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HERMENEUTIC LEGACY

The International Institute for Hermeneutics

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The International Institute for Hermeneutics¹ is founded upon the conviction that interdisciplinary, inter-religious, and inter-lingual discussion must be foremost in the pluralistic university of the twenty-first century. In pursuit of this goal, the Institute creates a forum for interdisciplinary and multi-lingual collaboration on hermeneutics, particularly, though not exclusively, in the human sciences. Through seminars, lectures, conferences, and publishing, the Institute situates academic hermeneutic praxis, the concrete activity of interpreting philosophical, theological, and literary texts within the context of general hermeneutic theory. Although primarily a research institute, the Institute has a view to the application of hermeneutics in teaching. Its mandate is to facilitate the uncovering and reflective analysis of the hermeneutic presuppositions and foundational disputes operating within the academy, inspire research in hermeneutics, and assist university departments in including hermeneutics in their pedagogy.

¹For more information on the International Institute for Hermeneutics please visit our Webpage <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/iilh>.

The International Institute for Hermeneutics is a center for inter-disciplinary, inter-lingual, inter-national, and inter-religious collaboration. To represent an international academic community, the Institute has an international network of associates: an advisory board of world-class academics, and senior and junior associates. The members of the International Institute for Hermeneutics come from different academic, religious, cultural, and lingual backgrounds. They represent different generations of scholars: from well-known veterans to emerging voices. Representing the particularities of the languages, times, and places in which their thinking originates and develops, each of them offers a reading of the tradition from the perspective of their uniquely situated horizon. Interpretation, circular in its character, is a projection of possibilities. To enter the circular structure of understanding is to recognize the essential temporality of interpretation, the historicity of the community of learning. The poetry of John Keats (1795–1821) provides a wonderful example of concern with the temporality of interpretation in its effort to interpret an object that speaks silently, from the past, as the “foster-child of Silence and slow Time,” with a message for the future. Listen to his “Ode on a Grecian Urn.”

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 Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
 What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
 Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal – yet, do not grieve;

She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea-shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul, to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe

Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, – that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

In interpreting the urn, Keats acknowledges the inaccessibility of the urn's story to the speaker. Yet, the urn speaks to him as it speaks to us. This is the phenomenon well known to us when we encounter the work of art. The truth we speak of is the truth that speaks in the work of art, the truth that originates in the work. As Gadamer observes: "We must realize that we must first decipher every work of art, and then learn to read it, only then does it begin to speak."² In fact, Gadamer moves beyond Heidegger's "spoken" claim of art toward the imperative relevance of the beautiful.³ As we pursue the interpretive paths, we realize that we follow the interpretive moves of the poet as he interprets the urn and discover the distance between us and the poem, a distance that is temporal and spacial. Encountering the beautiful we *know* that poetry can disclose to us a horizon inaccessible to different modes of human thinking. It can happen while reading Keats's "Ode to Psyche" and the "Ode to a Nightingale," where he is very self-conscious about his own interpretive practice. It can happen while reading Rainer Maria Rilke's "Archaischer Torso Apollons." The poetic imperative: "denn da ist keine Stelle,/ die dich nicht sieht. Du musst dein Leben ändern" became the synonym for the transforming power of art. "You must change your life" needs to be read in a horizon of a difficult and ultimately incomplete act of interpretation. Its is an invitation to a passionate encounter with that which needs to be understood. Our reading is conditioned by the poem in front of us and our interpretation is historically conditioned by our tradition. We can only be conscious of our hermeneutic situation when we are conscious of the interpretative character of our existence. When we talk of hermeneutics we mean hermeneutic experience, which is first and foremost hermeneutic practice. In *doing* phenomenological hermeneutics we need to become engaged with a poem, we need to look at a picture which opens up a new horizon before us. That which needs to be understood (a poem, a picture, etc.) constitutes an immediate horizon of our hermeneutic experience.

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² Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Die Aktualität des Schönen: Kunst als Spiel, Symbol und Fest," in idem, *Gesammelte Werke* 8 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 138: "Die moderne Kunst ist eine gute Warnung zu glauben, man könnte, ohne zu buchstabieren, ohne lesen zu lernen, die Sprache auch der alten Kunst zu hören."

³ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," trans. Albert Hofstadter, in idem, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 17–81; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Gadamer provided the introduction to the 1960 edition of Heidegger's *Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1960). See also Robert Bernasconi, "The Greatness of the Work of Art," in idem, *Heidegger in Question: The Art of Existing* (Atlantic Highlands, N. J.: Humanities Press, 1993).

The range of topics we address in the Institute represents the original scholarship of our members. We wish to introduce a variety of horizons, as rich as possible, to accommodate the specializations and interests of individual contributors. Following the principle that hermeneutic truth is linked to the particularity of context and situation, our research tends to address the multiple approaches to human and natural sciences. With Gadamer, we insist that every reading is a new reading and every act of understanding a pathway to new understanding. The author of a text remains the same; every reader of that text is unique. Thus, every reading is grounded in a unique context and therefore each time a text is read it is understood in a different way. No single reading can be claimed as a definitive or final interpretation of the text. As long as there are texts to be interpreted and readers willing to read them we will witness to an ongoing dialogue, and will be happy to participate in it.⁴

Hermeneutics as the Theory and Practice of Interpretation

Hermeneutics is a word with ancient roots. The Greek word ἑρμηνεύειν means the activity of interpreting (expressing in words, explaining, and translating), and ἑρμηνεία the interpretation as such.⁵ The words invoke Hermes, the messenger god of the Greek pantheon. Hermes relays messages between mortals and divinities. Thus hermeneutics is always between speakers who are otherwise alienated from each other. It works with “the tools which human understanding employs to grasp meaning and to convey it to others.”⁶ Contemporary hermeneutics as a general philosophical discipline seeks to illuminate the basic structures of human understanding. Like all genuinely philosophical disciplines, it claims for itself a universal scope and validity.⁷ In the foreword to the

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⁴ See also Bruce Krajewski, ed., *Gadamer's Repercussions: Reconsidering Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2004).

⁵ See Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias*, in idem, *The Categories; On Interpretation*, trans. Harold P. Cooke (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983). See also Andrzej Wierciński, “Phenomenological Hermeneutics: The Horizon of Thinking,” in idem, ed., *Between Description and Interpretation: The Hermeneutic Turn in Phenomenology* (Toronto: The Hermeneutic Press, 2005), ix–xii.

⁶ Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 13; idem, “Heideggerian Ontology and Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics,” in Andrzej Wierciński, ed., *Between the Human and the Divine: Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics* (Toronto: The Hermeneutic Press, 2002), 113–121.

⁷ Gary B. Madison, “Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality,” in Lewis E. Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 24. According to Gadamer, philosophical

second edition of *Truth and Method* Gadamer, the interpreter *par excellence*, defines the scope of his philosophical hermeneutics:

Heidegger's temporal analytics of Dasein has, I think, shown convincingly that understanding is not just one of the various possible behaviors of the subject but the mode of being of Dasein itself. /.../ The term "hermeneutics" ... denotes the basic being-in-motion of Dasein that constitutes its finitude and historicity, and hence embraces the whole of its experience of the world. Not caprice, or even an elaboration of a single aspect, but the nature of the thing itself makes the movement of understanding comprehensive and universal.⁸

Hermeneutics as the art of interpreting began as a legal and theological methodology, a set of rules governing the application of civil and canon law, and the interpretation of Scripture. It developed into a general theory of human understanding, particularly through the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and Jacques Derrida. These authors proved that hermeneutics is much more than theology or legal theory, for it is not only the application of laws and theological texts to various situations that requires hermeneutic understanding; the comprehension of any written text requires hermeneutics. The interpretation of a literary text, for example, is as much a hermeneutic act as the interpretation of Scripture.

The historicity of human understanding is the foundational insight of hermeneutics.⁹ Without collapsing critical thought into relativism, hermeneutics

hermeneutics must be universal because understanding takes place in all aspects of experience; it encompasses the way we experience one another, historical traditions, our own existence and our world. In our being-in-the-world we are opened to this universe. See James Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other: Re-Reading Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997).

⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2d rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2000), xxx. See also Ingrid Scheibler, *Gadamer: Between Heidegger and Hermeneutics* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000). For a recent comprehensive presentation of Gadamer's hermeneutics see Lewis Edwin Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Chicago: Open Court, 1997); Günter Figal, Jean Grondin, Dennis J. Schmidt, and Friederike Rese, ed., *Hermeneutische Wege: Hans-Georg Gadamer zum Hundertsten* (Tübingen, Mohr, 2000); Robert L. Dostal, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Jean Grondin, *The Philosophy of Gadamer*, trans. Kathryn Plant (New York: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002).

⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Historicity of Understanding as Hermeneutic Principle," in Michael Murray, ed., *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1978);

recognizes that understanding is always situated and determined by historical, lingual, and cultural horizons of meaning. Problems and questions can only be genuinely understood through a grasp of the historical situation within which they first arose. Thus is hermeneutics the practice of historical retrieval and reconstruction. Unlike the study of history, however, hermeneutics does not reconstruct the past for its own sake, but always for the sake of understanding the particular way a problem or question must be engaged *in the present*. It is only by addressing the old questions within ever-new hermeneutic horizons that understanding breaks through the limitations of any particular cultural setting to the matter which calls for thought.¹⁰

In part four of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger attempts to lay a ground for metaphysics in a retrieval. He explains:

By the retrieval of a basic problem, we understand the opening-up of its original, long-concealed possibilities, through the working-out of which it is transformed. In this way it first comes to be preserved in its capacity as a problem. To preserve a problem, however, means to free and keep watch over those inner forces which make it possible, on the basis of its essence, as a problem.

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Retrieval of the possible does not just mean the taking-up of what is “customary,” “grounded overviews /which/ exist” from which “something can be done.” The possible in this sense is always just the all-too-real which everyone manages to manipulate in its prevailing mode of operation. The possible in this sense directly hinders a genuine retrieval, and thereby in general it hinders a relationship to history.¹¹

Hermeneutics opposes the radical relativist notion that meaning cannot be trans-lingual. As the speculative grammarians of the Middle Ages recognized, the grammars of the world’s languages are rooted in a depth grammar of human meaning.¹² This depth grammar is not codifiable; it is not a meta-language

idem “The Historicity of Understanding,” in Paul Connerton, ed., *Critical Sociology* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976).

¹⁰ For the hermeneutic notion of tradition see Andrzej Wierciński, “L’Ermeneutica Filosofica della Tradizione,” *Ars Interpretandi: Annuario di ermeneutica giuridica* 8 (2003): 21–40.

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 4th. ed., trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1990), 139.

¹² The modern linguistic theory taught at the universities these days is largely the theory of Chomsky which posits a underlying condition (equal in all peoples and places) of lingual potential. The diffe-

in which everything can be said. Rather, it is the single horizon of human understanding, which makes speakers of various languages members of a human community. On the other hand, hermeneutics opposes the rationalist tendency to downplay the uniqueness of languages. Hermeneutics is not satisfied with translating the language of the other; it wants to speak with the other *in* the language of the other.

Claiming to be a universal discipline¹³ while at the same time accentuating the finite nature of understanding and the linguality and textuality of experience,¹⁴ philosophical hermeneutics rejects both foundationalism in philosophy and fundamentalism in religion and theology.¹⁵ For Gadamer the universality of hermeneutics is grounded in historical consciousness, in language, historicity, and the understanding of philosophy as hermeneutics.¹⁶ The universality of hermeneutics is the universality of a lingually mediated experience, the ontological disclosure of Being. The persistent claim of hermeneutics that understanding is essentially presuppositional is most radically opposed to the search for and return to “fundamentals” – “unvarnished, literal truths” – the characteristic traits of both foundationalism and fundamentalism. In contrast

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rence of each specific historical and cultural determination can be preserved without scarifying the whole interpretative project. Preserving the difference and attaining communication creates the antinomy that needs to be actively surmounted in each attempt at translation and communication as such. See Noam Chomsky, *On Language: Chomsky's Classic Works, Language and Responsibility and Reflections on Language in One Volume* (New York: New Press, 1998), idem, *New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), idem, *On Nature and Language*, ed. Adriana Belletti and Luigi Rizzi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 11; also “Die Universalität des hermeneutischen Problems,” in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2, *Hermeneutik II: Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986), 219–231. See further See Jürgen Habermas, “Der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik,” in *Hermeneutik und Dialektik: Aufsätze. Hans Georg Gadamer zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Rüdiger Budner, Konrad Cramer, and Reiner Wiehl (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1970), 73–104.

¹⁴ On the hermeneutic primacy of language and the universality of hermeneutics see Andrzej Wierciński, “*The Hermeneutic Retrieval of a Theological Insight: Verbum Interius*,” in Wierciński, ed., *Between the Human and the Divine*, 2–7. See also Jean Grondin “Gadamer on Augustine: On the Origins of the Hermeneutical Claim to Universality,” in idem, *Sources of Hermeneutics* (Albany, N. Y.: SUNY Press, 1995), 99–110.

¹⁵ Andrzej Bronk, “The Anti-foundationalism of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics,” in Wierciński, ed., *Between the Human and the Divine*, 102–112. See also Evan Simpson, ed., *Anti-Foundationalism and Practical Reasoning: Conversations Between Hermeneutics and Analysis* (Edmonton: Academic Printing & Publishing, 1987).

¹⁶ Gary B. Madison, “Hermeneutics’ Claim to Universality,” in Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, 349–365.

to religious fundamentalism, hermeneutics sees the “either/or of relativism and absolutism” as an untenable metaphysical opposition.

As such, hermeneutics is philosophy in the Greek sense of the word, the love (*philia*), the desire for wisdom (*sophia*), as comprehensive an understanding of human existence as is possible.

The Need for Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Hermeneutics cannot happen without a level of inter-disciplinary collaboration that, for the most part, does not yet exist on university campuses. The theologian needs the philosopher as much as the philosopher needs the theologian, both need the literary critic, the historian needs the sociologist and vice versa, the political theorist needs the economist, the natural scientist needs the cultural theorist, etc. Hermeneutics is a resolute break with the specialization that has left so many disciplines isolated from each other, an effort to redress the fragmentation of the sciences, without infringing upon the unique area of inquiry that determines any individual science as such.

The Need for Inter-Lingual Collaboration

Anyone who has done work in translation knows that in some sense translation is impossible. What is said in a particular language is said in a distinct form of life and context of meaning. The only way to understand a text is to read it in its original language; the only way to read a language is to be familiar with the form of life that constitutes its horizon of meaning. Nonetheless, as Walter Benjamin put it, we *must* translate,¹⁷ reunite what we say with the *Ursprache*.¹⁸

¹⁷ In Benjamin's case the stress is on his work's inner struggle with and against the myths of Genesis, the Fall of Man and Babel, on the differentiation of modern languages from the language of creation, which he presents as an irredeemable demand for translation at issue with a ban against translation, originating from a difference within the language of creation itself. See John Sallis, *On Translation*, Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2002).

¹⁸ The hermeneutic task is the common human task to interpret everything. Since “God is dead, and no value is universal,” hermeneutics is the method and context for a dialogue. According to Gadamer the participants in an authentic dialogue can achieve a common language and a common judgment in a non-arbitrary transfer of their viewpoints. He writes that “practical and political reason can only be realized and transmitted dialogically. I think, then, that the chief task of philosophy is to justify this way of reason and to defend practical and political reason against the domination of technology based upon science. /.../ It vindicates the noblest task of the citizen ... decision-making, according to one's own responsibility.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Hermeneutics and Social Science,” *Cultural Hermeneutics* 2 (1975): 314.

Truth exists only in an *Ursprache*. “If there is such a thing as a language of truth, the tensionless and even silent depository of the ultimate truth which all thought strives for, then this language of truth is – the true language.”¹⁹ We must speak *to* each other. Translation is not a simple substitution of languages, but a hermeneutic exercise of interpreting how a meaning nexus can be transposed into a historical-lingual horizon different from the one in which it first arose.

We feel deeply inspired by the Word of the prophet Isaiah, which becomes a moral imperative for translating. Any word, and particularly a Word of God, needs to be interpreted, since it carries a meaning that needs to reach a heart of the other to who that word is addressed. Isaiah, inspired by God proclaims:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts. For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it. (Is 55:8–11)

In the effort to interpret a word, we need first decipher it, to face it, and if necessary, we need to translate it, to make it sound familiar in the living language of someone to whom the word is addressed. There is no word that is meant to return void to the original speaker: each word carries a mission with itself to be accomplished; in fact, each word *is* a mission. Recognizing ethnic, cultural and lingual diversity, it is our duty to make the word sound familiar in the fundamental horizon between familiarity and strangeness.

The Need for Inter-Religious Collaboration

Hermeneutics has a great impetus from theology through the work of Roman Catholic theologians Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Bernard Lonergan, Protestant theologians Friedrich Schleiermacher and Karl Barth, and Jewish theologians Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, and Emmanuel Levinas. In

¹⁹ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 77.

different ways, they have shown us that the philosophical and historical traditions of the world are intimately interwoven with the practice of human religion. Understanding traditional texts is not possible without religious contextualization, a context that can be engaged independent of any particular religious commitment. While hermeneutics recognizes the unique disclosure of religious meaning in the horizon of a particular faith, hermeneutics is equally interested in the disclosure of meaning of a religious text in the horizon of unbelief.²⁰ In the hermeneutic universe, no voice can be excluded from the conversation on the grounds that their view is “biased” by a faith commitment or a lack thereof. As Gadamer shows, our “pre-judgements” do not impede understanding; on the contrary they make it possible. Yet a forum for inter-theological discussion (not simply a department for the study of religion as a phenomenon of human culture, which often excludes the theological voice) is difficult to find in today’s academic topography.²¹

Hermeneutics re-establishes the place of religion in our secular world by challenging natural science’s purported hegemony on truth.²² With Enlightenment, not so much Descartes’ “reason” (abstraction and definition) but Newton’s laws – observation and experience were points of departure. Natural science occupied the front of the stage. The real power of reason lies not in the possession but in the acquisition of truth, and objective truth, independent of the observer, needs to be verified by the natural sciences. Yet truth manifests itself in various ways.²³ Supporting interpretive pluralism, hermeneutics provides a powerful means to combat the prejudice that only empirically verifiable scientific propositions can lay claim to validity.²⁴ By uncovering the presuppositions that un-

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²⁰ William V. Spanos, “Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and the Hermeneutic Circle: Towards a Postmodern Theory of Interpretation as Dis-closure,” *Boundary 2*, no. 4 (Winter 1976), 455–488.

²¹ In the contemporary period the debate is reopened by revisionist theologians like David Tracy who claims that theology must be rational and rigorously scientific. Tracy demands that a theologian must be faithful to the criteria of the “morality of scientific knowledge.” The theologian must make Christianity answerable to the public norms of scientific knowledge which he or she shares with the whole academic community. In this way Christian theology must be “revised” in order to recover Christianity’s public role in liberal democratic societies. Otherwise, Christians will be relegated to the fringes of an increasingly pluralistic world. See David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology: With a New Preface* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

²² Richard Rorty, *Truth, Politics and “Post-Modernism”* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1997).

²³ See Holger Zaborowski, “Der Wahrheitsbegriff Edmund Husserls, Martin Heideggers und Hans-Georg Gadamer,” in Markus Enders and Jan Szaif, ed., *Die Geschichte des philosophischen Begriffs der Wahrheit. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005).

²⁴ Donald Davidson, “The Folly of Trying to Define Truth” in Michael Lynch ed., *The Nature of*

derlie scientific claims, hermeneutics is capable of bringing a plurality of voices (scientific, religious, aesthetic, and existential) into dialogue. Placed in the infinite “conversation that we are,” religion is free to speak itself in its own terms. Dialogue alone can save us from the danger of limiting ourselves to a single voice.

Inter-religio

The Second Vatican Council recognized the urgency of the dialogue with other religions, not only to secure the international peace but in order to remain faithful to the Christ’s mandate:

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age. (Mt 28: 19–20)

Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*²⁵ is a fundamental step on the path toward unity:

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All in the Church must preserve unity in essentials. But let all, according to the gifts they have received enjoy a proper freedom, in their various forms of spiritual life and discipline, in their different liturgical rites, and even in their theological elaborations of revealed truth. In all things let charity prevail. If they are true to this course of action, they will be giving ever better expression to the authentic catholicity and apostolicity of the Church.²⁶

The enduring inspiration to the openness toward other religions is the *Nostra Aetate*:

The Church therefore has this exhortation for her sons: prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other reli-

Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2001). Davidson refers to a pre-analytic notion of truth that is intuitively self-evident. See Donald Davidson, “Reality without Reference,” in idem, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

²⁵ Vatican II, *Decree on Ecumenism: Unitatis Redintegratio*, November 21, 1964, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html.

²⁶ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4.

gions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their society and culture.²⁷

Catholic Church does not only admits to the presence of truth in the other traditions, but encourages the process of assimilation of these very values into the one universal tradition of the Church. The mission of proclaiming Christ is a mission to grow and acquire new insights in the ever changing world.²⁸ In the continuation of the Christ redeeming work the Church emphasizes the necessity of constructive collaboration among all humans on their way to inner transformation, which is the chief goal of the spiritual life in any tradition. Here the Catholic Church unconditionally expresses the need to bear faithful witness to Christ:

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to “maintain good fellowship among the nations” (1P 2:12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men, so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.²⁹

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Religious diversity as a defining feature of the contemporary society requires the consolidation of all our efforts in worship, prayer, word, and action in order to bring God’s reconciling mission in Jesus Christ to all people of good will.

The International Institute of Hermeneutics encourages the academics to work on overcoming the division between people representing different religious traditions. Acknowledging the various theological opinions cut across the different churches and noticing concrete attitudes of missionaries belonging to various churches we would like to offer an opportunity for a broad consensus. Reflecting together on our Christian identity in the postmodern pluralistic context we welcome a diversity of opinions as a starting point on the way to accept

²⁷ Vatican II, *Declaration: Nostra Aetate*, 2, October 28, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

²⁸ Wayne Teasdale, “Interreligious Dialogue Since Vatican II The Monastic Contemplative Dimension,” *Spirituality Today*, vol.43, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 119–133.

²⁹ *Nostra Aetate*, 5.

God's universal salvific will not as an abstract possibility but as a concrete reality, operative among us.³⁰

The Need for Inter-National Collaboration

The world of business has already recognized that the economy is global; the world of academia has been slower to recognize the global unification of research on an unprecedented scale made possible by modern communications.³¹ A university can no longer remain content within its national setting; it must become a center where the nations meet to discuss issues crucial to the whole human community. We can only understand the other by entering into his or her horizon of thinking, and we can only enter into the horizon of the other by first recognizing that it is *other* than our horizon; we cannot assume an immediate understanding of it, but must *interpret*.

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In assessing different ways of disclosure hermeneutics respects human limits, ontological complexity, and cultural difference. Hermeneutics is an inter-national search for understanding, a search, which promotes our common life. In our increasingly globalized world we are confronted with otherness, the experience of the different. Meeting this challenge means recognizing the humanity of that which is initially strange to us. According to Gadamer:

Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and state in which we Live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed cir-

³⁰ One of the greatest ecumenical achievement of the Vatican II was the official disavowal of the rigid interpretation of the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*: salvation must be held possible outside the Church. "All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery." Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution On the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes*, December 7, 1965, 22, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_1965_1207_gaudi_um-et-spes_en.html.

³¹ Madison interprets globalization not as a process of suppression of differences and peoples, but as opening new possibilities. See Gary Madison "Globalization: Challenges and Opportunities," in Oliva Blanchette, Tomonobu Imamichi, and George F. McLean, ed., *Philosophical Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization* (Washington, D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2001).

cuits of historical life. *That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.*³²

A shared understanding plays a decisive role in reaching consensus in a negotiation process aimed at resolving conflicting interpretations. Any conflict resolution engages the involved parties in a dialogue. All sides are called upon to reinterpret and reexamine their meaning and values.³³

The Mandate of the International Institute for Hermeneutics

The International Institute for Hermeneutics facilitates the fusion of horizons of human meaning. Gadamer's account of the challenge of the other and the fusion of horizons applies to our attempts to understand different cultures and our own life in the dialectics of past and future as experienced in the dynamic now.

A House of Historical Research

Any question that is important and significant requires a contextual study of the situation in which it first arose, and a transposition into new settings where it might have relevance. The International Institute for Hermeneutics has a strong commitment to the medieval tradition as the often-ignored site of the genesis of Western rationality, the fusion of the Greco, Judaic, Christian, and Muslim horizons of meaning in the Latin languages.

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The notion of the relationship of history to life as explicitly elaborated by Heidegger, particularly in his hermeneutics of discourse, is also a focal point. Through discourse (*Rede*) with the other we arrive at the understanding of our position in the world and the nature of our thrownness. History can not be methodologically analyzed by philosophy as an object: the understanding of what it means to be historical is a center of hermeneutics. The components of history become primary symbols for the language of the hermeneutic discourse and need to be constantly revisited and renewed. The future is the origin of history,

³² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 276–7.

³³ Tarja Väyrynen, "A Shared Understanding: Gadamer and International Conflict Resolution," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 42, no. 3 (2005): 347–355; Fred Dallmayr, "Dialogue of Civilizations: A Gadamerian Perspective," *Global Dialogue* 3 (2001): 64–75.

which is the source of all our possibilities. Our understanding is determined by the possibilities we project into the future. It is only through us, that Being confirms itself in its manifestations as history of its own disclosure.³⁴

A House of Philosophical Research

Historical reconstruction is guided by a philosophical impulse, an engagement of a question as a *genuine* question, worthy of consideration in its own right. Though so-called “continental philosophy” has been particularly concerned with hermeneutic questions, overcoming the unhelpful division of philosophy along lingual-nationalistic lines is one of the chief aims of the Institute. Being involved in bridging ‘continental’ and ‘analytic’ philosophy we are endeavoring to overcome the artificial divide between these schools. The work of “analytic philosophers” such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Donald Davidson has important parallels in the work of continental thinkers like Martin Heidegger, Hans-George Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur.³⁵

A House of Theological Research

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The International Institute for Hermeneutics redresses the academic separation of philosophy and theology, on the one hand, and the hegemony of any one

³⁴ “The question of whether the object of historiography is just to put once for all ‘individual’ events into a series, or whether it also has ‘laws’ as its objects, is one that is radically mistaken. The theme of the historiography is neither that which has happened just once for all nor something universal that floats above it, but the possibility which has been factually existent. /.../ Only by historicity which is factual and authentic can the history of what has-been-there, as a resolute fate be disclosed in such a manner that in repetition the ‘force’ of the possible gets struck home into one’s factual existence ... The ‘selection’ of what is to become a possible object for historiography *has already been met with* in the factual existentiell *choice* of Dasein’s historicity, in which historiography first of all arises, and in which alone it *is*. The historiographical disclosure of the ‘past’ is based on faithful repetition, and is so far from ‘subjective’ that it alone guarantees the ‘Objectivity’ of historiography.” Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1962), 447.

³⁵ Jeff Malpas shows some eminent connections between Davidson’s philosophy and Gadamer’s hermeneutics. Referring to Heidegger, she shows that Davidson and Gadamer do not ground understanding in some element or single source, “not Dasein, nor Spirit, not Life, nor even History” but rather “in the complex dialogical interplay between speakers and their world,” an interplay that is within language and tradition but “never held captive by them.” Jeff Malpas, “Gadamer, Davidson, and the Ground of Understanding,” in Jeff Malpas, Ulrich Arnschwald, and Jens Kertscher, ed., *Gadamer’s Century: Essays in Honour of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 195–215, at 212.

particular religious group in the study of theology, on the other. Addressing the question of the proximity between theology and philosophy, Heidegger can be seen as the last major philosopher to be thoroughly familiar with the theological issues.³⁶ However, the brief “untheological” period in philosophy is coming to an end, which is most clearly discernible in the works of Vattimo and the more recent Derrida. The possible causes of the new proximity between theology and philosophy are indebted to the disappearance of the social, political, and ideological agenda of Marxist *vulgata* from the philosophical mainstream.³⁷ The “disappearance” of religion is a very recent phenomenon, limited in time and space, for it constitutes only a limited interlude in the history of Western civilization. This new proximity between philosophy and theology is a call for both continental and analytic philosophers to overcome their provincial attitudes.³⁸

Are culture, religion, and morality not in need of support from philosophy? The significance of philosophical hermeneutics to theology can be only subsidiary or ancillary, for even though theology is in need of foundations, the latter are first and foremost to be sought not in reason but in Revelation. Yet theology is never practiced in a vacuum and is today carried *out* in a situation of antifundamentalism and antifoundationalism. By showing that the process

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³⁶ See for example an early Heidegger's treatment of phenomenology of religion: Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, GA60, ed. Matthias Jung, Thomas Regehly, and Claudius Strube (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1995), 158–299; English, *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2004). See also Johannes Schabert, OSB, “Martin Heideggers ‚Herkunft‘ im Spiegel der Theologie- und Kirchengeschichte des 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhunderts,” *Heidegger-Jahrbuch* 1 (2004): 159–184.

³⁷ Prior to the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the extended studies of Marx and Marxism were necessary wherever Marxism was the dominant philosophy. The main reason was not the facilitation of a dialogue with Marxism, since this dialogue hardly ever happened in the European Communist Countries at the advanced academic level. It was rather a practical necessity to prepare a horizon for a critical understanding of Marxism or to elaborate on an alternative philosophy, which could address the whole of reality without submitting the reason to the scrutiny of a particular ideology. However, talking about “disappearance” of Marxism I do not diminish the influence of Marxism on sociology, economics, ideology studies, politics, etc. There are Marxist scholars who are not vulgar and statist tools of the oppressive state and offer constructive engagements with the philosophical tradition. It is our mandate to acknowledge the engagement of great thinkers with the texts of Marx and council against the profitless exclusion and derision of Marx and Marxists, especially considering the hermeneutic spirit of openness and inclusion.

³⁸ Jean Grondin, “The New Proximity Between Theology and Philosophy,” in Wierciński, ed., *Between the Human and the Divine*, 97–101.

of understanding theological texts develops from a certain pre-understanding, the assumption that no understanding is complete, and that each new understanding brings forth new questions, philosophical hermeneutics is most helpful to the theologian who takes up the challenges of the present and who attempts to influence his or her age. Hermeneutics is helpful to theology in disclosing those presuppositions that influence the way the Christian faith is explained and proclaimed. By stressing the fusion of horizons between the ancient and the present world, hermeneutics can perform an important function in our meditation on the Scriptures.

The Heideggerian notion of truth reevaluates our relation to religious texts.³⁹ To speak of the truth of the Scriptures does not simply mean that the interpreter's claims should correspond to those of the texts; the interpreter is rather invited to allow what was originally spoken to be disclosed. Furthermore, the interpreter cannot suppose that any single act of interpretation is a pre-eminent disclosure; the play of disclosedness and undisclosedness implicates the historical nature of the "self-interpretation of the text."⁴⁰ Finally, the self-manifestation of the text cannot be isolated from its historical unconcealment, for its power to reach the hearer and reader and enhance our experience belongs to its own life.

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A House of Language

The International Institute for Hermeneutics does not promote the reduction of distinct traditions to a meta-language of rationality; rather, it cultivates the expression of meaning in multiple lingual worlds through comparative linguistics and comparative literature. According to Gadamer "we can only think in a language," "we are always encompassed by the language that is our own."⁴¹ Understanding always happens as a lingual event: *Verstehen vollzieht sich im sprachlichen Geschehen*. Gadamer stresses the tension by inscribing language within the phenomenological process itself.⁴²

³⁹ Lauren Swayne Barthold, "The Sheltering Sky: The Region of *Aletheia*," in Wierciński, ed., *Between Description and Interpretation: The Hermeneutic Turn in Phenomenology*, 320–333.

⁴⁰ Andrzej Wierciński, "Poetry Between Concealment and Unconcealment." *Revista Filosófica de Coimbra* 14, no. 27 (2005): 173–204.

⁴¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. and trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1976), 62.

⁴² Ricoeur goes even further, arguing that the phenomenological researcher must surrender the initiative if meaning is to be uncovered: "We must understand to believe, but we must believe to

Language is not a supplement of understanding. Understanding and interpretation are always intertwined with each other. Explication in language brings understanding to explicitness; it makes concrete the meaning that comes to be understood in the encounter with what has been handed down to us.⁴³

Lingually oriented hermeneutics considers language as the manifestation of Being in which Being reveals itself in the primal conflict (*Urstreit*) between concealment and unconcealment. It was Heidegger, who first thematized the dynamics of concealing (*Verbergen*) and revealing (*Entbergen*) as the essence of truth.

A House of International Collaboration

The International Institute for Hermeneutics is a truly international body undertaking the development of new modes of discourse and philosophizing. We use modern communications technologies to facilitate a discussion with scholars and institutes all over the world. As in Gadamer's and Ricoeur's own life and work, dialogue and conversation are in the center of our hermeneutic enterprise.⁴⁴ By encompassing a diversity of philosophical perspectives, interests, and styles, we attempt to build bridges between different cultures, based on the conviction of the ever-present possibility of dialogue across language and tradition.⁴⁵

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understand. The circle is not a vicious circle, still less a mortal one; it is a living and stimulating circle. We must believe to understand: never, in fact, does the interpreter get near to what his text says unless he lives in the *aura* of the meaning he is inquiring after." Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1969), 351.

⁴³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gadamer in Conversation: Reflections and Commentary*, ed. and trans. Richard E. Palmer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 51.

⁴⁴ See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980).

⁴⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Erziehung ist sich erziehen* (Heidelberg: Kurpfälzischer Verlag, 2000); idem, "Education is Self-Education," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 35, no. 4 (2001): 529–538; John Cleary, "The Reciprocal Character of Self-Education: Introductory Comments on Hans-Georg Gadamer's Address 'Education is Self-Education,'" *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 35, no. 4 (2001): 519–527. See also Paul Ricoeur, "Ethics and Culture: Habermas and Gadamer in Dialogue," *Philosophy Today* 17 (1973): 153–165 and Andreas Vasilache, *Interkulturelles Verstehen nach Gadamer und Foucault* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus Verlag, 2003).

Practicing Hermeneutics

The mandate of the International Institute for Hermeneutics is to facilitate hermeneutic thinking: thinking with each other, rethinking what has been thought, and thinking on to what is yet to be thought. In this play of *Mitdenken*, *Nachdenken*, and *Weiterdenken*, hermeneutics shows itself as the practice of *philosophia*, of listening to oneself, the tradition, and the other, with the devotion (*Hingabe*) that expresses our self-giveness to the living truth.⁴⁶

Hermeneutics is not only the practice of opening up the world of the text, it is also the practice of opening ourselves to the world of the other. It is the art of asking questions, conscious of their history and with undivided attention to what calls for thinking, primordially an encounter with otherness, and thus a relationship to the other. Without pre-understanding, understanding is not possible. Hermeneutic consciousness concerns itself with the prejudgements that condition understanding, that is, with the historicity of thinking. Prejudice is not an obstacle to understanding, but rather, the very condition of its possibility; it is not to be abandoned, but revised according to *die Sache selbst*: “The important thing is 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 foremeanings.”⁴⁷ Historical being-in-the-world seeks new understanding while reinterpreting what has been understood; it mediates prejudice and the matter to be thought, the self and other, the familiar and the strange. We must persevere in this tension, “the play between the traditionary text’s strangeness and familiarity to us, between being a historically intended, distanced object and belonging to a tradition. *The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between.*”⁴⁸ Dwelling between the human and the divine, between the earth and the sky, between what we already understand and what we yearn to know, constitutes human facticity.⁴⁹ The *in-between* that we are is the site of the *Ereignis*, the unconcealment of Being, *A-letheia*, truth.

⁴⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Hermeneutik als Philosophie,” in idem, *Hermeneutische Entwürfe: Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2000), 1–66.

⁴⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269. See also 270: “The recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutic problem its real thrust.”

⁴⁸ Ibid., 295. On the hermeneutic notion of in-between see Nicholas Davey, “Between the Human and the Divine: On the Question of the In-Between,” in Wierciński, ed., *Between the Human and the Divine*, 88.

⁴⁹ See Martin Heidegger, “Bauen Wohnen Denken,” and also “... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...,” in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 7, *Vorträge und Aufsätze, 1936–1953*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000).

One of the preliminary conditions of understanding each other is translation. Translating foreign languages is a special case of the pragmatics operating in any act of understanding. We represent various lingual backgrounds and traditions, and each of us comes from a unique historical perspective. Translation happens in every conversation, not only on academic questions, but also on the personal level, for thinking is a way of being. Even *soliloquium*, the inner dialogue, is a translation; we are not transparent to ourselves, but on some primordial level determined by difference. Conversation is a simultaneous and ongoing translation on all these levels. The person is a being that understands, and always understands differently, not only *rationalis naturae individua substantia*, *intellectualis naturae incommunicabilis existentia*, but primarily *existentia hermeneutica*.

Gathering together to listen and speak, representing a wide range of professional interests and fields of expertise, we want to break through traditional barriers, thereby creating an interdisciplinary forum for hermeneutic dialogue, a conversation which revolves around our relationship to history and its texts, “the conversation that we are,”⁵⁰ a dialogue in which we are “far less the leaders than the led.”⁵¹ We see Gadamer approaching “the mystery of language from the conversation that we ourselves are.”⁵²

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What I tried to do, following Heidegger, was to see the linguality 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. Perhaps a phrase from Hölderlin will make clear to you what kind of turn this move involved. Because Heidegger could no longer accept the dialectical reconciliation with Christianity that had marked the whole post-Hegelian epoch, he sought the Word through Hölderlin, whose words “Since we are a conversation and can hear one another,” inspired him. Now Heidegger had understood this as the conversation of human beings with the gods. Perhaps correctly so. But the hermeneutic turn, which is grounded in the linguality of the human being, at least also includes us in the “one another,” and at the same time it contains the idea that we as human beings have

⁵⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 378.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 383. Philosophy of conversation is in Gadamer’s words “the essence of what I have been working on over the past thirty years.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gadamer in Conversation: Reflections and Commentary*, ed. Richard Palmer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 56.

⁵² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 378.

to learn from each other. We do not need just to hear one another but to listen to one another. That is “understanding.”⁵³

Listening to one another is a constitutive element of belonging together (*Zueinandergehören*):

In human relations the important thing is ... to experience the Thou truly as a Thou – i.e., not to overlook his claim but to let him really say something to us. Here is where openness belongs. But ultimately this openness does not exist only for the person who speaks; rather anyone who listens is fundamentally open. Without such openness to one another there is no genuine human bond. Belonging together always means being able to listen to one another.⁵⁴

When we listen and respond to a voice that addresses us first, we experience the other truly as Thou. Representing different generations of philosophers and theologians, we are united by the common task of understanding *how* we understand our respective traditions, in order to better understand each other and promote the unity of knowledge.

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The objective of the International Institute for Hermeneutics is to situate hermeneutic praxis within the context of general philosophical hermeneutics, to discuss general and specific issues in hermeneutics. If we are to succeed in articulating an interdisciplinary hermeneutics, the general presuppositions and the foundational disputes operating within academia must be made explicit. We go beyond hermeneutics as a theory or an academic discipline to the practice of hermeneutics, interpreting the texts that constitute the diversity of understanding. Rethinking the relationship between philosophical and theological hermeneutics, we ask: How can theology appropriate hermeneutic philosophy without losing its specific character, that is, without accommodating itself to a criterion of rationality alien to its own horizon of understanding? On the other hand, how can philosophical hermeneutics engage theology without conceding its rigorous criteria of independent research to a religious *Weltanschauung*?

⁵³ Gadamer, *Gadamer in Conversation*, 39, translation altered.

⁵⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 361. Good will is a hermeneutic condition of a dialogue is particularly elaborated by Gadamer in long and multifaceted dialogue with Jacques Derrida. According to Caputo, Gadamer’s dynamics of a good will is still tainted by the metaphysics of the subjectivity of the subject. John D. Caputo, “Good will and the Hermeneutics of Friendship: Gadamer and Derrida,” *Philosophy Social Criticism* 28, no. 5 (2002): 521.

The International Institute for Hermeneutics is the beginning of an international and interdisciplinary endeavor to re-establish the place of thinking in a technological age. According to Heidegger, our greatest danger is not the threat of annihilation posed by the atomic age, but the monopolization of all thinking by calculative thinking:

Let us not fool ourselves. All of us, including those of us who think professionally, as it were, are often enough thought-poor; we all are far too easily thought-less. Thoughtlessness is an uncanny visitor who comes and goes everywhere in today's world. /.../ The growing thoughtlessness must, therefore, spring from some process that gnaws at the very marrow of man today: man today is in flight from thinking.⁵⁵

This daring but much needed effort to encourage meditative thinking (*besinnliches Denken*) goes against the dominant currents of our culture. Following Heidegger's diagnosis on the domination of calculative thinking, Gadamer elaborates on the genesis of the idolatry of natural sciences.

I think, then, that the chief task of philosophy is to justify this way of reason and to defend practical and political reason against the domination of technology based science. That is the point of philosophical hermeneutic. It corrects the peculiar falsehood of modern consciousness: the idolatry of scientific method and the anonymous authority of the sciences and it vindicates again the noblest task of the citizen – decision-making according to one's own responsibility – instead of conceding that task to the expert. In this respect, hermeneutic philosophy is the heir of the older tradition of practical philosophy.⁵⁶

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Calculative thinking has never seemed so irresistible, not only in North America, but also in the great centers of learning in Europe.⁵⁷ The inauguration of

⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 44–45. "What great danger then might move upon us? There might go hand in hand with the greatest ingenuity in calculative planning and inventing indifference toward meditative thinking, total thoughtlessness. And then? Then man would have denied and thrown away his own special nature – that he is a meditative being. Therefore, the issue is the saving of man's essential nature. Therefore, the issue is in keeping meditative thinking alive. Yet releasement toward things and openness to mystery never happen of themselves. They do not befall us accidentally. Both flourish only through persistent, courageous thinking." *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hermeneutics and Social Science," *Cultural Hermeneutics* 2 (1975): 314.

⁵⁷ Andrzej Wierciński, "Non-calculative Responsibility: Martin Heidegger's and Paul Ricoeur's

such a venture inevitably meets with opposition. Yet, overcoming adversity is an intrinsic element of human experience; and with it comes also the experience of suffering (*pathei mathos*). Learning through such experience

does not mean only that we become wise through suffering and that our knowledge of things must be first corrected through deception and undeception. /.../ What a man has to learn through suffering is not this or that particular thing, but insight into the limitations of humanity, into the absoluteness of the barrier that separates the human from the divine.⁵⁸

In our hermeneutic endeavor the emphasis is on the hermeneutic priority of the question. In the dialectic of our hermeneutic praxis, the dynamics of question and answer, the hermeneutic mystery of the being-that-we-are, being-unto-death, and being-toward-God may, if we are attentive, emerge into understanding. “In order to be able to ask, one must want to know, and that means knowing that one does not know.”⁵⁹ We are called to speak in the language that is an infinite source of new possibilities for thinking, a self-manifestation and self-expression of Being. Participating in the “conversation that we are” in the light of Being, hermeneutics thrives in the in-between of the human and the divine, the mysticism of the ordinary. It is not our task to know *what* will be revealed to us, or *how* it will be revealed. In embracing limitations we seek understanding where it might be found. If our conversation is genuinely hermeneutic, we will be “transformed into a communion in which we /will/ not remain what we were.”⁶⁰

Seeking Understanding: Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics

Between the Human and the Divine. Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics,⁶¹ the inaugural volume in the institute’s *Hermeneutic Series* examines the complex and multi-faceted relationship between philosophical and theological hermeneutics. The main objectives are threefold: to trace the develop-

Hermeneutics of Responsibility,” in Marcelino Agís Villaverde, Carlos Beliañas Fernández, Fernanda Henriques, and Jesús Ríos Vicente, ed. *Herméutica y responsabilidad: Homenaje a Paul Ricoeur* (Santiago de Compostela: Universidade, Servizo de Publicación e Intercambio Científico, 2005), 413–432.

⁵⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 356–357.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 363.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 379.

⁶¹ Wierciński, ed., *Between the Human and the Divine. Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics*.

ment of philosophical hermeneutics from Schleiermacher with particular attention to Hans-Georg Gadamer's language-oriented hermeneutics; to examine the application and transformation of hermeneutics in theology; and to address the future of both philosophical and theological hermeneutics. The emphasis on the pivotal moments in the development of contemporary hermeneutics leads us to a more complex understanding of our hermeneutic situation: We live in the "age of interpretation." According to Gianni Vattimo, the existential analytic of *Being and Time* makes us aware that knowledge is always interpretation and it can only be seen as an complex response to an historically determined situation. Interpretation is the only "fact" of which we can speak; the more we attempt to grasp interpretation in its authenticity, the more it manifests itself in its historical character. Vattimo stresses particularly a point which uncovers the presuppositions that underlie the conception of the world-in-itself. The metaphysical notion of "natural reality" and "objectivity" is merely "ruinous realism" which produces its corollary: authoritarianism. Vattimo's paradoxical claims that Nietzsche and Heidegger speak from within the biblical tradition, that the claim of the death of God signifies the maturation of the Christian message, and that nihilism constitutes the truth of Christianity are dealt with in greater depth in *After Christianity*.⁶² For Vattimo, the hermeneutic approach to Christianity reveals the necessity of abandoning literalism and natural metaphysics and dissolving the Church's claims to objectivity, for the truth of Christianity is the dissolution of the metaphysical idea of truth; the truth of the scriptures is the truth of love, of charity.

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The hermeneutic project stands in some ways as evidence that hermeneutics is much more than the methodology of interpretation practiced in the human sciences. Contemporary hermeneutics has turned from the art of textual interpretation to the world-constitutive functions of language and symbolic representation. It has effected a radical temporalization of thinking, what the young Heidegger called a "hermeneutics of facticity."⁶³ Gadamer's philosophical her-

⁶² Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, trans. Luca D'Isanto (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); idem, *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy*, trans. David Webb (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 1997); idem, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, trans. Jon R. Snyder (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

⁶³ Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity originates in his philosophy prior to *Being and Time*, the thesis which has been only recently fully elaborated, undoubtedly due to the publication of Heidegger's early Freiburg lectures (1919–1923). To name but a few studies of early Heidegger in

meneutics has shown us that all understanding takes place within horizons constituted by history and language. In the process of interpretation we fuse horizons by bringing the prejudgments of our own traditions to the understanding of historical texts, the political and ethical world, and one another. This is not a reductive appropriation, but a dialogue within which a common meaning is created. Meaning does not reside in the subjectivity of the interpreter, nor in the intentions of an author or speaker, but emerges from encounter and engagement. Both interpreter and interpreted are transformed in interpretation. Written texts have the double function of preserving the meaning of the past for us and, at the same time, of presenting the past to us as a question of current and enduring interest.

Understanding an historical phenomenon from the necessary historical distance characteristic of our hermeneutic situation, we read a written text as belonging to the “history of effects” (*Wirkungsgeschichte*).⁶⁴ We can not leave our own horizon, because the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of a continuing tradition depends on ever new appropriation and interpretation.⁶⁵

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Projecting a historical horizon ... is only one phase in the process of understanding; it does not become solidified into the self-alienation of a past consciousness, but is overtaken by our own present horizon of understanding. In the process of understanding a real fusing of horizons occurs – which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously superseded. To bring about this fusion in a regulated way is the task what we called historically effected consciousness.⁶⁶

By recognizing the historicity of the text we can consciously and critically engage with the present. Acknowledging the contemporary cultural anti-fun-

recent English-language literature see Kiesel and van Buren; Theodore Kiesel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993); John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1994). See also Jean Greisch, *L'Arbre de vie et l'Arbre du savoir: Les racines phénoménologiques de l'herméneutique Heideggerienne (1919–1923)* (Paris: du Cerf, 2000) and Hans-Helmuth Gander, *Selbstverständnis und Lebenswelt: Grundzüge einer phänomenologischen Hermeneutik im Ausgang von Husserl und Heidegger* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 2001).

⁶⁴ In a late paper Ricoeur entertains the idea of extending Gadamerian concept of *Wirkungsgeschichte* “by introducing the question of death as a paradigm of distance.” Paul Ricoeur, “Temporal Distance and Death in History,” in Malpas, Arnschuld, and Kertscher, ed., *Gadamer's Century*, 239–255, at 239.

⁶⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 390–391.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 306–307.

damentalism and philosophical anti-foundationalism in which contemporary Christian theology is enacted we address the question of the place of philosophy in Jewish, Protestant, and Roman-Catholic theological reflection. The guiding question is: How can philosophical hermeneutics, being antifoundationalist, form the philosophical source of theology which in its very nature is foundational, since it is founded on Revelation? As the deconstruction of the dichotomy between epistemological foundationalism and pessimistic antifoundationalism is central to hermeneutics, we attempt to step beyond this metaphysical dichotomy. Revelation and hermeneutic insistence on the primacy of interpretation are not opposed to each other. The hermeneutic orientation in theology is a call for the abandonment of literalism and objectivism in regard to religious truths. Hence a new question: Can these philosophical sources be translated by theological hermeneutics into the language of theology?

Building on the ultimate religious foundation of divinely revealed truth, theological hermeneutics reflects upon theology as the site of a circular mediation of Scripture, tradition, and culture. Within the hermeneutic universe, we are not only interpreters of the Bible: the Bible interprets us and gives us a paradigm for our interpretation of the world. The recurring problem for theological hermeneutics is the question of normativity. All theologians will agree that theological interpretation requires critical distance, but does this amount to a need for philosophical input? Or does a philosophical hermeneutic appropriated to theology thereby become theology? What then happens to critical distance?

Hermeneutics is not only “between the human and the divine;” it is also a mediation between philosophy and theology. Hermeneutics may significantly contribute to the retrieval of philosophically important theological insights.⁶⁷ *Verbum Interius*, situates the theological phenomenon of *Verbum* at the center of philosophical hermeneutics. The rehabilitation of medieval thinking opens the hermeneutic horizon for a fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue. Tracing the development of the concept of language in Augustine and Aquinas, Gadamer insists, contra Heidegger, that the history of Western thought is not merely a history of the forgetfulness of Being, for medieval Trinitarian theology opened up the hermeneutic horizons by stressing the priority of language. The crucial development in hermeneutics is the historical movement from the Platonic con-

⁶⁷ Wierciński, “The Hermeneutic Retrieval of a Theological Insight: *Verbum Interius*,” 1–23.

cept of language to the “full integration of incarnation of meaning” in Augustine’s conception of the word. This is a movement from exclusively philosophical sources to new discoveries that lie in a rich mixture of philosophical and theological thought. Hence hermeneutics transcends disciplinary limitations; it essentially lies *in between*. The other nonphilosophical sources, particularly poetry, explicate the crucial aspects of philosophical hermeneutics: the power and powerlessness of language, historicity, and linguality.⁶⁸ The question of the in-between turns out to be not merely a question of how philosophical themes can ground theological thought, for these themes are already infused with nonphilosophical insights; hermeneutics is a mediation between philosophy and theology.

The question of the *between* is central to this discussion on philosophical and theological hermeneutics. Gadamer writes:

The theme of this congress, “Between the Human and the Divine,” is an invitation to listen to the languages with which we speak of our being-toward-God and ourselves, to hear the resonances and discordances between them, and to hearken to what shows itself in that play of words. It is an opportunity to reflect upon the *between*, for historically effected consciousness always remains *between* horizons, *between* traditions, *between* “*den Sterblichen und Göttlichen*.” In the constantly changing structure of our essentially finite languages, we might find, with Hölderlin, that we “still have access to much of the divine.”⁶⁹

Hermeneutics connects the problems and questions arising from the philosophical and theological traditions to concrete problems of application in our contemporary post-modern context. The guiding question is: How do the problems and questions arising from the philosophical and theological hermeneutic traditions relate to concrete problems of application in the contemporary post-modern context? The resurrection of medieval philosophy in the passage to postmodern hermeneutics, issues concerning ethical/hermeneutic responsibility in the face of the other, questions concerning the risks and limits of the theological appropriation of hermeneutics.

⁶⁸ Hee-Yong Lee, *Geschichtlichkeit und Sprachlichkeit des Verstehens: Eine Untersuchung zur Wesensstruktur und Grundlage der hermeneutischen Erfahrung bei H. G. Gadamer* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2004).

⁶⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Greeting to the First International Congress on Hermeneutics,” in Wierciński, ed., *Between the Human and the Divine*, X.

Celebrating the Confusion of Voices and the Fusion of Hermeneutic Horizons

Between Suspicion and Sympathy: Paul Ricoeur's Unstable Equilibrium,⁷⁰ is dedicated to the life-time achievement of Paul Ricoeur, honorary member of the *International Institute for Hermeneutics*. In 1917, in his Inaugural Lecture at the University of Freiburg i.Br., Edmund Husserl stated: "Most recently, the need for an utterly original philosophy has re-emerged, the need of a philosophy that – in contrast to the secondary productivity of renaissance philosophies – seeks by radically clarifying the sense and the motifs of philosophical problems to penetrate to that primal ground on whose basis those problems must find whatever solution is genuinely scientific."⁷¹ At the beginning of the new millennium Husserl's statement is still relevant. Philosophy stands in need of renewal. We are convinced that philosophical hermeneutics can be the vehicle of that renaissance.

With our focus firmly on the epistemological limitations of the hermeneutic situation, and a theological interest in hermeneutics, it was inevitable that Paul Ricoeur would be a central figure in our discussions. His critical engagement with Gadamer, Habermas, and Lévinas, as well as his creative work in biblical interpretation and the philosophy of religion give him special credibility in theology. While emphatically maintaining that he is not a theologian, and insisting on keeping his philosophical and biblical writings separate, Ricoeur nonetheless has a significant impact on both philosophical and theological discourse.⁷² His work brings us to the guiding questions of the relationship between philosophy and theology: Can a theological hermeneutics re-translate philosophical sources into the language of theology? Is philosophical hermeneutics a "detour" through which theology must pass, while each acts as a check on the other's claims to ultimacy?

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⁷⁰ Andrzej Wierciński, ed., *Between Suspicion and Sympathy: Paul Ricoeur's Unstable Equilibrium* (Toronto: The Hermeneutic Press, 2003).

⁷¹ Edmund Husserl, "Pure Phenomenology, Its Method and Its Field of Investigation," trans. Robert Welsh Jordan, in idem, *Husserl: Shorter Works*, ed. Peter McCormick and Frederick A. Elliston (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

⁷² Andrzej Wierciński, "The Heterogeneity of Thinking: Paul Ricoeur, the Believing Philosopher and the Philosophizing Believer," in idem, ed. *Between Suspicion and Sympathy: Paul Ricoeur's Unstable Equilibrium* (Toronto: The Hermeneutic Press, 2003), XV–XXXIV.

Predominantly a philosopher, Ricoeur works across the subjects of literary criticism, psychoanalysis, history, religion, legal studies and politics. He has been lecturing around the world and critically engaging his contemporaries, be they structuralists, phenomenologists, psychoanalysts, theologians, or hermeneuticians. Drawing on the full amplitude of the resources present in language, Ricoeur makes apparently familiar phenomena thought-provoking and fresh. Language has a privileged position in Ricoeur's hermeneutics: "Only this dialectic /sense and reference/ says something about the relation between language and the ontological condition of being in the world. Language is not a world of its own. It is not even a world. But because we are in the world, because we are affected by situations ... we have something to say, we have experience to bring to language."⁷³

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Ricoeur, "the son of a victim of the First World War," the five-year prisoner of World War II, a witness to the atrocities of our time, made his personal and intellectual journey a passionate search for the balance between love and justice. He has been a remarkably interdisciplinary scholar, a philosopher of all dialogue, whose mission was to bring the tradition alive to his contemporaries. Although he was one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, Ricoeur's intellectual depth allowed him to maintain a self-critical stance, to foster dialogue partners instead of disciples, a crucial requirement for hermeneutic understanding.

On a number of occasions Ricoeur addresses the question of the philosopher encountering the message of Christian Revelation. He confesses: "This is my case, I am a believer, a Christian of the Protestant confession, to whom it is important to maintain a necessary distance between my faith and my philosophical practice." His Christian faith is undoubtedly influenced by his philosophical thought. But the reverse is equally true: his religious convictions makes him aware of philosophical problems: evil, suffering, responsibility, and the relationship between love and justice. The real power of the personal God of Christianity lies in a disarmed love. The only icon of God that we have access to is the human face, which is also a face of God, a face of weakness, and therefore the power of love.

⁷³ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, Tex.: Texas Christian University Press), 20–21.

Ricoeur's role as mediator between European and Anglo-American Philosophy cannot be overestimated. No one has better bridged the gap, dialoguing with such analytic philosophers as John L. Austin, Donald Davidson, Derek Parfit, and John Rawls, while continuing his conversation with Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida. He is one of the great commentators of the European Tradition. His hermeneutics can be seen as an alternative to postmodern deconstruction.

The title of the volume, *Between Suspicion and Sympathy: Paul Ricoeur's Unstable Equilibrium*, refers to the dialectical tension between Ricoeur's two modes of hermeneutic investigation. Ricoeur himself stresses the importance of acknowledging the dialectical tension in his work:

It is with great joy and gratitude that I receive the volume of the "hermeneutic series" which you have gathered and published. The title *Between Suspicion and Sympathy: Paul Ricoeur's Unstable Equilibrium* renders precisely the tension which runs through all my work: between suspicion and sympathy. This tension resonates with another one which is equally dear to me, between critique and conviction. I am conscious of the fragility of the balances that in turn threaten the unity of my work, and welcome the dynamism which pushes me from one work to another. I am grateful to the pleiad of authors you have solicited. The totality of my work is thus covered and the dominant tone of the authors themselves situates it ... "between sympathy and suspicion"!⁷⁴

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When we last met in November 2003 at the International Symposium, *Herméneutica y responsabilidad: Homenaje a Paul Ricoeur* in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, Ricoeur once again expressed his appreciation for the volume, calling it "a thorough and comprehensive companion to his work."⁷⁵

Opening a spectrum of possible interpretations, Ricoeur creates unstable yet tenable equilibriums. According to him, a narrative is produced by predicative assimilation, which "integrates into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events, thereby schematizing the intelligibility attached to the narrative taken as a whole."⁷⁶ Equilibrium, disruption of equilibrium, and res-

⁷⁴ Paul Ricoeur's letter to Andrzej Wierciński, dated June 11, 2003, translation mine.

⁷⁵ The proceedings have been published as Villaverde, Fernández, Henriques, and Vicente, ed., *Herméneutica y responsabilidad: Homenaje a Paul Ricoeur*.

⁷⁶ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 185.

toration of equilibrium create a dynamic of strategy implemented by each micro element in establishing the unity and meaning of the narrative.

Ricoeur's hermeneutics has influenced not only literary criticism, but the humanities, theology, and the social sciences. According to him, hermeneutics is "animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience."⁷⁷ Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion is in fact a hermeneutic circle. "Openness," the dynamic between the reader and the text, cannot be closed, since the written text is a disembodied voice, which only comes to life in being interpreted. Ricoeur's hermeneutic project attempts to develop a hermeneutics that will uncover the ontological structures of meaning, the worlds which unfold in front of the text. "Three masters, seemingly mutually exclusive, dominate the school of suspicion: Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud."⁷⁸ These three masters of suspicion opposed interpretation as restoration of meaning. Ricoeur's exploration of their work led to the coining of the now famous phrase, "the hermeneutics of suspicion."⁷⁹

274 Ricoeur's theory of reading enables us to talk about interpretation without becoming trapped in the binaries of sympathy *versus* judgment, historical objectivity *versus* subjective response. Ricoeur works out a hermeneutics that extends beyond the reading of literary works to constitute a theory for reading life. The radicalization of a linguistically oriented hermeneutics inscribes the reading subject into the process of interpretation.

Suspicion must be balanced by sympathy. The hermeneutics of historical sympathy does not overlook the problems of the ethics of sympathetic reading: reading sympathetically still means reading critically.⁸⁰ Hermeneutic reading treats any author and text as an "other" to whom we have an ethical obligation.

⁷⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970), 27.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 32–35; Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and The Human Sciences*, trans. and ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge; Paris: Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1987), 34. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion," in Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica, ed., *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 54–65 and David Stewart, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *Journal of Literature and Theology* 3 (1989): 296–307.

⁸⁰ Erin White, "Between Suspicion and Hope: Paul Ricoeur's Vital Hermeneutic," *Journal of Literature and Theology* 5 (1991): 311–321.

The supposed opposition between sympathy and history began with Schleiermacher's notion of "divination," the reader's intuitive grasp of the mind of the author. Dilthey attempted to historicize Schleiermacher's psychologistic approach. Heidegger moved the hermeneutic problem from the epistemological to the ontological level. Gadamer emphasized that the individual subject is subordinated to the play within historical conversation. Historical conversation is always more comprehensive than the individual horizons of the author, the text, and the interpreter. Here Gadamer's otherness of the conversational partner meets Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self, particularly as developed in *One-self as Another*.

Ricoeur's work has been at the cutting edge of phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics for a number of years. For him, phenomenology and hermeneutics presuppose each other. Following Husserl's eidetic phenomenology, and particularly Gadamer's linguistically oriented hermeneutics, Ricoeur perceives the ontological basis of understanding in language. His hermeneutic theory of interpretation emphasizes pre-lingual experience and attempts to disclose the meaning of *Dasein*. As with Gadamer, preconceptions or prejudices are not obstacles to understanding, but its very condition. Ricoeur argues that there is no interpretation without preconceptions.

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Ricoeur's hermeneutics of selfhood thematizes personal identity as narrative identity, addressing the issues of alterity and sameness. Here his semantics of identity critically engages phenomenology. The hermeneutic philosophy embarked upon by him offers new ways of interpreting ourselves in terms of otherness. Navigating a winding path between ontological and ethical categories of otherness, his diacritical hermeneutics makes us more hospitable to others, which represents a real transformation from text to action. His hermeneutics of testimony situates him within the Christian tradition. Ricoeur's original and provocative contributions continue to be an inspiration to theology. His work on the philosophical interpretation of the Bible has become indispensable to the study of religion.

Ricoeur is critically open to sign, symbol, metaphor, and narrative and exhaustively investigates the relationship between hermeneutics (interpretation) and deconstruction (textual reading). The formation of new signification in metaphor relies on the human imaginative experience of being-in-the-world. Modern hermeneutics situates understanding in history. Classical physics had also

started out from a strict division between subject and object, presupposing that the physicist can separate himself from his experimental arrangements. Quantum physics has exposed the fallacy in this assumption.

Ricoeur is also dedicated to the social sciences. Following Gadamer, Ricoeur's hermeneutics incorporates a critique of ideology. Critical theory is a necessary complement to philosophical hermeneutics. When interpreting a text, we must adopt a critical self-understanding, which mediates between the interpreter's immediate horizons and the emerging horizon: a dialectic between the horizons of the text and the reader. A critical distanciation is a necessary requirement for understanding the text. The tension between the "is like" and "is not" elements projects a whole world in front of the text. Our interaction with the world in front of the text is a search for a metaphor-faith beyond demythologization, a second naivete beyond iconoclasm.⁸¹ Ricoeur emphasizes the role of language and historical critique, and the poetic performance of reference. He redirects his critical hermeneutics toward poetic hermeneutics. The implicit question to which the text responds is not the same question as the one opened up by the text. The reading and interpreting subject has to lose one's initial naiveté through criticism. On that condition, poetic hermeneutics can propose a second naiveté.

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The hermeneutic task of assigning functional roles to words and symbols is dedicated to uncovering the meanings and desires (particularly those with many layers of meaning – polysemy) hidden behind symbols. *Demythologization*, i.e., the recovery of hidden meanings from symbols, and *demystification*, i.e., the destruction of the symbols by revealing their illusionary character or falsehood, are two major psycho-analytical venues visited by Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics. The critical question is, whether a hermeneutic reconstruction of psychoanalytic theory and therapy can offer us a bridge between the natural and the social sciences.

Between Suspicion and Sympathy: Paul Ricoeur's Unstable Equilibrium is a celebration of thinking. As is invariably the case, this volume addresses only some aspects of Ricoeur's hermeneutics; there is still much more that remains to be covered in the main body of Ricoeur's prolific and multi-faceted work. Presenting a number of perspectives on Ricoeur's hermeneutics we emphasize

⁸¹ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

various approaches to Ricoeur's work, allowing the differences in understanding and exposition to emerge, thus opening up new critical perspectives for understanding his hermeneutics. Ricoeur has pointed out many times that he means to continuously develop his thinking, to expand his own understanding, or even to modify his previous interpretation. As a philosopher, who insists that existence itself is essentially hermeneutic, he could hardly avoid endorsing the ideal of an ever developing interpretation. Only thus does hermeneutic thinking show us its full radiance. Ricoeur's is a truly polysemic voice, sacrificing neither truth nor variety. His voice has been true to the confusion of voices, which constitutes the tradition that we are.

Phenomenological Hermeneutics: The Horizon of Thinking

*Between Description and Interpretation: The Hermeneutic Turn in Phenomenology*⁸² elaborates on the complexity of the relationship between phenomenology and hermeneutics, particularly by addressing the tension between phenomenological hermeneutics and hermeneutic phenomenology. The volume is a debate between the philosophers and theologians who confront key issues at work and offer their unique perspective to grasp the meaning of that which needs to be understood. Thus, this debate happens in the spirit of the *privatissimum*, a seminar where questions are asked because there is something that needs to be thought through, not just alone, but in a community of scholars who understand themselves as being addressed by the matter at hand. Here the German *Angesprochensein* is understood not as a kind of mysterious, undefined call by Being, but as a personal responsibility to give an answer to the voice that addressed me, an individual in the community of thinkers. This voice is an unmistakably recognizable *synteresis*, the intuitive knowledge of what is right, the divine spark of the soul, requiring my comprehensive answer (*respondeo*). Hermeneutic discussion is a lively debate where the participants respond to each other, posture at one another, and clarify their positions. While abandoning the presupposition that there is one correct interpretation for presenting 'the truth of the matter', hermeneutics does not forsake the search for that truth. Hermeneutics does not abandon truth.⁸³ Every reading is a new read-

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⁸² Wierciński, ed., *Between Description and Interpretation: The Hermeneutic Turn in Phenomenology*.

⁸³ See Lawrence K. Schmidt, *The Specter of Relativism: Truth, Dialogue, and Phronesis in Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995); Brice R. Wachterhauser, ed., *Hermeneutics and Truth* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1994).

ing and every act of understanding a pathway to new understandings.⁸⁴ The real meaning of the hermeneutic conversation goes beyond clearing the matter at hand; it truly transforms us, the participants of that never ending *Gespräch*.⁸⁵ The most decisive element in this hermeneutic conversation is not a particular understanding of something, however important, but the happening of our personal transformation. In a genuine conversation the question takes over.⁸⁶ As partners in a dialogue (*colloquium*), we always experience a back and forth movement; listening to each other, understanding our prejudices, and verifying our positions, we are led by the very dynamics of the dialogue: after participating in a hermeneutic conversation, we are not the same anymore. Hermeneutic conversation becomes a *modus vivendi* for our life, a communion in the self-understanding of humankind, and in sharing, together, the world in which we live. In Gadamer's linguistically oriented hermeneutics the understanding of language as conversation, *Sprache ist Gespräch*, means that we always think in a

⁸⁴ See Werner Kogge, *Verstehen und Fremdheit in der philosophischen Hermeneutik: Heidegger und Gadamer* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2001).

⁸⁵ For Heidegger, we *are* conversation and language is *conversation*: "Wir – die Menschen – sind ein Gespräch. Das Sein des Menschen gründet in der Sprache; aber diese geschieht erst eigentlich im Gespräch. Dieses ist jedoch nicht nur eine Weise, wie Sprache sich vollzieht, sondern als Gespräch nur ist Sprache wesentlich ... Was heißt nun ein Gespräch? ... Offenbar das Miteinandersprechen über etwas ... Redenkönnen und Hörenkönnen sind gleich ursprünglich. Wir sind ein Gespräch – und das will sagen: wir können voneinander hören ... Seit ein Gespräch wir sind, hat der Mensch viel erfahren und der Götter viele genannt. Seitdem die Sprache eigentlich als Gespräch geschieht, kommen die Götter zu Wort und erscheint eine Welt ... Und das so sehr, dass im Nennen der Götter und im Wort-Werden der Welt gerade das eigentliche Gespräch besteht, das wir selbst sind." Martin Heidegger, "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung" in idem, *Erläuterung zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, GA4, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1981), 38–40.

⁸⁶ For Gadamer, the question and the answer belong together. A dialogue operates on the model of question and answer. We are always interpreting the content of a dialogue as an answer to a question, which in turn raises new questions requiring new answers. It is particularly manifested in the experience of the work of art. Gadamer writes: "But how it is with artwork, and especially with the linguistic work of art? How can one speak here of a dialogical structure of understanding? The author is not present as an answering partner, nor is there an issue to be discussed as to whether it is this way or that. Rather, the text, the artwork, stands in itself. Here the dialectical exchange of question and answer, insofar as it takes place at all, would seem to move only in one direction, that is, from the one who seeks to understand the artwork. ... The dialectic of question and answer does not here come to a stop. ... Apprehending a poetic work, whether it comes to us through the real ear or only through a reader listening with an inner ear, presents itself basically as a circular movement in which answers strike back as questions and provoke new answers." Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Reflections on My Philosophical Journey," in Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, 43–44.

language, but it does not need to occur always *in* the same language. Every conversation has a lingual character, even if this is a conversation one has with oneself (*soliloquium*). Conversation is the way in which we come to understand both ourselves and the matter that needs to be thought through. In a conversation, the main concern of the participants is not to win the argument, but to deepen their understanding and, as such, to contribute to building a more human culture of life, a task that becomes more and more important in the increasingly global structure of the world in which we live. Hermeneutic significance of the work of art is decisively developed by following Gadamer's sharp critique of "aesthetic consciousness;" we can talk about the hermeneutic centrality of the work of art in revealing truth. Truth experienced as the event of meaning overwhelms us. By participating in that event we listen to the art that speaks to us in an unprecedented way by situating ourselves between concealment and unconcealment.

In recent years, the bibliography of hermeneutic literature has increased significantly, showing the diversity of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the pioneering work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, who, sadly, are no longer with us. They are irreplaceable and will be dearly missed. We are filled with sorrow, but our sorrow is an expression of gratitude for the gift of their thinking. In the infinite "conversation that we are" they will always have a voice. Phenomenological hermeneutics as developed by Heidegger, who moved phenomenology in a direction which Husserl himself had made possible is a style of thinking, is a philosophical attitude rather than a school labeled for the sake of simplified classification. The development of phenomenology follows a certain internal logic dictated by the things themselves. For both Husserl and Heidegger the proper subject of phenomenology is the meaningful as such. What differentiates these two thinkers is the structure and mode of accessing the meaningful. Heidegger is situated in the horizon of his understanding of truth as ἀλήθεια. Tracing Heidegger's development from his hermeneutics of facticity to the hermeneutics of the word, λῆγος ἔχον ζοον, an existence-giving Logos will be placed in the center of hermeneutic phenomenology. Truth as disclosure will preserve the unconcealed in its unconcealedness. Heidegger's development of hermeneutics as *Auslegung* to hermeneutics as *Andenken* can be seen as his decisive contribution to the hermeneutic tradition, which has been further transformed and radicalized in Gadamer by paying special attention to the notion of truth and understanding. As Gadamer himself noted, philosophers are thinkers whose identity is to be found in the continuity of their

thought. By addressing our hermeneutic heritage we want to re-address the most important of questions: the question of Being, which Being asks us. Linguistic and personalistic hermeneutics thematizes the other as the person: the text is always his or her voice that confronts the face of a reader.

A special place in the historical development of phenomenology and hermeneutics belongs to Paul Ricoeur. In the constructive encounter of phenomenology with hermeneutics we develop the different perspectives that are opening up an intense dialogue with other philosophical traditions. Phenomenological description, interpretive narration, and discursive argumentation are dialectically related and, as part of a “practical whole,” they are essentially complementary to each other. By addressing the phenomenological moments in the philosophical tradition we discover the crucial issues of historicity and the nature of the phenomenon. The radicalization of the phenomenological reduction brings fully to light the matter at hand. A connection between the radical reduction and existence as such is shown by exploring death and holiness. If the task of the philosopher is to understand that which needs to be understood, the hermeneutic question of the quality of an interpretation needs to be asked with ever greater sensitivity. By encouraging a variety of interpretations, hermeneutics decisively states that not every interpretation is equal.

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An interesting phenomenon in the development of phenomenological hermeneutics is the movement toward the theological, which originated within French phenomenology.⁸⁷ The now famous term “the theological turn in phenomenology” encompasses the increasing interest in exploring and analyzing traditionally theological themes, religious experience in particular. Dominique Janicaud is well known for his very critical position on the lack of methodological justification for the theological turn within French phenomenology. According to Janicaud, phenomenology is moving away from being the science of things as they are given, toward a theological meditation on phenomena of religious experience. Janicaud’s position is contrary to that of Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion, Paul Ricoeur, Michel Henry, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and Jean-François Courtine. For Janicaud, the concern for the theological and rather than the philosophical is an error of choice, the wrong methodology thus modifying the phenomenology of the absolute toward being a transgression of phenomenol-

⁸⁷ Dominique Janicaud, *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Combas: Éd. de l’Éclat, 1991).

ogy. He insists that “phenomenology and theology make two,” without thereby amalgamating them into one. The recent movement toward religion must be viewed within a wider context of postmodernity. We could say that as modernity celebrated the secular, postmodernity is carefully restoring the sacred. Jacques Derrida, by deconstructing any simple opposition between philosophy and theology, explicitly turns to religion.⁸⁸

Hermeneutic Challenge: The Future of Hermeneutics

The International Institute for Hermeneutics invites colleagues specializing in hermeneutics and hermeneutically related fields into a dialogue, in a spirit of openness and inclusiveness, to deepen their own knowledge and to increase hermeneutic awareness in different schools of thinking. This is a first step, by the Institute and its *Hermeneutic Series*, toward the establishment of an ongoing international hermeneutic collaboration that aims to transcend lingual, cultural, and disciplinary boundaries.

Looking for the new prospects in hermeneutics we are aware of the challenges and directions facing philosophical and theological hermeneutics in the immediate future. Hermeneutic and critical theory need to be brought into a creative dialogue with the classic conceptions of systematic theology. Special focus needs to be given to important new impulses for interpreting these traditions emerging from feminism and gender studies.

Gadamer is called “the exemplary practitioner of the hermeneutic virtues, both intellectual and moral.”⁸⁹ His critical development of Heidegger’s notion of *Verstehen*, the self-interpretation and projective nature of *Dasein*, “urbanized the Heideggerian province.”⁹⁰ With his teacher’s attentiveness to *der Ursprung*

⁸⁸ Jacques Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Mere Reason,” in Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, ed., *Religion*, trans. David Webb (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); idem, *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002). See also James K. A. Smith, “Determined Violence: Derrida’s Structural Religion,” *Journal of Religion* 78 (1998): 97–212 and John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1997).

⁸⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre, in his essay, “On Not Having the Last Word: Thoughts on Our Debts to Gadamer,” in Malpas, Arnszweig, and Kertscher, ed., *Gadamer’s Century*, 157.

⁹⁰ See Robert Bernasconi, “Bridging the Abyss: Heidegger and Gadamer,” *Research in Phenomenology* 16 (1986): 1–24. Referring to the now famous phrase by Habermas of Gadamer “urbanizing Heideggerian province,” Bernasconi interprets Gadamer as departing of Heidegger’s “history of Being” in favor of Hegelian continuity of history.

he advanced his own unique readings of Greek and Latin sources, complementing Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity with a very personal sensitivity to the dialogic and social nature of understanding. In his book, *Die Lektion des Jahrhunderts: Ein philosophischer Dialog mit Riccardo Dottori*,⁹¹ Gadamer emphasizes that dialogue between religions and cultures is humanity's last chance to preserve itself from the self-destructive forces unleashed by the technological age. As we live always anew in a dialogue, hope becomes our *modus existendi*. Practicing an ever deepening understanding of ourselves and the other, we will contribute to a civilization of tolerance and respect for alterity. Gadamer's hermeneutic enterprise extends to a conscientious transformation of the world. The call to interpret is ontological, ethical, and transcendental, for it points to our roots in other worlds: it demands a personal response, not only to be-there, but to be-grateful to Being.

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Hermeneutics expresses different understandings of crucial philosophical issues. What is decisive is to address the matter that needs to be thought through in the most comprehensive horizon possible. The way the philosophical problems are addressed is dictated by the inner dynamic of the relationship between phenomenology and hermeneutics: a hermeneutician attempts to thematize everything that presents itself to him/her as that which needs to be addressed. As with all our activities, thinking points toward creating a tangible place for our being in the world, a place where we could unrestrainedly explore and realize its possibilities. We know that this place is tangible, yet we cannot adequately describe it. We will always attempt to depict and interpret everything. And we will always remain unsatisfied: not because we lack the means for a describing and descriptive interpretation, but because we are human. The reason for any limits we deal with is our human finitude. It is our destiny to learn always afresh to dwell on this earth within this limitation: between description and interpretation.

Gadamer's and Ricoeur's voice accompanied us over the years. Now it joins the chorus of tradition, inviting us to transmit and transform what we have received. We continue to listen for this voice. As Heidegger reminds us, absence is a mode of presence. An era has passed! We miss Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur very much, yet in our fidelity to the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of

⁹¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Die Lektion des Jahrhunderts: Ein philosophischer Dialog mit Riccardo Dottori* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2002).

their thinking, we will never be without them. The sorrow of this irreplaceable loss calls for faithfulness in our mission as members of the International Institute for Hermeneutics: It is our call to uphold the hermeneutic legacy.⁹²

⁹² The entirety of volume of the Canadian Society for Hermeneutics and Postmodern Thought, *Symposium* 6, no. 2 (Fall/Automne 2002) is devoted to Gadamer's philosophical legacy. See also Guy Deniau and Jean-Claude Gens, ed., *L'héritage de Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Argenteuil: Association Le Cercle herméneutique-Société d'anthropologie phénoménologique et d'herméneutique générale; Paris: diff. SBORG, 2003); Juan Acero, ed., *Materiales del Congreso Internacional sobre Hermenéutica Filosófica: El legado de Gadamer* (Granada: Departamento de Filosofía de la Universidad de Granada, 2003); Andrzej Przyłębski, ed., *Das Erbe Gadamer* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang), 2006.
