmas. Given the multifaceted character of Gadamer's project, it stands out from the general thrust of postmodern philosophical criticism. His rehabilitation of metaphysics allows for greater mobility of meaning and avoids rupture and discontinuity. Moreover, he achieves all of this without appealing to foundationalist thinking. Instead, he offers a dialogical modality as a critical alternative. The new political possibilities that emerge in Gadamer's work beyond the prisons of conventionality, towards *Bildung*, underscore our capacity to constantly create new directions through encounter. The contact with the other for Gadamer facilitates creativity and self-knowledge, not anxiety and alienation: "Thus what constitutes the essence of Bildung is clearly not alienation as such, but the return to oneself" (2013, 14).

As such, philosophical hermeneutics becomes a vehicle of transformation capable of liberating self and other. It opens our self-enclosures and moves towards creating a wider horizon, one that is *more inclusive and yet more reflexive*. "If we take Gadamer seriously and press his own claims, they lead us beyond hermeneutics," argues Richard Bernstein (1980, 150). Gianni Vattimo conceives of hermeneutics, not as a particular philosophical school, but rather as a new orientation in Western culture. In his book with Richard Rorty, *The Future of Religion* (2005), Vattimo argues that Gadamer's hermeneutics points to a new direction in which philosophical investigation is no longer about what is enduringly present, or the search for that which is beyond us, but rather about *Bildung*, "the unending formation of oneself" (2005, 4).

The power of hermeneutics therefore lies not only in what it already offers, but also in what it could offer—in what it points to and leads to, beyond itself. By inviting us to acknowledge the implications of the denial of the givenness of our *relationality* and *hermeneutic diversity,* philosophical hermeneutics pushes the boundaries of our thinking beyond both traditional and critical frameworks to awaken us to different possibilities. It helps us recognize more subtle power dynamics by finetuning our hermeneutics to the ways we arrest movement in the *ineluctably intersubjective* human condition.

5.1 The Age of Hermeneutics

In *The Future of Religion* (2005), Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo discuss and debate the contemporary moment, in which the foundationalist framework is giving way to a different horizon. They argue that before the Enlightenment, in the "Age of Faith," humanity had duties towards God, and that after the Enlightenment, humanity's duties shifted towards serving rationality, hence ushering in the "Age of Reason." While the "Age of Reason" is generally understood as *progress*, Rorty and Vattimo argue that in fact both ages erred, not because they failed to discover the "real" nature of things, but because in both ages other forms of life and modes of being were eclipsed for the sake of singular truth claims that were perceived as transcending time and space (2005, 55). They conclude that we are again at a new precipice, and that the age of hermeneutics is upon us. This new "Age of Interpretation," they argue, represents an era where

various possibilities could become available again; where all claims of accessing and interpreting reality will be perceived as being finite and always already within history and within linguistic expression (2005, 43).

Despite differences in temperament and the disparate areas of interest in critical theory, the wider spectrum of intellectual orientations points to the necessity of seeing knowledge as something situated and historically specific. Philosophical hermeneutics does that too, but it also brings in an added value in *its emphasis on knowledge as both dynamic and intersubjective*. Moreover, philosophical hermeneutics places emphasis on the perspectivity of our own knowledge and the historicity of our own situatedness. This creates a temporal continuum that is distinctly Gadamerian. The core of philosophical hermeneutics is predicated upon a dialogical modality in which the arising of knowledge unfolds as movement in intersubjectivity, across space *and* time. Gadamer perceives of the *hermeneutic circle*, not in the methodic sense made popular in the 19th century, but as a dynamic circle that is "neither subjective nor objective." In this way, he describes understanding as arising in intersubjectivity, "as the interplay of the movement" between those who encounter each other, whether between the interpreter and voice of the text, or between two interlocutors (2013, 305).

Although Gadamer begins with the older view of the hermeneutic circle, argues the Italian philosopher Donatella Di Cesare, "he reinterprets both the *circle* and *understanding*. He broadens the *hermeneutics circle* so fundamentally that it becomes the guiding thread of the entire middle section of *Truth and Method*" (2013, 84). Gadamer moves away from linearity to circularity to achieve a dynamic and always finite conception of understanding. Di Cesare explains Gadamer's reason behind the rehabilitation of the hermeneutic circle: "Circularity excludes linearity. Circular interwovenness cannot be untied and leveled down" (2013, 85). By emphasizing circularity, Gadamer conceives of understanding and communication as occurring within a more open, circular, and continuous movement. The hermeneutic circle therefore suggests an altogether different way of communicating, one that is not unilinear, and hence refuses to arrive at conclusions that are not subject to revision, questioning, or looping around.

By placing Gadamer in conversation with Foucault and Arendt, Gadamer's underlying concerns about power and politics come through in ways that are not usually discussed, especially because he does not directly engage with these themes. And yet, Gadamer's entire project is predicated on questions about the nature of domination and the suppression of the dialogical. His understanding of hermeneutics as our mode of being in the world brings to the surface the genealogical and linguistic dimensions of Foucault and Arendt's projects. Gadamer's hermeneutics highlights the importance of Foucault's genealogy as an act of resistance, and also highlights Arendt's move beyond the duality of idea/action and the re-conceptualization of thinking as a form of action. Arendt's later work aligns strongly with the understanding of hermeneutics as transformative. This alignment arises because, for her, the act of thinking and interpreting increase our capacity for a kind of discernment that would keep us from committing harm in a nonchalant manner, as she explains in her reflections (1977) on the trial of Eichmann (discussed in chapter four). In reading these philosophers in parallel, *we end up with a conception of dialogue that is neither free from tension, nor beyond ethical and political implications.* Given Gadamer's views, and those of his interlocuters, conflict and power tensions are not free from the dialogical dynamic either. *Our mode of being in the world according to these thinkers is always ineluctably relational and therefore also inescapably caught in power tensions.*

Gadamer's project can, in many ways, be framed as a *philosophical response* to the malaise of the 20th century. Being German, he witnessed from a young age the devastation and destruction

of both World Wars and the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan. He also witnessed the reconstruction of a new democratic, prosperous, and peaceful Germany, one that successfully arose from the ashes of Nazi ideology and the inhumanity of concentration camps. One can thus appreciate Gadamer's interest in themes of hermeneutics and ontology, given the drastically different experiences he witnessed in his life that spanned the 20th century and into the 21st century, many of which were of a negative nature. Yet, his project is not an attempt to provide facile answers or solutions to modernity as much as it is an attempt to dig deeper into *the ways we create the problems*. Hence, the general orientation of his ideas is not a way to fully understand the world around us, formulate specific solutions, or come up with lofty theories. Rather it is more about the need *to constantly question the forms of understanding that create the world around us in ways that reduce and dwarf the world around us*. Gadamer is more interested in questions than answers. This is why it is not surprising that Gadamer insists on "the hermeneutic priority of the question" (2013, 371). For him, the process of understanding is more directly connected to our ability to raise questions than it is to finding answers, because " people who think they know better cannot even ask the right questions. In order to be able to ask, one must want to know, and that means knowing that one does not know" (2013, 371).

It is obvious that Gadamer's prioritization of the question, and the constant assumption of ignorance that accompanies it, have to do with the Socratic dialectic. Certain critical and political implications naturally accompany this move. For Gadamer, questioning takes precedence over theorizing because he considers the capacity to raise questions to be the more challenging activity. "Among the greatest insights that Plato's account of Socrates affords us is that, contrary to the general opinion, it is more difficult to ask questions than to answer them" (2013, 371). This shows that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is not a theory that answers questions, as much as it is a critical approach that empowers us to question our modes of being in the world. In other words, Gadamer's interest lies in urging us to articulate questions in order to expand our understanding—not in settling upon fixed answers.

5.2 Hermeneutics as Politics

Despite the political implications and critical potential of philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer is generally viewed as apolitical, or even as having a philosophical orientation that is blind to the problems of power and the category of the political. Yet the thrust of Gadamer's project rests upon *questioning* the orientation of domination and the will to power that underlie the modern ethos. He sees this orientation especially manifest in our modern epistemologies, which have compressed the wider spectrum of knowledge and arrested the dialogical movement of understanding.

There are, to be sure, certain issues that obfuscate these political dimensions, or questions of power, within Gadamer's philosophical project, leading to what Lorenzo Simpson refers to as "the commonly voiced charges of relativism and critical impotence" (Simpson 2016, 22). Given much of the conventional thinking around hermeneutics and dialogue, these are not generally understood as political categories, but more as themes confined to literary discussions, areas within communication studies, or at best as techniques for consensus building. Conflict, power, and politics, on the other hand, are seen in opposition to dialogue and understanding. Even with the evolution and the various detours the field of hermeneutics has undertaken, from its 19th century textual orientation to its wider philosophical reformulation, it is still largely seen as being related

to technique and method, or, more precisely, as a discipline to be placed within a general interpretive approach for reading and deciphering ancient or literary texts. The discussions around dialogue are also generally confined to ideas and ways of dealing with literary genres, or in a lesser way as "soft" tools to build mutual understanding, cohesion, and consensus. Given such prevailing notions and dichotomies, Gadamer is seen in a particular light, in which *issues of power and the categories of the political are perceived as evading him, especially given his emphasis on the dialogical.*

In addition to critiques of Gadamer from those who uphold the Cartesian *cogito* and authorial intention, especially in literary circles (see Hirsch 1973), there are also the usual philosophical and political critiques against Gadamer's project. A couple of years after Gadamer's death, the American academic Carl Niekerk questioned if hermeneutics could sustain any relevance in contemporary critical thought. In his essay, "Why Hermeneutics? Rereading Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Method*" (2004) Niekerk questioned whether philosophical hermeneutics would sustain it capacity for addressing contemporary issues. "To the best of my knowledge," Niekerk wrote,

> there is no thriving, youthful, contemporary scene of prolific hermeneutic scholars whose work addresses the problems of our world today, and there are not signs that such a scene will develop anytime soon. […] It is hard to see how a hermeneutic approach like the one proposed by Gadamer is or could be connected to a progressive political agenda. Jurgen Habermas is of course a major exception, but one could argue that his intellectual development has led him away from hermeneutic origins. (2004, 168)

This was, of course, an overstatement on Niekerk's part. Its sweeping predictions did not give philosophical hermeneutics enough time to bear fruit. In the past several years, there has in fact been a renewed interest in philosophical hermeneutics, with some attention paid to its critical potential, especially considering its emphasis on application. Georgia Warnke's edited volume, *Inheriting Gadamer: New Directions in Philosophical Hermeneutics* (2016), includes many scholars who underscore the critical importance of Gadamer around various subjects. Moreover, Dallmayr's recent book *Horizons of Difference* also revisits Gadamer's hermeneutics, and focuses on Gadamer's emphasis on dialogue as holding potential for responding to the challenges of the 21st century. The Gadamerian title, which references *horizons*, is indicative of what frames the underlying ethos of the book. Gadamer's significance for our age, according to Dallmayr, has to do with our urgent need to understand dialogue differently, because dialogue "is not a restricted or ephemeral enterprise, but it extends broadly to the most important domains of experience: philosophical, cultural, religious, ethical, and political" (2020, 12).

Almost twenty years after Niekerk's reflections and predictions we see a continued interest in Gadamer, an interest that appears to be increasing in recent years. Interestingly, Gadamer is highly esteemed by three prominent Canadian thinkers: Charles Taylor, Jean Grondin, and Paul Fairfield, all whom have been central figures in introducing him to North American academic audiences. These thinkers do not introduce Gadamer as merely another figure in continental philosophy. Rather, they introduced him as someone who has much to add to our critical conversations, especially in areas of encounter and diversity. Moreover, the corpus of their own philosophical projects shows clear signs of the benefits they receive from the critical and political directions that underpin Gadamer's pluralistic and intersubjective orientation.

However, Niekerk's main objection is directed against Gadamer's undoing of the metaphysics subjectivity. He frames as problematic the conception of the subject as being

constituted by historical forces beyond the subject's control, and charges Gadamer of removing responsibility from individuals and authorship from writers. He argues that Gadamer views consciousness as being historically effected and determined without any agency on our part: "Hermeneutics sees language not as the object of rational reflection and a conscious self-positioning of the author: rather, texts are products of powers beyond the influence of the subject. Language speaks itself, history speaks through the subject, the subject is a product rather than a creator of history, and these contingencies lead to questionable interpretations" (2004, 164).

Despite these criticisms, Niekerk also feels compelled to address some of the underlying and larger critical themes underpinning Gadamer's project, and admits that Gadamer could not be described as apathetic let alone apologetic. Instead, he acknowledges, even if somewhat hesitantly, that Gadamer strives to question historical influences and offer corrective alternatives. Niekerk even goes so far as to suggest that Gadamer wrote *Truth and Method* as a cathartic expression to respond to the past. "Perhaps the book was also meant as a type of therapy and not just as the description of the processes of understanding that it claims to be" (2004, 165). By leveling this charge, Niekerk implies that Gadamer's hermeneutics and questioning of the Cartesian and Western metaphysics of subjectivity represent his academic escape from the gravity of Germany's past.

The significance of Gadamer's dialogical orientation, however, lies precisely in his ability to undo some of the foundationalist assumptions that Niekerk seems to take lightly. Contra Niekerk, Dallmayr (2020) argues that the undoing of metaphysical subjectivity has been a positive paradigm shift with profound political implications. The dislodging of the *ego cogito* from the centerstage of Western thought as the transcendent active master of reality created a cascading effect in other areas, as Dallmayr argues (2020). In turn, this unsettling shifted our conceptions of ourselves and the world. All ideas that were based on hierarchies, unified cohesion, or unity were now under question:

> The discovery of the 'life-world' or 'world' as the underpinning of human life dislodged the *ego cogito* from its place as the warrant of human identity, just as it called into question the nation-state or the state based on unified exclusionary ethnicity. No doubt, the changes occurring with regard to identity and nationality are unsettling, but they are (or can be) also hopeful, productive, and transformative. Thus, state structures that have become outdated and oppressive can give way to new cross-cultural and cross-national combinations more in tune with emerging exigencies and needs. The same is true of identity conceptions, which no longer fit the emerging diversity of life-world experiences. The most important feature characterizing our epoch, in my view, is the upsurge of pluralism and multiplicity in the place of older unitary entities and/or polarized dichotomies or dualisms. This is what one means by 'difference' in the contemporary 'postmodern' sense. The point is not that everything differs from other beings in a purely binary or else negative sense (A is not B). Rather, difference in the new sense is a mode of relationship or 'transversality' where commonality remains a lived background and hence a constant task searched for possibility. For this reason, solidarity and stability today cannot simply be imposed or presupposed but have to be explored though mutual dialogue and interaction. (Dallmayr 2020, 20-21)

Vattimo is deeply aware of the misunderstandings around his mentor's project and legacy, even by those that tend to perceive Gadamer positively. Vattimo therefore argues that "both positive receptions and critical rejections of Gadamer's hermeneutics seem to be marked by a basic misunderstanding: namely, the assumption that it may be reduced to a theory of the intrinsically finite and historically bound character of understanding. […] Gadamer's critics find here the reason to impute to him a philosophy that will necessarily end up either in a historic relativism or

in a vague traditionalism" (2002, 300). Niekerk's criticisms should therefore be taken into consideration, because his main arguments encapsulate some of the major misunderstandings or misconceptions about Gadamer's project. It reflects the general attitude of scholars who tend to view philosophical hermeneutics as being irrelevant to our contemporary predicaments and lacking any critical potential from which we might benefit.

The very issues Niekerk raises, including his praise of Habermas, are at the core of what makes Gadamer even more relevant to current critical theory and the questioning of Western foundationalist thinking. *Gadamer refuses to give free reign to critique precisely because it could perpetuate the very power issues it is critiquing when a given critical perspective does not acknowledge its own historical and cultural situatedness.* Moreover, according to Vattimo, the core of Gadamer's project is missed by both his critics and admirers precisely because they miss its profound political implications, especially as found in his ontological shift of hermeneutics. Vattimo shows how Gadamer's hermeneutics is deeply, if implicitly, political, since it challenges the duality between thought and action set in Marx's maxim about how philosophers have been interpreting the world when the point is to change the world. "One of the tenets of Gadamer's hermeneutics, one could perhaps say its main tenet, is the identification between the act that interprets the world and the act that changes it" (2002, 299). Vattimo thus rephrases the famous maxim, stating, "until now, philosophers thought they were only interpreting the world, yet they were truly changing it" (Vattimo 2002, 299). Vattimo argues that this is "how one could rewrite from the standpoint of a philosophy reconfigured by Gadamer's influence" (2002, 299). Gadamer's ontological conception of hermeneutics is what gives his philosophical hermeneutics a different kind of political impetus and renders it as a potent tool for transforming the world. Although this dimension of hermeneutics is somewhat recognized by a few scholars, it tends to be mostly for the wrong reasons, as Vattimo indicates.

Ironically, the radical political implication of hermeneutics is not lost upon Stanley Rosen, one of the strongest critics of the interpretive turn. His book *Hermeneutics as Politics* (1987) is a scathing critique of *the age of hermeneutics*. Its main purpose is to set a warning against the dangers of the radical politics endemic to hermeneutics (1987). Although he is opposed to the new orientations in "The Age of Interpretation," given his commitments to the ideals of the Enlightenment and the centrality of reason in foundationalist thinking, Rosen is among the few who senses what is truly at stake in hermeneutics, and he is quite cognisant of the radicality of what may seem to be calm and soft interpretive turns. Of course, by "hermeneutics," Rosen includes all the recent anti-foundationalist philosophical projects that question the possibility of a transcendent, ahistorical, objective truth, and which also take language as an object of analysis. Consequently, the *hermeneutic turn*, for him, is the linguistic turn turned political. This "rebellion" includes the usual suspects in continental philosophy: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida, and Gadamer. He also includes—even though he comes from analytic philosophy—Ludwig Wittgenstein. Rosen stresses the role of Wittgenstein's contributions to the linguistic turn, since Wittgenstein was among the first to introduce the relativity and changeability of meaning in linguistic use due to contextual variations (1987, 153). He decries the way even science has fallen within this interpretive paradigm: "Thanks in part to the influence of the later Wittgenstein but also to a variety of other factors […] science as a linguistic process has triumphed over the pre-Darwinian, pre-Einsteinian sense of science as a theoretical understanding of the immutable laws of nature […]. *Doxa* is the successor to *episteme*, and poetry has triumphed in its ancient quarrel with philosophy" (1987, 153, emphasis mine).

Rosen, like Arendt, sees the connection between hermeneutics and politics as a central theme in the Platonic dialogues. However, what he finds appalling in such new orientations, in contrast to Arendt, is the kind of horizontal plurality that hermeneutics inaugurates in relation to truth—the emphasis on any knowledge as *doxa*. Whereas Arendt sees an increase in objectivity and truth in the plurality of perspectives, Rosen sees a dangerous detour—even a future of anarchy—in such a reorientation to plurality. Arendt says, "Only in the freedom of our speaking with one another does the world, as that about which we speak, emerges in its objectivity and visibility from all sides" (2005, 128-129). In contrast, Rosen argues that the kind of liberal pluralism found in contemporary society points to "the crucial fact that modern liberal democracies are the result of the *failure*, not the success, of the Enlightenment. It could therefore be argued that hermeneutics is the proper critical instrument of liberal democracy. But we must also understand that this instrument has the fatal consequence of urging democracy towards anarchy" (1987, 139). For him, the increase in our hermeneutic diversity is a new political turn, in which hermeneutics is ineluctably a political reorientation with prospects that defy the stabilizing power of Western metaphysics. Rosen's awareness of the inescapability of the political implications of post-foundationalist hermeneutics is what fuels his panic:

> The popularity of hermeneutics in our own time is thus a mark of singular political as well as theoretical importance. It is a sign not of our great understanding, but of the fact that we have lost our way, that we understand nothing, expect to the extent that we adopt rule and principles, which, however, must themselves be supported by an interpretation that hangs in the void […]. What we call freedom today is all too frequently the result of a failure to think through the corruption of finitude by history. This is why I have called postmodernism an extreme form of decadence. (1987, 139)

Such statements and sentiments about a new world based on a plurality of hermeneutic worldviews, beyond any appeal to objective truth or externally established authority, are also shared by Alan Bloom, in his book *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987). Here, Bloom also sees a hermeneutic world as dangerous. Ironically, for Bloom, the opening up to a larger hermeneutic plurality indicates a closing down of the Western mind. For the two authors, a diversity of hermeneutic perspectives paradoxically leads to relativizing *Truth* as established by Western philosophy and metaphysics. Hence the fear a closure, or the besieging of the Western mind in a chaos of perspectivism and pluralism. Rosen echoes this sentiment of Bloom's when he states: "What we call freedom today is all too frequently the result of a failure to think through the corruption of finitude by history. This is why I have called postmodernism an extreme form of decadence" (1987, 139).

Questions of freedom and equality, for both, are set in contention with the singularity of truth and the power of a state to control the hermeneutic chaos of its citizens. As Rosen states, "A rigorous and consistent defense of the Enlightenment, or the thesis that freedom is the highest good and scientific knowledge its most powerful instrument, leads *in principle* to what Kojéve called the universal and homogeneous state. It leads to the suppression and indeed the exclusion of error and superstition. But whereas there are many forms of error and superstition, there is only one form of scientific truth" (Rosen 1987, 138).

Rosen is therefore aware of the real implications of the hermeneutic turn on many levels. But these are also the very implications that give an ethical thrust to Gadamer's hermeneutic project. Naturally, Rosen does not spare criticism against Gadamer either. He argues that Gadamer is at fault for "promulgating a doctrine according to which objective interpretation is impossible"

(1987, 165), and is even more critical of Gadamer's emphasis on the political notion of *phronesis*. He is wary of the political implications of always being inclusive of the various perspectives of diverse citizens, and is thus also wary of Gadamer's appropriation of the concept of *phronesis* to push for a perspectivist agenda. Rosen thus argues that Gadamer "is surely mistaken, however, and despite his greater subtlety, in the same way as the philologists, when he attempts to apply classical *phronesis* to a modern historicist view of human nature" (1987, 165).

Rosen's critique stands in complete contrast to Bernstein's evaluation of Gadamer's use of *phronesis* and its practical potential in furthering the ethical and political implications that underpin Gadamer's philosophical concerns. While Bernstein acknowledges that "ethics and politics are not in the foreground of his [Gadamer's] investigations" (1983, 150), he nevertheless insists that:

> it is also clear if we pay close attention to Gadamer's writings before and after the publication of *Truth and Method*, we will see that from his very earliest to his most recent writings he has consistently shown a concern with ethics and politics, especially with what we can learn from Greek philosophy. In his writings since the publication of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer has returned again and again to the dialectical interplay of hermeneutics and *praxis*. (1983, 150-151)

Bernstein's admiration for Gadamer's political orientation is the very reason that Rosen renders hermeneutics a threatening and menacing new orientation. The *Age of Hermeneutics* is therefore a perilous turn for Rosen, since hermeneutics in general—including what he takes to be Gadamer's lack of commitment to objective truth—represents a dangerous rebellion:

> The twentieth-century rebellion against *the* scientific truth—and the consequent popularity of doctrines of historicism and linguistic conventionalism, whether derived from Nietzsche or Wittgenstein—is thus a rebellion against the Enlightenment, and it comes dangerously close to being a rebellion against truth. Whatever was intended by the leaders of this rebellion, there can be no doubt that *the thesis that art is worth more than the truth* is the dominant principle of our time. We have protected ourselves against rationalism not by prudent moderation in its use but by a reckless embrace of recklessness, or the rejection of rationalism in favor of the imagination. (1987, 138, emphasis mine)

As this passage indicates, unlike Niekerk, Rosen does not see hermeneutics as a passing fad. He sees it as gaining approval and momentum, with strong and impending political consequences. "The popularity of hermeneutics in our time is thus a mark of singular political as well theoretical importance. It is a sign not of our greater understanding but of the fact that we have lost our way" laments Rosen (1987, 139). In a paradoxical way, then, Rosen brings to the fore the political significance of Gadamer's project, including its potentially powerful consequences.

Rosen's framing of the issue obviously offers the kind of polarized thinking that characterizes modernist discourse. There is no tension in Gadamer's project between science and imagination, or between truth and art, because Gadamer does not conceive of them as dichotomies, or competing polarities. Bernstein explains that when "we enlarge our horizon and consider the implications of what he [Gadamer] is saying for a contemporary understanding of *praxis*, a number of difficulties come into sharp relief" (1983, 151). This is precisely why philosophical hermeneutics is relevant today in more than one way. Gadamer resolves these unnecessary tensions by re-expanding the spectrum of knowledge such that science and art can both coexist as different modes of accessing reality. This is why Bernstein pays attention to Gadamer's understanding of truth. The primary intention of *Truth and Method*, for Bernstein, is to elucidate and defend the

legitimacy of speaking of the "truth" of works of art, or ancient texts. "Gadamer tells us," Bernstein argues, "that it was not his aim to play off Method against Truth, but rather to show that there is 'an entirely different notion of knowledge and truth' which is not exhausted by the achievements of scientific method and which is available to us through hermeneutical understanding" (1983, 151).

Gadamer's major contribution lies, therefore, precisely in his ability to offer a new perspective in which he revolutionizes our thinking beyond reductionist dichotomies that create violent political consequences. In his project, such polarities are not at opposite ends but are rather intertwined, interconnected, and within a continuum. In *The Future of Religion* (2005), Santiago Zabala argues that if modernity revolved around strong dichotomies—between the natural and human sciences, atheism and theism, analytic and continental philosophy, etc.—then at the end of the modern epoch, we are beyond such dualities. In other words, he argues that the deconstruction of metaphysics has finally created new ground for shedding the dualisms that have characterized Western thought (2005). "As soon as one realizes, thanks to hermeneutics," argues Zabala, "that every critical thought comes about within a historical condition that makes it possible and supplies its substratum and framework—realizes, that is, the 'historicity' of all knowledge—the division between scientific and humanistic culture becomes less consistent" (2005, 8). This is another reason why Gadamer's project will have increasing relevance—it is reorienting Western thought away from the conventional polarities that are markers of foundationalist thinking, while also offering a fresh dynamic alternative.

Zabala therefore presents hermeneutics as offering a new critical direction that liberates us from our illusory assumptions of being the only heirs and inheritors of singular truths. The rising interest in Gadamer's hermeneutics indicates the potential and significance of *the hermeneutic turn*. Moreover, to respond to Niekerk's claims about the absence of a thriving hermeneutic scene, we also need to probe a bit deeper. Even if we assume such a lack of interest—although the current literature suggests otherwise—then this overlooking in certain circles, despite Gadamer's emphasis on hermeneutic and dialogical diversity, is rather indicative of remnants of foundationalist thinking. It reveals the underlying hegemonic structures in our epistemological endeavours—not Gadamer's irrelevance or lack of critical potential. Vattimo is aware of the fear and anxiety around releasing the foundationalist appeals to objectivity, as seen above in Rosen's analysis of the *hermeneutic rebellion*: "Hasty readers of Gadamer may think that that this is the case because human finitude prevents us from knowing things the way they are. On the contrary, *one should rather say that things are what they truly are, only within the realms of interpretation and language*" (2002, 301, emphasis mine). This is why the Age of Interpretation, in which we can articulate and develop the potentialities of hermeneutics, can also be an age of radically new political possibilities. "In other words, a consistent formulation of hermeneutics requires a profound ontological revolution," writes Vattimo, because for him, hermeneutics "must bid farewell" to the previous foundationalist thinking and its illusions of objectivity and control (2002, 301).

5.3 Dialogue as Politics: The Hermeneutic Priority of Horizontal Intersubjectivity

Given the preceding discussion, I would like to argue that the absence of Gadamer's hermeneutic approach in much of the general thrust of critical theory is indicative of a lack of genuine interest in dialoguing with the "other" in a horizontal manner, rather than in Gadamer's own critical weakness. On the one hand, modernist appeals are invested in the foundationalist

paradigm, as Rosen has shown, and therefore do not shy away from the stance of rejecting otherness and upholding hegemonic epistemology. On the other hand, even in postmodern critiques, there is the tendency of the neutral external critic, as discussed above. Both positions offer critiques that either exclude the other or fail to critique one's own positionality.

Gadamer's increasing relevance to our world is underscored by several scholars who *are* interested in re-including the "other," and who thereby subscribe to Gadamer's mobile modality of dialogue as a way of creating dynamic and evolving knowledge. Moreover, the deeper political and critical implications of philosophical hermeneutics are becoming increasingly obvious in a world where encounter is becoming an inevitable norm. Postmodern working conditions, the refugee crises, and massive labor migrations all are creating contexts in which we cannot avoid encounter and otherness. Simpson therefore argues that we need to acknowledge the critical potential in philosophical hermeneutics by recognizing "the ongoing relevance of hermeneutic approaches to matters that are far beyond the field of literary and textual analysis to which hermeneutic strategies have all too often been restricted" (2016, 21).

It is unfortunate that Paul Ricoeur's work played a major role in eclipsing the critical importance of Gadamer's project. Ricoeur in his influential work on hermeneutics, *Freud and Philosophy*, contrasts two streams of hermeneutics. Ricoeur distinguishes between the the *hermeneutics of recovery of meaning*, which he associates with Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer, and the *hermeneutics of suspicion*, which he associates with Marx, Freud and Nietzsche. Of course, this dichotomy indicates that philosophical hermeneutics is not a genre with strong critical inclinations, and, moreover, that the kind of interpretive investigations undertaken by other thinkers offer more critical possibilities. We can see from this division that Foucault or even Habermas would also be placed in the latter category, given their critique of practices and ideologies. Ricoeur's dichotomy thus places Gadamer's hermeneutics in opposition to a hermeneutics of suspicion. However, this facile categorization of Gadamer's project, which has had a wide and lasting impact on perceptions of Gadamer, has been challenged by several scholars. Fairfield, Simpson, Vilhauer, Dallmayr, Warnke and others all insist on the value of philosophical hermeneutics, especially in posing more complex questions about power and hegemony

In fact, taking a corrective stance on this issue, Simpson names his chapter on Gadamer in Warnke's edited volume "Critical Fusions: Toward a Genuine 'Hermeneutics of Suspicion,'" thus challenging Ricoeur's division. Fairfield also offers, in more than one work, some nuanced and well-argued critiques of this facile dichotomy. Repeatedly, Fairfield explains why philosophical hermeneutics, in terms of its critical edge, provides a much more radical stance than Ricoeur's own conception of a "hermeneutics of suspicion." Fairfield's main contention with Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion, in addition to its polarizing division of hermeneutics, has also to do Ricoeur's failure to discuss the necessity of being "suspicions" of the critic's own embeddedness. In other words, Fairfield argues that Ricoeur's elevation of the critical projects of postmodern critics does not position them within history, which therefore shows a reluctance to acknowledge the problematic nature of some of their stances (2002, 59). For Fairfield, a hermeneutics of suspicion also becomes dangerous when the critic "claims for himself a kind of quasi-neutrality of the kind that his premises expressly forbid" (2002, 58). He therefore argues that a certain philosophical arrogance occurs when a critic assumes the ability to reveal a hidden reality, a "final truth," behind an apparent façade (2002, 56). This is exactly the point that Zabala also makes in his introduction to *The Future of Religion* (2005), which shows how Gadamer's dialogue helps us move beyond claims of some sort of final revelation by creating more reflexive turnabouts. "With the end of metaphysics, the aim of intellectual activity is no longer knowledge of truth but a

'conversation' in which every argument is fully entitled to find agreement without recurse to any authority. The space left open by metaphysics must not be filled up by new philosophies claiming to exhibit some foundation external to the 'conversation'" (2005, 11). The significance of this difference in Gadamer's position lies in his questioning of the validity of a neutral position in the formation of knowledge, as emulated and modeled after the natural sciences. It is what makes Gadamer's critical angle more relevant to our current critical conversations, especially in the Canadian context, given much of the cultural and political blindness towards the First Peoples.

For Gadamer, knowledge and dialogue are intimately connected. Stepping away from the dialogical model of knowledge to provide an external, "truer" version of reality is a return to foundationalist thinking by other means. Although there is not enough space in this dissertation to discuss the Gadamer/Habermas debate, the main contention that arose between them was around this particular issue; whether the critic does have a superior positionality with her interlocuters.[26] In *The Ways of Power*, Fairfield deals primarily with the way hermeneutics resolves and subverts this quiet return to claims of neutrality, subtly found in certain streams of post-foundationalist thought. Facing the blind spot of the critic is a central issue for Fairfield, which makes him appreciate the critical value of Gadamer's project. Fairfield asks whether "the critic of power must speak either form a neutral, objective, and systematic frame of reference or from a position that is at once nowhere and everywhere" (2002, 58). Given the importance of such questions, Fairfield's entire book revolves around the attempt to show the inherent contradictions in most postmodern thinking on power. In turn, he shows how Gadamer's emphasis on dialogue, and the impossibility of an external neutral position, creates a stronger and bolder alternative in dealing with issues of power. For Fairfield, one of the major contribution of hermeneutics is therefore the perspectivity of all sides, including the critic's own. Consequently, this points to the possibility of equality, which is almost always elusive in epistemologically framed contexts. The critic usually stands beyond and above the object of his gaze, looking down from a higher plane and presuming a higher consciousness. This is precisely the problem Gadamer raises in regard to the obsession with method in the social sciences, in whose encounters the "other's" voice and presence are denied, and where the movement of the interplay of language comes to a stall.

5.4 Philosophical Hermeneutics and the Politics of Temporality

In *Arrival*, one of the main consequences of learning the language of the aliens for Dr. Banks in her ongoing dialogue with the visitors, is the shift in her temporal consciousness (Villeneuve 2016). Being exposed to the circular palindromic structure of the alien language, Dr. Banks begins to have a nonlinear temporal awareness in which she experiences time as a continuum. This is another theme that reflects Gadamer's temporal analysis and its inherently political ramifications.

Perhaps one of the most revolutionary ideas of Gadamer's project is his challenge to the linear and hierarchal character of *Western time*. Although, the movie stretches the metaphor with the protagonist gaining access to flashes from the past and premonitions from the future, the main

[26] In *The Ways of Power* (2002), Fairfield provides a detailed analysis of the Gadamer/Habermas encounter in which Habermas's analogy of the critic as the psychoanalyst and society as the analysed is taken by Gadamer as an example of the assumption of a higher, rational, and external position. Fairfield discusses "whether critical theory can transcend the situation-dependency of hermeneutic interpretation by employing the method of psychoanalysis" (86). He also explicates the implications of the two positions as a means of underscoring the significance of Gadamer's insistence upon horizonal dialogue—i.e., dialogue in which the critic can also be critiqued.

idea is that language structures our experience of time. Gadamer's emphasis on the way temporality is structured within linguisticality is not too far from the movie's imaginative premise. Philosophical hermeneutics makes us re-think the political implications of our current and deeply ingrained constructs of history and time, constructs which enhance global inequalities with a particular temporal paradigm. In *Time and the Other* (1983), Johannes Fabian argues that temporality is a deeply political signifier, and discusses the way Western thought has been organized around hierarchical and linear notions of time.

Fabian argues for the deeply political signification of temporality by investigating specific intellectual interpretations of history. Western temporal consciousness, he argues, is shaped by the use of what he terms "evolutionary Time," a sequencing mechanism which parses history into "developmental stages" (1983, 44). This is evident in the works of Darwin, Marx, and Hegel, who all posit a linear progressive history in which the West, having passed through all preceding developmental stages, now occupies the present. "Civilization, evolution, development, acculturation, modernisation (and their cousins, industrialization, urbanization) are all terms whose conceptual content derives, in ways that can be specified, from evolutionary Time" (Fabian 1983, 17). Thus, it is not just space that is colonized in modernity, he argues, it is also time that becomes colonized by turning the "other" into a distant temporal object (1983, 118). Fabian highlights the deeply political implications of the temporal categories within language. "Time, much like language or money, is a carrier of significance, a form through which we define the content of relations between Self and Other [...]. Time may give form to relations of power and inequality under the conditions of capitalist industrial production" (1983, I).

Fabian's thesis sheds light on the political significance of the temporal dimensions in Gadamer's work. His political reading of Western temporal constructs brings out Gadamer's temporal critique of modernity in a more pronounced way. Gadamer's insistence on questioning the distancing of the past helps us think in new ways about the temporal ways we push the other out of the I-Thou relationship. In Gadamer's thought, it becomes clear that time is a construct within our linguistically mediated horizon, one with inherently political implications. Given the extent to which the *other has been distanced* by being pushed from the present, Fabian argues that we need to seriously think of the necessary steps "to formulate a theory of coevalness" (1983, 37). He thus situates his own project as part of this needed effort to find new ways of recognizing the presence of the other in the present. Gadamer's temporal notions help in articulating this theory of coevalness.

The temporal dimension in Gadamer's project pushes our critical angles beyond the usual postmodernist critical corpus. Philosophical hermeneutics probes into the assumptions of modernity in ways that make us more self-conscious about the deeply temporal dimension of domination in modernity. First, Gadamer's emphasis on *our historically effected consciousness* is meant to help us overcome naive assumptions about our capacity to stand above and beyond history as transcendent and independent subjects. Secondly, his project creates a frame of analysis for acknowledging and recognizing the prejudices of the Enlightenment against the past. Thirdly, Gadamer's rehabilitation of Kierkegaard's notion of "contemporaneity" provides the necessary alternative *to formulate a theory of coevalness* as Fabian demands.

Gadamer conceives of the illusion of rupture as one of the main "naïve" assumptions in modernity, especially when we pretend to achieve a full exit from tradition with an inherit assumption of superiority towards the past. For Gadamer, tradition is already built into the very structure of understanding, even when we are not always aware of the historical conditions that shape our temporally situated consciousness. Thus, Gadamer introduces a notion of time as a

continuum, which is a radical departure from Western time. Gadamer resurrects Kierkegaard's notion of contemporaneity as a means of breaking through the confines of the constructed linear character of Western time. The choice of this word is intentional, because Gadamer is aware that for "Kierkegaard, 'contemporaneity' does not mean 'existing at the same time'" (2013, 129). Rather, it means the "simultaneity of aesthetic consciousness" which "achieves full presence, however remote its origin may be" (2013, 129). This is what is intended in Gadamer's conception of *Die Rehabilitierung von Autoritat und Tradition* (the rehabilitation of tradition and authority), where the voice of the other is not objectified, but accepted as an other who achieves full presence.

Nevertheless, Gadamer's approach to rehabilitating tradition usually evokes accusations of conservatism. This position is often misunderstood, if not altogether rejected. Gadamer is often portrayed as a scholar of ancient texts, romanticizing tradition: "Gadamer's re-accommodation of 'tradition' within philosophical debate is of great consequence but its poignancy has been lost in the debates about Gadamer's alleged conservatism," argues Nicolas Davey (2006, xii). "Central to a dialogical notion of tradition is the idea of a continuity of intellectual conflict. This implies that the tradition is not opposed to modernity but is one of its principal drivers. The evidence for a more radicalized conception of tradition within philosophical hermeneutics is plain, yet rarely is it discussed" (Davey 2006, xii).

The temporal dimension of Gadamer's critique of modernity challenges the momentum of Western thought in its treatment of the past. His notion of "tradition" has more to do with the present than with the past. The notion of rehabilitating tradition is *not* an appeal to return to the past. It is a new temporal conception of tradition as living and still effective in the present. Gadamer's emphasis on the necessity of allowing for an encounter with the past lies in the capacity of the past to reveal the shadows of our repressed encounters in the present. Ironically, because the postmodern approach is still within the modernist paradigm in its prejudice towards tradition—and its break with sacred time—it falls back into repressing and silencing tradition as a "dialogical other," as Gadamer argues. This is another way in which Western subjectivist metaphysics comes back through the window—where *self* and the *present* become superior to the *other* and the *past*.

For Gadamer, the attempt to always place tradition as a distant other can also be glimpsed through another reversal that Gadamer does not directly address. Just as there is an "othering" of tradition, there is also a "temporalizing" of the other into a distant tradition. According to Taylor, although the origins of fields like ethnography and anthropology seem, on the surface, like sciences in search of understanding the other, they remain trapped within a philosophical temporal paradigm of modernity which had already placed the other out of the present (2002).

If the *past is a forgotten other*, for Gadamer, then in our contemporary world, *the other is a forgotten past*. The description of *the other* as "traditional," "pre-modern," or "pre-Enlightenment," are linguistic tools by which we practice temporal expulsion—the expelling of *contemporaneous others* from the present. "A discourse employing terms such as primitive, savage (but also tribal, traditional, Third World, or whatever euphemism is current) does not think, or observe, or critically study, the 'primitive' it thinks, observes, studies in terms of the primitive. Primitive being essentially a temporal concept, is a category, not an object, of Western thought" (Fabian 1983, 17-18). Taylor is also aware of the way such temporalized encounter prevents the sharing of knowledge or experience. He argues that the anxieties around the validity and stability of truth, despite the emphasis on openness toward the other, create a one-directional monology. "The very ideas of objectivity that underpinned Western social science seemed hard to combine with that of fundamental conceptual differences between cultures; so that real cultural openness appeared to threaten the very norms of validity on which social science rested" (2002, 279).

The points these thinkers raise are related to the problematic that Gadamer raises about the unified worldview of the modern context, and also to the "subjugation of knowledges" that Foucault raises. In a world where a plurality of hermeneutic worldviews is not accommodated, our present becomes a narrow intellectual site that allows for a particular dominant view. Those who do not exactly fit will be booted out in a variety of ways. In the modern context this is done by different means, physically and temporally. According to Fabian's perspective, we do not only push the other out of space—out of the landscape of our geographies of domination—but we also push the other out of time physically, by eliminating the other, besieging the other, or taking away the lands and resources from the original inhabitants of a given physical space (1983, 109). Alternately, if they are spared physically, then their displacement is temporal— what Fabian refers to as "circumventing coevalness"—a form of displacement which denies the others presence in the present (1983, 38).

The significance of this discussion lies in the way Gadamer problematizes our relationship to the present by making us reflect upon the underlying implications of our temporal categories. When we see the various modes in which we suppress otherness and difference, we see that our use of time is not so innocent. Gadamer's analysis of the temporal dimensions of hermeneutic consciousness helps us see *the political in the temporal*—and not just in the physical. The domination of the temporal landscape means that if we must encounter the other in our spatial landscape, we have found other ways of avoiding encounter. We have rejected her presence and avoided the givenness of relationality in the present through circumventing coevalness, as Fabian puts it. We choose to see the other as a ghost reappearing from a distant past, in need of reform and modernizing to merit entry into our temporal castle. Taylor also deals with this avoidance of the "risk" of encountering the other in context of the social sciences, where a "unilateral language" is sustained. When he takes Gadamer's dialogical model into consideration, Taylor shows that avoiding the dialogical context renders the other, who is our dialogical interlocutor, into a mute object incapable of influencing our views and therefore allowing us to avoid the risk of having to change anything. "The unilateral nature of knowing emerges in the fact that my goal is to attain a full intellectual control over the object, such that it can no longer 'talk back' and surprise me" (2002, 280).

Although the issues of power and the political may seem latent in the trajectory of Gadamer's thought, they are also what underpins his entire project. The hegemony of the scientific paradigm, for him, is not simply an epistemological orientation, but one that has many other political and social implications. Gadamer's main issue, which surfaces repeatedly, is the constant struggle to control and stabilize our relations, whether in dealing with others in social and political contexts, studying the other in social research, or in controlling our environment in our attempts to subdue the natural world.

Gadamer, however, offers exits strategies, not by offering specific intellectual content or by pointing to a certain direction, but by wresting both hermeneutics and dialogue from their conventional literary definitions, beyond method and technique, to initiate a philosophical orientation that opens us to the *different, distant* and *difficult*. Such a reorientation inherently has far-reaching political consequences, and not just philosophical implications. Gadamer is not only relevant to conversations about power and marginalization, but is rather indispensable to such debates—not only because he offers critiques of Western thought and its underlying philosophical assumptions, but also because he proposes dialogue as an alternative. The dialogical exit strategy is a mode of horizontal relating to otherness that opens the whole world anew. As Simpson writes,

> in our current moment of global modernity, I think that hermeneutics can make a unique contribution to critical social and cultural understanding. Given contemporary concern about questions of global justice and, in particular, the skepticism voiced by some 'postcolonialist' and 'multiculturalist' thinkers that any ethical regime with cosmopolitan intension must inevitably founder on the shoals of a Eurocentric ethnocentrism, hermeneutic approaches to social justice may well be the best positioned simultaneously to do justice to cultural differences and to avoid situations where critique depends for its legitimacy on normative standards developed in and imposed by the West. (Simpson 2016, 23)

Gadamer's hermeneutics leads the conversation in different directions and in ways that can make use of the contributions of other scholars as well. Hermeneutics is more than just a curiosity about the exotic other, rather it is a true widening of the conversation in ways that create a whole new context for discussing language, domination, and otherness. It points to new horizons of re-thinking our exit strategies together—to dialoguing *with* each other and not *past* each other.

By inviting us to recognize the power of open and equal encounters, Gadamer awakens us to the dialogical structure of life from an ontological perspective. His dialogical modality, with an emphasis on rehabilitating the past, opens a temporal continuum of thinking and questioning in a manner that allows us to build upon those before us without closing down the conversation for those who come after us. Gadamer's *rehabilitated hermeneutic circle* is captured in the alien palindromic graphemes of *Arrival*, inviting us to experience the world in a more open and dynamic manner.

Gadamerian hermeneutics ultimately helps us step out of the modernist prison, which is *rationally structured*, into a world that is *relationally engaged.* In his forward to Gadamer's *In Praise of Theory*, Weinsheimer argues that Gadamer's project is a call to liberate ourselves from the modernist fantasy of control to the end: "A new Enlightenment is needed, Gadamer argues, to overcome the old Enlightenment superstition that we can make our world anything we would have it" (1998, viii). Only by finally acknowledging our situatedness in time, with others, and within a linguistic horizon, can we begin to really think about how to relate to all that is truly around us and constantly beckoning us. Gadamer's project is not a final philosophy about something as much as it is a reorientation from the self-enclosure of Western metaphysics and its flight above history. It is not an ideology or a particular system of ideas as much as a drastic philosophical turnaround—a quiet revolution. Gadamer's project awakens us to a completely different world.

Although Gadamer does not on top most philosophical lists of those who theorize about power, I have proposed in this dissertation that Gadamer's entire work and intellectual trajectory is predicated on understanding how our modern forms of knowledge and the resulting consequences of modernity are reflective of our attempts to evade encounter and dominate being. Just as *Arrival* points artistically to the determining power of hermeneutics and the gift of language, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics awakens us to the value of the voice of the other, and the "gifts" that we might receive if we are willing to enter into dialogue with the alien other. For Gadamer, this gift is also found in allowing ourselves to experience the otherness of other modes of knowing. In his essay "Culture and the Word," Gadamer invokes the power of religious knowledge; its ability to create reconciliation through the language of forgiveness:

> In the experience of reconciliation, something of the true inner historicality of man presents itself, as does something of his inner possibility of development; so it is one of the deepest experiences that people can ever have. For wherever there has been disunity, discord, and disintegration, wherever we have fallen out with one another, wherever our sociability has collapsed—whether it is between an I and a you, or a person and a society, or perhaps the sinner and the church—we

> always experience how the reconciliation brings an increase into the world. That is the mystery of reconciliation. Only through reconciliation can the otherness—the insuperable (*unaufhebbare*) otherness that divides man from man—be overcome, nay, raised up (*heraufgehoben*) in the wonderous reality of living and thinking in community and solidarity. (1998, 14-15)

This dissertation has engaged in conversations *with* Gadamer, *about* Gadamer, and *between* Gadamer and others. As such it is part of an ongoing dialogue in which Gadamer's writings resurrect him into a state of *contemporaneity*, where we can fuse our horizons with his to move language and generate newness into being. "But I will stop here," as Gadamer writes in his last lines in *Truth and Method*, "The ongoing dialogue permits no conclusion. It would be a poor hermeneuticist who thought he [or she] could have, or had to have, the last word" (2013, 603).

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