Accommodation via Understanding:
Philosophical Hermeneutics and Intercultural Dialogue

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ABSTRACT

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Hans-Georg Gadamer is widely recognized as one of the most influential figures in twentieth century hermeneutics. Following Heidegger, Gadamer articulates the hermeneutical problem ontologically as the problem of human understanding, and argues that understanding is an inherently dialogical process that cannot be grasped by a facile appeal to method. While *Truth and Method*—his magnum opus—primarily focuses on the understanding of texts, his assertions regarding the historical and dialogical nature of understanding opens his work up to different types of application. This thesis will assert that his work provides an excellent framework for making sense of some of the challenges inherent in inter-cultural/religious dialogue and understanding, and accomplish this by exploring the Quebec accommodation crisis through a Gadamerian lens.

Dedication

To my partner and best friend, Alexander Kulczyk, with love.

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I would specifically like to thank Marc Lalonde, who was the first professor to get me interested in the philosophy of religion, and who successfully guided my thesis to completion—it truly wouldn't have been possible without his help and guidance. I would also like to thank Norma Joseph and Michael Oppenheim for their engaging courses and ability to get me to think about things in new ways, and the Department of religion as a whole for providing such an engaging and warm atmosphere. Last but not least, I would like to thank Tina and Munit for being continual sources of information and help, and also my family and friends for their constant support and encouragement.

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Introduction

Why Gadamer, Why now?

The current state of geopolitics in the second decade of the new millennium[1] has engendered a renewed and somewhat urgent interest in inter-cultural/religious dialogue and understanding. It is in this context that the following claim by Charles Taylor rings true: "the great challenge of the coming century, for both politics and for social science, is that of understanding the other."[2] Reflecting on this quote fourteen years after its initial publication in 2002, the argument can be made that perhaps a slight reformulation of this sentiment is in order; that perhaps the "other" Taylor speaks of is best understood as "the *religious* other."

While a cursory glance at the Pew Research Center's 2015 report on the future of world religions[3] seems to confirm the common perception that religious affiliation is on the decline in most Western nations, a closer look indicates that the net impact of increasing global populations means that, "as a share of all people in the world, those with no religious affiliation are projected to decline from %16 in 2010 to %13 percent by the middle of the century."[4] This type of projection—combined with the present reality of

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[1] Here I am primarily referring to the ongoing civil war in Syria and general instability throughout the Middle East, the ensuing 'refugee crisis' and the sluggish and inadequate response from the European Union and other global powers, the alarming rise of proto-fascist and anti-religious discourse in the wake of increasing numbers of refugees and acts of terrorism in the West, the return of Cold War tensions, and, on a broader and perhaps more abstract level, the general sense of global malaise caused by the feeling that, to quote Aharon Klieman, "international society is under siege" (V). From *Great Powers and Geopolitics: International Affairs in a Rebalancing World* ed. Aharon Klieman (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing Switzerland, 2015).

[2] Taylor, Charles, "Gadamer on the Human Sciences," in *Gadamer's Century: Essay's in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, eds. Jeff Malpas, Ulrich Arnswald and Jens Kertscher (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2002), 126.

[3] "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050" http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/22/what-is-each-countrys-second-largest-religious-group/

[4] Ibid.

ever-increasing international migration[5]—seems to support this reformulation of Taylor's assertion, and thinking in these terms raises the very important question of what this challenging task of understanding actually entails.

Although the philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer may not be the first thing that comes to mind when thinking through a way to approach such a question, I hope to demonstrate that Gadamer's life-long effort to articulate understanding as an ontological process, combined with his unique understanding of transcendence—and his insistence on the role it must play in "the task of philosophy today"[6]—provide indispensible resources in this regard. Within the vast body of existing Gadamerian scholarship this is certainly not a novel claim, and a number of noteworthy Gadamer scholars[7] have made important strides in expounding the ways in which Gadamer's thought can aid scholarly attempts to make sense of understanding across cultural and religious divides, and also in pointing out areas where his thought seems to fall short in this regard. For the most part, however, these efforts seem more exploratory than sustained, and there seems to be—at least in English language publications—an interesting lacuna: while many important theoretical discussions are occurring, there is a notable scarcity of attempts to apply these insights to a case study to see how they could work to illuminate and/or mitigate some of the issues surrounding attempts at dialogue in a real-life intercultural or interreligious conflict.

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[5] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2016). *International Migration Report 2015: Highlights* (ST/ESA/SER.A/375).

[6] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *A Century of Philosophy: Hans-Georg Gadamer in Conversation with Riccardo Dottori*, Trans. Rod Coltman and Sigrid Koepke (London: Continuum, 2004), 73.

[7] See all bibliographic entries for Fred Dallmayr, David Tracy, Jens Zimmerman and Andrzej Wiercinski as a sampling of this discourse.

This is a lacuna I find interesting for a number of reasons: (1) in his later years Gadamer was clear in his insistence that hermeneutics cannot be contained in some theoretical silo, but is, rather, something with intimately practical dimensions;[8] (2) while the practical application of continental philosophy to case studies is not a typical operation in philosophical scholarship, the urgency of the current global social context demands—at least from the interdisciplinary standpoint of Religious Studies—that the practical application of all potentially viable paths to clarifying issues surrounding inter-cultural/religious understanding be explored in earnest; (3) from the standpoint of hermeneutics itself and the historical considerations it puts forward, it is important to explore why the legacy of Gadamer has endured—in other words, why does Gadamer's thought continue to address us as being significant today?

It is with these considerations in mind that I approach the current undertaking, an examination of the ways in which Gadamer's account of understanding can clarify and assuage some of the issues surrounding the Quebec accommodation crisis—a situation that arose in the early 2000s as media outlets in Quebec began heavily reporting on requests for religious accommodation in the province, which led to a widespread concern among sizable portions of the francophone majority regarding whether or not these requests (and the people making them) posed threats to certain fundamental pillars of Quebec society. The accommodation crisis brought longstanding and deeply-rooted issues related to cultural identity, social cohesion and pluralism to forefront of public debate, and prompted two successive provincial governments to try and take decisive steps to quell the resulting unrest. The primary documents to emerge from these

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[8] See Gadamer, *A Century of Philosophy;* Hans-Georg Gadamer "Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy" and "Hermeneutics as a Theoretical and Practical Task" in *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of Later Writings*, ed. and trans. Richard E. Palmer (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

government responses[9] will form the basis of my case study, an analysis which will be structured around a careful explication of the areas of Gadamer's thought that appear to be promising avenues for advancing successful intercultural and interreligious dialogue—namely: his concept of effective history; his rehabilitation of prejudice and the authority of tradition; his insistence on the experiential and dialogical nature of understanding;[10] his assertion that this process follows the Platonic logic of question and answer; his concept of "the horizon" and "the fusion of horizons;" his understanding of transcendence as the "beyond" which represents the absolute limit of the knowing subject.

These concepts are first introduced in *Truth and Method*[11]—Gadamer's magnum opus—and represent his attempt to decisively [12] disentangle hermeneutics from a fundamental presupposition of the Enlightenment, "namely that [the] methodologically disciplined use of reason can safeguard us from all error."[13] According to Gadamer this presupposition informs the interpretive stance of the natural sciences—which, in turn, informs the interpretive stance of the human sciences—and creates a rather unfortunate situation where truth is formulated as a thing that can be objectively grasped through correct methodology. Understanding based on method thus tends to position the

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[9] The findings of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission and the now-shelved Quebec Charter of Values.

[10] As we shall see in Chapter Two, Gadamer relates the dialogical and experiential nature of philosophical hermeneutics to the Aristotelian category of praxis, and, in doing so, makes the case that philosophical hermeneutics in fact continues the tradition of practical philosophy and therefore carries both ethical and political considerations ("Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy," 235).

[11] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinscheimer and Donald G. Marshal (London: Continuum, 2004).

[12] As the discussion in the following chapter will demonstrate, although Dilthey and Schleiermacher before him had attempted this in their own way, both fell prey to romantic historicism, which, despite its critique of Enlightenment rationality, in fact shares the Enlightenment's "prejudice against prejudice" (*Truth and Method*, 268-278), i.e. the belief that correct methodology can result in a unprejudiced interpretative stance.

[13] Ibid, 279.

interpreter as a detached observer rather than a participant with something at stake.[14] This is something Gadamer explicitly rejects, as positioning oneself in this way is to adopt the removed and supposedly unprejudiced stance of someone gathering empirical data. For Gadamer, scientific knowing is not (and can never be) synonymous with human understanding, as the latter always occurs *in the middle of things*: when we encounter a text or another person we enter into this encounter not as removed observers, but as embodied creatures who are always already shaped by our traditions (shared history, culture, beliefs, etc.), language, past experiences and accumulated knowledge. The fundamentality of this historical embeddedness allows Gadamer to put forward the notion of "historically effected consciousness;" the idea that human consciousness (understanding) is, inescapably, historically effected.

Our historically effected consciousness forms the prejudices (pre-judgments) that we bring to all encounters with others, be they other texts or other people. It is one of Gadamer's central arguments in *Truth and Method* that these prejudices must not be condemned or denied, but instead require a positive reassessment, as these prejudices are what form our horizon; the range of conceptual possibilities available from one's own particular vantage point. When we enter into an encounter with a text or another person, understanding only occurs if we treat this encounter as a dialogical event we must surrender ourselves to. This requires us to risk allowing the horizon of the other text or person to enter into our own in an ongoing and dynamic process of question and answer. Risk is thus crucial here, as the event of understanding—the "fusion of horizons"[15]—only occurs when we are truly able to allow the Other's horizon to enter into our own, a

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[14] Stanley E. Porter and Jason Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 78.

[15] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.

process that Gadamer argues tests our prejudices and opens up new and unforeseen possibilities of meaning.[16] In short, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics offers an account of understanding that forces us to confront the issues at the very heart of intercultural and interreligious dialogue: the inescapable historical and linguistic embeddedness of human beings, the impossibility of objective understanding in human affairs and the need to come to terms with the implications stemming from the acknowledgement of our own finitude, and, perhaps most crucially, the role the experience of alterity plays in understandings of both self and other.

In Chapter One I aim to sketch out the factors that contributed to Quebec's accommodation crisis by fleshing out some important elements of the Quebec context. Here is where I will be inquiring into the conditions of possibility that led to the crisis, and, by examining two of the most consequential documents to emerge from this event—the Quebec Charter of Values and *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation[17]*—outline two different ways the crisis has been perceived. I will argue that the concerns outlined by these different perceptions squarely positions inter-cultural/religious understanding (or a lack thereof) as the main issue underlying the debate over accommodation in the province. The analysis provided here will thus lay the groundwork for my subsequent exploration of the issue in Gadamerian terms.

In Chapter Two I will provide an in-depth examination of Gadamer's hermeneutics by focusing on the following questions: Where does Gadamer's thought fit into the longstanding tradition of hermeneutical inquiry? What are the implications of his critique of scientific knowing and concurrent rejection of hermeneutics-as-methodology?

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[16] This process will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.
[17] The report detailing the findings of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission.

How does the dialogical model of human understanding offer insight into the possibilities and limits of human communication? In what ways are these insights furthered or complicated by his unique conceptualization of transcendence and argument regarding the role it has to play in facilitating inter-cultural/religious dialogue?[18] And, finally, How can we understand his insistence that hermeneutics is "more than a mere teaching of a technique, and […] belongs in the neighborhood of practical philosophy"?[19] As the preceding remarks should indicate, my primary source for this chapter will be the work that cemented Gadamer's philosophical importance, *Truth and Method.* This will be supplemented by a number of articles written throughout his long philosophical career, as well as a selection of the numerous interviews he gave in the years leading up to his death in 2002. The chapter will end with a short literature review to lay out some further theoretical considerations and contextualize my project within the larger body of existing Gadamerian scholarship on philosophical hermeneutics and inter-cultural/religious understanding.

The third chapter is where I will seek to relate the hermeneutical framework explicated in Chapter Two to the accommodation crisis. By framing the central issue—inter-cultural/religious understanding—in Gadamerian terms, I aim to demonstrate how certain aspects of Gadamer's thought do indeed provide meaningful frameworks for exploring Quebec's anxiety surrounding the intersections between religious expression, secularism, cultural identity, pluralism and ethnocultural integration. I will also outline

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[18] Briefly summarized, he argues that transcendence describes a universal human experience, the experience of our own finitude. While religions define this experience in positive terms (their various dogmas), he maintains that the base experience is universal and has an important role to play in facilitating inter-cultural/religious understanding. This aspect of his thought is rather difficult to grasp and carries some problematic connotations, and will be fleshed out in detail in Chapter Two.

[19] Gadamer, "Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy," 235.

the shortcomings of his thought in this regard, and, drawing from some of the insights provided by my literature review, make the argument that the application of Gadamer's thought to inter-cultural/religious understanding is ultimately limited by his failure to incorporate a greater concern for certain insights stemming from critical theory.

In concluding I will reflect upon the following question: Can Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, all things considered, offer constructive suggestions for the issue of religious accommodation in Quebec? Here I will aim to provide an overview of the conclusions reached in the preceding chapters, and to clearly outline the insights gained from applying Gadamer's hermeneutics to this issue. I will further reflect on the challenges of utilizing Gadamer's hermeneutics in this way, and, building off the questions raised by the secondary sources consulted in chapter two, offer some suggestions for ways to incorporate a greater concern for the insights of critical theory[20] into future attempts to apply Gadamer's hermeneutics to intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

The mode of inquiry guiding my investigation will be one of philosophical exploration and analysis, and it will be pertinent to provide a few remarks on how this approach will inform the structure of my discussion. Philosophical hermeneutics demands a reframing of the way scholars in the social sciences approach the problems they encounter—it encourages us to ask, not "How can we use methodological rigor to understand consistently and accurately?" but rather, "How is understanding possible?" This reframing of the problematic acknowledges the inexhaustibly dialectical structure of

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[20] I will specifically be looking at Paul Ricoeur.

human knowledge,[21] and encourages us to resist the temptation to reify our position as if we had full intellectual control over the issue at hand. It is important to note that Gadamer isn't denying the applicability of the methods of the natural sciences to the social world,[22] but rather is asking us to consider the ways in which understanding occurs "over and above our wanting and doing."[23]

As David Tracy notes in "Western Hermeneutics and Interreligious Dialogue," most interreligious and intercultural dialogue does not strive to let the event of understanding unfold as Gadamer suggests, and are perhaps better described as "dialogical negotiations [which seek to] clarify the genuine differences and similarities of the official dialogue partners"[24]—no real risk is taken, no intellectual control ceded. It is little wonder that the results are often felt to be wanting. However, I maintain that by probing the question of understanding—by asking "how is understanding possible here?"—the door can be opened for a new type of dialogue, one which appreciates that successful accommodation requires something more akin to a dialogical event than a dialogical negotiation.

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[21] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 359.

[22] Ibid, xxvii.

[23] Ibid, xxvi.

[24] David Tracy, "Western Hermeneutics and Interreligious Dialogue," in *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, ed. Catherine Cornille and Christopher Conway (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010), 5.

Chapter I

The Quebec Context: Anatomy of a Crisis

Historical Antecedents

Between 2006 and 2007 many Quebecers came to believe that requests for religious accommodation in the province had reached a point of "crisis." To get at the nature of this crisis it will be necessary to provide some historical context. Quebec is a small nation[25] comprised of eight million inhabitants, the majority of whom are of French-Canadian ancestry[26] and have a number of "distinctive characteristics"[27] in common: a rich natural,[28] cultural, political, religious and linguistic heritage; a francophone identity and culture;[29] shared institutions, sensibilities, and aspirations for the future.[30] Despite enjoying majority status in Quebec, Quebecers of French-Canadian ancestry—who, following Gérard Bouchard, will henceforth be referred to as "Québécois"[31]—are indisputably a cultural and linguistic minority in the larger Canadian and North American context. This "majority-minority"[32] status has been a continual source of anxiety for the Québécois, who have long feared, and vehemently fought

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[25] Quebec was officially recognized as a "nation within a united Canada" in the 39th Parliament, 1st session, vol. 141, no. 87 (27 November 2006).

[26] As Gérard Bouchard notes in *Interculturalism: A View From Quebec,"* trans. Howard Scott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), this demographic accounts for the majority population "in sixty-six of the seventy-five federal electoral districts in Quebec" (50).

[27] Ibid, 10.

[28] By "natural heritage" I am referring to the physical landmass of Quebec.

[29] Following Bouchard I am referring to culture as, "all the symbols that, in a given collectivity, (family, community, nation, etc.), constitute the foundation of the social bond, on the one hand, and sustain all the components of identity on the other hand: perceptions of the self and others, affiliations, traditions, memory, rituals, values, beliefs, ideals, visions of the world." (*Interculturalism*, 11).

[30] Ibid, 10. The nature of these themes will be explored in much more detail in subsequent sections.

[31] Ibid, 28.

[32] Gérard Bouchard, "What is Interculturalism," in *McGill Law Journal* 56, no. 2 (2011): 544, accessed October 12 , 2015, 10.7202/1002371ar.

against, cultural and linguistic assimilation into this vast English-speaking milieu. Since the latter half of the twentieth century this anxiety has been further compounded by the demographic shifts that accompany globalization—or, put differently, by the *contemporary reality of pluralism*.

The contemporary reality of pluralism refers, on one hand, to the existence of plurality—the presence of ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity within a society or state[33]—and on the other, to a paradigm (pluralism) which holds that this diversity must be a) respected, and b) managed in a way that minimizes discrimination and fosters an equality of rights among citizens.[34] While the anxiety surrounding the majority-minority status of Quebec has historically referred to Québécois fears over assimilation into English-speaking Canada, the contemporary reality of pluralism has heightened this anxiety by giving rise to the perception that the threat to the survival of their culture comes not only from English Canada and Canadian federalism, but also from the increasing presence of diverse and demographically significant groups of people with different languages, cultures, beliefs and values that all demand equal *recognition*.[35] While the term "anxiety" is often imbued with negative connotations, it will be important to note that the anxiety detailed above has expressed in a variety of ways throughout Quebec history, and cannot be portrayed as an inherently detrimental or productive force. It is simply a reality of Quebec society—a reality that is often implicit, but that can, under the right circumstances, come to be explicitly and vehemently communicated.

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[33] "pluralism, n." OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/146193?redirectedFrom=pluralism (accessed October 09, 2016).

[34] Bouchard, *Interculturalism*, 288.

[35] I am here referring to Charles Taylor's "principle of recognition;" this will be outlined in detail in Chapter II.

A momentous example of an explicitly communicated and socially constructive expression of this anxiety is the Quiet Revolution (*La Révolution tranquille)*—a sustained period of intense socio-political and economic change in Quebec that began in 1960 when a newly elected Liberal government, led by Jean Lesage, took power. For the purpose of this discussion, however, the Quiet Revolution represents far more that a pertinent example: it is an aspect of Quebec history that must be addressed before examining the accommodation crisis. Why? Because this transformative facet of Quebec history (and its enduring legacy) represents the wellspring of many foundational elements of the modern Québécois social imaginary, and anxiety surrounding the survival and flourishing of this social imaginary is what is at the very heart of the Québécois belief that requests for religious and ethic accommodation within their society had reached a point of crisis.

While the concept "social imaginary" has been conceptualized in various ways by different scholars, I believe Charles Taylor's account to be the most appropriate for furthering the present discussion. According to Taylor, a social imaginary is the set of symbols, values, traditions, institutions, myths, etc. that, together, provide the social whole individuals' understand themselves in reference to. It is the "symbolic cement"[36] that informs and legitimates collective understandings of what is normative and desirable—and what is not. As Taylor puts it, "[it is] the kind of common understanding which enables us to carry out the collective practices which make up our social life."[37] It will be important to note that a society's social imaginary is not static, nor is it interpreted in exactly the same way by all members of the social group—it is a dynamic concept that,

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[36] Bouchard, *Interculturalism*, 14.

[37] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 173.

while indeed rooted in deep symbolisms that stem from the experience of a shared history, undoubtedly changes over time as perceptions of this history change and new considerations are incorporated.[38] *In Gadamerian terms, the social imaginary of a group is its historically effected consciousness*; the hermeneutical whole which informs individual and collective horizons of meaning. While the scope of this investigation will not allow for a detailed historiography of the Quiet Revolution,[39] it will be necessary to outline the historical context of three vitally important principles that stem from this legacy and represent integral elements of the modern Québécois social imaginary: secularism, gender equality, and interculturalism.[40]

Secularism and gender equality are perhaps the most cherished principles to emerge from the Quiet Revolution. Before this point in Quebec history the Roman Catholic Church was a ubiquitous force in Quebec society, and played a role in almost every aspect of daily life: not only did its Cathedrals and Churches represent formidable and pervasive aspects of the physical landscape, its values and norms pervaded social interactions and informed many important public and private institutions. Put differently, "the influence of the Catholic Church cannot be over-emphasized. Its control of education and the ability to influence the government's social policies gave it decided

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[38] For more on the dynamic nature of this concept see Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation* (Quebec: Quebec Official Publisher, 2008), 123.

[39] For an interesting account of the different ways this history has been conceptualized over the last half century see Yves Bélanger, Robert Comeau et Céline Métivier, eds., *La Révolution tranquille 40 ans plus tard : un bilan*, (Montréal: VLB éditeur, 2000).

[40] While many Québécois might not readily identify the principle of interculturalism as fundamental aspect of their collective identity (and may even reject this principle), Bouchard maintains that this is due to a failure on the part of the Quebec government to clearly define the term, and, in both *Interculturalism* (2015) and "What Is Interculturalism?" (2011), offers a sustained argument asserting that the term does in fact represent a cluster of principles that are integral to the modern Québécois social imaginary.

influence over the lives of Quebecers."[41] Bouchard argues that this state of affairs led many Québécois to associate religion with "experiences of domination, of even oppression."[42] So, when the shifting social and political tides of the 1960's brought about the definitive secularization of society, this was a move that many Québécois experienced as *emancipatory*.

The association of secularism with feelings of emancipation was perhaps most acutely experienced by women, as the gender norms espoused by the Catholic Church meant that (pre-secularization) most Québécois women married and had children at a relatively young age, and did not have many opportunities to pursue a higher education or enter into the work force.[43] It is thus no small coincidence that the contemporary principle of gender equality developed in conjunction with secularization. While the development of this highly cherished principle cannot be solely attributed to secularism and the waning influence of the Catholic Church,[44] contemporary discourse—both scholarly and popular—on the relationship between these two principles demonstrates that they are closely interrelated in the Québécois social imaginary.[45] The perception of secularism as a liberating force is therefore deeply ingrained in this small nation's

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[41] Catherine Krull and Frank Trovato, "Where Have All the Children Gone? Quebec's Fertility Decline 1941-1991," in *Canadian Studies in Population*, 56 no. 1 (2003): 197.

[42] Bouchard, *Interculturalism*, 13.

[43] As Krull and Trovato note in "Where Have All the Children Gone?", "[During] the period of 1961-1991, the percentage of women 20-24 years of age with a university education increased from 4.7 to 27 (Statistics Canada, 1991) […] [and] just as important, the number of employed married women still in their childbearing years rose from 15 percent in 1961 to 74 percent in 1991" (198-99).

[44] It has also been noted that there is a strong link between the emergence of Quebec feminism and neo-nationalism; as neo-nationalist sentiments emerged, Québécois women began to draw "parallels between the oppression of women and that of Quebec," something the 1970's feminist slogan "No liberation of Quebec without liberation for women; No liberation for women without liberation for Quebec" readily attests to. Quotes from Jill Vickers, "Feminists and Nationalism" in *Gender, Race and Nation: A Global Perspective*, ed. Jill Vickers and Vanaja Dhruvarajan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 248.

[45] This will be explicitly demonstrated in my analysis of *A Time for Reconciliation* and the Charter of Values.

imaginary, something clearly demonstrated by the fact that many Québécois express "an intense sensitivity to anything religious—a sensitivity that entails a great deal of suspicion and even hostility."[46]

Interculturalism describes the principle underlying Quebec's approach to managing ethnocultural and linguistic diversity. It has largely been understood as a response to, on the one hand, the new vision of Quebec articulated by neo-nationalists in the wake of the Quiet Revolution, and, on the other, the Canadian government's policy of multiculturalism. [47] Before the 1960's Quebec society was marked by a state of longstanding inequality between its French majority and English-speaking minority. While the roots of this inequality can be traced back to the British conquest of New France—and the ensuing push to assimilate French Canadians into English-speaking society and minimize their political agency—in the twentieth century this inequality was further exacerbated by the uneven impacts of industrialization. As Leslie Laczko explains in *Pluralism and Inequality in Quebec*, the industrialization of Quebec was primarily led by "English-Canadian and American interests,"[48] which

> produced a society characterized by sets of parallel but unequal institutions. The education level of Francophones was considerably below that of Anglophones. […] Francophones were underrepresented in the most modern sectors of the economy, in managerial and professional occupations, and among high income earners. […] English was the dominant language of business and advancement.[49]

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[46] Bouchard, *Interculturalism*, 13.

[47] See Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*; Charles Taylor, "Quebec Interculturalism or Multiculturalism?" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 38 no.4-5 (2012): 413-423, doi 10.1177/0191453711435656; Amy Nugent "Demography, National Myths, and Political Origins: Perceiving Official Multiculturalism in Quebec" in *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 38, no. 3 (2006): 21-36.

[48] Leslie S. Laczko, *Pluralism and Inequality in Quebec*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 10.

[49] Ibid, 17-18.

During this period expressions of nationalism were largely characterized by a "defensive, past-oriented"[50] attitude that focused on surviving in this inhospitable environment by remaining firmly attached to a vision of Quebec as a Catholic, French-speaking, rural and agrarian society.[51] By the mid 1950's, however, two-thirds of the Quebec population resided in urban centers,[52] a demographic shift which increased awareness[53] of these social inequalities and effectively exposed traditional nationalism as being decidedly out of touch with the contemporary needs of the Québécois nation.

When the liberal party won the provincial election in 1960 and ushered in a period of intense socio-political and economic reform a new form of nationalism emerged, which "aimed at transforming Quebec into a modern, secular, French-speaking society."[54] This new nationalism, more accurately described as neo-nationalism,[55] was future rather than past-oriented, and shifted the focus of its agenda from one of survival to one of development and emancipation. As Laczko explains, "this new ideology involved a shift from the long-held view of French-Canadians as a minority in the Canadian context to a new majority identity centered in Quebec."[56] While this paradigm shift was liberating, it also energized the majority-minority anxiety described above, because it drew renewed attention to the fact that Quebec—a province within the Canadian federation—had limited powers to effect all of the developmental changes its

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[50] Ibid, 19.

[51] Ibid.

[52] François Rocher, "The Evolving Parameters of Quebec Nationalism" in *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, 4 no. 1 (2002), 76.

[53] The English minority had always been "much more urban" than the French-Speaking majority, and so the rural exodus of French-Canadians into urban centers following WWII increased regular contact between these two communities and heightened awareness of the uneven status quo that had long been in operation, particularly in Montreal (Laczko, *Pluralism and Inequality in Quebec,* 17).

[54] Ibid, 19.

[55] Rocher, "The Evolving Parameters," 79.

[56] Laczko, *Pluralism and Inequality in Quebec,* 19.

majority desired.[57] While some Quebec intellectuals and politicians saw the answer in amending the Canadian constitution so that it acknowledged the bicultural and bilingual nature of Canada (a move that would support Quebec's quest for greater legislative autonomy),[58] others argued that the goal of developing Quebec into a modern, French-speaking, secular society required political (but not necessarily economic) independence from Canada. This latter position led to the development of a vocal sovereigntist movement and the creation of sovereigntist parties at both the provincial (Parti Québécois) and national (Bloc Québécois) levels.[59] As Rocher states, "in sum, […] [t]he Quebec state looked to take into its own hands the economic and social development of Quebec through numerous policies that sought to confer a new status on French-Canadians, who had been relegated for a long time to the inferior echelons of a society where they comprised the majority."[60]

The fight for greater autonomy over the province's social and economic development led, in the decades following the Quiet Revolution, to a number of important political milestones—the most pertinent *for the discussion at hand* being:

> [The] creation of a ministry of immigration (1968), rejection of Canadian multiculturalism (1971), adoption of a charter of human rights and freedoms (1975), establishment of French as the official language of Quebec (1974, 1977), development of a 'cultural convergence' policy (1978, 1981), the Chancy report

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[57] See Rocher, "The Evolving Parameters," p. 76-91 for a more detailed account of the constitutional debates that marked this period.

[58] Ibid, 79-80.

[59] Front de libération du Québec (FLQ), an extremist sovereigntist group, also formed during this time. The FLQ's consistent recourse to violence eventually culminated in the 1970 kidnapping of James Richards Cross, a British diplomat, and Pierre Laporte, Quebec's Labour Minister. Known as the "October Crisis," this event ultimately ended in Laporte's murder and Pierre Trudeau's invocation of the War Measures Act, which suspended many civil liberties and granted the police extraordinary abilities of arrest and detention. While this marked an important part of the history of this era, it's beyond the scope of this investigation to treat in any real detail. For more see Louis Fournier *F.L.Q. Histoire d'un mouvement clandestin*. (Montreal: Lanctôt Éditeur, 1982) or M. Laurendeau, *Les Québécois violents*, (Montreal: Boreal, 1990).

[60] Ibid, 89.

on intercultural education (1985), declaration of the government on interethnic and interracial relations (1986), enactment of a 'moral contract' policy (1990-1991), Quebec-Ottawa agreement on responsibility for immigration (1991), orientation focusing on citizenship (late 1990s, early 2000s), a multidimensional approach that fully reintroduced the cultural dimension into government politics, the Bouchard-Taylor Commission (2007-2008).[61]

While the scope of this historiography will not allow for a detailed account of this trajectory, it will be necessary to draw out a few important connections.

The policy of multiculturalism declares, as its "main postulate,"[62] that the Canadian nation is comprised of a mosaic of individuals and ethnocultural groups that are all equal before the eyes of the law.[63] According to this policy, then, there is no "official" Canadian culture. As Bouchard explains it in *Interculturalism*, "[multiculturalism holds] in the name of diversity, raised to the rank of value and norm, [that] all citizens can affirm and express without constraint their identities and their differences, within the limitations of the law."[64] Although this policy has grown to be an integral part of English-Canadian identity, it has nevertheless been rejected by all Quebec governments since its introduction, due to the firm conviction that "multiculturalism treats Quebeckers as just another cultural group in the Canadian cultural mosaic instead of a distinct society and a nation, which delegitimizes Quebec's nation building policy."[65] Put differently, the Quebec government's stance on multiculturalism stems from the belief that multiculturalism fails to recognize and respond to Quebec's unique majority-minority status and the linguistic and identity related anxieties that accompany it.

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[61] Bouchard, *Interculturalism, 29.*

[62] Bouchard, *Interculturalism*, 18.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid, emphasis mine.

[65] Miriam Chiasson, *A Clarification of Terms: Canadian Multiculturalism and Quebec Intercilturalism*, Montreal: Center for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, McGill University (2012). Accessed Sept 15th, 2016. http://canadianicon.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/TMODPart1-Clarification.pdf.

The Charter of the French Language (1977) and the principle of interculturalism, however, do specifically address these linguistic and identity-related anxieties. While the Charter of the French Language squarely established French as the official language of Quebec—*the* common language of public life—the principle of interculturalism, as Bouchard and Taylor argue, articulates an important shift in the Québécois social imaginary: its "ultimat[e] penetra[tion] by pluralism"[66] As noted, the paradigm of pluralism holds that social diversity must be respected and managed in a way that minimizes discrimination and fosters an equality of rights among citizens. The internalization of this paradigm is clearly reflected in Section 43 of the *Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1975), which explicitly asserts that "persons belonging to ethnic minorities have a right to maintain and develop their own cultural interests with other members of their group."[67] What interculturalism expresses, however, is the unique combination of pluralism with other elements of the Québécois imaginary, a combination which acts to address the linguistic and identity-related anxieties detailed above.

Unlike the expression of pluralism articulated by multiculturalism, interculturalism is marked by a distinct "tension between two poles"[68]—on the one hand, a desire to respect ethnocultural and religious diversity and an equality of rights among citizens, and, on the other, a desire to protect and propagate the culture, language and values of the Québécois majority.[69] The result is an attitude towards ethnocultural and religious integration characterized by *reciprocity*: the host society has a duty to respect the diversity of immigrants, extend them equal rights, and support and facilitate their

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[66] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 119.
[67] Nugent, "Demography, National Myths, and Political Origins," 24.
[68] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 119.
[69] Ibid.

successful social and economic integration, while immigrants have a responsibility to a) learn French, b) learn and respect Quebec's laws, customs and values, c) fully participate in public life.[70] It will be important to note that while the Quebec government has not officially adopted a policy of interculturalism in the same way the federal government has adopted a policy of multiculturalism,[71] the term has recently begun being used in official government documents to describe its integration policy, and the general academic consensus is that "[a policy of] interculturalism can be distinguished through official documents and scholarship."[72] The principle of interculturalism can thus be seen to represent—albeit in various and sometimes ambiguous ways—a cluster of values integral to the Québécois social imaginary: pluralism, democracy, civic participation, the heritage of the Quiet Revolution, the inviolability of secularism, gender equality, the French language and culture.

So, between 2006 and 2007 when media outlets in Quebec began heavily reporting on a number of requests [73] for religious accommodation that, for many Québécois, appeared to threaten these core elements of their collective identity—or, put differently, to threaten the delicate balance struck between the two poles of tension described above—it is clear why a large segment of this population began to believe that they were facing a genuine crisis regarding ethnocultural and religious accommodation.

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[70] Ibid, 121. Chiasson, in *A Clarification of Terms*, 2, also offers a very similar description. While this set of aims may, in certain respects, sound very similar to those of multiculturalism (if one switches French for English and Quebec for Canada) *A Time for Reconciliation* firmly maintains that interculturalism is qualitatively different from multiculturalism in many respects. For an argument that seeks to assert their ultimate continuity, see Nugent, "Demography, National Myths, and Political Origins."

[71] Ibid, 119. Also see Chiasson, *A Clarification of Terms*, 2.

[72] Chiasson, *A Clarification of Terms*, 2.

[73] Bouchard and Taylor note that of the 73 requests for accommodation covered by the media between 1985 and 2007, "40 […] were brought to the public's attention during the period of March 2006 to January 2007 alone" (*A Time for Reconciliation*, 18).

Some of the most high-profile and contentious cases reported were: The 2006 Supreme Court of Canada ruling that a Sikh boy, Gurbaj Sing Multani, be allowed to wear his *kirpan*[74] to a public school in Montreal; a Montreal YMCA's decision to honor a request made by the Yetev Lev Orthodox community to replace regular windows with frosted ones to obscure the sight of women exercising inside; the banning of an 11 year old girl from a soccer game for her refusal to remove her hijab.[75] The infamous "Life Standards" charter adopted by the Hérouxville town council in January 2007[76] in response to such reports thoroughly invigorated the debate, and has been pinpointed by some observers[77] as a true turning point—that is to say, after this event government intervention on the issue was inevitable. In 2007 Jean Charest's Liberal government (2003-2012) established the "Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences," or, as it is more commonly referred to, the Bouchard-Taylor Commission. The incoming Parti Québécois government (2012-2014) headed by Pauline Marois took a different approach, and in 2013 proposed the Quebec Charter of Values, a controversial[78] bill that sought to create a clearer legal framework for dealing with issues related to

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[74] A ceremonial dagger worn by Sikh's as one of the five distinguishing signs of their faith.

[75] For a full Chronology of the cases reported in the media during this period (and in the decades leading up to it) see Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 45-60.

[76] This charter "aspired to delineate a 'code of conduct' for prospective new immigrants to this homogeneous rural community of just over 1,300 persons, singling out such practices as publicly stoning women, female circumcision, covering the face, school prayer, and wearing of a symbolic weapon to school as unacceptable, while also reaffirming the rights of an Hérouxville to drive a vehicle, vote, sign cheques, dance, and 'decide for herself.'" Meena Sharify-Funk, "Muslims and the Politics of 'Reasonable Accommodation': Analyzing the Bouchard-Taylor Report and its Impact on the Canadian Province of Quebec" in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs,* 30 no. 4 (2010): 538.

[77] Ibid.

[78] See "Jewish General Hospital says charter is 'offensive,'" *CBC News,* November 13, 2013, accessed May 12, 2016, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/jewish-general-hospital-says-charter-is-offensive-1.2425582?utm_content ; "Thousands gather in Montreal to protest charter of Quebec values," *CTV* News, September 14 2013, accessed May 12, 2016, http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/thousands-gather-in-montreal-to-protest-charter-of-quebec-values-1.1454721 ; or Melanie Marquis and Nelson Wyatt, "Quebec human rights commission slams proposed values charter," *CTV News*, March 26, 2014, accessed May 12, 2016, http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/quebec-human-rights-commission-slams-proposed-values-charter-1.1501308.

accommodation. These responses frame the accommodation crisis in two very different ways, and by examining the different concerns outlined by each I aim to propose that the primary issue underlying the crisis was not, as it ostensibly seemed, *policies* surrounding "intercultural harmonization practices" (see below), but rather dialogical understanding—or a lack thereof.

The Bouchard-Taylor Commission

The mandate of the *Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences* was to: "a) take stock of accommodation practices in Quebec; b) analyze the attendant issues bearing in mind the experience of other societies; c) conduct an extensive consultation on this topic; and d) formulate recommendations to the government to ensure that accommodation practices conform to Quebec's values as a pluralistic, democratic, egalitarian society."[79] It will be necessary to note that the phrase "accommodation practices" should be understood as being synonymous with what I've referred to as "intercultural harmonization practices" above. In a broad sense, both describe the compromises and adjustments necessitated by the contemporary reality of pluralism and the respect for diversity it enshrines. More specifically, accommodation/harmonization practices are practices which aim to "sett[le] difficulties and misunderstandings that arise through the encounter of different cultures. [They are] measures […] adopted in favor of individuals or minority groups threatened with discrimination because of their culture (including religion)."[80] The two prominent Quebec scholars charged with heading the commission, Gérard Bouchard and Charles

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[79] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 17.
[80] Ibid, 287.

Taylor, explain in their final report that they choose to interpret this mandate in the broadest sense possible to "grasp the problem at its source and from all angles."[81]

This broad interpretation of the commission mandate was quite comprehensive, and resulted in: 13 research projects carried out by specialists from Quebec universities; 31 focus groups with individuals from different milieus in Montreal and the regions; 59 meetings with experts and representatives of sociocultural organizations; the establishment of an advisory committee comprised of 15 specialists from various disciplines; the creation of a website to foster public exchanges (the site was accessed over 400,000 times); public consultations.[82] These public consultations took on two forms. The first was an appeal to members of the public to a) submit briefs on the issue (900 were received total) and b) to provide further "testimony" regarding these briefs at one of 328 hearings (241 individuals obliged).[83] The second was the organization of 22 televised citizens forums—"open without restriction to the public"—where a total of 3,423 participants "from all social backgrounds" were allowed to take the floor and publically express their opinions.[84] The findings of the commission are contained in an equally exhaustive report entitled *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation*.

Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation

Due to the report's extremely broad scope it will be beyond the purview of the present investigation to attempt to provide a substantive summary of the commission's findings and/or Bouchard and Taylor's analysis. Instead I aim to offer a focused

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[81] Ibid, 17.
[82] Ibid, 35.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid, 36.

discussion on the factors Bouchard and Taylor pinpoint as representing the conditions of possibility that led to the crisis—in other words, I aim to focus on the issues that seem to have been hindering or preventing intercultural understanding in the Quebec context during this period. According to Bouchard and Taylor the accommodation crisis was not—as the media tended to present it—a crisis that involving a genuine or dramatic spike in requests for religious accommodation, nor was it a crisis involving the ability of public or private institutions to deal with the relatively small number of requests that actually came before them.[85] As their findings demonstrate, it was rather a "crisis of perception"[86] regarding the public's view of harmonization practices which—fuelled by the controversial angle of much of the media's reporting on the issue[87]—led many members of the public to believe that such practices (and the people they accommodate) posed threats to "the foundations of collective life in Quebec."[88]

Bouchard and Taylor argue that, despite the undisputable role the media did play, the root cause of this belief cannot be solely attributed to its tendency to present these requests in controversial or misleading ways.[89] As they state, "it was certainly amplified by media coverage, but we cannot explain solely in this way the astonishing reaction observed in the public […] From this we must infer that favorable conditions existed and that the situation was riven with insecurity, *lack of understanding* and even

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[85] Ibid, 18.

[86] Ibid.

[87] "In 2006, among the 10 Canadian provinces, it is in Quebec that highest proportion (77%) of texts was noted dealing with the topic from the angle of controversy." Ibid, 38.

[88] Ibid.

[89] "Requests were often covered from the angle of privileges or abuses, rather than from the standpoint of equality rights or negotiated agreements." Maryse Potvin, "Social Media Discourse in the Reasonable Accommodation Debate," in *Our Diverse Cities*, 7 (2010), 80.

exasperation." [90] These "favorable conditions" refer to a series of complex and interrelated factors: the "majority-minority" anxieties detailed above, misunderstandings regarding the concepts of secularism and interculturalism, the presence (however small) of ethnism, racism, xenophobia and a general distrust of the Other—all of which combined to discourage intercultural dialogue and understanding, and thus interculturalism's "dream of a closely integrated society."[91]

Bouchard and Taylor are quick to point out that not only was the public "hardly aware of the notion of accommodation and its various dimensions"[92] when the media got hold of the issue, there were also "striking distortions between general public perceptions and the actual facts as we were able to constitute them." [93] These distortions, by "emphasizing stereotypes, kindling emotionalism […] and encouraging xenophobia,"[94] thus played into and inflamed the majority's anxiety surrounding the survival and flourishing of their social imaginary. While Bouchard and Taylor are careful to note that the evidence they gathered *does not* support the idea that negative responses to accommodation are unique to the Québécois majority,[95] they do acknowledge that public debate over the issue was "largely dominated"[96] by this demographic, and that:

> The so-called wave of accommodation clearly touched a number of emotional chords among French-Canadian Quebecers in such a way that requests for religious adjustments have spawned fears over the most valuable heritage of the Quiet Revolution, in particular gender equality and secularism. The result has been an identity counter-reaction movement that has expressed itself through the rejection of harmonization practices. Among some Quebecers, this counter-

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[90] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 38. Emphasis mine.

[91] Ibid, 41.

[92] Ibid, 66.

[93] Ibid, 18. See pages 69-73 for a detailed account of the reported version of events and the facts as they were able to reconstitute them.

[94] Ibid, 74.

[95] Ibid, 66.

[96] Ibid, 67.

> reaction targets immigrants, who have become, to some extent, scapegoats. What has just happened in Quebec gives the impression of a face-off between two minority groups, each of which is asking the other to accommodate it. The members of the ethnocultural majority are afraid of being swamped by fragile minorities that are [themselves] worried about their future.[97]

This situation, in turn, was further compounded by widespread misunderstandings regarding secularism and interculturalism.

As the "main fears and dissatisfaction voiced by Quebecers concerned accommodation for religious reasons,"[98] Bouchard and Taylor set out to explore some of the common misconceptions surrounding the open model of secularism Quebec has historically followed. [99] As their public consultations revealed, many Quebecers understood secularism in reference to deceptively straightforward formulas such as "the separation of Church and State, State neutrality, [or] the confinement of religious practice to the private sphere."[100] While any secular system must indeed achieve a balance between a) the legal and moral equality of all persons, b) freedom of conscience and religion, c) the separation of Church and State, and d) state neutrality regarding religion,[101] "secularism models vary to different degrees from one context to the next,"[102] and therefore cannot be reduced to any one simple formula.

The tendency to do this, Bouchard and Taylor note, has led to a number of unfavorable perceptions: the idea that the requirement of neutrality refers not only to

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[97] Ibid, 18.

[98] Ibid, 133.

[99] They define open secularism in opposition to the more "rigid" forms of secularism found in countries such as France, noting that while the former "defends a model centered on the protection of freedom of conscience and religion and a more flexible conception of State neutrality," the latter has a less flexible conception of this theme and allows for far more restrictions regarding the free exercise of religion (*A Time for Reconciliation*, 137).

[100] Ibid, 133.

[101] Ibid, 20.

[102] Ibid, 133.

institutions but also individuals (which would confine religion "within the strict limits of the home and places of worship"[103]); the idea that accommodating religious requests in a secular society is "according religious choice unacceptable preferential treatment in relation to other personal choices;"[104] the idea that, because religion can be a source of oppression and inequality, restrictive models of secularism are patently preferable;[105] the belief that, according to secularism, socially acceptable religious belief is only that which "fairly readily harmonizes with individual freedom and autonomy,"[106] and, by extension, that religious orthodoxy demonstrates a refusal to integrate; the idea that religion is not a right (a positive duty) but a freedom (a negative duty)—in other words, while the state shouldn't interfere with exercising this freedom, it shouldn't be obligated to take positive steps to remove all obstacles to enjoying this freedom. [107] Finally, they note the presence of a tension between these understandings of secularism and the desire to maintain various public displays of Quebec's Catholic heritage: "A number of Quebecers do not understand why accommodation must be granted to individuals belonging to minority religious groups while the majority must accept in the name of secularism the modification of certain of its symbols and institutional practices." [108] According to Bouchard and Taylor, these perceptions of secularism are closely related to a number of unsympathetic beliefs about the viability and/or desirability of interculturalism.

In *Interculturalism*: *A View from Quebec*, Bouchard devotes a whole chapter to this theme, and incorporates the main insights gleaned from the commission into a much

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[103] Ibid, 143.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid, 144-5.
[106] Ibid, 146.
[107] Ibid, 147. As
[108] Ibid, 152. An often cited example is the debate over the crucifix hanging above the Speaker's chair in the National Assembly.

more streamlined and focused discussion on the issue than can be found in *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation*. For this reason I will primarily be relying on this work rather than the final report in addressing this aspect of the crisis. As Bouchard notes at the beginning of the chapter, while the commission's public consultations made it clear that Quebecers—"almost unanimous[ly]" [109]—prefer interculturalism to multiculturalism, some members of the majority nevertheless maintained a number of negative beliefs about interculturalism. Bouchard differentiates between two different strands of discourse in this chapter: 1) erroneous perceptions of interculturalism rooted in cultural anxieties, and 2) criticisms of interculturalism rooted in civic or legal concerns. In keeping with the delimitations of my own discussion, however, only the culturally rooted misconceptions that further the present inquiry will be addressed.

First is the idea that interculturalism's interpretation of pluralism promotes a harmful cultural relativism that increases social fragmentation and therefore undermines the majority's "values, identity, memory, language."[110] Related to this is the belief that interculturalism—primarily through its acceptance of the principle of recognition[111] and its policies regarding accommodation—affords minority groups special privileges while not offering much in return to the majority.[112] Third is the belief that the promotion of a shared culture will "will smother the founding culture,"[113] by irreparably altering it.[114]

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[109] Bouchard, *Interculturalism*, 72.

[110] Ibid.

[111] As noted above, this principle will be treated in more detail in the following chapter. But, briefly, "the principle of recognition refers to the status or to the condition of minorities in a given society. […] In effect, the principle postulates that any individual or group's sentiment of self-worth or dignity requires that, in the spirit of equality, its differences be recognized, especially by members of the majority culture" (Bouchard, "What Is Interculturalism," 440 (footnote)).

[112] Bouchard, *Interculturalism*, 79-83.

[113] Ibid, 72.

[114] Ibid, 89.

Finally, some members of the majority expressed the belief that, due to these deficiencies, "Quebec should apply a policy of long-term assimilation aimed at blending immigrants and minorities into the majority culture."[115]

As some of these beliefs about secularism and interculturalism reveal, the commission's public consultations often "broke with political correctness and gobbledygook and […] spurned taboos"[116]—an atmosphere which provided valuable insight into the way "a broad sampling of the population"[117] viewed the crisis, and, by extension, one another. Bouchard and Taylor emphasize that these forums were open to *all* members of the public, "without restriction,"[118] which provided an important opportunity for members of the majority and members of various minority groups to express themselves and hear one another out. As was to be expected,[119] these forums did reveal the presence of ethnism, xenophobia, racism and a general distrust of the Other, among other harmful (but less extreme) prejudices and stereotypes.[120] Bouchard and Taylor are careful to emphasize that the statistical analysis of the forum transcripts— "prepared by external researchers"[121]—revealed that such sentiments were a minority[122] and "were more a reflection of a lack of information than genuine malice."[123] However, the presence of such sentiments must be highlighted here, as they represent an important

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[115] Ibid, 72.

[116] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 37.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid, 36.

[119] I say this not as a comment on Quebec in particular, but as a comment about the prevalence of these sentiments across all societies.

[120] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 36.

[121] Ibid.

[122] As Bouchard and Taylor note, while "negative, offensive interventions accounted for roughly 15% of the total," only about 2% were openly racist or xenophobic (*A Time for Reconciliation*, 36).

[123] Ibid.

obstacle to intercultural dialogue and understanding that, as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, poses a particular challenge to Gadamer's hermeneutics.

According to Bouchard and Taylor's framing of things, then, the accommodation crisis can indeed be viewed as a symptom of a problem much more deeply rooted than a simple policy failure regarding accommodation—it is a symptom of a lack of intercultural dialogue and understanding. As they present it, the factors preventing understanding from occurring in this context are related primarily to issues of identity, self-understanding, and understanding of the Other. I will now turn to the Quebec Charter of Values, a bill which represents a response to the accommodation crisis that opened the Parti Québécois up to charges of increasing divisiveness between the Québécois majority and Quebec's various ethnocultural and religious minorities, furthering anti-immigrant sentiments, and breaking with the principle of pluralism.[124] It is a response that thus highlights many of the issues pinpointed in the preceding discussion as hindering intercultural dialogue and understanding, but from a different perspective.

The Quebec Charter of Values

In September 2013, the Parti Québécois introduced the Quebec Charter of Values (Bill 60), the purpose of which, as defined in the explanatory notes, "is to establish a Charter affirming the values of State secularism and religious neutrality and of equality between women and men, and provid[e] a framework for accommodation requests."[125] While the introduction of this bill was indeed in response to the accommodation crisis, it can also be seen as a response to the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, as the Parti

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[124] Bouchard, *Interculturalism*, 152 (afterword).

[125] Bill 60: Charter Affirming the Values of State Secularism and Religious Neutrality an of Equality Between Women and Men, Providing a Framework for Accommodation Requests. 1st Session, 40th Legislature, 2013. Quebec: Quebec Official Publisher, 2013.

Québécois argued that the commission did not adequately address Quebecers' concerns regarding the (purported) negative impacts of religious accommodation on Quebec identity.[126] It should be noted that here, "accommodation requests" specifically refers to requests for *reasonable accommodation*, which must be differentiated from harmonization practices in general—while reasonable accommodation is indeed a type of harmonization practice, it refers to a specific category of requests that will be detailed shortly. Although the language used above to describe the bill's intent doesn't come across as very controversial, the specific ways in which the bill proposed accomplishing these tasks were cause for controversy. As Bouchard lays it out in *Interculturalism*: "The proposed charter announced on 10 September 2013 had three components: first, an official definition of the principles of a secular regime for Quebec […]; second, changes in the practice of religious and cultural accommodations; and third, a requirement that government employees (including those in government-run agencies) no longer wear religious symbols to work."[127] The first component, clarifying the values of Quebec secularism, was actually one of the final recommendations given by Bouchard and Taylor in *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation*, and did not cause much argument or debate among the general public, politicians or academics. The last two, however, were viewed as highly contentious by many, and as Bouchard asserts, reveals "an area of profound misunderstanding among the population."[128]

According to the Charter's framing of things, religious accommodations act to violate certain rights laid out in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms,

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[126] Gada Mahrouse, "Reasonable Accommodation in Quebec: The Limits of Participation and Dialogue," in *Race and Class* vol 52.1 (2010): 88.
[127] Bouchard, *Interculturalism,* 149 (afterword).
[128] Ibid.

specifically those relating to a woman's right to gender equality. To understand this "profound misunderstanding" it will be necessary to provide some explanatory notes on the notion of reasonable accommodation. The notion of reasonable accommodation represents the legal framework for remedying instances of discrimination that stem from the "application of a norm or an otherwise legitimate statute […] [that] can adversely affect an individual or a category of people who display a trait for which the statue or norm makes no provision."[129] In other words, it is meant to protect minority rights against the various forms of discrimination that can arise from the fact that legislation is never truly neutral as it is drafted with the concerns of the majority in mind.[130] In Quebec, citizens making requests for reasonable accommodation must have evidence that the discrimination they face is recognized by the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.[131] As Bouchard and Taylor explain it, there are thirteen types of discrimination recognized by the charter as justifying an accommodation request.[132] These types of discrimination can be loosely categorized under three different headings: *circumstantial discrimination* (discrimination based on things like marital or pregnancy status), *discrimination based on permanent traits* (discrimination based on sexuality, gender identity or expression,[133] skin color, disability, etc.), *discrimination based on sociocultural traits* (discrimination based on one's religion, socioeconomic status, etc.).[134]

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[129] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 63.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid.

[133] To acknowledge the fluidity of sexuality and gender, I would like to assert a differentiation between permanent traits that may be expressed in different ways over time (sexuality and/or gender identity and expression) and immutable permanent traits (skin colour, different forms of disability).

[134] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 63.

If this requirement has been met there is still one more hurdle to overcome before being granted accommodation: "the duty of accommodation is limited by the realism of the request, i.e. by the ability of the organization to accommodate. The notion of undue hardship is decisive in this instance […] in other words, the duty of accommodation must be assessed in relation to the weight of inconvenience."[135] If, for, example, a request for reasonable accommodation requires an unreasonable financial expenditure, is likely to have a negative impact on an organization's operations or safety, or, furthermore, would infringe on the rights of others, the request may be denied on the ground of undue hardship.[136] According to Bouchard, with all these measures already in place, the PQ's suggested amendments demonstrate their misunderstanding of the principle and practice. These amendments are as follows: "the accommodation request is consistent with the right for equality between women and men;" "the accommodation is reasonable in that it does not impose undue hardship on the public body with regard to, among other considerations, the rights of others, public health and safety, the effects on the proper operation of the public body, and the costs involved;" "the accommodation requested does not compromise the separation of religions and State or the religious neutrality and secular nature of the state"[137]

As the existing legislation governing reasonable accommodation already accounted for these concerns under the notion of undue hardship—albeit with less explicit language—the addition of these clauses thus seems superfluous, and appears to assert that existing legislation had allowed religious accommodation requests to infringe

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[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid. Emphasis mine.

[137] Bill 60, Chapter V, 15.

on gender equality and the other issues outlined above, when in fact it hadn't. This, in turn, acted to increase the perception that religious "Others" were trying to utilize the principle of reasonable accommodation to gain special privileges and infringe on the rights and values of the majority, when, according to the findings of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, this was decidedly not the case.[138]

The third component of the charter, which imposes a restriction on wearing religious symbols to work in public institutions, is based on a restrictive understanding of secularism that goes against the model of open secularism that Quebec has followed since the Quiet Revolution. Furthermore, as this component of the charter dedicates a whole chapter to the "obligation to have the face uncovered"[139]—not only for personnel members working for public bodies but also members of the public accessing certain public services[140]—it seems to betray a special concern or apprehension regarding the Muslim faith in particular. Ironically, then, in the name of protecting gender equality, this provision would act to deny some Muslim women not only the ability to work in public institutions, but also the ability to receive certain public services. As Bouchard notes, these positions are problematic on a number of fronts: the perceived social benefits of the charter do not outweigh the negative impacts on significant segments of the population;[141] the understanding of state neutrality it puts forward is flawed ("it has never been demonstrated that this rule [state neutrality] would be broken by the wearing of

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[138] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 63.

[139] Bill 60, Division II, Chapter III.

[140] "personnel members of a public body must exercise their functions with their face uncovered, and *persons to whom they provide services must also have their face uncovered* when receiving such services" (Bill 60, Explanatory Notes. Emphasis mine).

[141] Bouchard, *Interculturalism*, 151.

religious symbols"[142]); the ban would increase divisiveness and fragmentation between the majority and minority groups rather than cohesion and integration; and, finally, "as hard as it is to believe, it has now been confirmed that the government conducted no research whatsoever prior to engaging in this major initiative. In other words, it intended to legislate on matters of which it had very little knowledge."[143] It will be important to note that these problematic aspects of the charter were not only noted by intellectuals such as Bouchard—all opposition parties in the National Assembly rejected the charter, and opinion polls indicate that it was rejected by almost half of the Quebec population as a whole.[144]

One of the central recommendations proposed by the Bouchard-Taylor Commission was to focus on promoting harmonization practices that act to strengthen interculturalism's model of *integration through interaction*; "to move forward [and] build a common identity, with common values and one inclusive collective memory."[145] This frames the accommodation crisis as an opportunity for self-reflection and an invitation to engage and begin dialogues with minority groups. The Charter on the other hand, appears to side with the media's framing of the accommodation crisis, and takes a number of defensive steps to provide solutions for problems that haven't been demonstrated to truly be present.[146]—as the Bouchard Taylor commission exhaustively demonstrated, "the foundations of collective life in Quebec are not in a critical situation."[147] Despite their clear differences, both of these responses squarely frame the accommodation crisis as

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[142] Ibid, 150.

[143] Ibid, 152.

[144] Ibid, 153.

[145] Ibid, 153.

[146] See Trygve Ugland, "The Quebec Charter of Values: A Solution in Search of Problems" in *Journal of Eastern Township Studies/ Revue d'études des Cantons-de-l'Est*, 42 (2014): 11-21.

[147] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 18.

being rife with a lack of intercultural dialogue and understanding. The challenges to intercultural understanding that have been brought to light through the investigation of these documents are manifold, and I will now turn to the work of Gadamer to explore whether or not philosophical hermeneutics seems able to illuminate and/or mitigate some of the issues raised in this debate.

Chapter II

Laying the Groundwork:
Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics Explained

Like most ideas that have managed to occupy a privileged place in the Western intellectual tradition, the concept of hermeneutics can be traced back to "a family of ancient Greek terms: "*hermêneuein* or *hermêneusai* and *hermêneia* to designate an activity, *hermênês* to designate the individual who carries out this activity, and *hermêneutikê* to designate a particular discipline associated with this activity."[148] While there is some debate in existing scholarship over the precise translations of these cognates,[149] there is wide consensus that "the various forms of the word suggest the process of brining a thing from unintelligibility to understanding."[150] This consensus is largely rooted in the terms' relationship to the messenger-god Hermes, who was tasked with communicating messages from Olympus in a way that made them intelligible to humans. As the limited capacities of Hermes' human audience would have barred them from understanding direct transliterations, Hermes was required to act as an interpretive intermediary[151]—hence the commonplace understanding of hermeneutics as "the art or science of interpretation." [152] As this etymology suggests, mediation, language, interpretation and understanding have long been at the center of hermeneutics. What has changed over the ensuing centuries is the way these themes have themselves been

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[148] Francisco Gonzales, "Hermeneutics in Greek Philosophy" in *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Jeff Maplas and Hans-Helmuth Gander (London: Routledge, 2015), 13.

[149] See bibliographic entries for Palmer and Gonzales for more on this debate.

[150] Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 13.

[151] Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson, *Hermeneutics*: *An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 3.

[152] Jeff Malpas, "Introduction: Hermeneutics and Philosophy," in *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Jeff Maplas and Hans-Helmuth Gander (London: Routledge, 2015), 1.

interpreted and understood.

Contextualizing Gadamer in the Hermeneutical Tradition

Prior to the twentieth century and the pioneering work of both Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer, hermeneutics was commonly understood in epistemological terms, as "any systematic approach to the questions of interpretation as those questions might arise in some particular domain."[153] For a large portion of Western thought the "domain" in question was predominately theology, and the hermeneutical task one of biblical interpretation. Early biblical hermeneuts were interested in uncovering the ways in which correct technique could establish 'correct' understanding—i.e. understanding that truly reflected what the author (and, by extension, *The Author*) really meant. The conceptual link between correct technique and correct understanding was further bolstered by the watershed event of the European Enlightenment, which engendered an intense concern with language and history (in the form of classical philology) and rational thought. According to the history of modern hermeneutics provided by Richard E. Palmer in his seminal work *Hermeneutics*, the cohabitation of these two stands of Enlightenment thinking—philology and rationalism—"had a profound effect on biblical hermeneutics,"[154] forcing, for the first time, critical and historical considerations that had formerly been neglected.

While the rationalist orientation of the Enlightenment took issue with the way biblical interpreters utilized Christian dogma—not reason—as an interpretive framework for articulating biblical truths, classical philology revealed that not only was the bible a

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[153] Ibid.

[154] Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 38.

historical text, but that the understanding of *all* historical texts, "involve[s] a rediscovery: a rediscovery of something that was not absolutely unknown, but whose meaning had become alien and inaccessible."[155] These developments led to the normalization of the belief that structured appeals to reason and historical considerations were indispensible factors for successful interpretation, and also to the acknowledgement that the methods of interpretation utilized in biblical hermeneutics could also be extended to "secular"[156] theories of interpretation—developments which opened the door to the possibility of a general hermeneutics not specific to a particular discipline. Although traditional hermeneutical scholarship tends to credit Friedrich Schleiermacher, a Romantic thinker, as the first to conceptualize hermeneutics as the general "science" or "art" of understanding,[157] modern scholarship[158] acknowledges that the seeds of this project were planted much earlier, in the writings of a number of different Enlightenment thinkers:

> Hermeneutic luminaries [such as] Joseph Konrad Dannhauer (1603-66), Christian Wolff (1679-1754), Johann Martin Chladni (a.k.a. Chladenius) (1710-59), and George Friedrich Meier (1718-77) took inspiration from the universalist rationalism of Leibniz in seeking a *hermeneutica generalis* predicated on scientific principles of demonstrable logic.[159]

As Gadamer contextualizes his own project as a critical reevaluation of the understanding of hermeneutics-as-method—an understanding *reified* by the rationalism of the Enlightenment and *reconceptualized* by the historicism of the Romantics—it will be

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[155] Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 176.

[156] Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 42.

[157] Ibid, 40.

[158] See C. Mantzavinos, "Hermeneutics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/hermeneutics/, or John Arthos "Hermeneutics and Rhetoric," in *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Jeff Maplas and Hans-Helmuth Gander (London: Routledge, 2015): 466-473.

[159] John Arthos, "Hermeneutics and Rhetoric," 469.

pertinent to briefly sketch out the dominant trends in Enlightenment and Romantic thinking that led to the development of a general hermeneutics.

A major preoccupation of the Enlightenment was "the programme [of] removing prejudice, ignorance and superstition from the world and making it a rational place."[160] Enlightenment thinkers sought to increase intellectual certitude through applied logic— the *modus operandi* of the Enlightened rational subject—and, to speak in very general terms, viewed hermeneutics as "the science of the rules" governing the accurate interpretation of different types of texts.[161] Early Enlightenment thinkers like Christian Wolff understood science as that which is demonstrably true, and thus viewed demonstration as representing the dividing line between knowledge and belief.[162] These developments seemed to position hermeneutics as a "part of logic,"[163] which lead to serious questions regarding whether or not the application of logic was a dynamic enough model for interpreting non-scientific texts, like those dealing with aesthetics, religion or history.[164]

While Wolff maintained that these types of texts could only produce belief and not knowledge—as the types of truths contained therein were not scientifically demonstrable—many of his peers, such as John Martin Chladenius and Georg Friedrich Meier, took issue with this, and strove to develop "the basic principles for a *general*

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[160] Frederick Beiser, "Wolff, Chladenius, Meier," in *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Jeff Maplas and Hans-Helmuth Gander (London: Routledge, 2015), 52.

[161] Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 81.

[162] Beiser, "Wolff, Chladenius, Meier," 52.

[163] Ibid, 51.

[164] Ibid.

hermeneutics, that is, those necessary for the interpretation of *all* texts."[165] While these early efforts resulted in a number of different general hermeneutical theories, three common developments planted the seeds from which Romantic hermeneutics would grow—namely, the belief that the key to understanding non-scientific texts lay in grasping authorial intent, the idea that texts had to be understood according to "the conditions of [their] time,"[166] and, finally, the acknowledgement that different disciplines may indeed require different ideals of certitude.[167] Despite the latter acknowledgement the conceptual link between hermeneutics and the logic of the natural sciences remained strong in Enlightenment thinking, and this is something the Romantics sought to revisit.

Romanticism has largely been viewed in reactionary terms, as a movement focused on responding to and ultimately rejecting the intense rationalism of the Enlightenment—as Gadamer argues in *Truth and Method*, the period's ethos is rooted in the effort to "revers[e] the Enlightenment's criteria of value."[168] One of the great insights of Romantic hermeneutics—perhaps *the* great insight—is the idea that underneath the problem of interpreting specific texts lies a much broader problem: that of human understanding in general.[169] Romantic thinkers viewed this problem epistemologically, and thus sought to formulate "principles or laws of understanding that [could] transcend individual occasions or applications."[170] This task required a much more sustained consideration of language and history that the rationalist orientation of Enlightenment

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[165] Ibid, 54.

[166] Ibid, 53.

[167] Ibid, 57. For more on how all three of these ideas factored into Enlightenment understandings of hermeneutics see Beiser (2015), 50-61.

[168] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 275.

[169] Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*, 42.

[170] Ibid.

hermeneutics allowed for, and, in turn, caused romantic thinkers to extend these considerations beyond the text and author to include the subjectivity of the reader as well. Within the history of ideas the two thinkers most often recognized as embodying Romantic hermeneutics are Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey, both of whom—albeit in different ways—present interpretation as a reconstructive process, one that requires the reader to grasp the complex relationship between themselves and a linguistically and historically alien text. While Schleiermacher sought to create a method that would dispel misunderstanding by allowing the interpreter to transpose themselves into the mind of the author—an introspective, psychological and circular process that granted the interpreter the ability to divine (reconstruct) the author's true meaning[171]— the scope of Dilthey's project was much wider.

Dilthey saw the potential for hermeneutics to formulate the methodological basis of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (human sciences), and thus strove to create a hermeneutical framework free from "the reductionist and mechanistic perspective of the natural sciences," [172] while also avoiding the overly introspective turn initiated by Schleiermacher. For Dilthey, human expression, the subject matter of the human sciences, "calls for an act of historical understanding" [173] —*not* an act of rational explanation—as all human expression is rooted in *lived*, and therefore historical, experience. Dilthey maintained that understanding in this domain requires a special type of historical consciousness, "a way of both examining and describing experiences such that they remain bound to the totality or comprehensiveness of our lives, including our

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[171] Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 84-97.
[172] Ibid, 100.
[173] Ibid, 42.

values, morals, belief, social customs, laws, etc." [174] Despite this insight (which manifested as historicism), Dilthey remained firm in his epistemologically grounded position that a methodology that did this *correctly* could yield "objectively valid"[175] understandings of human expressions. The reconstructive enterprise of Romantic hermeneutics—with its reliance on historicism and tacit validation of the subject-object binary—would later face stark criticism, but it is important to emphasize that Romantic hermeneutics did develop two very important lines of thinking that would set the stage for the ontological turn in hermeneutics initiated by Heidegger and fully realized in Gadamer: first is the articulation of the hermeneutical problem as being the problem of human understanding, and second is the acknowledgement that the subjectivity and sociohistorical contextualization *of the interpreter*—and not just the author—are indispensible hermeneutical considerations.

Arguably the most influential Western philosopher of the twentieth century, Heidegger's hermeneutical project involves a radical reconceptualization of the hermeneutical problem as the question of being.[176] For Heidegger, this reframing of the question makes it clear that methodological schemas for achieving understanding occlude the real issue at hand—hermeneutics isn't about "the status or content of our knowledge" but rather "is a question about our mode of knowing, a question about our living as knowers."[177] Put differently, Heidegger is interested in articulating a hermeneutics (the "hermeneutics of facticity") that discloses the ontological and existential structures of the human being, which he refers to as *Dasein*, a German play on words that expresses the

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[174] Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*, 36.

[175] Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 98.

[176] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 272.

[177] Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*, 9.

notion that we are *always already* in and of the world.[178] According to Heidegger understanding refers to Dasein's fundamental relationship to the world, a "pre-reflective"[179] and experiential connection that describes how the world is "tacitly intelligible"[180] to us before it enters into our reflective consciousness. Interpretation, then, is the effort to "describe *how* the world becomes significant to us"[181] in our reflective consciousness, a process Heidegger conceptualizes as being circular in nature. As McLean explains it:

> Heidegger's hermeneutic circle begins when Da-sein interprets an entity in the world. But in order to appreciate *how* this entity has become significant to Da-sein, Da-sein must turn inward and circle back to disclose its own fore-structure that made this present sense-event possible. Da-sein, having moved out of itself in apprehending an entity, returns back into itself, repeatedly, in a circular motion, then circles back to the entity being interpreted in successive iterations. Each circle provides greater insight into Da-sein's own fore-structure, thereby allowing Da-sein to interpret the significance of the entity in successively different ways as Da-sein progressively brings deeper and deeper levels of its fore-structure into focus.[182]

As this passage indicates, Heidegger firmly rejects the subject-object schema so prevalent in Enlightenment and Romantic hermeneutics—and indeed the history of philosophy in general—and therefore denies that interpretation is a process that can yield objective truth.

The collapsing of this binary leads Heidegger to a very interesting position on historical truth, one that would come to be seen as characteristic of the ontological turn in

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[178] As B.H. McLean explains it in *Biblical Interpretation & Philosophical Hermeneutics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), "In everyday German, the word 'Da-sein' means […] 'to be' (*sein*) in a particular "there" (*Da*) or 'here.' In other words, the 'being' (*sein*) of every Da-sein—you or I—is embedded in both a particular 'place' and 'time'" (103).

[179] C. Mantzavinos, "Hermeneutics", 13.

[180] Ibid, 13.

[181] McLean, *Biblical Interpretation*, 116.

[182] Ibid, 117.

hermeneutics. For Heidegger, historical meanings—far from being objectively accessible or valid—are meanings that are *inextricably bound* to the historicality and temporality of the interpreter: "the selection of what is to become a possible object for historiology *has already been met with* in the factical existentiell *choice* of Da-sein's historicality, in which historiology first of all arises, and in which it is alone."[183] The accumulation of these insights finally leads us to Gadamer, whose hermeneutical project masterfully builds off the hermeneutics of the preceding two centuries to develop an original and compelling account of human understanding as a dialogical event.

Exploring the implications of Gadamer's critique of scientific knowing and concurrent rejection of hermeneutics-as-methodology

Building off of the "breadth of the historical horizon"[184] outlined by Dilthey and continuing Heidegger's ontological reframing of the hermeneutical problem, Gadamer seeks to articulate a hermeneutics that, following Heidegger, views understanding as a mode-of-being, but which penetrates much more deeply into the "history of its effect."[185] As he plainly states in Part II of *Truth and Method*, "Heidegger entered into the problems of historical hermeneutics and critique only in order to explicate the fore-structure of understanding for the purposes of ontology. Our question, by contrast, is how hermeneutics, once freed from the ontological obstructions of the scientific concept of objectivity, can do justice to the *historicity of understanding*."[186] The critique of scientific knowing and concurrent rejection of hermeneutics-as-method, then, is what

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[183] Ibid, 134.
[184] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxiv.
[185] Ibid, xxviii.
[186] Ibid, 268.

allows Gadamer to articulate—through phenomenological analysis [187]—the radically fundamental connection between understanding and historicality, or, in other words, the insight that "understanding is never a subjective relation to a given 'object' but to the history of its effect."[188]

The notion of the "history of effect" or "effective history" is thus central to Gadamer's hermeneutics, and is rooted in the Heideggarian assertion that understanding, as the human being's very mode-of-being, occurs *prior to* the operations of our reflective consciousness, operations which have a tendency to want to objectify, thematize, and reify knowledge. Gadamer isn't interested, therefore, in outlining a method—a tool for reflective consciousness—but rather in helping bring to the attention of our reflective consciousness the conditions of possibility that make understanding and interpretation (and thus all knowledge) possible. [189] For Gadamer, effective history—and the concomitant phenomenon of Language—form the basis of these conditions of possibility, conditions which reframe the objective of knowledge in a way antithetical to "the scientific conception of truth."[190] Effective history, then, "is used to mean at once the consciousness effected in the course of history and determined by history, and the very consciousness of being thus effected and determined."[191] A complex concept that this short quote seems to deceptively simplify, effective history describes three very important concepts that form the foundation of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.

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[187] While he acknowledges that traditional phenomenology, "bracket[s] all positing of being [to] investiga[te] the subjective modes of givenness," he maintains that "human subjectivity […] too can be regarded as a 'phenomenon' and explored in its various modes of givenness" (*Truth and Method,* 237).

[188] Ibid, xxvii.

[189] Ibid, xxvii.

[190] Ibid, xxii.

[191] Ibid, xxx.

First is the notion that we are historically situated beings, that is beings whose very existence represents a specific temporal and historical intersection. Following from this is the insight that striving to achieve an Archimedean vantage point is a fruitless endeavor; true objectivity is impossible, because all understanding (even that in the natural sciences) is historically situated and therefore framed by our prejudices—the "pre-judgments" that stem from a) our historical situadedness (the period, culture, language etc., that we are born into) and b) the way that which we are encountering has been previously been understood in the tradition that we are a part of. Finally, and perhaps most crucially, Gadamer wants to point to how our consciousness is not only affected by this history, but in turn also adds to this history of effects, something he calls "historically effected consciousness." As Nicolas Bunnin and Jiyuan Yu so concisely put it, "the consciousness that is affected by history, through having a pre-history, and will in turn effect history, through having a post-history, is called effective historical consciousness."[192] As these comments may suggest, Gadamer is arguing that effective history is "a universal element in the structure of understanding,"[193] that is to say, a very part of our ontological make-up.

The positivistic epistemology of the natural sciences conceals this reality by perpetrating the myth of the subject-object binary—a binary that denies effective history by affirming the idea that the prejudices of the interpreter can be bracketed away. This is hugely problematic for Gadamer, as he feels that "the recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice [is what] gives the hermeneutical problem its real

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[192] *The Blackwell Dictionary of Philosophy, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 198.*
[193] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxx.

thrust."[194] This insight also forms the basis of his critique of Romantic historicism, as he believes that the Romantics—despite their scathing critique of rationalism—"unwittingly" share in the Enlightenment's "prejudice against prejudice itself."[195] Put differently, although romantic hermeneuticists understood that scientific rationalism represented a poor method for understanding human expression, they nevertheless continued to objectify history by assuming that correct method could yield objectively valid (and thus prejudice-free) truths.

Gadamer is therefore interested in rehabilitating the concept of prejudice, which he notes did not take on a negative connotation until the Enlightenment's preoccupation with rationalism. As he states, "The history of ideas shows that not until the Enlightenment does the concept of prejudice acquire the negative connotation familiar today. Actually 'prejudice' means a judgment that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been fully examined."[196] While the negative connotation comes from the acknowledgement that these judgments may not be rooted in reason and therefore may be false, Gadamer emphasizes that it is important to recognize that the potentiality of false prejudices does not cancel out the reality and usefulness of true ("legitimate") prejudices. [197] Why does Gadamer maintain that this distinction is important? Because he wants to demonstrate that prejudices are always present in any event of understanding, and thus impact the way we experience, approach, question and interpret all our encounters with the world—whether we acknowledge this or not. This stance on prejudice is rooted in Heidegger's idea of the fore-structure of understanding,

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[194] Ibid, 272.
[195] Ibid, 273-4.
[196] Ibid, 273.
[197] Ibid.

the pre-reflective "experience of the world as meaningful"[198] that Dasein projects outward when interpreting.

As Gadamer explains, "The process that Heidegger describes is that every revision of the fore-projection is capable of projecting before itself a new projection of meaning; rival projects can emerge side by side until it becomes clearer what the unity of meaning is […] The constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation."[199] As all understanding and interpretation thus involves the fore-projection of meaning, Gadamer argues that it is crucial to acknowledge that *prejudices are in fact what form one's fore-structure*. In other words, prejudices—constituent elements of effective history—are that which form the "horizon" of meaning available to the interpreter from their unique vantage point. This is why, as we shall see, Gadamer's project of rehabilitating prejudices is simultaneously a project of rehabilitating the authority of tradition.

While the paradigm of the natural sciences tries to discredit the authority of tradition by "[subjecting] all authority to reason,"[200] Gadamer takes great pains to demonstrate that "our finite historical being is marked by the fact that the authority of what has been handed down to us […] always has power over our attitudes and behavior."[201] In other words, our prejudices are in fact rooted in the authority of the tradition of which we are a part. Acknowledging the authority of tradition should not, then, be viewed as some act of blind faith, but rather as a process that stems from

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[198] McLean, *Biblical Interpretation*, 113.
[199] Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 269.
[200] Ibid, 279.
[201] Ibid, 281.

projecting various possibilities of meaning (pre-judgments) onto that which we encounter. Through this process, Gadamer claims, "legitimate" prejudices, those which aid understanding, are differentiated from the harmful prejudices that lead to misunderstandings. The description of how exactly this process of differentiation works is notoriously vague—and has opened up his rehabilitation of prejudice and tradition to criticism,[202]—but seems to ultimately depend on the ability of both interlocutors to genuinely put their own position at risk, thereby exposing the prejudices that ground it.

With regards to the current undertaking, the implications of Gadamer's critique of scientific knowing and concurrent rejection of hermeneutics-as-method are manifold. The idea of Effective history and the rejection of the subject-object binary demonstrates why intercultural exchanges can be so difficult: issues of contention and instances of misunderstanding cannot be solved through facile appeals to method, and there is no "objectively valid" truth that, once reached, will validate one party and force the other to submit. Furthermore, as all human understanding is deeply prejudiced—that is, rooted in the authority of the tradition one "always already" finds themselves in—reaching an understanding between cultures with vast traditional divides requires adopting a stance of openness to the Other that seems to threaten the very self-identity of each. While at first glance these insights may seem to paint a rather grim outlook for success, the way that Gadamer conceptualizes these concepts playing out in the event understanding frames things in a much more positive light.

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[202] David Tracy's critique of this notion—which draws on the insights of Paul Ricoeur and others—will be addressed in the final section of this chapter and will provide more insight into the potential issues with Gadamer's framing of things, issues which will then be further explored in Chapter 3.

Philosophical Hermeneutics' insights into the possibilities and limits of human communication

As the discussion of effective history, prejudice and the authority of tradition suggests, Gadamer believes that understanding—and thus human life—occurs within "horizons" that provide access to various possibilities of meaning. However, as previously noted, not all of these possibilities of meaning are legitimate: some stem from harmful prejudices that need to be rooted out. According to Gadamer the act of differentiating between true and false prejudices "must take place in the process of understanding itself,"[203] a process he believes begins with an *experience* and has the character of an *event*.[204] Although the idea of the event is a "very ambiguous conception"[205] in philosophy, it various usages always allude to a *happening*, to a state of affairs that is ongoing. The experiential encounter with something other than ourselves is thus what provokes the fore-projection of meaning, and Gadamer argues that in order to make the necessary differentiation between useful and harmful prejudices we must approach that which we encounter (be it another person or another person's textual or artistic expression) "with the logical structure of openness."[206] As "the essence of the *question* is to open up possibilities and keep them open,"[207] it is Gadamer's assertion that "the logic of question and answer"[208] is the most appropriate way to conceptualize how the event of understanding—which he refers to as "the fusion of horizons"[209]—unfolds.

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[203] Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 295.
[204] Ibid, 308.
[205] Bunnin and Yu, *The Blackwell Dictionary*, 233.
[206] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 356.
[207] Ibid, 298.
[208] Ibid, 363.
[209] Ibid, 305.

The logic of question and answer is inherently dialogical, and this is why Gadamer asserts "the primacy of conversation"[210] in hermeneutics. Although the main focus of *Truth and Method* is articulating textual and not interpersonal encounters, Gadamer wants to demonstrate that the phenomenon of understanding (as an ontological function) has a universal structure that transcends all differences in application, and that is, at its core, dialogical. As dialogue must take place through the medium of language, Gadamer further insists, as Tracy puts it, that "insofar as we understand, we understand through language and therefore hermeneutically."[211] The basic model he offers is thus as follows: when we enter into an encounter with a text or another person, understanding occurs only if there is a genuine effort to question and be questioned; to risk allowing the horizon of the text or other person to enter into a dialogical relationship with our own in an ongoing and dynamic process that tests our prejudices.[212] This process requires us to surrender ourselves to the event, and understanding—the "fusion of horizons"[213]—only occurs when we are able to permit the other's horizon to enter into our own, opening up new and unforeseen horizons of possibility and meaning.[214] Many important concepts are

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[210] *Truth and Method,* 362. Further affirming the primacy of conversation in a 1993 interview with Carsten Dutt Gadamer says, "What I tried to do, following Heidegger, was to see the linguisticality of human beings not just in terms of the subjectivity of consciousness and the capacity for language in that consciousness, as German idealism and Humboldt had done. Instead, *I moved the idea of conversation to the very center of hermeneutics.*" (*Gadamer in Conversation*, 39. Emphasis mine).

[211] Tracy, "Western Hermeneutics," 6. While much more can be said about Gadamer's treatment of the theme of language, expanding on this isn't necessary for the task at hand, and, furthermore, requires an explication of the later Heidegger that seems inadvisable for an investigation of this scope.

[212] As Gadamer explains, human understanding is an "infinite process", as "new sources of understanding are continually emerging that revel unsuspected elements of meaning" (*Truth and Method*, 298).

[213] Ibid, 305.

[214] It is important to note that the fusion of horizons should *not* to be understood as an assimilatory process that denies the alterity of the other. As Andrzej Wierciński explains it in "The Primacy of Conversation in Philosophical Hermeneutics," in *Gadamer's Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation*, ed. Andrzej Wierciński (London: Transaction Publishers, 2011), "The partners [in] conversation are not requested to give up their diverging points of view to reach an agreement; on the contrary they are encouraged to try to understand their personal standpoints in light of the understanding of the other as ordained by the matter

contained in this brief description, so it will be necessary to explicate a few themes more closely.

Gadamer argues that when someone encounters something they are met with "a polarity of strangeness and familiarity."[215] Familiarity because it must have some bond to us to have come into the realm of our experience,[216] and strangeness because its difference addresses us in the form of a question: "Recognizing that an object is different […] obviously presupposes the question of whether it was this or that."[217] If we want to come to understand and interpret the object of our experience rather than see it as "a tool that can be absolutely known and used,"[218] Gadamer argues that we must maintain the stance of genuine openness inherent in the logic of the question; i.e., openness to the idea that the answer could be either this *or* that.[219] As we can only experience, understand and interpret things from *within* our own horizon—"the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point"[220]—Gadamer is careful to emphasize that this openness is not boundless,[221] and, furthermore, is actually indicative of a "radical negativity: the knowledge of not knowing."[222] As this acknowledgement of our finitude and the ensuing call to openness reveals, the event of understanding is not

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which wants to be understood. Neither sustaining the difference just for the sake of diversity of opinions (*diversitas dilecta*), nor the glorification of a forced agreement can be the goal of a conversation" (17).

[215] Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 295.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Ibid, 356.

[218] Ibid, 353.

[219] Ibid, 356.

[220] Ibid, 301.

[221] Ibid, 357.

[222] Ibid, 356. This point is important and will be returned to when treating the topic of transcendence.

something that can be controlled but rather "happens over and above our wanting and doing,"[223] a process Gadamer likens to the way players engage in a game:

> 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 (this is shown precisely in those experiences in which there is only a single player) is not the player but instead the game itself.[224]

So, just as the willful consciousness of players in a game cannot secure the outcome of the game, the willful consciousness of interlocutors in a conversation cannot secure understanding. In other words, both sets of actors are constituent elements in an *event* that they can participate in but not control. Gadamer's use of the concept of play is interesting, and helps further highlight how fundamental the idea of effective history is for hermeneutics.

As beings in motion who are radically affected by and effecting history, it is impossible for us to achieve full self-transparency. As Tracy puts it, we are "ever-changing."[225] What the experience of entering into dialogue with another allows for, however, is the opportunity "to acknowledge what is […] to have insight into the limited degree to which the future is still open to expectation and planning or, even more fundamentally, to have the insight that all expectation and planning of finite beings is finite and limited."[226] This fundamentally shifts the object of knowledge from "certainty"

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[223] Ibid, xxvi.
[224] Ibid, 106.
[225] Tracy, "Western Hermeneutics," 3.
[226] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 351.

to "possibility," and thus transforms that which we encounter from "object" to "Thou."[227] To allow the event of understanding to unfold we must acknowledge that the "Thou" is also a historically effected and ever-changing self, one that can we can only come to know through the medium of language and a process of *ongoing dialogue*. The dialogical model of human understanding, then, provides insight into the *radically unstable* nature of human understanding: all we can hope to achieve in understanding is an interpretation of the ways in which our discrete horizons can come together to form new possibilities of meaning, possibilities which in turn must themselves be tested as new experiences arise.

It is important, however, to recognize that this instability is *not* synonymous with relativism, which Gadamer characterizes as "truth-dissolving."[228] As he states, "however cogent they [relativist arguments] may seem, they still miss the main point. In making use of them one is proved right, and yet they do not express any superior insight or value."[229] In other words, relativist arguments avoid the hard work of putting oneself at risk, of trying to see how new possibilities of meaning can emerge from the bringing together of two discrete horizons. As relativism frames things, one is "imprisoned"[230] in their horizon and therefore cannot hope to expand it. Philosophical hermeneutics is thus decidedly un-relativistic, but nevertheless acknowledges that there are *limits* to human knowledge— limits which force us to acknowledge our own ignorance, limits that require us to come to terms with any harmful prejudices we may be harboring, limits which demand that we come to terms with "the otherness, the indissoluble individuality of the other person."[231]

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[227] Ibid, 352.
[228] Ibid, 340.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid, 549.
[231] Ibid, 304.

In his later years[232] Gadamer came to frame the significance of this finitude in religious terms, arguing that the experience of finitude—"the finitude beyond which we are not allowed to go"[233]—is best conceptualized as an experience of *transcendence.* The hermeneutical significance of this religious reframing of human finitude will be explored in the following section, but first I would like to offer some considerations on how the dialogical model of understanding, once fully explicated, can offer a much more positive frame of reference for intercultural and interreligious dialogue than appeared at first glance.

First is the hermeneutical imperative to approach the Others we encounter in our experiences of the world as "Thou"—not as objects that can be absolutely known or controlled. Following from this is the idea that the fusion of two discrete horizons yields more knowledge than can be achieved if one partner (or both) refuses to risk allowing the other's point of view to question and challenge their own. Equally important is the insight that the event of dialogue, which requires both openness and risk taking, offers us an opportunity to root out the harmful prejudices that lead to misunderstandings and conflict. Put differently, the event of dialogue demonstrates that the risks we take by adopting a radical stance of openness are not without reward—even if our encounter with another challenges our very self-identity, the knowledge that emerges from this process helps us reach a greater understanding of both Self and Other. Finally, these concepts help further an idea that is often acknowledged but rarely taken seriously enough: truth

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[232] From the mid-1980s until his death in 2002.

[233] Gadamer, "Metaphysics and Transcendence" in *A Century of Philosophy*: *Hans-Georg Gadamer in Conversation with Riccardo Dottori,* trans. Rod Coltman and Sigrid Koepke (New York: Continuum, 2004), 79.

and meaning in human affairs are simply not stable and must constantly be revisited as we experience new perspectives.

Transcendence, Practical Philosophy, and Critical Appraisals

To conclude this chapter I would like to end with a short literature review to contextualize my project within the larger body of existing Gadamerian scholarship on philosophical hermeneutics and inter-cultural/religious understanding. As will soon be apparent, this literature review will also act to address the final concerns framing this chapter, namely Gadamer's concept of transcendence-as-finitude and his insistence that philosophical hermeneutics continues the tradition of practical philosophy. In English-language scholarship that explores the usefulness of applying philosophical hermeneutics in this way, there seems to be three different strands of discourse: (1) those who conceptualize the relationship between philosophical hermeneutics and inter-cultural/religious understanding in purely textual terms, and who argue that it either does or does not aid in the cross-cultural/religious understanding of texts from different religions and cultures[234]; (2) those (and these voices are decidedly in the minority) who seem to accept Gadamer's ontology as a "way of living" [235] that facilitates the understanding of "geographically, culturally, and religiously"[236] different Others; (3) those who argue—albeit in different ways and with different points of focus—that Gadamer's hermeneutics offers a valuable resource for scholars trying to comprehend

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[234] For a sampling of this type of scholarship, see Nirmala Pillay "The Significance of Gadamer's Hermeneutics for Cross-Cultural Understanding" in *South African Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 4 (2002): 330-44, or Mary Ann Stenger "Gadamer's Hermeneutics as a Model for Cross-Cultural Understanding and Truth in Religion" in *Religious Pluralism and Truth: Essays on Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Thomas Dean (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1995): 151-168.

[235] Wierciński, "The Primacy of Conversation," 14. Wierciński offers the clearest example of this type of scholarship that I've come across.

[236] Ibid, 15.

what inter-cultural/interreligious understanding actually entails: what its end goals are, how to make sense of the challenges that arise, what type of conditions help facilitate it. Thinkers who fall under this last category do not fully accept the universality of Gadamer's claims, but do maintain that philosophical hermeneutics nevertheless contains valuable resources in this regard. This last strain is where I would like to situate my own efforts, and so I will begin by examining three prominent examples of this approach as found in the work of David Tracy, Fred Dallmayr, and Jens Zimmerman.

In "Western Hermeneutics and Interreligious Dialogue," David Tracy argues that "the most persuasive model for interpretation-hermeneutics remains the Gadamerian hermeneutical model,"[237] and, furthermore, that an exploration of this model's strengths and weaknesses acts to "clarify certain central aims of modern interreligious dialogues."[238] In explaining his position Tracy is careful to emphasize that the nature of Gadamer's hermeneutical project is *des*criptive and not *pre*scriptive: "It is important to note that despite many misreadings of his position, Gadamer is not presenting a methodology for dialogue […] As [he] makes clear over and over again, he is presenting a philosophical not methodological analysis of dialogue as constituted by a peculiar questioning, to-and-fro movement."[239] Tracy argues that while we shouldn't accept Gadamer's ontological description completely or unreservedly, it does offer a useful framework for conceptualizing understanding as an inherently dialogical process, which, in turn, frames the central aim of inter-cultural/religious dialogue as *the desire to*

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[237] Tracy, "Western Hermeneutics," 2.
[238] Ibid, 1.
[239] Ibid, 5.

understand and be understood—not merely to "exchange viewpoints."[240] He further argues that the main strength of Gadamer's model is the way it clarifies "what dialogue is and what it is not,"[241] and, following from this, the way it sheds light on the "basic limits [of] hermeneutical-dialogical understanding."[242] He identifies and outlines three aspects of Gadamer's thought he feels are indispensable in this regard. First is how effective history and the primacy of language offer "a strong acknowledgement of the finitude and historicality of all human understanding."[243] Second is how the logic of question and answer frames our partners in dialogue as "genuine *other[s]*, not […] projected other[s]."[244] Third is how Gadamer's concept of play frames dialogue as something that can't be fully controlled by either party: "each self must 'let go' to the dialogue itself."[245]

Tracy also maintains, however, that interreligious dialogue often faces certain challenges that Gadamer's model doesn't seem to adequately address—namely, the presence of prejudices rooted in systematic distortions (racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia, etc.). As he states, "I do not believe Gadamer ever fully grasped the radical difference between conscious error and unconscious distortion."[246] In other words, while Gadamer's model may offer a fairly convincing description of how the "to-and-fro" of question and answer can expose and dispel certain prejudices (those stemming from "pre-conscious"[247] attitudes that the event of dialogue makes conscious through the process of question and answer) this description doesn't seem to be as convincing or useful when

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[240] Ibid, 19.
[241] Ibid, 1.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Ibid, 3.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Ibid, 34.
[247] Ibid, 7.

one suspects they are facing prejudices rooted in systematic distortions. The fact that the latter often present themselves as hindrances to inter-cultural/religious understanding, Tracy argues, demonstrates "the need, at crucial dimes in dialogue, for the interruption of dialogue by various hermeneutics of suspicion"[248]—the act of pausing dialogue (for however long necessary) to see if the application of certain critical theories can expose and "treat"[249] these prejudices so dialogue can proceed.[250]

In "Hermeneutics and Intercultural Dialogue: Linking Theory and Practice," Fred Dallmayr argues that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics offers an "antidote" to the "overly pessimistic and debilitating" view that "cross- or inter-cultural hermeneutics [is] impossible or futile."[251] The areas of Gadamer's thought he highlights as being particularly "antidotal" are: (1) Gadamer's insistence that philosophical hermeneutics continues the Aristotelian tradition of 'practical philosophy;' (2) his description of the event of understanding as a "fusion of horizons." As ontology, philosophical hermeneutics makes the assertion that understanding-as-interpretation is the mode of being underlying all lived experience. Practical philosophy makes the assertion that lived experience (*praxis*) and the ability to exercise free choice (*prohairesis*) represent the basis for ethics.[252] According to Dallmayr, by making the claim that philosophical

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[248] Ibid, 1.

[249] Ibid, 13.

[250] Tracy also argues that Gadamer's ontology doesn't adequately explain what occurs when "dialogue has reached its natural limit" and one is met with "an opportunity for a new experience of the Real beyond ordinary reality" (20). This aspect of Tracy's argument reveals that he is unfamiliar with Gadamer's take on transcendence—he doesn't mention it at all—so I have decided not to highlight this concern.

[251] In *Ethics and Global Politics* 2, no. 1 (2009): 24, accessed 20 November 2015, DOI: 10.3402/*egp.v2i*1.1937. Dallmayr refers to Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis as a prominent and influential example of this particular outlook.

[252] Gadamer, "Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy" in *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of Later Writings*, edited and translated by Richard E. Palmer (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 230-231.

hermeneutics "belongs in the neighborhood of practical philosophy"[253] Gadamer is, on the one hand, articulating the ethical dimension of hermeneutics, and, on the other, *making a claim that clarifies the type of social context that best facilitates inter-cultural/religious understanding*. Explaining this may require a bit of back tracking. Practical philosophy, as just noted, holds that ethical choices arise in social contexts that allow for the ability to exercise free choice,[254] and Dallmayr argues that Gadamer is making a similar claim about hermeneutics:

> As Gadamer indicates, [hermeneutical] application cannot really happen in a society or political regime where norms or rules of conduct are entirely static and exempt from further interpretation, that is, where there is a ban on creative exegesis and transformation […] Hermeneutics, for Gadamer, hence presupposes a constitutional regime (perhaps a democratic constitutional order) which does not rely on arbitrary decisions or willful domination and which makes room for the hermeneutical balancing of 'whole and parts' and the dialogical inquiry into the conditions of social justice and fairness.[255]

This knowledge is "antidotal" for Dallmayr, because it asserts that genuine inter-cultural/religious understanding is not an impossible or lost cause—it is possible, but this possibility is contingent on context (a context that allows for debate, deliberation and free choice).

While some scholars reject the idea that the "fusion of horizons" represents an appropriate description of the event of understanding—arguing that it seems to depict an assimilatory process that denies the alterity of the other—Dallmayr contends that this is a superficial understanding of Gadamer's position: the fusion of horizons isn't, as Gadamer puts it, "naïve assimilation,"[256] but rather "an unlimited openness to horizons […] in such

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[253] Ibid, 235.

[254] Ibid, 230-231.

[255] Dallmayr, "Hermeneutics and Intercultural Dialogue," 29-30.

[256] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.

a matter that interpretive understanding can never by fully stabilized or completed."[257] The fact that the fusion of horizons presents understanding as an "infinite process"[258] demonstrates that this process *depends upon the inviolability of the Other*, as the Other's alterity is the very challenge to the Self that keeps the process going.[259] Dallmayr asserts that this insight is significant for inter-cultural/religious dialogue because it acts to assuage fears that the outcome of such dialogue must inevitably end in misunderstanding (Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations thesis"[260]), problematic assimilation, or "condoning everything."[261] As he states, "the point of inter-cultural encounter is not to reach a bland consensus or uniformity of beliefs but to foster a progressive learning process involving possible transformation […] the point is to achieve a shared appreciation and *recognition of difference*."[262]

Of particular interest to the discussion at hand is how Dallmayr explicitly relates the fusion of horizons to the thought of Charles Taylor. Dallmayr states that Taylor's thought is "friendly" [263] to Gadamer's hermeneutics, and asserts that his argument regarding the politics of recognition helps "flesh out and corroborate"[264] the idea that inter-cultural/religious hermeneutical understanding is indeed possible and not inevitably destined to end in misunderstanding, assimilation, or an attitude of complete

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[257] Dallmayr, "Hermeneutics and Intercultural Dialogue," 27.

[258] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 298.

[259] For further reading on this see: Joseph Gruber, "Hermeneutic Availability and Respect for Alterity," *Philosophy Today* 50, no. 1 (2014): 23-38. Doi: 10.5840/philtoday20121235.

[260] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Penguin, 1996).

[261] Dallmayr "Hermeneutics and Intercultural Dialogue," 29

[262] Ibid. 32. Emphasis mine.

[263] Ibid, 33.

[264] Ibid.

permissiveness.[265] Briefly summarized, the principle of recognition refers to the notion that the self-identity and self-dignity of a person or community of people is shaped by dialogical relationships with others, others who either recognize the unique identity of the individual or group, withhold recognition, or misrecognize.[266] According to Taylor, certain expressions of pluralism (namely multiculturalism) try to deny this principle by asserting that a stance of "difference blindness"[267] is actually what allows people of different cultures and religions to peacefully coexist. This stance is problematic for Taylor, because "difference blindness" demands, as a right, "actual judgments of equal worth applied to different customs, and creations of […] different cultures,"[268] in a way he argues discourages people from doing the hard work of actually engaging with other cultures and being genuinely moved to make the judgment or not. As the ethical dimension of hermeneutical understanding is rooted in *praxis* and *prohairesis*, the judgment of value that stems from this demand is forced and therefore not "dictated by a principle of ethics."[269] This, in turn, also reaffirms Gadamer's assertion about the significance of context for facilitating inter-cultural/religious dialogue and understanding.

Jens Zimmerman focuses on a aspect of Gadamer's thought that neither Tracy or Dallmayr explicitly consider: his notion of transcendence. In both "*Ignoramus*: Gadamer's 'Religious Turn'" and "The Ethics of Philosophical Hermeneutics and the Challenge of Religious Transcendence," Zimmerman evaluates Gadamer's claim—made most famously in *Die Lektion des Jahrunderts* but also discussed in a number of his later

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[265] Ibid.

[266] Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition,"* ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992): 25-73.

[267] Ibid, 68.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid, 69.

interviews[270]—that "the pressing task of philosophy is to prepare a dialogue between the world religions by discovering in each one a moment of the 'great chain we call transcendence'"[271] For Gadamer, the concept of transcendence describes the experience of a radical limit to our knowing subjectivity (our finitude) and the simultaneous experience of an excess beyond this limit. It is the *ignoramus* in Plato's account of Socrates—"the knowledge of not-knowing."[272] He believes this experience is a universal aspect of the human condition, and argues that it is something that is inextricably linked with our experience of alterity: "the actual meaning of our finitude or thrownness consists not only in the awareness that we are historically conditioned [*Bedingtheit*] but in our awareness of being delimited by the other."[273] While religion defines this experience through positive theology—i.e., through various dogmas—Gadamer argues that a negative definition of this experience (the refusal to thematize it) results in a stance of radical openness towards the Other that "opens the way up to the true superiority of questioning,"[274] and thus to the possibility of genuine understanding. Zimmerman argues that this particular framing of transcendence is also closely linked with Gadamer's belief that philosophical hermeneutics continues the tradition of practical philosophy: "what sets Gadamer's notion of transcendence apart from mere philosophical speculation is his

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[270] See Hans Georg Gadamer and Riccardo Dittori, "Metaphysics and Transcendence" or "The Last God" in *A Century of Philosophy: Hans-Georg Gadamer in Conversation with Riccardo Dittori*, Trans. Rod Coltman and Sigrid Koepke (New York, NY: Continuum, 2004). Also, Hans Georg Gadamer and Cartsen Dutt in *Gadamer in Conversation*, edited and translated by Richard E. Palmer (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007). The foundations of this notion can also be discerned in *Truth and Method*.

[271] Jens Zimmerman, "The Ethics of Philosophical Hermeneutics and the Challenge of Religious Transcendence" in *Philosophy Today* vol. 51 (2007): 54. Internal quote is Zimmerman's translation of a quote made by Gadamer in *Die Lektion des Jahrunderts* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2002).

[272] Jens Zimmerman, *Ignoramus*: Gadamer's 'Religious Turn' in *Symposium* 6 (2002): 209.

[273] Gadamer, *Die Lektion des Jahrunderts* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2002), 33. Translated by Jens Zimmerman in "The Ethics of Philosophical Hermeneutics," 50.

[274] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 356.

insistence that it cannot be theoretical but must be genuinely experienced."[275] Gadamer's argument regarding the significance of transcendence thus asserts that the universal experience of transcendence-as-finitude (conceptualized in negative terms) compels us to adopt and maintain the radical stance of openness we need to meet the Other with if we hope to let the dialogical event of understanding between religions and cultures unfold ethically.

While Zimmerman's offers a sympathetic portrayal of Gadamer's position, he ultimately argues that it is deeply flawed. By asking religious individuals to experience transcendence in negative rather than positive terms, "Gadamer asks a large percentage of humanity to forgo […] the very thing that defines their humanity, their particular beliefs, for humanity's sake,"[276] which, in turn, contradicts the "ethos of learning from the other"[277] that characterizes philosophical hermeneutics. In other words, Zimmerman argues that it's impossible to see how Gadamer's notion of transcendence is even a remotely viable way of approaching task at hand—Gadamer can't even describe the experience in adequately negative terms himself, as what he is articulating is a "neo-Platonic *logos*"[278] rooted in a "Greek cosmology."[279] He concludes by asserting that the concept's primary value lies in demonstrating the "historically effected limitations"[280] of philosophical hermeneutics itself.

Taking Zimmerman's critique to its logical conclusion, I maintain that this notion of transcendence in fact demonstrates the soundness of many other aspects of Gadamer's

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[275] Zimmerman, "*Ignoramus*," 209.

[276] Zimmerman, "The Ethics of Philosophical Hermeneutics," 54.

[277] Ibid.

[278] Ibid, 53.

[279] Ibid, 54.

[280] Ibid.

position and highlights their applicability to inter-cultural/religious understanding. Gadamer can't see the problematic nature of his own notion of transcendence because he hasn't truly opened himself up to the idea that his own cosmology is just one possibility of meaning among many. When he says, regarding this notion, that "There is only this solution left. There is no other,"[281] he reveals that he is not letting the event of understanding unfold as he himself says it must, and is instead trying to secure understanding through his own willful consciousness. The fact that this notion fails to resonate with even a sympathetic audience (Zimmerman) poignantly demonstrates how difficult it is to become conscious of one's own prejudices, and how inter-cultural/religious understanding thus does seem to truly require, on the one hand, sustained dialogical encounters with alterity, and, on the other, a radical stance of openness to this alterity, to the point that one is willing to let themselves be taken over by the event and potentially have their own horizon of meaning (and thus understandings of Self and Other) transformed.

The theoretical considerations put forward by these three thinkers clearly frames philosophical hermeneutics as a valuable resource for making sense of many of the difficulties surrounding inter-cultural/religious understanding, while at the same time acknowledging its limitations in this regard. My aim in the following chapter, then, is to argue that the true value of applying philosophical hermeneutics in this way lies in seeing how these insights hold up in relationship to a concrete event—can the Quebec accommodation crisis, taken as a case study, reveal obstacles to inter-cultural/religious dialogue and understanding that have been overlooked by these positions? Can it open

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[281] Gadamer, *Die Lektion,* 129. Translated by Jens Zimmerman in "The Ethics of Philosophical Hermeneutics," 57 (endnote).

the door to thinking of any new or different ways Gadamer's thought might lend itself to this endeavor? Will it confirm all of these insights or prove some of them to be faulty? Will it affirm the idea that the motivation behind inter-cultural/religious dialogue is the desire to understand and be understood (to be recognized), or will it demonstrate that the politicization of this dialogue has alerted the underlying motivation? With these questions in mind it is now time to turn to the issue of inter-cultural/religious understanding in Quebec.

Chapter III

Accommodation via Understanding

As outlined in the preceding chapter, Gadamer is making the claim that human understanding is a dialogical event that happens "over and above our wanting and doing"[282]—not something that can be consciously willed or forced into existence by some facile appeal to method. Keeping this important distinction in mind, it will now be time to turn to the central aim of the present inquiry: a pointed investigation of the ways in which philosophical hermeneutics' framing of human understanding can shed light on—and, in doing so, perhaps act to alleviate—some of the factors hindering intercultural dialogue and understanding in the Quebec context. The accommodation crisis offered a window into these factors, which, according to my analysis in Chapter One, can be summarized under three broad categories: (1) anxiety over identity; (2) the presence of harmful prejudices (some of which are rooted in a lack of information and exposure to the Other, others in what Tracy has labeled "systemic distortions"); (3) misunderstandings regarding secularism and interculturalism, which, by extension, also encompasses misunderstandings regarding pluralism and the harmonization practices it necessitates.

Anxiety Over Identity

As argued in Chapter One, a close examination of the Quebec Charter of Values and the findings of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission suggests that *anxiety over identity* is a major obstacle to intercultural dialogue and understanding in Quebec. This anxiety over identity is perhaps best conceptualized as a deep concern regarding the viability of

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[282] Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* xxvi.

achieving the delicate balance interculturalism strives for: while the Québécois majority is anxious about ensuring that the contemporary reality of pluralism does not hinder the survival and flourishing of their social imaginary, Quebec's various ethnocultural and religious minorities are anxious about maintaining their own social imaginaries in a context which demands they reconceptualize their self-understanding to account for their new status as Quebecers. In Gadamerian terms, both sides are concerned over the fact that *coming to understand the Other unavoidably entails a risk to one's Self-understanding*. Unpacking this in relation to the accommodation crisis will require a reexamination of some of Gadamer's central claims. Before beginning my examination, however, I would like to note that as the Bouchard-Taylor report and the Charter of Values both primarily focus on the anxiety of the majority, the focus of my discussion largely will follow suit.[283]

One of the central aims of philosophical hermeneutics is to articulate the historically effected character of all human understanding.[284] As humans are embodied creatures embedded in a specific historical context (and thus cultural and linguistic tradition), the way we view the world is thus always already colored by the authority of this context—we simply cannot assume some objective vantage point that will allow us to bracket away the "pre-judgments" (prejudices) that stem from this basic frame of reference. What philosophical hermeneutics asks us to recognize, then, is that the existence of these pre-judgments is not, as the paradigm of the natural sciences would have us believe, an obstacle to understanding, but rather "a universal element in the

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[283] See Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, Chapter X, section D "Anxiety and Solitudes: Minority Groups" (213 ff.) for what they have to say specifically about minority anxieties.

[284] "in all understanding, whether we are expressly aware of it or not, the efficacy of history is at work." (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 300).

structure of understanding."[285] Put differently, these pre-judgments are what we project onto the people and things we encounter to make sense of them; they are constituent elements of our horizon. However, as emphasized in Chapter Two, "the prejudices and fore-meanings that occupy the interpreter's consciousness are not at his free disposal. He cannot separate in advance the productive prejudices that enable understanding from the prejudices that hinder it […] [T]his separation must take place in the process of understanding itself."[286] The universality of prejudices and our inability to bracket them away does not mean that we are imprisoned by the delimitation they represent—that we can't think or understand otherwise—but rather that we *depend on the challenge of alterity to transcend this delimitation*, and herein lies the element of risk.

As Gadamer frames things, when someone encounters another person (or another person's textual or artistic expression), understanding only occurs if they can relinquish their desire to try and control the situation, if they acknowledge that "the other must be experienced not as the other of myself grasped by pure self-consciousness, but as a Thou."[287] Experiencing the other as Thou, Gadamer explains, requires us to adopt a stance of genuine openness: "we cannot stick blindly to our own fore-meaning about the thing if we want to understand the meaning of another […] All that is asked is that we remain open to the meaning of the other person or text."[288] In other words, we have to let the Other "really say something to us."[289] Opening oneself up in this way, however, can be perceived as a distinctly risky endeavor. Why? Because by entering into a *dialogical relationship* with this Other and relinquishing our desire to control the event we are

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[285] Ibid, xxx.
[286] Ibid, 295.
[287] Ibid, 338-339.
[288] Ibid, 271.
[289] Ibid 355.

opening ourselves up to the possibility of fusing our horizon with theirs—something with transformative implications.

As Gadamer explains it, "to reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which *we do not remain what we were*."[290] This transformation doesn't mean that we have reached a "perfect agreement over the subject matter"[291] by assimilating ourselves with the Other and thereby effacing the difference between us. What it does mean, rather, is that by following the logic of question and answer—"with all the necessary conflicts, ruptures and discordance"[292]—we have truly opened ourselves up to the possibility that meaning exists beyond our own horizon, to the idea that the Other's point of view is meaningful and that their difference, to use Taylor's terminology, *deserves recognition*. The fusion of horizons, then, transforms our self-understanding by revealing that "we are not a self-sufficient source of meaning."[293] As the transformative potential of dialogue thus indicates, understandings of Self and Other are simply not stable: coming to an understanding is "an infinite process."[294] This means that the understandings people have about themselves and their society (and their place in it) are subject to change, which, while perhaps easy to acknowledge in the abstract, can be deeply unsettling when actually experienced—as the accommodation crisis demonstrates.

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[290] Ibid, 371.

[291] Wierciński, "The Primacy of Conversation," 17.

[292] Ibid.

[293] Ibid, 21.

[294] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 298.

From a Gadamerian standpoint, the anxiety over identity in Quebec can be read as an implicit acknowledgement that individual and collective understandings are constructed in relationship to Others, and that the existence of diversity represents a challenge to the impulse to control the way this construction takes shape. However, if we accept Gadamer's framing of things it becomes clear that in coming to an understanding with another we simply cannot have the control we desire. To understand the Other we must open ourselves up to them, a gesture which, if genuine, indicates that we have relinquished our desire for control and come to terms with dialogue's transformative implications. What philosophical hermeneutics further reveals, however, is that *transformation is not erasure*: when something is transformed what was there endures, but in a new form. As Gadamer puts it, "Even where life changes violently […] far more of the old is preserved in the supposed transformation of everything than anyone knows, and it combines with the new to create a new value." [295] According to my own interpretation of things, this insight into the nature of transformation can act to alleviate some of the anxiety under discussion.

As Bouchard and Taylor frame it, Quebec's anxiety over accommodation is rooted in the belief that the principle of accommodation represents a risk to the collective identity of the founding culture. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, risk can be defined as "exposure to the possibility of loss." [296] However, the type of loss many members of the majority seem to associate with the accommodation of alterity is a permanent loss, not a transformation (where what is "lost" is still preserved, albeit in a

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[295] Ibid, 282-283.

[296] "risk, n.". OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/166306?rskey=hUPRUE&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed November 21, 2016).

new form). Think back to the language used by Bouchard in *Interculturalism* as he details the erroneous perceptions of interculturalism rooted in cultural anxieties—he states that one such perception holds that "the promotion of a shared culture will *smother* the founding culture."[297] While the word "smother" can mean "to overwhelm" it can also mean "to kill," "to extinguish." The use of this type of language is not isolated. Throughout the Bouchard-Taylor report the word "survival" is used sixteen times in reference to the majority's identity related anxieties, in phrases such as: "[Quebec is] constantly worried about its future *if not survival*;"[298] "A concern for *survival* has been a hallmark of this [Quebec's] past;"[299] "the constant battles it [Quebec] must wage for its [the French language's] *survival*."[300] Furthermore, Bouchard and Taylor also note that a small but notable portion of the majority invoked the "scenario of inevitable *disappearance*"[301] when articulating their criticisms of accommodation. While "survival" can mean to continue, persist, or endure, it can also mean to "remain alive,"[302] and, furthermore, the sense of "disappearance" invoked by the phrase above indicates "to cease to be present, to depart; *to pass from existence*."[303]

While the connotations of this language thus reveal a fear that openness to the other (a precondition for dialogue and understanding) represents an existential threat, philosophical hermeneutics suggests the opposite, that openness to the other nourishes existence: "To become always capable of conversation—that is, to listen to the Other—

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[297] Bouchard, *Interculturalism,* 72.

[298] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 41.

[299] Ibid, 185.

[300] Ibid, 67.

[301] Ibid, 21. Emphasis mine.

[302] "survival, n.". OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/195104?redirectedFrom=survival (accessed November 22, 2016).

[303] "disappear, v.". OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/53500?redirectedFrom=disappear (accessed November 22, 2016).

appears to be to be the true attainment of humanity."[304] The transformations precipitated

by dialogical understanding are thus not life-threatening but rather *life-giving*. Put

differently, philosophical hermeneutics asks us to recognize that our very being-in-the-

world is a journey that inescapably involves Others: we are who we are because of the

Others we encounter, and the ways we engage with and understand these encounters. As

the construction of identity is thus "ever changing,"[305] transformation is not something

that should be feared—it is a part of our very ontological make-up. This is something that

Bouchard and Taylor themselves try to emphasize. As they state,

> We now know that collective entities are not essences or immutable characters
> that appear to navigate on the surface of time. Instead, they are constructions that
> are forged in history from the experience of communities [….] The past of the
> French identity in Québec is an eloquent example: first Canadian, then French-
> Canadian, then Quebecer; first confined to the Laurentian Valley, then extended
> across Canada and again confined to Québec; defined for a long time exclusively
> with reference to culture, i.e. mainly language and religion, then released from
> this latter component to open itself up to the political, social and economic fields,
> and ultimately, penetrated by pluralism. *However, all of these transformations do
> not prevent a feeling of continuity.*[306]

As this emphasis on continuity-in-transformation indicates, Quebecers—but particularly

the Québécois majority—need not be so fearful that the legacy of the Quiet Revolution

and the values it represents will be *effaced* through the accommodation of alterity.[307]

    As a constituent element of the majority's historically effected consciousness—or,

put differently, their collective horizon—this aspect of Quebec history and the values it

represents cannot be ignored or erased, *but rather must be engaged with.* In other words,

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[304] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Incapacity for Conversation," (1972), trans. David Vessey and Chris
Blauwkamp, *Continental Philosophy review* 39, no. 4 (2006), 358.

[305] Tracy, "Western Hermeneutics," 3.

[306] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 123. Emphasis mine.

[307] As I've tried to indicate by emphasizing the word "efface" I am not trying to assert that their anxiety is
unfounded, but to suggest, rather, that philosophical hermeneutics demonstrates that the type of erasure
they fear is in conflict with the notion of effective history.

if Quebec's ethnocultural and religious minorities hope to come to an understanding with the Québécois majority, they must open themselves up to the idea that these fundamental aspects of the Québécois collective identity are meaningful and deserve recognition. However, as the discussion regarding the Charter of Values indicates, this process cannot be forced. If, through legal recourse, Quebec demands that ethnocultural and religious minorities recognize these values by renouncing important aspects of their own identity, intercultural dialogue—the desire to understand and be understood—cannot occur.

Gadamer's emphasis on the necessity of language for dialogue can also act to assuage existential fears,[308] in this case those surrounding the idea that pluralism will undermine the primacy of the French language in public life. As noted in Chapter Two, Gadamer's assertion about the primacy of conversation in understanding is simultaneously an assertion about the ontological primacy of language. In other words, if understanding (our mode of being) is inherently dialogical it is also inherently *lingual*.[309] Language, then, is the medium that allows for "the freedom of 'expressing oneself' and 'letting oneself be expressed.'" [310] As Wierciński puts it, "The fusion of horizons happening in the event of understanding is accomplished by language. Language is constantly present in our interaction with one another (*Im Miteinander*)." [311] The acknowledgement of the primacy of language in all human understanding, then, demonstrates that in the Quebec context, the primacy of the French language cannot be

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[308] I am using "existential" here in the literal rather than philosophical sense.

[309] Following Wierciński I have consciously chosen "lingual" over "linguistic." As he states, "it seemed to be essential to decisively move away from lintuisticality, which might erroneously suggest the relationship to linguistics (*Linguistik/Sprachwissenschaft*), thus being not only an unfortunate and misleading translation, but strongly problematic" ("The Primacy of Conversation," 14).

[310] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 553.

[311] Andrzek Wierciński, "Sprache Ise Gespräch: Gadamer's Understanding of Language as Conversation," in *Gadamer's Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation*, ed. Andrzek Wierciński (London: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 50.

undermined: it is *the* foundation, the starting point, the very possibility for all attempts at intercultural understanding in this context.

These insights into the ways in which Gadamer's thought can clarify and assuage certain aspects of Quebec's identity related anxieties—a major obstacle to intercultural understanding in this context—thus clearly supports Dallmayr's claim that philosophical hermeneutics offers an "antidote" to overly pessimistic or debilitating views regarding the viability of intercultural understanding. I would now like to move on to discuss the issue of harmful prejudices and the misunderstandings they give rise to. According to Gadamer the event of dialogue is a sufficient means of brining these prejudices to light and dispelling them, and, in the following section, I aim to evaluate this claim in light of the accommodation crisis.

Prejudice, Misunderstanding and the Event of Dialogue

Gadamer's project of rehabilitating prejudice and the authority of tradition is rooted in the central claim of philosophical hermeneutics: the idea that understanding, (experience plus dialogue), is *medial*; that it is "always already mediated by the saying of others or tradition."[312] When Gadamer states "*The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between*,"[313] he is thus asserting that understanding isn't rooted in the logic of the demonstrable statement (which assumes the possibility of achieving an Archimedean vantage point) but rather in the logic of the question born out of the experience of

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[312] Maria Luisa Portocarrero, "The Role of Prejudice in Gadamer's Understanding of Language as Dialogue," in *Gadamer's Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation*, ed. Andrzej Wierciński (London: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 180.
[313] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 295. Emphasis his.

openness to alterity.[314] It is necessary, then, to rehabilitate the concept of prejudice, because prejudices represent the "referents of human understanding"[315]—without them how can we question or be questioned? Gadamer doesn't deny the existence of harmful prejudices, and explicitly acknowledges that "it is the tyranny of hidden prejudices that makes us deaf to what speaks to us."[316]

When Gadamer states that a person trying to understand "cannot separate in advance the productive prejudices that enable understanding from the prejudices that hinder it" and that "this separation must take place in the process of understanding itself,"[317] he is asserting that we can only become aware of our prejudices (both good and bad) through the event of dialogue; through opening ourselves up to the other and allowing their prejudices to question our own in an ongoing and dynamic process. In other words, before our prejudices are thrown into question by the Other's alterity we cannot become aware of them. Differentiating between which prejudices are harmful and which are productive is also dependent on the event of understanding. As dialogical understanding frames meaning not as "rigid concept" but rather as "possibility," what Gadamer seems to be suggesting is that what allows us identify the presence of harmful prejudices is whether or not we can achieve a fusion of horizons. As Maria Luisa Portocarrero puts it in "The Role of Prejudice in Gadamer's Understanding of Language as Dialogue," false prejudices are "those which close themselves up to dialogue and understanding."[318] What this means, then, is that no prejudice is inherently harmful—it only becomes harmful if we refuse to allow it to be questioned and thus are prevented

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[314] Refer back to Chapter Two, p. 51 ff. for a more detailed discussion of this point.

[315] Portocarrero, "The Role of Prejudice," 182.

[316] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 272.

[317] Ibid, 330.

[318] 185.

from opening ourselves up to the possibilities of meaning present in the horizon of the Other (and thus from achieving the "genuine human bond"[319]).

As noted in Chapter Two this description is highly abstract and somewhat vague, and so I would like to try and apply these insights to the accommodation crisis to see how this description holds up in reference to a concrete event (and, in doing so, evaluate the usefulness of this notion in reference to intercultural dialogue). A major component of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission was the hosting of public forums where members of the public from all walks of life could come together and express themselves freely. Based on the descriptions of the public forums contained in the final report, it seems safe to assert that these forums were not characterized by a fusion of horizons. Although Bouchard and Taylor describe the forums as having a "warm, cordial atmosphere,"[320] I'd like to examine the words they use to describe the interactions that took place. They say the forums provided a space for people to "express their opinions;"[321] "debate;"[322] "defend themselves;"[323] "express very deep concerns or, indeed, anxieties."[324] While these characterizations don't appear to reflect dialogical understanding as described by Gadamer, prejudices—both good and bad—were nevertheless exposed (but, as we shall see, not necessarily dispelled). While the ability of the majority to express their "deep seated attachment to the legacy of the Quiet Revolution"[325] revealed constructive prejudices (i.e., the notions of gender equality, secularism and the primacy of the French

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[319] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 355.
[320] Bouchard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 36.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid, 37.
[325] Ibid, 36.

language), the presence of "offensive remarks […] targeted mainly at Muslims"[326] revealed negative prejudices (xenophobia, racism). Does this mean that Gadamer's framing of things is incorrect?

Although the members of the public who expressed themselves in the public forums didn't appear to have reached a fusion of horizons, it would be hard to defend the position that no dialogue occurred here. In this sense, Gadamer's claim that we can only become aware of our prejudices (both good and bad) through dialogue seems to be confirmed. Dialogue did occur during the public forums, and through this both productive and harmful prejudices were revealed. However, as what occurred here cannot be characterized as a fusion of horizons it is not possible to look to these forums to confirm or deny Gadamer's claim that the fusion of horizons—openness to and recognition of the Other's meaning—is able to somehow dispel all types of harmful prejudice.

However, what about Bouchard and Taylor themselves? Is it possible to assert that they were able to fuse their horizons with the concerned parties at the center of the crisis? That in doing so they dispelled a number of harmful prejudices? I believe this can be asserted—when one keeps in mind that the fusion of horizons doesn't signal finality[327]—and, furthermore, that the comparison between their response and the Charter of Values demonstrates this. The Bouchard-Taylor report not only seems to acknowledge that "we cannot have experiences without asking questions,"[328] but also that answering

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[326] Ibid.

[327] I.e. as the event of understanding is an "infinite process," the fusion of horizons doesn't represent the "end point" of understanding, but rather the successful expansion of one's horizon. The new understandings gained are not capital-T Truths, but rather possibilities of meaning that must again be revisited as we are faced with new experiences of alterity.

[328] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 356. This is demonstrated by the structure of their approach: each part, chapter and section is framed by and punctuated with questions the subsequent discussion sets out to answer by taking into account both minority and majority perspectives.

the questions provoked by the experience of pluralism requires a fundamental openness to the horizons of the majority *and* minorities. Furthermore, they acknowledge that their take on things cannot be conceptualized as all-encompassing—that is, they indicate their awareness that coming to an understanding of the issues at the center of the crisis must be conceptualized as an on-going effort. Finally, the report demonstrates that the dialogue they engaged in with members of the majority and various minorities did dispel certain harmful prejudices: not only do they dispel the notion that requests for religious accommodation are harmful, they also dispel many factual misconceptions surrounding the notions of open secularism and interculturalism, thus *beginning the process* of dispelling prejudices rooted in the fear of cultural erasure, which, as they state, "ha[ve] no future."[329]

The Charter of Values, however, as a legal document, sets out assertions of meaning in the form of regulations which deny that other possibilities of meaning could be valid, and, in doing so, confirms the two harmful prejudices: (1) that religious accommodation poses a threat to the Québécois majority; (2) that there is reason to fear ethnocultural and religious Others on the basis of their otherness. Furthermore, as Bouchard argues in *Interculturalism*, since "it has now been confirmed" that the PQ government "conducted no research whatsoever prior to engaging in this major imitative,"[330] it is clear that that dialogue did not occur between the PQ and ethnocultural and religious minorities. This, then, seems to confirm Gadamer's claim that harmful prejudices—and misunderstandings—thrive in the absence of dialogical understanding (the fusion of horizons). As Bouchard notes,

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[329] Bouhard and Taylor, *A Time for Reconciliation*, 21.
[330] Bouchard, *Interculturalism*, 152.

> Despite the outcome of the provincial election [which resulted in the shelving of Bill 60] it will not be easy to repair the major damage that has been caused. One negative effect has been the demonization of religious symbols, particularly the hijab. Another is the anti-immigrant sentiment that has been aroused. A third is the rift that has been created in Quebec society between the francophone majority and many members of minorities.[331]

This statement by Bouchard thus seems to confirm Dallmayr's claim that Gadamer's move to link philosophical hermeneutics with practical philosophy clarifies the type of social context that best facilitates inter-cultural/religious dialogue and understanding. As the Charter of Values, if passed, would have denied certain religious minorities the ability to exercise free choice (*prohairesis*) it seems clear that this type of social context would not be conducive to facilitating intercultural dialogue and understanding.

The application of Gadamer's thought to Quebec's accommodation crisis has thus indeed demonstrated that philosophical hermeneutics is a useful framework for approaching the pressing issue of intercultural dialogue and understanding. It confirms Gadamer's insistence that philosophical hermeneutics cannot be contained in some theoretical silo, but is, rather, something with intimately practical dimensions that call out to be applied. However, applying Gadamer's thought in this way isn't without its challenges, and I am not claiming that philosophical hermeneutics has the ability to shed light on or alleviate all of the obstacles to intercultural understanding raised by the accommodation crisis. As noted in the preceding chapter, Tracy argues that Gadamer doesn't seem to be able to grasp the difference between harmful prejudices rooted in a "pre-conscious" lack of information (for example, the idea that accommodation was undesirable because it granted minorities special privileges) and those stemming from "systemic distortions" (prejudices such as racism and xenophobia that are rooted much

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[331] Ibid.

more deeply into one's psyche). The analysis provided above does not refute this claim—Bouchard and Taylor were not able to dispel the prejudices rooted in systemic distortions—and in concluding I aim to evaluate Tracy's suggestion that the way to address the presence of prejudices rooted in systemic distortions is not, as Gadamer asserts, by continued dialogue, but rather by pausing dialogue to see if the application of certain critical theories can expose and "treat" these prejudices so dialogue (understanding) can proceed. While it will be beyond the scope of this paper to explore this assertion in any real detail, I will suggest that Paul Ricoeur's insistence on the need for more critical reflection in hermeneutics is an avenue that could be taken up further in another case study on this issue.

Conclusion

I began this inquiry with a simple assertion: that there is value in applying Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics to a case study on inter-cultural/religious dialogue and understanding. While the link between Gadamer's thought and the realm of intercultural dialogue is fairly well established in Gadamerian scholarship, my own exploration into these themes asks, with Gadamer, that we acknowledge that *hermeneutics is application*; that a purely theoretical discussion on the relationship between philosophical hermeneutics and intercultural understanding does not truly put these themes into dialogue with one another. As philosophical hermeneutics asserts that we must *enter into dialogue with* that which we wish to understand—be it another person or another person's textual or artistic expression—the present inquiry has asserted that a case study accomplishes this in a way the theoretical discussions put forward by Tracy, Dallmayr and Zimmerman simply cannot.

I maintain that this is because if we take the notion of effective history seriously—as well as the attendant notions of prejudice, authority and tradition—then we see, as Gadamer puts it in *Truth and Method*, that "the very idea of a [hermeneutical] situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it […] throwing light on it is a task that is never entirely finished."[332] In other words, inter-cultural dialogue and understanding is not something that can be objectified and understood from a distance. Rather, it is something that occurs between embodied humans rooted in specific historical and cultural contexts, which means that coming to understand what facilities and hinders this activity must be

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[332] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301.

approached in reference to a specific hermeneutical situation. Again, *hermeneutics (understanding) is application*. By applying Gadamer's thought to the accommodation crisis, then, a number of important insights come to light.

The notion of effective history and the rehabilitation of prejudice and the authority of tradition can clarify and assuage the intense anxiety surrounding the legacy of the Quiet Revolution and the survival of the majority's social imaginary. Clarify, because it helps explain this anxiety, assuage, because it confirms that this history cannot be discarded or silenced: it is a constitutive element of the Québécois social imaginary and provides the horizon of meaning available to the majority. Gadamer's assertions regarding the primacy of language in all understanding can also act to assuage Québécois fears that pluralism will undermine the primacy of the French language in public life—it is highly improbable that the primacy of the French language will be undermined, because it represents a fundamental condition of possibility for all intercultural understanding in this context. Finally, the logic of question and answer helps assuage one of the accommodation crisis' most divisive issues—risk; the idea that accommodating ethnocultural/religious Others will result in the majority's cultural and linguistic *erasure.* As Gadamer takes pains to demonstrate, *the transformations that occur as the result of entering into dialogue with Others should be embraced not feared*. Why? Because self-understandings (both individual and collective) are simply not stable or static entities. Put differently, human identities are ever-changing, ever-evolving, and are created in relationship to Others. In a word, they are *dialogical*.[333] This means that these transformations are an inescapable reality of living in community with Others. As Wierciński states in "The Primacy of

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[333] As Wierciński puts it in "The Primacy of Conversation," "one of the major discoveries in the existential journey towards oneself is the disclosure of the dialogical nature of the self" (21).

Conversation," "Hermeneutic conversation makes us aware that what we need most on our journey toward-understanding via the otherness of the other is *change*."[334] To try and fight this reality by refusing to enter into dialogue with Others—as we saw with the Charter of Values—is to traverse a dangerous path.

However, as indicated in the preceding chapter, while philosophical hermeneutics may indeed, as Dallmayr asserts, be viewed as an antidote to the overly pessimistic view that intercultural dialogue simply isn't viable,[335] it should not be viewed as some final cure-all (as Gadamer's argument regarding transcendence in *Die Lektion des Jahrunderts* seems to suggest[336]). According to Tracy, one of the biggest challenges posed to intercultural dialogue and understanding is the presence of prejudices rooted in "systemic distortions," which he argues is something Gadamer's model fails to adequately account for. Drawing from the insights of Paul Ricoeur and others,[337] Tracy thus suggests, in conflict with Gadamer, that dialogue alone may not be a sufficient means of brining to light and dispelling such deeply rooted prejudices; that perhaps dialogue must be periodically interrupted by a "hermeneutics of suspicion" if it wishes to adequately address the presence of such systemic distortions. As Tracy states,

> Paul Ricoeur does not reject the basic Gadamerian model of conversation in hermeneutics while, at the same time, arguing for the use of all relevant explanatory methods (e.g. structuralist, semiotic, historical-critical, formal, aesthetic, etc.) to challenge or to correct one's initial understanding of the other by showing how certain structures and other linguistic, social, cultural, economic, religious, or historical networks […] can be decoded through the use of the

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[334] Ibid.

[335] i.e., Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis.

[336] Jens Zimmerman, "The Ethics of Philosophical Hermeneutics," 50-69.

[337] Such as Jürgen Habermas and others in the Frankfurt School. See Tracy, "Western Hermeneutics," p. 10ff.

relevant method, not to replace (as Gadamer fears) but to enrich the final hermeneutical understanding of the other.[338]

To flesh out Tracy's suggestion I would now like to turn to Ricoeur's discussion of the infamous Gadamer-Habermas debate.[339]

As Ricoeur asserts in "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology,"[340] the Gadamer-Habermas debate seems to frame the "fundamental gesture of philosophy"[341] as an either-or: "either a hermeneutical consciousness or a critical consciousness."[342] However, according to Ricoeur, the "fundamental gesture of philosophy" need not be framed in such polarized terms—both impulses can be accommodated, but in order to do this the hermeneutics of tradition needs some "critical supplementation."[343] While Ricoeur offers four suggestions,[344] the one Tracy is referencing is his second, which states that philosophical hermeneutics "must overcome the ruinous dichotomy inherited from Dilthey, between 'explanation' and 'understanding' [which] arises from the conviction that any explanatory attitude is borrowed from the methodology of the *natural sciences* and illegitimately extended to the *human sciences*."[345] According to Ricoeur, then, Gadamer—in his move to decisively disentangle hermeneutics from the objectifying paradigm of the natural sciences—seems to erroneously frame all explanation as "naturalistic."[346] As Ricoeur argues, semiotics demonstrates that all

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[338] Ibid, 11.

[339] For a "rough history" of this debate, see Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*: *Essay's in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (London: Continuum, 1991), 335 (note).

[340] Ibid, 263-299.

[341] Ibid, 263.

[342] Ibid.

[343] Ibid, 290.

[344] See Ibid, 290-293 for Ricoeur's discussion of all four themes.

[345] Ibid, 291.

[346] Ibid.

explanation is not rooted in the paradigm of naturalism,[347] which frees up critical explanation for use in hermeneutics. The main point is that Ricoeur's model is one of "understanding-explanation-understanding"[348]—when one suspects that dialogue and understanding are being hindered by the presence of prejudices rooted in "systemic distortions" such as racism or xenophobia, dialogue must be interrupted to see if critical explanation can work to fully expose and this distortion and, in doing so, "treat"[349] it.[350]

I believe Ricoeur's suggestion is valuable, and draws attention to an important lacuna in Gadamer's thought: in trying to rehabilitate prejudice and the authority of tradition Gadamer seems to have failed to remember that just as the rehabilitation of these notions is valid, so too is the move to critique them. However, all things considered, I do not believe that this insight invalidates Gadamer's central claims, but rather supports the idea that understanding is an infinitely dialogical process: philosophical hermeneutics itself is an understanding born out of a series of dialogical encounters, and, as such, is not a closed event but rather something that must itself stay open to being transformed by dialogical encounters with others such as Ricoeur. As Gadamer himself states in *Truth and Method*, "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."[351]

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[347] Ibid.

[348] Tracy, "Western Hermeneutics," 12.

[349] Ibid, 13.

[350] For further reading on this topic see Paul Ricoeur, "Explanation and Understanding," In *Interpretation Theory*: *Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976) 71-97; Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. by Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 20-37.

[351] 282.

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