

TEXTUAL INTERCOURSE: GADAMER'S PENETRATION INTO THE DEPTHS OF UNDERSTANDING

ALEXIS DEODATO S. ITAO, M.A.

ialexisdeodato@yahoo.com

Rogationist Seminary College-Cebu

JIOLITO L. BENITEZ, M.A.Ed.

jollylbenitez@yahoo.com

Cebu Normal University

Abstract – As rational animals, human beings not only have the ability to think but also the capacity to understand. Human rationality, so to speak, is constituted by thinking and understanding. The immediate connotation of rationality, however, is almost always thinking. Hence to speak of man as an *animal rationale* is to speak of man as a thinking being. But following his mentor Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer insists that man does not only think, but most importantly understands. To understand is an essential part of being human, of being rational. But what is understanding? What does it mean to understand?

The issue of human understanding is not something simply epistemological; rather, it is something hermeneutical. That is to say, understanding always relates to the act of interpretation. In his monumental work *Truth and Method*, Gadamer diligently considers the matter of human understanding from a purely hermeneutical perspective. This paper, then, aims to synthesize Gadamer's hermeneutical theory and argues that for Gadamer, human understanding is essentially characterized by a kind of textual intercourse, that is, a dialogic interaction or an intimate exchange of horizons between an interpreting subject and a text which, in very broad terms, can refer to any object of interpretation.

Keywords – understanding, interpretation, hermeneutics, text, language, dialectic

I. INTRODUCTION

Wisdom has always been associated with old age even though old age in itself does not always equate to wisdom. That is so since there are people who grow older but do not grow any wiser. Wisdom, as it were, cannot really be measured by the longevity of a person's life; rather, wisdom is measured by the depth of a person's understanding. Thus he who is considered wise is always the person who shows some kind of deeper understanding. But how do we determine the depth of a person's understanding? Better yet, how do we attain deeper understanding?

Hans-Georg Gadamer contends that deeper understanding is the central concern of philosophical hermeneutics.¹ But part and parcel of this concern is also the fundamental question about the constitution of human understanding (*Verstehen*) itself.² Beginning with Schleiermacher, in fact, hermeneutics has always involved the "attempt to analyze the process of understanding and inquire into the possibilities and limits of it."³ So although for Gadamer hermeneutics is ultimately aimed at deeper understanding, it primarily takes into consideration what understanding really is all about. On account of this, Gadamer's

hermeneutical theory stands as a complex examination of understanding⁴ – one that starts from the surface, then goes down to the depths.

Because of its complexity, however, Gadamer's hermeneutics does not always yield understanding in spite of the fact that it is in itself an elaborate treatise on understanding. Hence, this paper attempts to come up with a new synthesis – and yes, a new understanding – of Gadamer's complex hermeneutical theory.

II. GADAMER'S INITIAL DESCRIPTIONS OF UNDERSTANDING

Gadamer readily recognizes that the easiest way to explain understanding is by describing the very event of understanding itself.⁵ This can be done by looking for those universal human experiences which best portray the event of understanding. Definitely, not all experiences qualify as descriptive of the event of understanding. Basically, only those which are essentially hermeneutical can capture best this particular event. By hermeneutical, we mean to say those experiences which involve interpretation, that is, those experiences where understanding comes alongside the act of interpretation. Now in Gadamer's view, two experiences stand out: aesthetic experience and the experience of play (*spiel*).

Aesthetic Experience

Most human beings have, at one time or another in their lives, experienced art appreciation. This experience is very commonplace. This ordinarily happens when one is face to face with a beautiful work of art and looks at it with awe and admiration. This is what Gadamer refers to as aesthetic experience.

Aesthetic experience, no matter how ordinary, is all the time pregnant with meaning.⁶ The feeling of awe and admiration, for example, implies that on the part of the viewer, some sort of insight about the art has already dawned. This insight is like a key that unlocks some of the mysteries of the art itself.⁷ As such, this insight is akin to a kind of understanding about what the art intends to convey.

Moreover, what especially makes aesthetic experience representative of the event of understanding is its underlying hermeneutical character. Unquestionably, it is not only the encounter between the viewer and artwork that results into aesthetic experience but also their interaction. The viewer does not actually simply look at the artwork but interprets it. Similarly, the art does not simply stand there, fixed on a spot and passive to its viewer; rather, the art also *speaks* to the viewer, conveying some sort of message to him.⁸ The two, thus, always interact in this manner: the viewer relates to the art as an interpreter while the artwork relates to the viewer as a text, that is, as an object of interpretation. This peculiar interaction between art and viewer indicates that a hermeneutical relationship exists between them. And so every aesthetic experience tells us that the viewer's interpretation of the artwork always precedes his understanding of the art. That importantly signifies that the event of understanding is not occasioned by any objective scientific investigation but by hermeneutic interaction.⁹

Play (*Spiel*)

Play characterizes the experience of children.¹⁰ There is not one normal child in the world who does not play. Even those who are no longer children play, or at least, love to play. So by play we mean that which we commonly associate with games; and not only that, since play can also refer to that which is normally staged in theaters. But what is in a play? How does it picture the event of understanding? Where does its hermeneutical aspect lay?

Certainly, every play is meant to be played.¹¹ Though one can remain a spectator and appreciates a play without actually playing, the spectator has still to be partly involved in it or he will never appreciate it at all. How much more when it comes to the players? A whole play can transport its players into a different world, a world with its own sets of rules, challenges, and rewards.¹² Each player, in effect, is in a unique position owing to his inimitable grasp of the play, to a perspective which is entirely his. This

explains why a player's understanding of the play can be invaluable: It is a byproduct of his participation, experience, and interpretation of the play – surely not an outcome of any scientific experiment.¹³

Even when we consider theatrical plays, the actor owns a particular understanding of the play which greatly determines how "he plays his representing role."¹⁴ In fact, it is a common expectation that the actor "knows very well what [the] play is."¹⁵ Whatever the case may be, the play represents a different world which the actors need to enter into and be a part of.¹⁶ Entering this world, the actors act out the play but always according to how they interpret it. So play, whether by players or by actors, is always hermeneutical in character. No wonder, for Gadamer, play can typify the event of understanding in the same way as aesthetic experience can.

III. THE HERMENEUTICAL SITUATION AND THE INFLUENCE OF HISTORY

While aesthetic experience and play do not tell us fully what understanding really is, they do not leave us altogether clueless. One thing we can conjecture is that understanding does not take place in a void but always within a "hermeneutical situation."¹⁷ This particular situation does not simply point to the presence of interpreter-to-text relation but more importantly brings to light how understanding itself develops from this relation.

According to Gadamer, a hermeneutical situation reveals an interpreter's distinctive horizon. That is why "essential to the concept of situation is the concept of '*horizon*.' The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point."¹⁸ So to speak, a horizon "designates everything that can be seen from a particular position."¹⁹ In simpler terms, then, a horizon is the interpreter's perspective, his particular viewpoint.²⁰

Subsequently, Gadamer relates that an interpreter's present horizon "cannot be formed without the past."²¹ "We are always already affected by history,"²² he says. This presupposes that underlying each horizon is a "historically effected consciousness" (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*)²³ – that is, a consciousness affected, shaped, and developed by the effects of history. This explains why, "in all understanding, whether we are expressly aware of it or not, the efficacy of history is at work."²⁴ Because of this, Gadamer firmly asserts that: "*Understanding is, essentially, a historically effected event.*"²⁵

So if understanding is effected by history, a person interprets and understands according to how his "consciousness is situated in the web of historical effects."²⁶ That is to say, interpretation and understanding operate according to how consciousness is shaped, formed, and developed by history. In short, we neither interpret nor understand with a blank and empty consciousness. This implies that understanding is naturally biased and laden with presuppositions.²⁷ For this reason, it is imperative to be more acquainted with these biases and presuppositions because they can shed light on how and why an interpreter arrives at understanding. Now to Gadamer, culture (*Bildung*) and prejudice (*Vorurteil*) are two defining elements that constitute every biased perspective (horizon), interpretation, and understanding.

Culture (*Bildung*)

The primary contributor to an interpreter's bias is culture. Though not exactly its English equivalent, the word "culture" nonetheless suggests what the original German word "*Bildung*" means and how it comes about. As Nicholas Davey shares:

One meaning of *Bildung* is culture. *Bildung haben* can mean to be or to become cultured. To be cultured supposes an acquaintance with the various stocks of knowledge and attitudes that constitute a given culture. Yet acquaintance with such knowledge does not of itself enable one to become cultured. Once again, it is the *process* of becoming intellectually and spiritually tempered by the experiences one undergoes during the acquisition of such knowledge that matters.²⁸

Simply put, culture pertains to what has been deeply ingrained in the *psyche* of an individual. The way he looks at things and interprets them is for the most part dictated by his culture. Culture, then, is at the very root of every interpreter's bias. Culture, of course, is not without its moral, social, and educative dimensions. All the same, culture is something that primarily conditions the outlook, attitude, and judgments of an individual or a community which, when put together, add up to what we call bias.

Prejudice (*Vorurteil*)

Bias, apparently, is not only constituted by culture but also by prejudice. But what is prejudice? Gadamer has this to say:

Actually "prejudice" means a judgment that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined. In German legal terminology a "prejudice" is a provisional legal verdict before the final verdict is reached... [It is a] provisional decision... a prejudgment.²⁹

So there, Gadamer makes it plain to us that prejudice is basically a form of prejudgment which all human beings have and make from time to time.³⁰ He even argues that "the human intellect is too weak to manage without prejudices."³¹ As Richard Palmer notes, prejudices "are not something we must or can dispense with; they are the basis of our being able to understand."³² "That is why," stresses Gadamer, "the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being."³³ This unmistakably hints "that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice."³⁴

Gadamer further relates that "the concept of prejudice is closely connected to the concept of authority."³⁵ Indeed, we can liken all our prejudices to an authority insofar as our judgments are by and large based upon the dictates of our prejudices. The "essence of authority" is tightly knit to its inherent "capacity to command and be obeyed,"³⁶ Gadamer claims. This is the reason why we follow the intimations and injunctions of our prejudices: they stand there like an authority to which we must submit and give our allegiance to. This is especially the case when we speak of "justified prejudices productive of knowledge."³⁷ We can tell without difficulty that their authority "is not irrational and arbitrary but can, in principle, be discovered to be true"³⁸ precisely because they are prejudices that are founded upon what we already know.

IV. THE CENTRALITY OF TEXTUAL INTERCOURSE

Given that the interpreter approaches the text conditioned by his culture and prejudice, Gadamer maintains that "a hermeneutically trained consciousness must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's alterity."³⁹ Gadamer sounds this caveat because for him it is important "to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings."⁴⁰ This attests why, in Gadamer's view, "hermeneutics calls instead for a dialogue between the text and the interpreter."⁴¹

A hermeneutical relation, therefore, fundamentally "implies the primacy of dialogue."⁴² So if "acts of interpretation are dialogical, a ceaseless conversation,"⁴³ this entails that the interpreter has to constantly engage himself in a kind of dialogic intercourse with the text. Thus it can be argued that textual intercourse signifies the consummation of the hermeneutical relation.⁴⁴ But how does textual intercourse proceed? Better still, how does textual intercourse lead to understanding?

The Art of Questioning as a Hermeneutical Foreplay

If the interpreter is situated in a particular horizon, the text likewise stands on "its own *horizon* of meaning."⁴⁵ So for textual intercourse to ensue, the interpreter has to penetrate into the text's horizon. Obviously, this penetration cannot be done without the interpreter opening first his partner's horizon. And

inasmuch as it is "openness [that] results in a dialogue,"⁴⁶ this "opening act" can only be regarded as crucial and important.

In any case, "because between the text and its interpreter there is no automatic accord,"⁴⁷ there is another caveat to keep in mind. Nicholas Davey warns that "hermeneutical engagement requires something more: a willingness to pass through the risks and suffering of an initial encounter in order to achieve a profounder level of *dialogical* exchange."⁴⁸ Apparently, this suggests that "opening up" the text's horizon necessitates what we might consider a hermeneutical foreplay in order to minimize what Davey calls "the risks and suffering of an initial encounter."⁴⁹

Now, to Gadamer's mind, only the art of questioning can possibly open up the text's horizon and allow the interpreter to penetrate into its depths. As he notes: "To question means to lay open... [because] questioning makes the object and all its possibilities *fluid* (emphasis mine)."⁵⁰ Furthermore, Gadamer explains that:

Only the person who knows how to ask questions is able to persist in questioning, which involves being able to preserve his orientation toward openness. The art of questioning is the art of questioning ever further – i.e., the art of thinking. It is called dialectic because it is the art of conducting a real dialogue.⁵¹

Questioning, then, is no ordinary prelude to textual intercourse. On one hand, it opens up the text's horizon and facilitates the interpreter's entrance into its depths; on the other hand, it excites the text to respond with a particular answer. "*Thus the dialectic of question and answer always precedes the dialectic of interpretation. It is what determines understanding as an event,*"⁵² Gadamer underlines. For this reason, "*finding the right questions to ask*"⁵³ is imperative.

The Fusion of Horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*)

As soon as the interpreter succeeds in opening up the text's horizon and penetrates into its depths, textual intercourse commences. Consequently, the horizon of the interpreter merges into the horizon of the text. This merger is what Gadamer refers to as the "fusion of horizons."⁵⁴ Here, we no longer have two separate horizons but one. As Charles Taylor remarks: "The 'horizons' here are at first distinct... The 'fusion' comes about when one (or both) undergo a shift; the horizon is extended so as to make room for the object that before did not fit within it."⁵⁵ So just as Gadamer himself emphasizes, "*understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.*"⁵⁶

Since understanding arises from the fusion of the horizons of the interpreter and the text, this fusion clearly represents the climax of every hermeneutical experience.⁵⁷ So if "in the process of understanding, a real fusing of horizons occurs,"⁵⁸ that is precisely because it is preceded by textual intercourse. Even as we recognize understanding to be the overall goal of any hermeneutical activity, textual intercourse remains indispensable because it is that which channels us into the depths of understanding.

V. FROM UNDERSTANDING TO DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

The fusion of horizons is, without doubt, a *sine qua non* of understanding. But more than being a condition, the fusion of horizons is an experience of understanding itself. It is the fundamental mode of how every understanding is experienced.⁵⁹ Understanding, so to speak, is always tied to an experience of fusion, of communion, of dialogic intercourse, so much so that "we call this kind of experience *dialectical.*"⁶⁰ The most important point here, however, is mainly this: understanding has the character of experience. That is to say, understanding has a manifest resemblance to experience. We commonly say, for instance, that one who has understanding is someone in possession of a particular experience;

similarly, we also normally say that one who has experience is someone who holds a particular understanding.

Because understanding and experience are closely related to each other, Gadamer explores at length "the nature of experience"⁶¹ and its subsequent implications – a fitting denouement to his complex hermeneutical theory, we may say, because it gradually unveils how understanding transforms into deeper understanding.

Experience (*Erfahrung*)⁶²

Gadamer straightaway asserts that experience "must be of such a nature that we gain better knowledge through it."⁶³ But as Richard Palmer clarifies,

experience does not here mean some kind of informational knowledge preserved about this or that. As Gadamer uses the term, it is less technical and closer to ordinary usage. It refers to... [an] accumulation of "understanding" which we often call wisdom. For example, a man who has all his life dealt with people acquires a capacity for understanding them which we call "experience"... It is not a purely personal capacity, however; it is a knowledge of the way things are, a "knowledge of people" that cannot really be put into conceptual terms.⁶⁴

So what experience generates is not simply knowledge of any sort; rather, what experience importantly brings about is insight. "Insight is more than the knowledge of this or that situation,"⁶⁵ Gadamer affirms. Insight signifies better or deeper understanding. It is for this reason that "the experienced person proves to be... someone who is radically undogmatic; who, because of the many experiences he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them, is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and learn from them."⁶⁶ In other words, the insight, the deeper understanding of the experienced person, makes him constantly "open to new experiences."⁶⁷

Thus when we speak of hermeneutical experience, what holds true for experience in general (*Erfahrung*) certainly applies. The interpreter's constant engagement in textual intercourse will not only make him experienced, but will also give him insight and deeper understanding of the text he is interpreting.⁶⁸ As a result, he remains open to what the text may have to say.

The Linguisticity of Understanding

Although the experienced interpreter is open to what the text may say to him, "no text and no book speaks," Gadamer admits, "if it does not speak a language that reaches the other person. Thus interpretation must find the right language if it really wants to make the text speak."⁶⁹ This leads Gadamer to consider the linguistic nature of experience and understanding. He reflects:

Experience is not wordless to begin with, subsequently becoming an object of reflection by being named, by being subsumed under the universality of the word. Rather, experience of itself seeks and finds words that express it. We seek the right word – i.e., the word that really belongs to the thing – so that in it the thing comes into language.⁷⁰

Language, hence, cannot really be divorced from experience because experience in general is "verbal in nature."⁷¹ That is why language "fundamentally embraces everything in which our insight can be enlarged and deepened."⁷²

Even more when we take into account hermeneutical experience. Gadamer emphasizes that "language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs."⁷³ There can be no textual intercourse, no fusion of horizons, without the mediation of language. As Günter Figal relates: "The relationship of the text and the interpreter is always a 'conversation'; the logic of which is the 'logic of question and answer.'

All these concepts, central to Gadamer's hermeneutics, point to forms of language."⁷⁴ And so as expected, Gadamer himself confirms "that the fusion of horizons that take place in understanding is actually the achievement of language."⁷⁵

In every hermeneutical experience, then, "understanding is inseparable from language."⁷⁶ In fact, it is not the text *per se* that the interpreter understands but what the text communicates – that is, the "subject matter" (*Sache*)⁷⁷ of the text wrapped in language. This is why Gadamer insists that "that which can be understood is language."⁷⁸ For one, it is language which gives form, expression, and being to the text's *Sache*. Then again, it is also through language that the interpreter acquires a better grasp, insight, and deeper understanding of what the text means to say.

VI. CONCLUSION

With his discussion of the linguisticity of understanding, Gadamer concludes *Truth and Method*. The point he wants to drive at is clear: deeper understanding is a fruit of one's experience with language, that is, a byproduct of textual intercourse. In any event, the mere fact that it is experiential entails that deeper understanding for Gadamer is not something abstract. Deeper understanding is instead something essentially practical. As Robert Dostal reports:

The practical application of knowledge is inherent in the very understanding of something. Practical application is not, on Gadamer's account, an external, after the fact, use of understanding that is somehow independent of the understanding. All understanding is practical.⁷⁹

So for Gadamer, anyone who claims to possess understanding must prove it by means of applying what he understands. "Understanding... is always application,"⁸⁰ he avers. But what does it mean in practice? How does one apply his understanding?

To be sure, the experienced person is not without aid; his wealth of experiences is there to guide him what he needs to do exactly. But inasmuch as there is no perfect understanding, there is also no perfect application. Nevertheless, a man of deeper understanding, as we said in the beginning, is also a man of wisdom. According to Gadamer, this wisdom is not a purely cerebral type of erudition. Precisely, it is called *phronesis* – a term Gadamer no doubt borrows from Aristotle – because it is *practical* wisdom.⁸¹ In Latin, it is translated as *prudencia* because it denotes one's ability to apply rightly and properly what one understands. For Gadamer, then, the application of one's understanding is simply a matter of prudence.

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¹ See Richard Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 215. Gadamer was the first to call hermeneutics philosophical in order to distinguish it from legal, historical, and theological hermeneutics among others. Gadamer, however, is not the pioneer of philosophical hermeneutics. The credit goes to Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1798-1834) who is also recognized as the "Father of Modern Hermeneutics." Historically, hermeneutics was mainly employed in the interpretation of various legal, historical, and sacred texts. With Schleiermacher, hermeneutics finally became philosophical in that it no longer asks primarily what the meaning of a text is, but rather examines the conditions that make all understanding possible.

² See Robert J. Dostal, introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3.

³ Josef Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique* (London: Routledge, 1980), 15.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 108.

⁵ Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), xxiii, 309, 472.

⁶ "In the experience of art is present a fullness of meaning that belongs not only to this particular content or object but rather stands for the meaningful whole of life." For details, see *ibid.*, 70.

⁷ "...art is not sense perception but knowledge. When we meet art... we see the world 'in a new light' – as if for the first time. Even common and ordinary objects of life appear in a new light when illuminated by art." Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 167-168.

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 168.

⁹ "The understanding of art does not come through methodically cutting and dividing it as an object, or through separating form from content; it comes through openness to being, and to hearing the question put us by the work." *Ibid.*

¹⁰ "Children's play serves as a good example for illustrating Gadamer's point." Patricia Altenbernd Johnson, *On Gadamer* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2000), 21.

¹¹ See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 106.

¹² *Ibid.*, 107-108.

¹³ Gadamer frequently brings to light the marked similarities between aesthetic experience and play. He even maintains that "when we speak of play [it is] in reference to the work of art." See *ibid.*, 101.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.
- ¹⁶ "Certainly the play takes place in another, closed world." *Ibid.*, 112.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 300-307.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 302.
- ¹⁹ Johnson, *On Gadamer*, 32.
- ²⁰ Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 82.
- ²¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 306.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 300.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 301.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 300. Emphasis (italicization) by Gadamer himself.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ Gadamer is indebted to Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), his mentor at the University of Marburg in the 1920's, for the idea that interpretation and understanding can never be devoid of presuppositions. Gadamer appropriated Heidegger's idea and incorporated it in his own hermeneutical theory.
- ²⁸ Nicholas Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 39.
- ²⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 270.
- ³⁰ Gadamer, of course, is fully aware that prejudices can be erroneous. This, however, is not an issue to him. No matter how much our understanding may be influenced by prejudice, in Gadamer's view, it is not prejudice that solely and absolutely determines our understanding in the end. What Gadamer simply wants to point out is the fact that we cannot be without prejudices. For details, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 9.
- ³¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 273.
- ³² Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 182.
- ³³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 276-277. Emphasis (italicization) by Gadamer.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 270.
- ³⁵ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 9.
- ³⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 279.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 280.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 269.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ Robert J. Dostal, "Gadamer: The Man and His Work," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 27.
- ⁴² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 369.
- ⁴³ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: CONTINUUM International Publishing Group, 2006), 3.
- ⁴⁴ See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 441, 472.
- ⁴⁵ Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 2. Because of its own separate and independent horizon, Gadamer throughout *Truth and Method* also refers to the text as tradition. From the Latin verb *tradere* – literally, "to hand over," "to bequeath," or to "pass down to" – tradition implies a reality that carries within itself a long history. In a sense, this is the text's similarity to its interpreting subject – that is, they are both "historically-effected."
- ⁴⁶ Johnson, *On Gadamer*, 37.
- ⁴⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 472.
- ⁴⁸ Davey, *Unquiet Understanding*, 68. Emphasis (italicization) by Davey.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*; cf. Johnson, *On Gadamer*, 36.
- ⁵⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 367.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 472. Emphasis (italicization) by Gadamer.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 301. Emphasis (italicization) by Gadamer.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁵⁵ Charles Taylor, "Gadamer on the Human Sciences," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 133.

⁵⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 306. Emphasis (italicization) by Gadamer.

⁵⁷ Richard J. Bernstein even argues that the fusion of horizons "is the aim of hermeneutics." For details, see "The Constellation of Hermeneutics, Critical Theory and Deconstruction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 277.

⁵⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 307.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 353. Emphasis (italicization) by Gadamer.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 352.

⁶² The English word "experience" has two equivalent terms in German so that it can either be translated as *Erfahrung* or *Erlebnis*. According to Richard Palmer, "the former refers to experience in general, as when one refers to his 'experience' in life," while the latter refers to some specific "lived experience" seen "as a unit held together by a common meaning." There is, for example, the "experience of romantic love [which] is not based on one encounter but brings together events of various kinds, times, and places; but their unity of meaning as 'an experience'... holds them together." This is *Erlebnis*. In the hermeneutical theory of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), understanding cannot be had without reexperiencing (*Nacherleben*) the *Erlebnis*, that is, the life experience of the text's author. In Gadamer, however, any genuine experience (*Erfahrung*) can potentially teach us something about hermeneutical experience, or better yet, something about the nature of understanding itself. For details, see Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 107-111, 123 (for his account of *Erlebnis*); 194-198 (for his account of experience in Gadamer).

⁶³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method.*, 353.

⁶⁴ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 195-196.

⁶⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 356.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 355.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Emphasis (italicization) by Gadamer.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 358.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 397.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 417.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 447.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 389. Emphasis (italicization) by Gadamer.

⁷⁴ Günter Figal, "The Doing of the Thing Itself: Gadamer's Hermeneutic Ontology of Language," in the *Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 102.

⁷⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 378. Emphasis (italicization) by Gadamer.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 474.

⁷⁷ Fred Lawrence relates that "the German word *Sache* means thing, subject matter, content, business, real issue at stake (in Latin *res* or *causa*)." In short, *Sache* pertains to the meaning of the text itself. For details, see "Gadamer, the Hermeneutic Revolution, and Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 168.

⁷⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 475.

⁷⁹ Dostal, introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 4.

⁸⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 309.

⁸¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 312, 322.