

The Theories of Understanding and Interpretation in European and Anglo-American Philosophy

The Liminality of Hermes and the Meaning of Hermeneutics

According to Martin Heidegger the Greek words for interpreting and interpretation - *hermeneuein, hermeneia* – can be traced back to the god Hermes.¹⁾ 1) M. Heidegger: *On the way to language*. Transl. Peter D. Hertz. New York: Harper and Row, 1971, p. 29. However questionable the etymological connection between Hermes and *hermeneuein* may be, hermeneutics, as the art of understanding and of textual exegesis, does stand under the sign of Hermes. Hermes is messenger who brings the word from the god Zeus, thus, the early modern use of the term was in relation to methods of interpreting holy scripture. An interpreter brought to mortals the message from God. Although the usage was broadened in the 18th and 19th century to take methods of understanding and explicating both sacred **and** secular texts from antiquity, the term „hermeneutics“ continued to suggest an interpretation which discloses something hidden from ordinary understanding. Ancient texts are, for

moderns, doubly alien: they are ancient and they are in *another language* . Their interpreter, poring over a text in Hebrew, Greek or Latin, cannot fail to convey the impression that he has access to a body of knowledge from elsewhere, is a bridge to somewhere else, he is a mediator between a mysterious other world and the clean, well-lighted intelligible world in which we live and move and have our being.

Hermes is just such mediator. He is the messenger between Zeus and mortals, also between Zeus and the underworld and between the underworld and the mortals. Hermes crosses these ontological thresholds with ease. A notorious thief, according to legend, he crosses the threshold of legality without a qualm. “Lord of dreams”, he mediates between waking and dreaming, day and night. Wearer of a cap of invisibility, he can become visible or invisible at will. Master of night-tricks, he can cover himself with night. Master of sleep, he can wake the sleeping or put the waking to sleep. Liminality or marginality is his very essence.

“Liminality” is a term given currency in 20th century by Victor Turner of the University of Chicago. *Limen* in Latin means threshold, and anthropologists like turner have become interested in a certain state of persons as they pass over the threshold of one stage of life to another. For instance, Turner notes that the rite of passage at puberty has three phases: separation from one’s status as a child in a household, then a *liminal stage*, and finally reintegration into as a full and independent member with rights and responsibilities that the initiate did not have before. During the liminal stage, the between stage, one’s status becomes ambiguous; one is “neither here or there”, one is “betwixt and between all fixed points of classification”, 2) 2) Victor Turner: ***Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society***. Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1974, p. 232. and thus the form and rules of both his earlier state and his state-to-come are suspended. For the moment, one is an outsider; one is on the margins, in an

indeterminate state. Turner is fascinated by this marginality, this zone of indeterminacy. He argues that it is from the standpoint of this marginal zone that the great artists, writers and social critics have been able to look past the social forms in order to see the society from the outside and to bring a message from beyond it.

This marginality is the realm of Hermes. Paul Friedrich in his book *The Meaning of Aphrodite* remarks on the multiple liminality of Hermes and his links with Aphrodite. 3) 3) Paul Friedrich *The Meaning of Aphrodite*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1978, p. 205. He notes that

1. Hermes moves by night, the time of love, dreams, and theft;
2. he is the master of cunning and deceit, the marginality of illusions and tricks;
3. he has magical powers, the margin between the natural and supernatural;
4. he is the patron of all occupations that occupy margins or involve mediation: traders, thieves, shepherds, and heralds;
5. his mobility makes him a creature betwixt and between;
6. His marginality is indicated by the location not just anywhere but on roads, at crossroads, and in groves;
7. even his eroticism is not oriented to fertility or maintaining the family but is basically Aphroditic - stealthy, sly, and amoral, a love gained by theft without moral concern for consequences;
8. Hermes is a guide across boundaries, including the boundary between earth and Hades, that is, life and death. 4) 4) Ibid.

For Heidegger, it is significant that Hermes is the messenger of the gods and not just other humans; for the message brought by Hermes is not just any message but “fateful tidings” (die Botschaft des Geschickes) Interpretation in its highest form, then, is to be able to understand these fateful tidings, indeed the fatefulness of the tidings. To interpret is first to listen and then to become a

messenger of the gods oneself, just as the poets do, according to Plato's *Ion*. Indeed, part of the destiny of man is precisely to stand in a hermeneutical relation to one's being here and now and to one's heritage. Human beings, insofar as they are human beings, says Heidegger, are used for hearing the message .. they are to listen and belong to it as **human beings**. 5) 5)M. Heidegger: *On the way to language*. Transl. Peter D. Hertz. New York: Harper and Row, 1971, p.40.

When we turn to the chapter on Hermes in Walter F. Otto's **The Homeric Gods**, we can read for instance this remark: "It is Hermes' nature not to belong to any locality and not to possess any permanent abode, always he is on the road between here and there." 6) 6) Walter F. Otto, **The Homeric Gods: The Spiritual Significance of Greek Religion**. Translated by Moses Hadas. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1979, p. 117. When one is on the road, one may encounter sudden good fortune or sudden misfortune. Hermes is the god of the windfall, the quick, lucky chance. Thus, the traveller or trader who suddenly comes on good fortune will thank Hermes, who as cattle-thief knows how to get rich quick and how to make poor quickly also. Walter Otto argues: "He is the god not only of sly calculation but also of lucky chances. Everything lucky and without responsibility that befalls a human being is a gift of Hermes." 7) 7) Ibid., pp. 108-109. We may say that the Hermes of sudden lucky breaks, of "deft guidance and sudden gain" is an appropriate god of text interpretation in that the solution to a problem or a burst of insight will come in a flash. 8) 8) Ibid., p. 111. And the amorality of Hermes suggests the moral neutrality of understanding as a pure operation of the mind in grasping the point of something. The truth or insight may be a pleasant awakening or rob one of an illusion, the understanding itself is morally neutral. The quicksilver flash of insight may make one rich or poor an instant. Hermes is the god of sudden interpretative insights that come from an ability to approach daytime reality with liminal freedom.

Small wonder it is advisable to have Hermes as a guide. The guide character of Hermes is central. F. Otto notes a parallel to the Vedic guide-god Pushan who comes to rescue of those. A knower of roads like Hermes, Pushan have a special way of helping men: his manner of giving treasure to men is that he permits men to find it.” 9) 9) Ibid., p. 121.

Again, this has a parallel in hermeneutic methods, in that they are designed to enable the text to yield its treasure, but the interpreter only leads the reader to the treasure and then retires. As a guide, the interpreter remains a liminal figure, an outsider, a facilitator.

Hermes, then, remains a god of roads, crossroads, thresholds, boundaries. It is at these locations in ancient times that one found altars to Hermes. He was considered the patron god of migrant skilled and unskilled workers who, in going from place to place, became professional “boundary crossers”. 10) 10) Norman O. Brown, *Hermes the Thief: The Evolution of a Myth*. New York: Vintage 1969, pp. 32, 51. Hermes is the god who presides over all transactions held at borders. Thus he is the god of translation and of all transactions between realms. And it would seem to be the essence of hermeneutics to be liminal, to mediate between realms of being, whether between god and human beings, wakefulness and sleep, the conscious and unconscious, life and afterlife, visible and invisible, day and night. The dimensions of the mythic god Hermes suggest a central element in the meaning of hermeneutics: that it is the mediation between worlds. And in the strongest instances, Hermes’ message is “world-shaking”: it brings, as Heidegger says, “a transformation of thinking.” 11) 11) M. Heidegger: *On the way to Language*, p. 42.

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher

Almost every account of the history of modern hermeneutics pays some tribute to the founding role played by German Protestant theologian and philosopher Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834).

Hermeneutics was held by Schleiermacher to be related to the concrete, existing, acting human being in the process of understanding dialogue. When we start with the conditions that pertain to all dialogue, when we turn away from rationalism, metaphysics, and morality and examine the concrete, actual situation involved in understanding, then we have a starting point for a viable hermeneutics that can serve as a core for special hermeneutics, such as the legal, biblical, literary etc. Especially when we speak about the relation of the literary work of art and the life of an author, we ought to use the dialogical principle, the principle of question, in this process of our investigation: “We distinguish here the question: *in what circumstances did the author come to his decision, from the question what does this decision mean in him, or what particular value does it have in relation to the totality of his life?*” (Schleiermacher, F., ***Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings***. Edited and translated by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 107-108).

Schleiermacher contrasts hermeneutics as the art of understanding with the art of speaking, which is rhetoric and deals with the externalization of thought. Speaking moves from the inner thought to its external expression in language, while hermeneutics moves from the external expression back to the thinking as the meaning of that expression: "The speaking of the words relates solely to the presence of another person, and to this extent is contingent. But no one can think without words. Without words the thought is not yet completed and clear." Schleiermacher, Friedrich : *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*. Translated and edited by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.8.

In the conditions of dialogue, it is one operation to formulate something and bring it to speech, it is quite another and distinct operation to understand what is spoken. Hermeneutics, Schleiermacher contended, dealt with the latter. This fundamental distinguishing of speaking and understanding formed a basis for a new direction in hermeneutics, and it opened the way to a systematic basis for hermeneutics in the theory of understanding. If hermeneutics is no longer basically devoted to the clarifying the varying practical problems in interpreting different kinds of texts, then it can take the act of understanding as the true starting point: Hermeneutics becomes in Schleiermacher truly "the art of understanding".

However – as Lawrence K. Schmidt argues – „by 'art' Schleiermacher does not mean that hermeneutics is merely a subjective, creative process. Rather, at that time 'art' included the sense of knowing how to do something, which is the shared meaning in the terms 'technical arts' and 'fine arts'. As an art hermeneutics includes hermeneutical rules but their application is not rule-bound, as would be the case in a mechanical procedure“. Lawrence K. Schmidt: *Understanding Hermeneutics*. Stocksfield: Acumen 2006, p. 10.

According to Schleiermacher understanding as an art is the reexperiencing of the mental processes of the text's author. It is the reverse of composition, for it starts with the fixed and finished expression and goes back to the mental life from which it arose. The speaker or author constructed a sentence; the hearer penetrates into the structure of the sentence and thought. Thus interpretation consists of two interacting moments: the grammatical and the psychological. The principle upon which this reconstruction stands, whether grammatical or psychological, is that of the hermeneutical circle.

What is the basic principle of hermeneutic circle in Schleiermacher's conception? We can use the definition of Lawrence K. Schmidt: "The hermeneutic circle states that one cannot understand the whole until one has understood the parts, but that one cannot understand the parts until one has understood the whole. Schleiermacher breaks the impasse of the hermeneutic circle because with sufficient knowledge of the language one can and must first conduct a cursory reading to get an overview of the whole. This reading then allows for the detailed interpretation of the parts." (Lawrence K. Schmidt: *Understanding Hermeneutics*. Stocksfield: Acumen 2006, p. 15.)

In Schleiermacher's conception understanding is a basically referential operation; we understand something by comparing it to something we already know. What we understand forms itself into systematic unities, or circles made up of parts. The circle as a whole defines the individual part, and the parts together form the circle. A whole sentence, for instance, is a unity. We understand the meaning of an individual word by seeing it in reference to the whole of the sentence; and reciprocally, the sentence's meaning as a whole is dependent on the meaning of individual words.

Grammatical Interpretation and Psychological Interpretation

In Schleiermacher's later thinking there is an increasing tendency to separate the sphere of language from the sphere of thought. The former is the province of *grammatical* interpretation, while the latter Schleiermacher called

psychological interpretation. Grammatical interpretation proceeds by locating the assertion according to objective and general laws; the psychological side of interpretation focuses on what is subjective and individual. The ***grammatical interpretation*** shows the work in relation to language, both in the structure of sentences and in the interacting parts of a work, and also to other works of the same literary type; so we may see the principle of parts and whole at work in grammatical interpretation. “The vocabulary, syntax, grammar, morphology and phonetics of a language are initially given to those who use that language in “objective” form, which is evident in the fact that they can now be successfully programmed into computer. I cannot use a language as a means of communication and at the same time ignore these “mechanizable” aspects. However, my ***understanding*** of what others say about the world cannot be said to result solely from my knowledge of objective rules of the kind that can be programmed into a computer, because it relies on my making sense of an ever- -changing world which is not reducible to what can be said about it at any particular time. I can, for example, spontaneously generate intelligible sentences that have never been said before, and I can understand new metaphors which are meaningless in terms of the notional existing rules of a language. (Bowie, Andrew: “Introduction”. In: Schleiermacher, F., ***Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings***. Edited and translated by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. xi.)

Schleiermacher argues that in grammatical interpretation “one cannot summarize individuality in a concept, it wants rather to be intuited”. However, the term *intuited* Schleiermacher conceives in the sense that what one grasps is not reducible to the conceptual means one has of describing it, precisely because it is unique.” Bowie, A.: *Introduction*, in Schleiermacher, Friedrich : *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*. Translated and edited by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 96.

Reflecting *psychological interpretation*, Schleiermacher argues that in the full reconstruction of the individuality of an author can never proceed through analysis of causes; this would remain hopelessly general. For the heart of *psychological interpretation*, a basically intuitive approach is required: “The task of psychological explication in its own terms is generally to understand every given structure of thoughts as a moment of the life of a particular person. What means do we have to achieve this task? We must go back to the relation of a speaker and a listener. If thinking and the connection of thoughts is one and the same in each, then, if the language is the same, understanding results of its own accord. But if thought is essentially different in each, it does not result of its own accord.” (Schleiermacher, F., *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*. Edited and translated by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 101.)

„Likewise, the individuality of the author and work must be seen in the context of larger facts of his life and in contrast to other lives and works. The principle of the interaction and reciprocal illumination of the part and the whole is basic to both sides of interpretation. The first task is therefore the unity of the work as a fact in the life of its author. The question is how the author arrived at the thought from which the whole developed, i.e. what relationship does it have to his whole life and how does the moment of emergence relate to all other life-moments of the author?“ Ibid., p. 107

“This difference lies in the fact that the technical is the understanding of the meditation and of the composition, the psychological is the understanding of the ideas [Einfälle], among which the basic thoughts are also to be included, from which whole sequences develop, and is the understanding of the secondary thoughts.”

However, especially in the mature period of his philosophical development, Schleiermacher distinguishes in psychological interpretation the two sides: “*purely psychological*” and “*technical*.” What is a difference between them?

As Schleiermacher argues, “the relative opposition of the purely psychological and the technical can be grasped more distinctly in terms of the first being more concerned with the emergence of thoughts from the totality of the life moments of the individual, the second being more a leading back to determinate wish to think and present, from which sequences develop.” (Schleiermacher, F., *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*. Edited and translated by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 104.)

A grammatical approach can use the comparative method and proceed from the general to the particularities of the text; the psychological uses both the comparative and the “divinatory”. “*For the whole procedure there are, from the beginning, two methods, the divinatory and the comparative, which, though, because they refer to each other, also may not be separated from each other* . The *divinatory* method is the one in which one, so to speak, transforms oneself in the other person and tries to understand the individual element directly. The *comparative* method first of all posits the person to be understood as something universal and then finds the individual aspect by comparison with other things included underf same universal. (Schleiermacher, F., *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*. Edited and translated by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp 92-93.) “The divinatory method is that in which one transforms oneself into the other person in order to grasp his individuality directly.” (F. D. E. Schleiermacher: *Hermeneutik*. Ed. Heinz Kimmerle. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, Universitätsverlag, 1959, p. 109.) For this moment of interpretation, one goes out of himself and transforms himself into the author so that he can grasp in full immediacy the latter’s mental process.

But how does comparative method come to posit the object under a universal? Obviously either once more by comparison, and then there would be an infinite regress, or by divination.

According to Schleiermacher „divination only receives its certainty by means of confirmatory comparison, because without this it can always be incredible. But the comparative method does not provide any unity. The universal and the particular must penetrate each other and this always only happens by means of divination.“ Ibid., p. 92-93.

There is very important Schleiermacher's thesis that the goal of hermeneutics is “to understand the utterance at first just as well and then better than its author”. (Schleiermacher, F., *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*. Edited and translated by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 23.) As Lawrence K. Schmidt shows “one understands an author better by making explicit what is unconscious in the author's creative process. In order to begin the hermeneutic process one must endeavour to place oneself objectively and subjectively in the position of the author, objectively by learning the language as the author possessed it, and subjectively by learning about the author's life and thinking. However, to place oneself completely in the position of the author requires the completion of the interpretation.” (Lawrence K. Schmidt: *Understanding Hermeneutics*. Stocksfield: Acumen 2006, p. 13.)

From the point of Andrew Bowie “Schleiermacher does not, however, think that knowing the individual is ‘intuitive’ and ‘empathetic’, as many commentators suggest. Instead, access to individuality requires a *method*, which will enable it to become accessible. It is the inherent generality of language resulting from the fact that any language involves only a finite number of elements for the articulation of a non-finitely differentiated world which makes such a method necessary.

These arguments should make clear that Schleiermacher's conception of understanding is primarily ethical, in a way which is echoed in those areas of contemporary philosophy which have abandoned the analytical project of a theory of meaning based on the kind of 'regulist' explanation used in the natural sciences. The desire for agreement is founded both in the need to take account of the possibility of the individual to be right against the collective, and in the need to transcend the individual which results from the realization that truth cannot be merely individual." Bowie, A.: *Introduction*, in Schleiermacher, Friedrich : *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*. Translated and edited by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. xxix.

There are also very interesting Schleiermacher's reflections concerning the relation of hermeneutics and criticism. As L. Schmidt argues criticism in Schleiermacher's conception is concerned with judgements about the authenticity of a part of a text or text. Clearly hermeneutics and criticism depend on each other, for one must have the correct text in order to understand and explain completely what the author meant, but in order to judge a text's authenticity, one must have first understood it. Schleiermacher grants priority to the hermeneutic endeavour since some understanding of a text must have occurred before any judgment concerning authenticity is made. (Lawrence K. Schmidt: *Understanding Hermeneutics*. Stocksfield: Acumen 2006, p. 12)

Schleiermacher's contribution to hermeneutics marks a turning point in its history. For hermeneutics is no longer seen as a specifically disciplinary matter belonging to theology, literature or law; it is the art of understanding any utterance in language. A luminous early aphorism states that hermeneutics is precisely the way a child grasps the meaning of a new word. "Jedes Kind kommt nur durch Hermeneutik zur Wortbedeutung." (F. D. E. Schleiermacher: *Hermeneutik*. Ed. Heinz Kimmerle. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, Universitätsverlag, 1959, p. 40.) The sentence structure and the context of meaning are the guides

for a child and are the systems of interpretation for a general hermeneutics. From that point hermeneutics can be seen as starting from the conditions of dialogue.

In this context Schleiermacher defines language as the system of organic movements which are simultaneously the expression and the sign of the acts of consciousness as cognitive faculty. The identity of knowledge articulated in languages is, though, only a postulate which must be continually conformed in real processes of communication. These processes take place in natural languages, so we cannot even maintain that all languages „construct“ in the same way, because we lack a „universal language. At the same time we must presuppose a universal „innate“ capacity for reason that is ultimately identical in all language users, for if this were not so, „there would be no truth at all“. (F. D. E. Schleiermacher: *Dialektik*, pp. 374-375. Compare to it: Bowie, A.: „Introduction“. In: Schleiermacher, F., *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*. Edited and translated by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. xxviii.)

However, as Richard Niebuhr points out, Schleiermacher's was a dialogical hermeneutics which regrettably did not realize the creative implications of its dialogical nature but was blinded by its own desire for laws and systematic coherence. (Niebuhr, Richard, R. *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion : A New Introduction*. New York: Scribner's, 1964, p. 81). American philosopher and theologian Richard Niebuhr emphasizes the relation of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics to his *Dialektik* and to his interest in ethics; since the interpreter „feels into“ the moral being of an author, interpretation itself becomes a moral act. (Ibid., p. 92.)

But the movement toward a hermeneutics which takes its understanding problem as its starting point was a fruitful contribution to interpretative theory. Only after many years would the assertion be advanced that the universals in

understanding which Schleiermacher saw in scientific terms could better be seen in historical terms, that is, in terms of intrinsically historical structure of understanding and more specifically the importance of preunderstanding in all understanding.

Schleiermacher moved decisively beyond seeing hermeneutics as methods accumulated by trial and error and asserted the legitimacy of a general art of understanding prior to any special art of interpretation.

Wilhelm Dilthey

When we speak about the theories of understanding and interpretation in European Continental philosophy we cannot omit the philosophy of life („Lebensphilosophie“) of **Wilhelm Dilthey** (1833-1911). Dilthey was born on 19 th November 1833 in Biebrich, near Wiesbaden in Germany. In 1852 he entered the University of Heidelberg to study theology, philosophy and history. In 1855 Dilthey passed theological exams and a year later (1856) he graduated in philosophy and began teaching in secondary schools. His first great work was *Schleiermacher's Hermeneutical System in Relation to Earlier Protestant Hermeneutics*. This work was awarded a double prize, but not published. In 1866 he accepted an invitation to lecture in philosophy at the University of Basel, then he moved to the University of Kiel (1868). His reputation was established by publication of the book *Schleiermachers' Life* (1870). In 1871 he was invited to the University of Breslau and then (in 1882) he moved to the University of Berlin to take a chair in philosophy. At the mature period of his philosophical development Dilthey published these books: *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (1883), *The Rise of Hermeneutics* (1900), *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (1910, unfinished). On 1 October 1911 Dilthey died in Seis am Schlern, near Bozan, Italy.

Dilthey's theory of understanding and interpretation has been mainly influenced by F. D. E. Schleiermacher and especially in the first period of his philosophical development had conspicuous psychological character. There is an obvious continuity between F. D. E. Schleiermacher's theory of understanding

and the theory of understanding and interpretation in the life-philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey who even in his first studies – paid his attention to the history of hermeneutics.

From the point of Dilthey the *Geisteswissenschaften* have very important social dimension, as it is stated in his book *Introduction to the Human Sciences*: „This introduction to the human sciences is intended to aid all those whose lifework is devoted to society: politicians and lawyers, theologians and educators - in coming to know how their guiding principles and rules relate to the encompassing reality of human society.“ (Wilhelm Dilthey: *Introduction to the Human Sciences*. Selected Works. Volume I. Edited, with an introduction, by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1989, p. 55.) In this way he also reflected the subject-matter of human sciences: „All the disciplines that have socio-historical reality as their subject-matter are encompassed in this work under the name „human sciences“. Ebenda, p. 56.

It is interesting that Dilthey's conception of science is very near to contemporary theories of science: „By a science we commonly mean a complex of propositions (1) whose elements are concepts that are completely defined, i. e., permanently and universally valid within the overall logical system, (2) whose connections are well grounded, and (3) in which finally the parts are connected into a whole for the purpose of communication.“ ... (Wilhelm Dilthey: *Introduction to the Human Sciences*. Selected Works. Volume I. Edited, with an introduction, by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1989, p. 56.)

As Lawrence K. Schmidt points out, “Dilthey formulated an empirically based methodology for the human sciences that recognizes the distinctive nature of the human sciences”. (Lawrence K. Schmidt: *Understanding Hermeneutics*. Stocksfield: Acumen 2006, p. 29) „That which has developed in the course of human history and which common usage has designated as ‘the sciences of man,

of history, and of society' constitutes a sphere of mental facts which we seek not to master but primarily to comprehend. The empirical method requires that we establish the value of the particular procedures necessary for inquiry on the basis of the subject matter of the human sciences and in a historical-critical manner." (Wilhelm Dilthey: *Introduction to the Human sciences*. Selected Works. Volume I. Edited, with an introduction, by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1989, p. 56.)

Wilhelm Dilthey reacted very sharply to the tendency in the human studies simply to take on the norms and ways of thinking of the natural sciences and apply them to the study of human being. Therefore in his book *The Introduction to the Human Sciences* he criticized positivism. According to Dilthey the human sciences cannot be conceived by means of methods in natural sciences as it was expressed in the conceptions of August Comte and John Stuart Mill: "The nature of knowledge in the human sciences must be explicated by observing the full course of human development. Such a method stands in contrast to that recently applied all too often by the so-called positivists, who derive the meaning of the concept of science from a definition of knowledge which arises from a predominant concern with the natural sciences." (Ibid., p. 56)

Wilhelm Dilthey began to see in hermeneutics the foundations for Geisteswissenschaften: "I shall follow those thinkers who refer to this second half of the *globus intellectualis* by the term *Geisteswissenschaften*. In the first place, this designation is one that has become customary and generally understood, due especially to the extensive circulation of the German translation of John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic*." (Ibid, p. 57).

However - in this consequence - Dilthey is in a certain extent critical to the term *Geisteswissenschaften* : „To be sure, the reference to the spirit (Geist) in the term *Geisteswissenschaften* can give only an imperfect indication of the

subject matter of these sciences, for it does not really separate *facts of the human spirit* from the *psychophysical unity of human nature*. Any theory intended to describe and analyze socio-historical reality cannot restrict itself to the human spirit and disregard the totality of the human nature. Yet this shortcoming of the expression *Geisteswissenschaften* is shared by all the other expressions that have been used: *Gesellschaftswissenschaft* (social science), *Soziologie* (sociology), *moralische* (moral), *geschichtliche* (historical), or *Kulturwissenschaften* (cultural sciences). All of these designations suffer of the same fault of being too narrow relative to their subject matter.“ (Ibid, p. 58.)

According to Dilthey the practice of regarding these disciplines as a unity distinct from the natural sciences is rooted in the depth and totality of the human self-consciousness. He argues that even before he is concerned to investigate the origin of the human spirit, man finds within his self-consciousness a sovereignty of the will, a responsibility for the actions, a capacity for subjecting everything to thought and for resisting, from within the stronghold of his personal freedom, any and every encroachment.

It was Dilthey's aim to develop methods of gaining objectively valid interpretations of "expressions of inner life". In his conception of hermeneutics **the concrete, historical, lived experience** must be the starting point and ending point for **Geisteswissenschaften** ("human sciences"). Just in this context Dilthey pays attention to the expression („Ausdruck“) of lived experience („Erlebnis“). According to him there is a special relation between lived experience, the life from which it stems, and the understanding that it brings about. Dilthey argues that „an expression of lived experience can contain more of the nexus („Zusammenhang“) of psychic life than any introspection can catch sight of. It draws from depths not illuminated by consciousness“. (W. Dilthey, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*. Selected works. Volume III. Edited, with an introduction, by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2002, s., p. 227.) In this

context we sense in Dilthey some of the fundamental conflicts in the 19th century thinking: the romantic desire for immediacy and totality ever while seeking data that would be objectively valid.

Wilhelm Dilthey consciously set for himself the task of writing a “critique of historical reason” which would lay the epistemological foundations for the “humanities”. He saw in categories of natural sciences: space, time, number, etc. little possibility for understanding the inner life of human being. “Dilthey argues that the human sciences require a unique methodology different from the natural scientific method. The natural sciences *explain* a phenomenon by subsuming it under universal causal laws. The human sciences *understand* the mental or spiritual meanings that are expressed in external, empirical signs. Although the human sciences will sometimes require knowledge from the natural sciences, their conclusions refer to the inner realm of human meaning. The human studies have available the possibility of understanding the inner experience of another person through a process of mental transfer. Understanding occurs when the interpreter is able to recognize the inner state of another by means of that other person’s empirical expressions.” (Lawrence K. Schmidt: *Understanding Hermeneutics*. Stocksfield: Acumen 2006, p. 36)

The problem of understanding man was for Dilthey one of recovering a consciousness of the historicity (“Geschichtlichkeit”) of our own existence which is lost in the static categories of science. He decided to lay this conception of historicity and understanding on the category of life which according to his opinion could grasp better the spontaneous, dialectical and moving character of social and cultural reality. However, to return to life does not mean for Dilthey to return to some mystical ground or source for all life both human and non human. Rather, **life** – especially in the mature period of his philosophical development - is seen in terms of “meaning”; life is human experience known from within. We can observe Dilthey’s antimetaphysical sentiment in his

refusal to treat phenomenal world as mere appearance: „Behind life, thinking cannot go.“ (Gesammelte Schriften, 184)

The top of Dilthey's philosophical development is characterized by his masterpiece *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (*Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen World in den Geisteswissenschaften*). This monograph demonstrates also Dilthey's fundamental belief that the method pervading human sciences is that of understanding and interpretation: „All the functions and truths of the human sciences are gathered in understanding. At every point it is understanding that opens up the world.“ (Dilthey, W.: *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*. Selected works. Volume III. Edited, with an introduction, by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2002, s. 226.

Forms of Understanding

According to Dilthey understanding comes about, first of all, through the interests of practical life where persons rely on interchange and communication. They must make themselves understandable to each other. One person must know what the other wants. This is how the elementary forms of understanding originate: “By such an elementary form, I mean the interpretation of a single manifestation of life. ... The tapistry of human action consists of elementary acts, such as the lifting of an object, the swing of a hammer, the cutting of wood with a saw, that indicate the presence of certain purposes. In such elementary understanding we do not go back to the overall nexus of life that forms the enduring subject of life-manifestations. Nor are we aware of any inference from which this nexus might result.” (Dilthey, W.: *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*. Selected works. Volume III. Edited, with an

introduction, by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2002, p. 228).

According to Dilthey the fundamental relationship on which the elementary process of understanding depends is that of an expression to what is expressed in it: “Elementary understanding is not an inference from an effect to a cause. Nor must we conceive it more cautiously as a procedure that goes back from a given effect to some part of the life that made the effect possible.” (Ibid. . 229)

What is Wilhelm Dilthey’s greatest merit for the development of hermeneutical thought? It is important that Dilthey renewed the project of general hermeneutics and significantly advanced it. He placed it in the horizon of historicity, within which it has subsequently undergone important development. He laid the foundations for Heidegger’s thinking on the temporality of self-understanding. He may properly be regarded as the father of the contemporary hermeneutical “problematic”.

Literature:

Wilhelm Dilthey: *Introduction to the Human Sciences*. Selected Works. Volume I. Edited, with an introduction, by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1989.

Martin Heidegger's Contribution to Hermeneutics in *Being and Time*

Just as Dilthey saw hermeneutics in the horizon of his own project of finding an historically oriented theory of method for the *Geisteswissenschaften*, so Heidegger used the word “hermeneutics” in the context of his larger quest for a more “fundamental” ontology. Like Dilthey, Heidegger wanted a method that would disclose life in terms of itself, and in *Being and Time* he quoted with approval Dilthey's aim of understanding life from out of life itself. But in Heidegger's conception *understanding* lacks its psychological dimension on the one hand and on the other hand it is tightly connected with the existential dimension of the human being. As H.-G. Gadamer points out, “Dilthey's work mediated essential stimuli to the thinking of the young Heidegger, and he used these to further develop and reshape Husserlian phenomenology. But what Dilthey was dealing with was psychology. Martin Heidegger had developed a hermeneutics of facticity – that is to say, a hermeneutics of the human being as concretely existing here and now, and he published this in the book *Being and Time* in 1927.” (H.-G. Gadamer: *Gadamer in Conversation. Reflections and Commentary*. Edited and translated by Richard E. Palmer. New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2001, p. 38).

As far as Husserl's phenomenology is concerned, Heidegger found there conceptual tools unavailable to Dilthey or Nietzsche, and a method which might lay open the processes of being in human existence in such a way that being, and not simply one's own psychic processes, might come into view. For phenomenology had opened up the realm of preconceptual apprehending of phenomena. This new "realm" had a quite different significance to Heidegger than to Husserl, however. Whereas Husserl had approached it with an idea of bringing into view the functioning of consciousness as transcendental subjectivity, Heidegger saw in it the vital medium of man's historical being-in-the world.

But there is a great difference between Husserl and Heidegger in relation to *hermeneutics*. Husserl never used this term in reference to his work, while Heidegger asserted in *Being and Time* that the authentic dimensions of a hermeneutical method make it hermeneutical; his project in *Being and Time* was „a hermeneutic of *Dasein*. Husserl's scientific leanings are reflected in his quest for apodictic knowledge, his reductions, his tendency to search out the visualizable and conceivable through eidetic reduction; Heidegger's writings make virtually no mention of apodictic knowledge, transcendental reductions, or the structure of the ego.

After *Being and Time*, Heidegger turns increasingly to reinterpreting earlier philosophers – Kant, Nietzsche, Hegel – and the poetry of Rilke, Trakl, or Hölderlin. His thinking becomes more „hermeneutical“ in the traditional sense

of being centered on text interpretation. Philosophy in Husserl remains basically scientific, and this is reflected in the significance it has for the sciences today; in Heidegger philosophy becomes historical, a creative recovery of the past, a form of interpretation.

In his philosophical work Heidegger stresses the *ontological* character of the hermeneutic process. In this context he insists on the situatedness and "thrownness" (Geworfenheit) of the human being in the world (Dasein) that cannot be analyzed by objective sciences. One of the most substantial properties of *Dasein* is its effort to understand its being. In this conception of fundamental ontology, Heidegger maintains that understanding is one of the original and essential properties of *Dasein* because living human beings understand themselves in a continuous process of interpretation, self-interpretation and re-interpretation, along with a constant effort to create and realize their intentions and goals. As the way in which a human life understands itself is conditioned by time, the structure of understanding has the character of a projection (i.e. it refers to future) and Heidegger therefore considers understanding to be a so-called "thrown projection". (**Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*. Gesamtausgabe. Bd. 2. Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1977, pp. 16-17.)**)

Yet in *Being and Time* Heidegger finds a kind of access in the fact that one has with his existence a certain understanding of what fullness of being is. It is

not a fixed understanding but historically formed, accumulated in the very experience of encountering phenomena. Ontology must turn to the processes of understanding and interpretation through which things appear; it must lay open the mood and direction of human existence, it must render visible the invisible structure of being-in-the-world.

How does this relate to hermeneutics? It means that ontology must, as phenomenology of being, become a “hermeneutic” of existence. This kind of hermeneutic lays open what was hidden; it constitutes not an interpretation of an interpretation (which textual interpretation is) but the primary act of interpretation which brings a thing from concealment. So Heidegger defines the essence of hermeneutics as the ontological power of understanding and interpretation which renders possible the disclosure of being of things and ultimately the potentialities of *Dasein*'s own being.

On the other hand, it is interesting that Heidegger's conception of understanding is also based on purposeful human activity in the life-world ("Lebenswelt"). **Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit. Gesamtausgabe. Bd. 2.* (Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1977), pp. 106-107.)** He conceives the life-world as a set of things with which we are in connection, and these things are endowed with meaning and sense. (Compare Jaroslav Kudrna, "K některým otázkám pojetí znaku u Diltheye, Freyera a Heideggera" [To Some Questions Concerning the Conception of Sign by Dilthey, Freyer and Heidegger], *Filosofický časopis* 12, 1964, Nr. 5, p. 640-656.) Understanding is,

therefore, also conceived as the ability of a human being to find a social and practical orientation in the life-world.

For Heidegger - from the point of philosophy of human being - understanding is the power to grasp one's own possibilities for being, within the context of the lifeworld in which one exists. Understanding is conceived not as something to be possessed but rather as a mode or constituent element of being-in-the-world. It is not an entity in the world but rather the structure in being which makes possible the actual exercise of understanding on an empirical level

Understanding is thus ontologically fundamental and prior to every act of existing. Yet the essence of understanding lies not in simply grasping one's situation but in the disclosure of concrete potentialities for being within the horizon of one's placement in the world. For this aspect of understanding Heidegger uses the term "existentiality" (*Existenzialität*).

Meaningfulness of Understanding

According to Heidegger understanding operates in a fabric of relationships (*Bewandnisganzheit*). Heidegger coins the term „meaningfulness“ (*Bedeutsamkeit*) to designate the ontological ground for the intelligibility of that fabric of relationships. As such, it provides the ontological possibility that words can have meaningful signification; it is the basis for language. The point

Heidegger is making here is that meaningfulness is something deeper than the logical system of language, it is founded on something prior to language and embedded in world – the relational whole. However much words may shape or formulate meaning, they point beyond their own system to a meaningfulness already present in the relational whole of world. Meaningfulness, then, is not something man gives to an object; it is what an object gives to man through supplying the ontological possibility of words and language.

Hans-Georg Gadamer

Let us briefly consider H.-G. Gadamer's hermeneutical theory and his conception of knowledge and understanding. First, it is important to note that Gadamer's epistemology is, from the historical point of view, based upon a complex critical reflection on the theories of *empathy* (Einfühlung) and *lived experience* (Erlebnis) in the Romantic philosophical tradition, especially in the psychologically oriented hermeneutics of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey.⁴ Heidegger and especially Gadamer have analyzed the notion of lived experience ("Erlebnis") in an obvious continuity with Wilhelm Dilthey's philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*). According to Dilthey, the process of understanding moves forward with the course of life itself, and the starting point of the process of understanding is an experience that, in one sense, cannot be repeated. In essence, this experience could be reduced to *lived experience* ("Erlebnis"), which expresses the intensity and wholeness of human experience, and constitutes the basis upon which it is possible to apply the hermeneutic circle to the process of understanding.⁵ In the conception of H.-G. Gadamer, which in many aspects issues from the tradition of Diltheyan *Lebensphilosophie*,

the process of understanding enables one to find the way to truth and simultaneously preserve, by means of "openness" for the other partner of communication, the stable coexistence between the interpreter and the object of interpretation.⁶

In his book *Wahrheit und Methode* (in a certain continuity with Heidegger's fundamental ontology), Gadamer places stress on the historical and lingual dimension of understanding, which is also the most important property of a human being. Gadamer's thesis of a *dialectical, historical and projecting* character of understanding is based on the theory that there is fundamental ontological connection between *understanding* ("Verstehen") and dialectical process of *speech events* ("sprachliches Geschehen"), respectively *speech* ("Sprache"). "Vielmehr ist die Sprache das universale medium, in dem sich das Verstehen selber vollzieht."⁷ However, we cannot consider this process or flow of speech only as a free, creative activity, as it is in Schleiermacher's theory of understanding, because Gadamer refuses subjectivistic and psychologically oriented conception of hermeneutics. It is necessary to realize that in Gadamer's view (influenced obviously by Edmund Husserl's phenomenology) inquiry is always inquiry into a subject-matter and "dialogues always remain the dialogues over *die Sache*".⁸

Therefore the process of understanding is characterized by Gadamer as *Tun der Sache selbst*, although it occurs in the context of tradition (*Überlieferung*).

Consequently, Gadamer argues, tradition can be conceived as an onto-creative category, which reflects the perpetual process of valorization and actualization of the culture of the past: "In Wahrheit ist in Tradition stets ein moment der Freiheit und der Geschichte selber."⁹

In light of this, Gadamer appreciates the historical role and moral authority of these institutions, whose origin has been connected with the gradual formation of a democratic political life, and which accentuates the importance of the spiritual heritage of Christianity in the life of Western society.¹⁰ Gadamer thus evaluates the historical and epistemological function of the myth and mythical thought as the important counterpart of our awareness of tradition.¹¹ We can find similar approach by the founder of the depth psychology and the theory of archetypes, Carl Gustav Jung.

On the basis of structural investigation of inner opposites and contradictions, C. G. Jung created, with the help of verifiable empirical procedures, the theory of the substantial function of collective unconsciousness in creating mythological thought. This theory is also very inspiring for unspeculative philosophical anthropology, which operates with mythical-narrative and deep founded structures. In such conception of hermeneutically oriented philosophical anthropology the term *collective unconscious* can become the complementary category to the notion of *collective consciousness*.

In Jung's view, there is a substantial binding link among the notions of tradition, myth, collective consciousness and collective unconsciousness. Collective consciousness is from the point of Jungian depth psychology comprehended as the "aggregate of the *traditions*, conventions, customs, prejudices, rules, and norms of human collectivity which give the consciousness of the group as a whole its direction, and by which the individuals of this group consciously but quite unreflectingly live".¹² In this context C. G. Jung is very close to Gadamer's hermeneutics with its emphasis on the great importance of tradition for the social and cultural continuity of the human mankind. In Jung's view tradition can compensate the inevitable one-sidednesses and extravagances of modern progress. "The retarding ideal is always more primitive, more natural (in the good sense as in the bad), and more "moral" in that it keeps faith with law and tradition. The progressive ideal is always more abstract, more unnatural, and less "moral" in that it demands disloyalty to tradition."¹³ If we take into account the problem of relation of philosophical hermeneutics and the depth hermeneutics, we can also argue that hermeneutical conceptions of M. Heidegger, H.-G. Gadamer and C. G. Jung have as their common feature the dialectical conception of experience. In the epistemological tradition of depth psychology and psychoanalytical literary science (C. G. Jung, G. Condrau, J. Hillman, P. von Matt, B. Urban, F. Gessing), modern philosophical hermeneutics (M. Heidegger, H.-G. Gadamer), and American neopragmatism (R. Rorty, S. Cavell, H. Bloom), there is emphasized the deep, imaginative and

projecting character of human experience which helps to overcome the theoretical foundation of experience on the processes of mere seeing, mirroring the world.¹⁴

Gadamer's basic concept of experience is owing to Heidegger's influence dialectical and existential, he emphasizes these forms of experience which cannot be verified by means of exact sciences.¹⁵ According to Gadamer the main paradigm of experience is that of philosophy, history, art, and religion. In this context Gadamer is interested in the deep philosophical reflection of the religious experience and examines the wide range of human experience and its spiritual dimension. Gadamer's analysis of religious and life experience helps him to overcome scientifically limited conception of knowledge and truth.¹⁶ A typical feature of experience is also its openness and connection with the finitude of human being which means the experience concerning our "painful failure".¹⁷ The subject of the hermeneutical process could be only someone who has learned in from the dialectical character of experience to such an extent that he is prepared for the new experiences. The dialectical character of experience can be therefore realized through the openness ("Offenheit") for new experiences. This kind of openness "has the structure of question" and is freely loosened up by means of the experience itself.¹⁸

Gadamer follows here from Hegel's conception of experience in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* as the dialectical process. Our experience leads to the

recognition there is the contradiction between our consciousness and the object itself. The fact that the consciousness is not in accordance to its object must lead to the change of this consciousness. Gadamer calls this process a "reversal in consciousness" and therefore from his point of view the essence of hermeneutical experience gains the character of *dialectical movement*.¹⁹ Hermeneutical experience - as Georgia Warnke argues - is in fact learning experience, an experience that in a sense cannot be repeated and serves to "negate the error or partiality of our previous views".²⁰

We can find very similar conception of the dialectical character of our experience and knowledge by C. G. Jung. He claims that "the transition from morning to afternoon means revaluation of the earlier values. There comes the urgent need to appreciate the value of the opposite of our former ideals, to perceive the error of our former convictions".²¹

It is obvious that Jung's account of experience, as well as Gadamer's, is dialectical, emphasizing its negativity. However, Jung's conception of experience is directly influenced not by Hegel, but above all by Heraclitus. It was Heraclitus who discovered very important principle of the deep hermeneutics, namely the regulative function of opposites. He called it *enantiodromia*, by which he meant that everything must ultimately flow into its opposite. C. G. Jung follows this Heraclitus's principle and formulates also his hermeneutically oriented dialectical conception of the world and human being:

"Everything human is relative, because everything rests on the inner polarity; for everything is phenomenon of energy. Energy necessarily depends on a pre-existing polarity, without which there could be no energy. There must always be high and low, hot and cold, etc. so that the equilibrating process - which is energy - can take place." ²² We can find a certain analogy between C. G. Jung's view on energetical character of the world reality and H.-G. Gadamer's conception of energetical, dialectical character of *sprachliches Geschehen* as the medium of hermeneutical ontology.

In the same way as philosophical hermeneutics, the depth psychology of C. G. Jung has its realm in the borderland between cognition and experience. In this boorderland, which by its very nature must confront the conceptual and metaphorical language, Jung strives, with all his power of creative expression, to draw the necessary and legitimate semantic distinctions adequate to the realm of the life *experience* ("Lebenserfahrung"). Heidegger's and Gadamers philosophical hermeneutics on one side and Jung's hermeneutically oriented depth psychology on the other side investigate the problems of the destiny of man, the sense of human life that cannot be resolved by exact sciences but can only be experienced.²³

The hermeneutical theories of M. Heidegger, H.-G. Gadamer and C. G. Jung concerning the problems of the dialectical character of experience are tightly connected with the analogous conceptions of the temporality and finitude of human being. In a certain extent Gadamer accepts the basic features of

Heidegger's philosophical theory of time, connected with Heidegger's characteristics of the temporality of *Dasein* as striving to the future which is, however, characterized as *Vorlaufen - zum - Tode*. In accordance with Heidegger (but also Aristotle and Augustine) Gadamer proclaims the thesis that "a sense for time is primarily a sense for what is future, not for is present." ²⁴ In Gadamer's view "Heidegger rather showed how 'knowledge' of death lies at the base of our experience of time and of our reckoning with time". ²⁵

However, in his study *Concerning Empty and Ful-filled Time* Gadamer strives to overcome the tragical dimension of Heidegger's *Sein - zum - Tode* by means of the cyclical conception of temporality, that means that time is presented as "a process which is rhythmically repeated" in a circle.²⁶ But it is remarkable that the form of a circle is typical for so-called mandalas or "magic circles", which according to C. G. Jung represent a primordial image of psychic totality, and their inner purpose is to transform chaos into cosmos. Mandalas express the view of the cyclical character of natural life and they are from the therapeutical point of view helpful to the self-reconstruction and regeneration of psychic life.

Against the tragical dimension of Heidegger's conception of temporality and human's finitude Gadamer applies the Neo-Platonic notion of *Aion* which he interprets as the life time of the world organism, the superior, unlimited duration of the world enlived by its "soul". The resolution from this tragical experience of human finitude seeks Gadamer in the conception of organic time which could

overcome the throwness of man into his subjectivity, therefore to reconcile him with his finitude but simultaneously to incorporate him in the "history of being". As it has been mentioned above, in his theory of organic time Gadamer searches its basic sources in the Neo-Platonic tradition, in its notion of aion as "the temporal structure of that which endures as one and the same in every alteration and articulation of life's phases, namely *liveliness* ("Lebendigkeit").²⁷

Gadamer's conception of organic time is based on the cyclical process of life, perpetual renewal of balance and rhythmically recurrent return to the beginnings, regeneration and re-birth. The process of individualization of human being, although it leads to the gain of one's own temporality, has as its consequence the loss of identity with the life cycle and so it excludes the possibility of return to the original state. In Gadamer's view the problem of human's finitude was deeply grasped by this statement of the Greek doctor Alkmaion: "Human beings therefore have to die because they have not learned to connect the end with the beginning."²⁸ From the point of Gadamer's hermeneutically oriented philosophical anthropology man is the fateful creature whose own certainty of life knowingly includes the certainty of death.

Where is the solution from this tragical situation of the human being, suffering from the consciousness of the finitude, the senselessness and aimlessness of its life, where is the way from the universal neurosis of our time in which a total spiritual, social and cultural disorientation has taken hold of mankind? It is interesting that Gadamer's solution (as well as Jung's theory of individuation) is

prospective, stressing the most profound forms of temporal experience and therefore influenced by depth psychology. "Only he who can leave what lies behind him or what is removed from him beyond his reach, who does not cling fast to what is past as something which he cannot relinquish, is at all able to have a future." [...] "We are familiar with this same insight in the theory of neuroses in modern depth psychology, which teaches us that when a person is bound to something, is not free from it, he is prohibited from becoming free for his own possibilities." 29

In Gadamer's view we can find the way to the conciliation with the tragical fact of man's finitude in an analogy with the so-called *epoch experience*. Namely in experiencing an epoch, wherever it takes place, one also experiences the necessity of taking leave, in the same way as we must conceal in the process of one's own maturation and aging for instance with the necessity of transition from one half to the second half of our life. At the same time we can find individual-psychological, personal correspondence to this epoch experience - as Gadamer argues - in the Christian hope which is only significant when one does not insist upon the old, which is subsiding. The ability to bid farewell, just as much as the openness for the new, has also the character of transition and *transformation*.

This hermeneutical conception of transition and transformation has its analogy in the C. G. Jung's theory of individuation in which the very concept of personal transformation occupies the fundamental place. We can say at the first

comparison that C. G. Jung is convinced (in the same way as H.-G. Gadamer) that transition and transformation is a strained position between departure and the openness for the new. Both in Jung's theory of individuation, as well as in Heidegger's and Gadamer's conception of temporality, the problem of man's finitude is solved in transcendental, mythical and religious dimension. However, if we closely compare Jung's theory of individuation with the conception of man's finitude in H.-G. Gadamer's philosophy we can characterize Jung's theory as more elaborate, based on the deep psychological experience and erudite knowledge of man's character.

In a certain analogy with the conception of hermeneutical understanding as "the dialogue of the soul with itself" C. G. Jung strives to understand the crisis of modern man by activation of the profoundest depths of his soul that means to counter his life disorientation by "activating the creative forces of his unconscious and by consciously integrating them into the whole of the psyche". By raising these forces to consciousness, which results in a "new creation" in our human experience and in a deeper self-knowledge, the individual "achieves an inward and outward bond with the world and cosmic order".³⁰ In this context we can find the obvious theoretical analogy with this Jung's conception in Gadamer's interpretation of *Aion* as the complete identity of life with itself, namely *liveliness* ("Lebendigkeit").³¹ The identity of man with himself is also the aim of the process of individuation in which "the work on the psyche paves

the way for a spiritual-ethical-religious order" and this process "must be chosen consciously and freely by the individual". 32

According to H.-G. Gadamer, the hermeneutic process involves not only the moments of understanding and of interpretation but also the moment of interpretation, that is to say, understanding oneself is a part of this process.

It is therefore also a serious mistake to think that the universality of understanding includes within it something like a harmonizing attitude or a basic conservatism with regard to our social world. To understand the structures and ordering of our world, to understand ourselves with each other in this world, just as much presupposes critique and struggle with what has grown rigid or outdated as it does the recognition or defense of the existing order of things. p. 97

H.-G. Gadamer: *Language and Understanding*. The Gadamer Reader. Bouquet of the Later writings. Edited by Richard Palmer. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press 2007, p. 97

Gadamer's conception of word

To speak of the first word is a contradiction in itself. There is always already a system of words that is the basis for the meaning of each word.

But when a word comes into being, this is certainly not how it happens. A word introduces *itself*. A word only becomes a word when it breaks and enters into communicative usage. In this connection – Gadamer argues – we cannot consider language and word as something like an instrument of the language user. The conception of language as an instrument suggests that words are like something one has in one’s pocket and when one uses them one just pulls them out of one’s pocket, as if linguistic usage were at the whim of the user of language. But language is not dependent on this or that user. In reality, language usage shows us that ultimately the language refuses to be misused. For it is language itself that prescribes what will be linguistically acceptable. This should not be taken to mean some kind of mythologizing of language; rather, that claim of language can never be reduced to what an individual subjectivity intends. It belongs to the way of being of language [Seinsweise der Sprache] that *we* and not just one of us but indeed all of us are the ones who are speaking. Ibid. The Gadamer Reader, p.105.

Understanding and Interpretation.

Understanding and interpretation have to do with the basic relationship of human beings to each other and to the world. German term *Verstehen* comes to mean “to have appreciation for something”, to comprehend it [für etwas Verständnis haben]. The ability to understand is a fundamental endowment of

man, one that sustains his communal life with others. Understanding takes place by way of language and partnership of conversation.

H.-G. Gadamer: *Text and interpretation*. In: *The Gadamer Reader*, p. 156-151, quoted place p. 158.

Gadamer and Heidegger on understanding

I followed Heidegger's raising of the concept of understanding to the status of an existential – that is, to a fundamental categorical determinant of human existence.

Interpretation

What is the literal meaning of the word *interpretes* ?

This term refers to someone who stands between and therefore has first of all the primordial function of the interpreter of languages, someone who stands between speakers of various languages and through intermediary speaking brings the separated persons together.

Ibid., p. 179.

The discourse of the interpreter is itself not a text: rather, it *serves* a text. This does not mean, however, that the contribution of the interpreter to the manner in which the text is heard would completely disappear. The contribution is just not thematic, not something as objective as the text, rather it has entered in the text.

Ibid., p. 180.

What is a relationship between text and reader?

When the text interpreter overcomes what is alienating in the text and thereby helps the reader to an understanding of the text, his own stepping back is not a disappearance in any negative sense; rather, it is an entering into the communication in such a way that the tension between the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader is resolved. Gadamer calls this *a fusion of horizons* [*Horizontverschmelzung*]. The separated horizons, like the different standpoints, merge with each other. The process of understanding a text tends to captivate and take the reader up into that which the text says, and in this fusion the text

disappears. But not in the case of *literature*! That is to say, that do not disappear in our act of understanding them, but instead stand there confronting our understanding with normative claims, and stand continually before every new way the text can speak. Ibid., p. 180.

Literary text are only authentically there when they come back to themselves. They fulfill the true meaning of the text, so to speak, from out of themselves: they speak. Literary texts are such texts that in reading them aloud one must also listen to them, if only with the inner ear; and if one recites, one not only listens but inwardly speaks with them. These texts attain their true existence only when one has learned them “by heart”. Then they live in memory, in remembrance by the great bard or the lyric singers. As if written in the soul, they are on their way to *scripturality* [*Schriftlichkeit*]. Ibid., s. 180.

A literary text is not just the rendering of a spoken into a fixed form. Indeed, a literary text does not refer back to an already spoken word at all. This fact has hermeneutic consequences. In this case, interpretation is not longer merely a means of getting back to an original expression of something and mediating it to the present. Instead, the literary text is text in a most special sense, text in the highest degree because it does *not* point back to the repetition of some primordial act of oral utterance. Rather, a poetic text in his own right prescribes all repetitions and speech acts out of itself. No speaking can ever completely fulfill what is prescribed in a poetic text. The text of a poem exercises a normative function that does not refer back either to an original utterance or to the intention of the speaker but is something that seems to originate on itself, so that in the felicity of its success, the poem surprises and overwhelms even its author.

K tomu pridat Gadamerovu uvahu o tom, ze neni mozne prevest basen do telef. Rozhovoru. Viz Palmer

H.-G. Gadamer: *Text and interpretation*. In: The Gadamer Reader, p. 156-151, quoted place p. 181.

