

Philosophical Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer

Dr. Mustafa Kamal Al-Maani

Al-Hussein Bin Talal University – MAAN - JORDAN

Abstract

Gadamer's hermeneutics builds upon predecessors in the field of hermeneutics such as Spinoza, Chladenius, G.F. Meier, Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Martin Heidegger. Known as **philosophical dialogical hermeneutics** (*philosophical hermeneutics kommunikation*), it extends to understanding and interpreting everything that is comprehensible and intelligible. While it is not a mere repetition of prior hermeneutics, it is an extension and broadening of their foundations, and thus it carries a phenomenological character.

Since its inception, Gadamer's hermeneutics has focused on challenging the notion of the scientific method, which forms the foundation of natural and empirical sciences, and surpassing their discourse on truth. Truth in the human sciences is not the product of a method, or rather, it is not exclusive to methodological interaction with the world; instead, it results from direct experience or openness to the world through understanding.

Gadamer's hermeneutics is a project aimed at liberating and rescuing meaning in Western thought. Meaning cannot be reached unless the human sciences develop their own methodologies, necessarily different from those of the natural sciences. Gadamer defined hermeneutics as an attempt to understand what human sciences truly are by transcending their methodological self-awareness and their relation to the totality of our experience of the world. Unlike traditional linguistic or theological hermeneutics that treat understanding as a technical art, Gadamer argues that such formal techniques falsely claim superiority over the truth conveyed by tradition.

Gadamer's hermeneutical tools are generally aimed at the necessity of opening the text to existence (historical, social, epistemic), reading it within its traditional context, and then achieving a fusion of horizons through an ongoing process that uses dialogue as an effective tool for understanding.

Keywords: Hermeneutics, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Gadamer, Fusion of Horizons, Hermeneutic Circle, Logic of Prejudices, Question and Answer.

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Introduction

The term "hermeneutics" is an old concept that originally appeared in theological studies to refer to the set of rules and standards a commentator must follow to understand a religious text (the Bible). In this sense, hermeneutics differs from *exegesis*, which refers to the actual detailed interpretation process, while hermeneutics refers to the theory of interpretation. This term first appeared in 1654 and remains in use today, especially in Protestant circles.

The issue of understanding has deeply occupied modern Western philosophy. Thinkers like Spinoza and Chladenius addressed it from an axiological perspective, arguing that understanding a text means grasping its truth. However, such understanding involves linguistic, artistic, and even psychological criteria that aim to unravel the ambiguous knots within the text. Hermeneutics, from their perspective, is the fundamental exchange of understanding of the text.

Later, G.F. Meier and Schleiermacher inaugurated a new era of hermeneutics by expanding its scope from sacred texts to various texts related to literature, art, philosophy, and more. Schleiermacher is seen as a representative of the transition from theological to human philosophical hermeneutics. However, unlike Spinoza and Chladenius, he did not emphasize the legitimacy and validity of understanding but linked it to the individuality of the thinker uttering a discourse within a specific spatiotemporal context.

Subsequently, Wilhelm Dilthey developed hermeneutics as the fundamental method for the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) the essential key to understanding not only written texts like stories, narratives, speeches, symbols, and myths, but also visible texts represented by networks of individual relations, social practices, historical facts, and artworks.

Dilthey stressed the importance of "transition and displacement," which allowed for a new model of hermeneutics that moves away from epistemological and axiological confrontation with texts. Hermeneutics thus became a dynamic process starting from the written text, passing through the visible and the readable, while not ignoring the author's subjective position behind the text: "The art of interpretation aims to understand and explain others' thoughts through their signs. Understanding occurs when representations and feelings awaken in the reader's psyche according to the system and relations present in the author's psyche."

Hence, the text is not a closed system of signs and symbols, but a confirmed and open discourse always accompanied by reading, criticism, intellectual communication, and conceptual exchange between reader and author. This intellectual and critical activity and continuous dialogue have led philosophers of hermeneutics to study the phenomenon of understanding the meaning contained in the text and to know whether this meaning expresses the author's intentions and goals.

Although Dilthey distinguished interpretation in the natural sciences from understanding in the human sciences — "we interpret nature and understand the psychic life" — the relationship between interpretation and understanding remains problematic. Helmholtz attempted to address this by proposing that induction could apply to human sciences with a delicate sensitivity that allows grasping natural science objects.

Hermeneutics took a new phenomenological and existential turn with Heidegger, known as **phenomenological hermeneutics**. Heidegger focused on interpreting the essence or meaning of human existence phenomena in their intimate relation to being itself — such as art and poetry. He found the path to understanding their meaning through understanding language itself. Two main features characterize Heidegger's hermeneutics: first, the text reveals being and contains a truth that transcends its formal structure; second, interpreting the text requires transcending both subjectivity and objectivity. These two features are also characteristics of language itself according to Heidegger. Thus, understanding the text presupposes understanding the nature of language.

Hermeneutics thus became concerned with examining texts internally and connecting them with their broader external context, aiming to reach a universal level, as it transcends classical conceptions of text understanding and the levels of truth it entails, to comprehend social phenomena, behaviors, historical events, and artistic creations.

Gadamer built upon these developments, formulating what became known as **philosophical dialogical hermeneutics**. Though not a repetition of Heidegger's hermeneutics, Gadamer's approach extends its foundations and broadens its horizons, also bearing a phenomenological character.

Chapter One: Hermeneutics and the Problem of Method in Gadamer

First: Truth and Method

Since its early stages, Gadamer's hermeneutics focused on undermining the idea of the scientific method, which constitutes the foundation of natural and empirical sciences, and on transcending their discourse on truth. Truth in the human sciences is not the product of method; or more precisely, it is not exclusively tied to methodological interaction with the world but is the result of direct experience or openness to the world through understanding.

The dominance of empirical and natural sciences in contemporary Western philosophy seems to be the direct reason for the rise of hermeneutics. After the remarkable achievements in scientific and mathematical fields, attention turned towards the human sciences, questioning the possibility of applying scientific methods to them to achieve the highest degree of accuracy and objectivity. Therefore, one can say: "The crisis that led to the emergence of hermeneutics is a crisis of confidence—a crisis of trust in the scientific method and its ability to reach certain knowledge. The method produces only what it seeks or only answers the questions it poses. That is, a method that contains its answers cannot lead us to anything new."

Gadamer's book titled *Truth and Method* immediately raises the question of the relationship between the two. Some researchers believe it would have been more appropriate for Gadamer to title his book *Truth and No-Method*, while others see the title itself as an ironic critique of linking them, since method is not the path to truth; on the contrary, truth eludes the "methodical man" and escapes him.

This brings us closer to the complex relationship between truth and method in Gadamer. A deeper conception of this issue leads to core questions regarding the nature of the hermeneutical experience itself. Gadamer's hermeneutics was not merely a cosmetic surgery method but a necessary prelude to liberating the question of truth in the human sciences, as reflected in the experiences of art and history.

Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy attempted to go beyond the methodological version of truth in the human sciences. To grasp the depth of his hermeneutical approach to the problem of method, it suffices to highlight the distortions caused by applying the method to the human sciences by revisiting human heritage. Gadamer asserts that this heritage has lost its philosophical vitality and become severely diminished for us because of imposing subjective and methodological frameworks on foundational concepts like culture, common sense, judgment, and taste.

Following Hegel and Herder, Gadamer warns that it is dangerous to regard culture merely as a collection of knowledge and information. This is a mistake typical of modern method-centered thinking. A cultured person is one who learns to step back from their knowledge; someone incapable of admitting ignorance and leaving some questions open cannot be called cultured. Simply, the cultured person is one who knows that they do not know, thereby ascending to a kind of universality that allows openness to other and broader viewpoints. Gadamer sees this "I do not know" as an example of a truth distinctive to the human sciences, as it is unrelated to method and acquired through a kind of sensitivity and subtlety—it is not learned knowledge but formed and cultivated.

Gadamer draws a crucial distinction between dialectical knowledge and methodological knowledge. Dialectical knowledge, according to him, allows the subject to move freely, letting things and beings reveal themselves from themselves. This contrasts sharply with methodological knowledge, which molds its subjects and imposes a false superiority of the subject over its object. In method, the knowing subject controls and manipulates, whereas dialectic leaves the subject it faces to ask its own questions that require answers, which come only through belonging to the subject.

Hence, the hermeneutical position is no longer one of a questioner who must build methods to capture the subject within their understanding, but the questioner rather becomes the one who is interrogated. To historically ground the concept of dialectical knowledge in the human sciences, Gadamer, like his teacher Heidegger, refers to ancient Greek philosophers, who did not conceive knowledge as a naïve matching of subject and world. They saw their thinking as part of existence itself; for them, knowledge was not possession but encounter and participation.

Gadamer, drawing on his ontological stance, sees method as an "epistemological destruction of meaning," posing a mortal danger to the essential being of the human sciences. Thus, his critique of methodological rationalism—the foundation of knowledge in modern thought, is a confrontation with the epistemological alienation that method exercises over the world, challenging the false claim that method has priority over truth. He criticizes methodological interpretation which claims to release truth, arguing that "method application is performed by someone who cannot bring anything new, who cannot produce any significant interpretive insight."

These places limits on the epistemological exaltation of method, whether as a philosophical phenomenon emerging in the modern era since Descartes, or as a positive development adding precision and objectivity to

human sciences. Thus, Gadamer's hermeneutical challenge to method is not opposition to method per se but to the "fever of method" – the absolute and prior domination of method over truth.

Therefore, when Gadamer sets strict boundaries for method, it is not to negate it entirely but to reveal the sources of its illusions, expose its misuse, dismantle its false self-awareness, and unearth what it suppresses.

For Gadamer, the main issue is not the validity of method itself but a philosophical approach that considers genuine understanding to be grounded in the language of truth and existence, not in methodological verifiability. Hence, method always remains below the challenge posed by the human sciences.

Hermeneutical openness—the experience that modifies the interpreter himself through the text—is precisely the opposite of method.

The importance of this hermeneutical understanding is that it seeks to dismantle a contemporary philosophical trend that claims it can understand the human phenomenon by the same tools and mechanisms used for scientific phenomena.

However, Gadamer's aim is deeper: he wants to re-articulate the relationship between philosophical truth and scientific truth, illuminating a different nature of truth in the human sciences as an ontological kind. The experience of truth sought by Gadamer does not depend on epistemology or theory of knowledge but on "radical grounding" or what can be called the foundation or source of life, though not knowledge in a strict sense.

In short, Gadamer's position is that "truth is not sought methodically but dialectically, and this way is, in fact, the opposite of method."

Second: Hermeneutical Openness

The task of hermeneutics has become to break the constraints imposed by the transcendental given of reflective philosophy and to transform the classical hierarchical relation "method–truth" from a dogmatic position based on the primacy of method to a position based on the openness of truth. Ultimately, truth is the ability to understand and listen to the language of the other, rather than "methodically devouring it" through the furnace of our own language.

This shift has led many researchers to associate the emergence of hermeneutics with the crisis of European modernity or, more explicitly, with the crisis of scientific methods. Alongside the claimed universality of the scientific method, the hermeneutical method seeks a new way that expands the scope of truth, making it more flexible and fluid.

Gadamer argues that we must stop interpreting the meaning of understanding according to the paradigm of the self. Understanding is always radically "non-subjective." As Gadamer states, "understanding is not understanding the possible and diverse behaviors of the self; rather, it is a mode of Dasein's very being, and in this sense, I use the term hermeneutics here."

By condemning the principle of self-sovereignty, Gadamer calls the self to achieve understanding through the mediation of the other with all its determinations. This mediation is nothing but acceptance of the other and attentive listening to its voice. It is a new opportunity to liberate meaning and allow it to come to us. At the same time, it is liberation of the self from the illusions it has drawn about itself, to rediscover itself more profoundly and comprehensively, in opposition to the weary arrogance of the modern self.

Thus, hermeneutics brings the question of understanding to the forefront, proclaiming that the self is not the sole locus of the question of existence and that method is not the only source for designating all truths in the world. Hermeneutical understanding is not a technical understanding that defines categories and frameworks and then seeks to fill them with subjects and objects. Rather, it is a more fundamental question relating primarily to existence and the self. The task of hermeneutics is to establish an ontology of existence that transcends self-conscious methodological awareness.

Hermeneutics does not ask what we do or what we should do but rather what happens beyond our will and action.

The methodological approach imposed by classical epistemology, which makes the transcendent self or "subjectivity" the source of direct awareness of things, has not provided a philosophically acceptable alternative to the process of understanding. Instead, it emptied the self of its content and placed it in a position where it makes the entire world a domain for itself, imposing a false superiority of the self over the object. This produced a theory of knowledge that is an illusion of completeness of the object's image in the perceiving consciousness and an illusion of the self's completeness.

The forgotten question is the question of the meaning of being. For these reasons, it became clear that there was a need to propose replacing the scientific method or philosophical analysis with a new kind of method—hermeneutics.

Dilthey observed that in the 19th century, awareness grew of the fruitful progress achieved by the natural sciences, which could measure and weigh every component of the planet we live on. The appearance of amazing inventions that shrunk distances on Earth led to the loss of the effectiveness of ideal images, and life itself became a problem, clearly manifested in all kinds of art and literature.

The hermeneutics that Gadamer offers is a project to liberate and rescue meaning in Western thought. Meaning cannot be reached except when human sciences draw their own specific methods, necessarily different from those of natural sciences. The problem with the human sciences is not their inherent nature but that they have become victims of the dominance and control of natural sciences.

Therefore, Gadamer opposed scientific alienation by focusing on the experiences of art and history and elevating them to ranks rich with truth. Hermeneutics emphasizes that human sciences relate to experiences that lie beyond science, namely philosophy, art, and history. These are forms of experience with a certain knowledge that cannot be verified by scientific methodological means.

Paul Ricoeur affirmed that Gadamer's philosophical project reveals a synthesis between several types of hermeneutics—from regional hermeneutics to general hermeneutics, from the epistemology of the sciences of mind to ontology.

Gadamer defines hermeneutics as an attempt to understand what the human sciences truly are, by transcending their methodological self-awareness and their link to the totality of our experience of the world. If we make understanding the subject of our thought, the goal is not the art or technique of understanding, as traditional linguistic and theological hermeneutics intended. Such art or technique fails to realize that formal technique, in the view of the truth speaking to us from heritage, falsely claims superiority.

Third: Fusion of Horizons.

Paul Ricoeur noted that Western thought in general "owes Gadamer this fertile idea that communication over distance between two consciousnesses differing in their position happens through the fusion of their horizons, i.e., through the intersection of their intentionality's about the distant and open." This concept of "fusion of horizons" means that we do not live in closed horizons nor in a single horizon.

Gadamer's efforts focused on finding solutions to the problem of human sciences and their independence. After man transformed from a living, open horizon into an object in front of the self, the question of existence receded and ceased to be primary.

According to Gadamer, after Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, and Locke, the first philosophical question in the 17th century became epistemological: What is the status of our knowledge? How do we know that we know? As a result, philosophy became an epistemology for the positive sciences and no longer a servant of theology but rather a servant of so-called modern sciences.

These philosophical foundations give Gadamer's hermeneutic discourse its justification and legitimacy. Traditional dualisms such as form–content, subject–object, method–truth become illusions of the conceptual foundations of Western reason. These binary oppositions proved ineffective both practically and theoretically. Moreover, they often contributed to excluding one side at the expense of the other, which caused many problems, especially in art, which was linked to all attributes of falsity and untruth.

Gadamer stresses that we should be monads—using Leibniz's term—reflecting the total truths of existence. But we are not closed monads without doors and windows; rather, we are interpretive, open, and dialogical monads if language has not yet and will never say what it intends or what we want to express.

From this standpoint, dialogue becomes the core of Gadamer's hermeneutics for the human sciences. American philosopher Richard Rorty pointed out that the importance of Gadamer's hermeneutics does not stem from showing us the errors of epistemology or achieving what epistemology failed to accomplish, but rather from offering another way of knowing based on dialogue and solidarity—what we obtain when we are no longer epistemologists.

In this sense, hermeneutics reorganizes the relationship with the heritage-text by emphasizing dialogical interaction versus epistemological supremacy, meaning it values the other as much as the self. It seeks to bridge the gap between self and object, ego and other, ensuring a form of liberating meaning from the continuous ego performances ("Descartes—Kant—Husserl"), and promoting tolerance for different ways of interrogating meaning, viewing it as a relation around which both the self's and the other's horizons converge.

This does not mean hermeneutics attempts to bypass the tense relationship between ego and other, past and present. On the contrary, hermeneutics opens to the other, because the other is one of the forms of truth and a manifestation of existence. It recognizes, unlike method, that dialogue with the past—i.e., the other—makes us open to its truths, symbols, and meanings not as coercion or compulsion, but as careful consideration and the art of listening to what it says and sings.

Ultimately, hermeneutics witnessed an ontological revolution with Gadamer, transforming hermeneutical understanding from an existential confrontation to an existential participation, and from a kind or mode of knowledge to a mode of being. Accordingly, the philosophical question shifts from the question of method (epistemology) to the question of being (ontology).

Example: Understanding a Poem

To understand a poem, for instance, we may closely analyze it and compare it with other poems; identify its poetic meter and the school it belongs to; explore all its images and metaphors; and discuss all its details.

We may be structuralists if we seek the elements composing the poem's structure, or semioticians if we analyze its signs and symbols.

All this work may be enjoyable and useful, but it does not guarantee "understanding." To achieve true understanding of the poem, we must immerse ourselves in it and fuse with its horizons to reach its ontological depth.

Even if all previous information and procedures prove correct, none of these theories or methods can replace entering the world of the poem itself, which remains inaccessible to any method or technique.

Thus, method does not contain the truth; rather, truth contains and transcends method, so the relationship between understanding and truth is a relationship of disclosure—truth is co-present with the experience of understanding as the experience of seeking the meaning of existence itself.

The result is that every human effort is an existence for truth—that is, a will to understand and a will to exist, or both together. The mission of understanding is ultimately to transcend the scientific version of truth and offer an ontological alternative.

It also emphasizes that truth is the twin of being, a meaning of elusiveness and infinity, which no entity can claim exclusively.

Here is the English translation of the provided text, which is a detailed philosophical discussion on Gadamer's hermeneutics and ontology of the artwork:

Chapter Two: The Hermeneutic Significance of the Ontology of Artwork

First: Essential Understanding and Intentional Understanding

Gadamer distinguishes between two types of understanding:

1. **Essential understanding:** This is the understanding of the content of truth (which unfolds through reading the text).
2. **Intentional understanding:** This is the understanding of the intentions and objectives of the author.

This distinction separates between understanding that two quantities are equal to a third equal quantity and understanding the motives and reasons that drive an individual to express the property of equality. Understanding is the perception of the psychological, individual, and historical data underlying the assertion of a particular proposition versus understanding the nature of that assertion, act, or behavior itself. What we understand is not the truth or significance of the assertion but rather the circumstances and context (often complex and intertwined) that allowed, in a particular situation and within a given context, the individual to assert a certain matter. Intentional understanding is a strategic means employed when essential understanding fails to grasp the truth of something; it is framed by the question: What precisely did this individual intend?

To clarify the idea of essential and intentional understanding, Gadamer presents the experience of art, considered an experience where the truth of understanding is manifested in grasping the truth of artistic works in light of the individual, social, and historical intentions and frameworks involved in shaping them as a complex set of multidimensional conditions. The artwork enters the personal interests of individuals and contains them in their entirety, much like the strategy of a game that engrosses its players and weaves around them a new world detached from their daily concerns, so that the game or artistic experience becomes like a dream for individuals from their lived experiences, drawing them into a labyrinth of an alien world, as Schiller noted in his critique of the strangeness of play.

Consciousness thus immerses itself in moments of a world foreign to its worries and concerns but adapts to its rules, standards, and specific requirements. The artwork (the game and the text share the same logic) therefore possesses a magical authority that subjects individuals to its normative system. Artwork is not a mere illusion or deception but rather an evaluation and re-establishment of the individual's life, because this communication between the world of artworks and the lived world grants the individual new patterns of vision and management. On the other hand, when individuals immerse themselves in the artwork, they do not remain passive observers, because their actual presence before the artwork imparts to it the reality of its existence and its normative authority. The relation between the individual and the artwork is a relation of participation. Artwork may exist independently from individuals to assert its own existence, but from this perspective, it would revert to a mere physical painting, statue, or architecture devoid of vitality and the power to impress individuals.

As Gadamer states, books exist for reading and musical pieces exist for listening. The teleological cause is a necessary condition for the actual existence of the artwork as experienced by individuals. Hence a conditional cycle that grants individuals the authority to evaluate and endow the artwork with meaning and grants the artwork the authority to engage individuals within its normative truth and reveal a truth known to the individuals.

Second: The Logic of Preconceptions

Gadamer goes beyond intentional understanding so that reading artwork and texts does not only focus on the visions and intentions of the author but also evaluates the artwork through its normative capacity and the motivations that stimulate individuals to create new modes of life and vital openness to the artwork. Unlike Schleiermacher and Dilthey, Gadamer moves from method to truth, because the reader's relationship to the

artwork, literary or philosophical text, is a relationship with truth understood as openness and disclosure in the sense Heidegger gives to the Greek word (Aletheia) meaning truth as unveiling.

However, this truth is inseparable from the pattern of lived experience and practice. It is not a transcendent truth detached from historical moments, but a truth immanent to the logic of experiences, intentions, and conceptions. The engagement of truth in experience regards understanding as poetic listening to what the artwork or text might say in the context of our current moment. Our relationship with it is our relationship with ourselves; it is like a mirror through which we see our reality and presentness. It concerns the fusion of horizons of meaning that we extract from our understanding of the text and the relation of this meaning to our current situation: the dialectic of the relationship established between the produced meaning and the consuming context.

Gadamer's detailed analysis of the structure of understanding cannot overlook pre-understanding or the theoretical and practical framework in which preconceptions are positioned. Whereas preconceptions were once a significant obstacle to clarity and obviousness during the Enlightenment, in Gadamer's hermeneutic thought they became an active element in interpretive understanding. Before any interpretation or detection of meaning that the text or artwork may contain, a pre-existing structure forms that places the text or artwork in a particular context and perspective. This reflects the infinite flow of meanings that move from consciousness to the objective (the text/artwork). Preconceptions indicate the involvement of consciousness in a particular historical and linguistic context.

Every understanding or interpretation that moves from reader to text is framed by language and history, not as epistemological obstacles but as methodological guidance that illuminates the path consciousness takes in observing its objects. It is not only the unity of immanent meaning presumed by the actual process of understanding: every understanding of a text presupposes that this unity is directed by transcendental preconceptions, in the relation of the text's goals to truth. The logic of preconception posits that before the text, there is another text—a pre-text; before understanding, there is another understanding—pre-understanding; and before interpretation, there is another interpretation—pre-interpretation.

These foundational preconditions posit that the themes intended by consciousness and the texts read by the interpreter are not independent or absolute data but are fused horizons of interpretations and present readings formed in the here and now of the present and others formed in the past. Thus, tradition (Tradition) with all its potentialities, semantic, symbolic, interpretive, and historical latent powers, is engaged in the present moment.

Every reading of a text or artwork—literary, philosophical—is a reading and interpretation of tradition, if the text or artwork is a network of interpretive and rhetorical relations formed throughout history. It is an interpretation of other interpretations that sought to understand the structure of tradition and investigate its function and validity. The text or artwork thus takes the form of a vessel containing previous interpretations, conceptions, discourses, and methodologies, as well as our own preconceptions and current interpretations.

From the above, we conclude the following:

1. The text is open to existence (historical, social, cognitive...).
2. The relation to the text is interpreted as an encounter with tradition.
3. Pre-interpretation or pre-understanding and present reading or understanding are fused horizons or interwoven worlds.
4. Pre-text (also included in the text) fuses with the text in a shifting and changing horizon (=context).

Third: Dialogue as Efficacy of Understanding

Besides the structure of understanding and preconceptions and the meeting of text with tradition, Gadamer raises the issue of dialogue as a fundamental dimension of effective understanding and real communication. This is because the questions he posed regarding the problem of subjectivity in understanding, arbitrariness in interpretation, and the authority of tradition in text understanding remained unresolved for methodological and epistemological reasons.

The dialogue that participants raise and enrich to address their topic presupposes the relativity of opinions and preconceptions raised about it; and knowledge is shared portions (regardless of their proportions and amounts), negating the absoluteness of conclusions and judgments reached by participants.

“A genuine dialogue requires that we incline to listen to the other, grant special attention to their opinion, and enter their thought to understand not the individual personally but what they say and express.”

Gadamer conceives dialogue as Socratic dialogue that excludes arbitrariness in judgments and tyranny in opinions, reverting to the ethical art whose goal is to reassess ideas and beliefs in light of the merging of opinions and assumptions through examination and transcendence: understanding is, above all, mutual understanding. Accordingly, consensus or agreement among people becomes a form of interpretive understanding as an experience and exercise and a link added to the circles of tradition.

Fourth: Artwork as a Model

Whereas Heidegger focused in his ontological philosophy on the experience of self-in-existence or Being-in-the-world (Dasein), rooted in time as retained and determined possibilities that frame "self-understanding," Gadamer expands the circle of understanding to become "being-with-the-other" through the experience of self-communication.

There is concern for self and interest in others because understanding as mutual understanding performs the function of participation in shaping meaning and signification, just as it applies mechanisms and means to extract meaning that circle around the horizons of self and other.

Gadamer says: "The artwork can be precisely defined as not being something produced and reproducible repeatedly. On the contrary, it is something that has emerged uniquely and manifested in a unique style. Thus, it seems more accurate to call it a creation."

That is, the nature of art is not to transform something pre-formed or to copy something pre-existing. Rather, art is a beginning through which something really emerges and appears as such.

The unique mission assigned to art in our contemporary life is its ability to diagnose the causes of tension and strangeness between humans and the world, and to assist humanity in restoring familiarity with the world through language at its multiple levels.

When Gadamer poses the question of the artwork, he does so based on aesthetic conceptions revolving around genius, inspiration, taste, and judgment... “For instance, in Kant and the idealist trend, the artwork is defined as the product of genius.”

Gadamer teaches us not to think in these terms but to think of art instead as an origin that announces and preserves the existential truth of a historical epoch.

Therefore, Gadamer criticized the central idea of aesthetic consciousness advocates who based their knowledge and truth conception on a holistic herm.

Sure! Here is an English translation of the text you provided, maintaining the academic style and nuance:

A Comprehensive Approach to Hermeneutic Experience

He states: "I begin by criticizing aesthetic consciousness in order to defend the experience of truth that the artwork conveys to us, in opposition to the aesthetic theory that remained confined to the concept of truth as it is in science. However, we do not limit ourselves here to justifying the truth of art; on the contrary, we try from this premise to enrich our conceptions to build a conception of knowledge and truth that corresponds with the universality of our hermeneutic experience."

The artwork communicates something to a person, and in doing so, it differs from the way a historical document tells something to the historian. The artwork says something to everyone as if it were said specifically for them, that is, as something new and contemporary. Thus, the artistic task presents itself as an understanding of a meaning being conveyed and making this meaning understandable to the self and the other. According to Gadamer, there is no direct conflict between the aesthetic and historical approaches; rather, the aesthetic approach is a moment of hermeneutic perception, the moment that allows us to be captivated by the artwork as art. This aesthetic moment is completed by the hermeneutic-historical task aimed at achieving understanding. Interpretation, for Gadamer, elevates art beyond being a subjective phenomenon. It allows for mediation between historical heritage, and cultural and linguistic contexts.

Hermeneutic theories owe much to Gadamer, who defends an aesthetic consciousness that evokes a hermeneutic awareness without making subjective experience the dominant theme in interpreting artworks. Such subjective control isolates the aesthetic experience and serves it from the flow of time, neglecting all that relates to the content of the artwork and separating art from knowledge, and form from content. Yet, the artwork's goal is not merely aesthetic pleasure; rather, it connects us directly with the world it refers to, which makes the interaction between us and it possible. When we encounter an artwork, we enter its world but return to ourselves, and our existence appears. The form is the medium that gives the artwork all its realizations. Aesthetic communication relies on participation and interaction without separating artistic performance from its tools and primary materials; they interact within the unity of truth that unites art, history, and language. The interpreter must restore the horizon that unifies them.

This conception led Gadamer to believe that the relationship between the artwork and the receiver stems from human nature itself, which makes it, in general, an issue with anthropological roots. He described this relationship as "play," which must be understood apart from jest or amusement. Instead, it is a serious intellectual framework that involves organized play based on solid foundations and refuses to be spontaneous or functionless.

The artwork communicates something to a person, differing from how a historical document tells something to a historian. The artwork says something to everyone as if said specifically for them, as something new and contemporary. Therefore, the artistic task presents itself as an understanding of meaning conveyed and making this meaning clear to the self and the other.

In Gadamer's view, art is play, but serious play with its own independent rules, sovereignty over the players, and specific regulations, with the aim of representing and conveying truth to the recipient. This truth in turn turns into a fixed form, which is the play itself. Play, as a fixed form, enables participation from the spectator (the receiver), provided they have prior awareness of the event of play. "The player is aware that play can only realize its actual being by existing within its world of specifically serious goals. The player fully understands this but does not want to think about this seriousness. Therefore, play is not complete and does not achieve its goals except when the player becomes lost in it." The artwork integrates the special interests of individuals fully, like play which absorbs its participants and weaves around them a new world detached from their daily concerns. Thus, play or artistic experience becomes a dream that uproots individuals from their reality and lived experiences.

However, this absorption is not passive; the audience is not a mere spectator or passive reactor, because their true being and existence before artworks grant these artworks their existence and normative authority. Their relationship with artworks is one of "participation and dialogue." As Gadamer said, "Tragedy exists only when performed, music only when played, and text only when read." In other words, the meaning of these works cannot be anything but tangible and material; the artwork cannot be treated in isolation and has no meaning. Gadamer states: "The artwork in itself can only be a pure abstraction." "What we call an artwork and subject it to an aesthetic experience is what is based on the realization and embodiment of the abstract." The text has no presence or effective meaning without mediating processes that grant it its pictorial dimensions and all its realizations. These realizations or embodiments are interpretations, since interpretation means, in one of its senses, reproduction. It is a re-appropriation closely related to the re-produced work, which the interpreter must represent, perform, or read according to the meaning it contains, preserving its unity and coherence.

The dialectic of understanding the artwork is based on the question posed by the artwork itself, the question that was the reason and origin of its existence. This question opens the horizon of our existential experience to receive the artwork, and the two experiences merge into a new product: the knowledge the artwork evokes in us.

This knowledge is not contained solely in the artwork or solely in our experience but is a new synthesis resulting from the interaction and fusion of our horizons with the truth expressed and embodied by the artwork. This means that the hermeneutic phenomenon inherently carries a question/answer structured dialogue. When the text presents itself as an object of interpretation, it poses a question to the interpreter. Hence, interpretation always includes a significant referral to the question posed, and understanding the text is understanding this question, which produces the interpretive horizon. Through the question, one cannot obtain only an answer but multiple and conflicting interpretations that produce the specific world of the text and shape its existence.

Grasping the artwork can only happen through multiple levels. The interpreting self creates, based on what the artwork provides, patterns of new meanings that transcend the immediate given. There is no interpretive act capable of containing all the artwork's components in a comprehensive holistic vision. If the artwork is a semantic mediating process and a mediator of the hermeneutic experience, this process confirms that there is a primary meaning and additional significations. The primary meaning forms the original and constant element; it is the initial and simple structure of signification. Based on this structure, the receiver can generate subjective additional significations, e.e., accepting that the first level can become a mere element within another level and within a specific context. The interpreter moves from the original stage—where the signification is perceived in its living dimensions—to the stage of reflective experience, where signification can only be cultural in nature.

Hence, there was a pressing need for a reading mechanism that would lift the veils from paintings to illuminate their shadows and darkness. Hermeneutics, as an integrative cognitive activity, is not limited to one practice but contains a model of interpretation and analysis to which all significant human practices in their individual and collective dimensions refer. This practice aims to produce meaning that does not depend on what is explicitly given in the text but evokes all prior knowledge that can place the text within trajectories not visible through the linear and direct manifestation of the text. In other words, this approach seeks to reveal semantic potentials, values, and renewed additional meanings transferred to a different space and time than they were originally, by entering these potentials into a dialogical relationship with new receivers. This confirms that this reading process can only be viewed as constructive.

This approach does not constitute a comprehensive coverage of the facts in the painting, nor does it claim to give a complete and final interpretation. It is a partial approach framed by prior judgments or contextual selections. There is no absolute interpretation; rather, it is about interpretive trajectories starting from perception and ending in action. The elements of the painting cannot be interpreted in isolation because all interpretation involves recalling a context, and every context is a special memory of shapes and colors. We approach the painting always based on a prior conception, vision, or possession, then return to reconsider these three elements, continuously cycling in this hermeneutic circle until reaching an acceptable understanding of the painting. This anticipatory nature is part of the way the painting's being is historically understood, upon which I focus toward a new use of things. Gazing and contemplation of these paintings in the Gadamerian sense will only focus on how we grasp the concept of time.

Paul Ricoeur emphasized in one of his conceptions of time and narrative that actual perception of time can only be through storytelling, and there is no time outside human experience; he says: "The common character of human experience, which is distinguished and articulated by the act of storytelling in all its forms, is temporality. Everything we narrate happens in time, takes time, and runs temporally. What happens in time can be narrated, and any temporal sequence is only recognized as such insofar as it can be narrated in one way or another."

I repeat, time, in other words, can only be inscribed within a figurative painting because human experience is holistic and needs highly rich and diverse expressive materials; art is one of these revealing aspects. What would we know about love, hatred, goodness, brokenness, anxiety, and waiting without the embodiment of these values in artistic expressions? Time is manifested in the form of a painted image that is originally a story, and the self only recognizes itself indirectly through symbols and narratives. Through a medium, here is a visual medium. Therefore, it can be said that the re-imaging or reshaping of being accomplished by the figurative image confirms this aspect of self-knowledge. The self does not perceive or realize itself based on what the fact provides in its determinate and initial dimensions but in a way that allows the self to free itself from the absolute and general to delve into the particular and cultural; that is, through the displacement of all kinds of cultural signs, produced based on symbolic mediating processes that always essentially produce action, including figurative art. There is a signifying link between the artistic function represented by the figurative image and human experience.

From this perspective, shaping granted things dimensions remove them from the circles of utility and immediacy toward what constitutes deep meaning and a decisive tool in organizing human experience. Figurative painting is a way to give the continuously fragmented human self a form that realizes and an image suitable for all its experiences. It is, in other words, a shaping and formulation of our experience in this life. "This necessarily includes a reshaping of our temporal experience."

If lived experience is fundamentally conflicted, art generally brings it harmony and provides expressive forms that organize it into molds and give it true coherence. Figurative art is not only a pictorial and representative form of life that reproduces it but a production, innovation, and semantic generation. It borrows from life but transforms it. It also seeks to compose among conflicting elements in their states, goals, and unexpected horizons. According to this thesis, time becomes human only insofar as it is articulated artistically, where figurative art represents an ontological status and turns into a primary source of knowledge about the self and the world. It is truly an ontological exploration tool of our relationship with beings and existence.

Conversely, feelings of loss, fall, and brokenness may push us to return to the womb because it grants us warmth, security, and reassurance. In other words, a desire to return to before birth, before existence. The body (woman's body) was nothing but a synonym for the first place in the artist's memory; it is an expression of nostalgia for that place and a hidden desire to return symbolically to the world of the womb, both geographically and psychologically. This is originally a symbolic return. Mircea Eliade confirms this by saying: "The myths and the initiatory rituals related to retreating to the womb reveal this truth: (the return to origin) prepares for the new birth, but this birth does not replicate the first physical birth."

Specifically, there is a new artistic birth, or in other words, reaching a new mode of existence. This resounding cry in the earth is the actual culmination of that labor—a birth and emergence into light—and the newborn's first cry is proof of its health. One cannot speak of this birth except as a burst and emergence from the world of waiting/falling. It is not limited to emergence only but also the insistence on rejecting with all its authenticity the time of brokenness and waiting because they bring shame and decay.

This contemplation of this or that painting would not have been possible without the embodiment of the creator's experience in a stable medium, the artwork or form, which makes the sharing process possible between the creator and the receiver. "The fusion of truth or existence latent in the artwork is so complete that the resulting product is something new. This clear independence of the artwork is not isolated independence without purpose except aesthetic pleasure but a mediator of knowledge in the deep sense. The receiver's experience of the artwork makes this knowledge possible and shareable."

The contents conveyed by the artwork to the receiver have no significance in themselves; they are only perceived through a form that embodies them and grants them all their achieved semantic dimensions through possible articulations and updates them within different interpretive horizons. What we understand about the meaning of this work is a form, no matter. "Thus, perceiving any content requires transforming it into a form, and this transformation goes through revealing the semantic units that inform the material content, which are also responsible for projecting possible contexts." There is no existence of the artwork in itself; the possibility of signification within it only occurs through giving it a form that provides all its realizations.

Fifth: The Logic of Question and Answer as an Interpretive Medium

Although Gadamer focuses on the truth and content of the artwork, he turns to the importance of form. For him, form is the medium through which the artist transforms their existential experience into a fixed given, making it an experience open to coming generations. Thus, Gadamer gave the stability of artistic form both power and dynamism. Form not only evokes aesthetic pleasure but is a medium of knowledge in the deep sense, knowledge impossible without embodying the creator's existential experience in a fixed medium, the form or the artwork itself, which makes the sharing process possible and qualifies the experience for transformation and change. The possibility of signification and producing some meaning inside the artwork or any event cannot be achieved except through this formalization or transformation into form, which applies to all components of life itself. "Every activity is only perceived and determined through its manifestation in a certain form within time and space, for life itself is only determined as a creator of forms, because it is form and form is the pattern of life."

Gadamer says: "I call the transformation into form or (work) that transformation that gives human play its actual being and its complete image to become art. Thanks to this transformation, play can answer its idea in a way that enables us to perceive and understand it in its specific individuality." The phrase "transformation into form" carries a profound significance; among its meanings, according to Gadamer, is that what existed before no longer has current effect, and even what is present now does not truly exist. What is displayed or depicted in the artwork is the eternal truth expressed by this work. The truth implied by the artwork is not fixed but changes from generation to generation and from one historical context to another according to the changing horizons and experiences of receivers. However, the fixed medium or artistic form is what makes the processes of understanding and interpretation possible. On this basis, meaning is not immanent to the artwork but the outcome of what the interpreter or receiver adds to the material existence that characterizes the work.

The relationship between the interpreter and the artwork is not immediate or directly perceived in its direct dimensions but is governed by a huge amount of mediation forms (language, art, history...). The interpretation of the artwork based on all this is the outcome of possible relations and forms of dialogue and interaction between the text and the receiver. What justifies all possible references connecting the components of the hermeneutic activity is these relations themselves. Therefore, hermeneutic activity can only be spoken through participation and dialogue between the interpreter and the text. This participation is an interweaving of the text's presuppositions and those of the interpreter, resulting in deriving additional suggestive meanings that carry values different from what is explicitly given in the work or event. Some of these meanings are accepted, others set aside, placing us before interpretive selections of a contextual nature. This participation between the presumptions of the work and those of the interpreter refers to the "belonging" relation that binds the interpreter to heritage.

This participation, which develops through the dialectic of question and answer, is itself the focal point of an interpretive process and is not a concentrated given. Interpretation cannot stop at the limits of direct assignment of things. Mediation is a necessary, undisputed condition, and humans cannot perceive themselves and the world simultaneously apart from the obligatory mediation forms mentioned. This concept of the mediator leads us to a further definition of the artwork. If the artwork is a mediating element, mediation means canceling the immediacy of the relationship between human and their external environment. Any interpretation (or behavior) is based on prior knowledge, judgments, and assumptions that determine the interpretation's material—its position within certain laws.

Accordingly, the only means of grasping the world and the self will be this cultural and semantic mediator. Since perception does not happen directly but through interpretive forms, the artwork will rely on common cultural laws produced from cultural and historical forms stored in collective memory (the authority of heritage and traditions) as laws and condensations of a set of meaningful human practices.

Thus, shaping establishes art, and art establishes history; humans will have history only insofar as truth is revealed to them, settled within artworks. Hence the necessity of art emerges as an ontological and historical necessity. In other words, according to Gadamer, art is simultaneously beauty and truth; anything else leads to estrangement from it. Art is deeply connected to existence and people, and our reception of it, based on our aesthetic awareness, cultivates our sense of estrangement from it.

Gadamer's thesis is that the being of art cannot be defined or reduced to a mere aesthetic subject. Art expresses beauty and produces truth simultaneously, as evident in the tremendous power of artistic works in their ability to generate meaning, reveal veils, and illuminate dark areas.

Research Summaries

1. The fundamental dimension of the hermeneutic experience, according to Gadamer, lies in **"listening to Being"** rather than in **"mastery over beings."** This distinction can be understood as Gadamer's philosophical effort to shift the problem of truth in the human sciences away from the Western modern notion of self-mastery toward the concept of **"dialectic,"** which forms a guiding horizon, enabling thought about existence itself as the house and origin of all truths.
2. Gadamer intended to point out that **"method is, in fact, a form of dogmatism** that separates the interpreter from the act, acting as a barrier between them and the text, preventing the text from being

- experienced in its fullness and completeness.” However, Gadamer does not reject the method outright; rather, he seeks to broaden the scope of understanding in the human sciences to eliminate the conflict between subjectivity and objectivity in the process of knowledge. Thus, I believe Habermas misunderstands Gadamer when accusing him of hostility toward science and method. Contrary to Habermas’s view, Gadamer’s insistence on the primacy of the question of truth should be understood as an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of subjective certainty or methodological dogmatism. The task of hermeneutics is to elevate the relationship with tradition from one of domination to one of participation and understanding. Let the reader understand me well.
3. Gadamer’s profound diagnosis enables us to distinguish between the **breadth and comprehensiveness of hermeneutic understanding** on one hand, and the **narrow, one-sided, methodological interpretation and its limitation in relation to the text and tradition** on the other. Hermeneutic understanding is open and inclusive rather “embraces and does not exclude” whereas methodological interpretation, through arbitrary arrogance and subjective hubris, seeks to subsume the text into ready-made frameworks. “Method is the effort exerted by the interpreter to measure and control the text; it is the opposite of letting the phenomenon guide us.”
 4. Gadamer’s hermeneutics centers on **the problem of method, truth, and the pathways through which truth is revealed in the human sciences.**
 5. Gadamer sees hermeneutic understanding as **the philosophical ambition to transcend claims such as possessing absolute certainty and complete knowledge of the world and existence, focusing instead on the interpretation of itself and questioning its mechanisms.** This makes hermeneutics an ambitious project to understand human beings and enable them to understand themselves in terms of their being and existence in the world. Hermeneutic understanding has thus been entrusted with breaking the stranglehold imposed by the transcendental givenness of reflective philosophy, transforming the classical “method–truth” relationship from a dogmatic positivist framework.
 6. Gadamer exhibits a strong desire to establish a **philosophical hermeneutics** that undertakes a comprehensive revision of all that philosophy has offered, even conducting a new ontological reconciliation between **“self and other,” “I and the other.”** Accordingly, Gadamer’s hermeneutics does not stop at critiquing natural science methods but extends its critique to modern philosophy as a whole—that is, modernity insofar as it represents the precise expression of “I” or subjectivity. The self is not capable of understanding the world by itself; rather, it increases the veil of blindness that separates us from Being and fails to reach the ontological competence involved in the question of understanding.
 7. It is the **negative dogmatism of Western reason** that drove Gadamer to proclaim philosophical hermeneutics. His reformist and critical orientations fall within the phenomenological philosophical framework, which tends toward criticizing natural sciences, focusing on essences, rejecting the subject-object dichotomy, adhering to the concept of being-in-the-world, and wholly refusing any attempt to secularize, normalize, or reduce the human sciences to servants of method.
 8. Gadamer recognized that the crisis facing the human sciences is a crisis of **independence and uniqueness.** Hence, his strategic choice was that hermeneutics must distance itself from being a mere set of rules and principles. This means that hermeneutics must be constituted **in the spirit of the text and tradition in all its existential twists and historical and epistemological dispersals.**
 9. Gadamer strives to establish the idea that hermeneutics is not about a set of rules and principles for understanding and interpretation but is rather an **ontological hermeneutics** that investigates the conditions and possibilities of understanding more than it seeks rules or techniques for it.
 10. Gadamer excluded the process of understanding both from method and the transcendental self simultaneously. This separation had philosophical implications for contemporary Western thought. It formed a horizon that overcame the “I” that characterized modernity and Kantian aesthetics on the one hand, and on the other, linked the process of understanding with truth as a disclosure and opening of Being. Understanding is thus a dialogue between subject and object, I and other, the horizon of the reader and the horizon of the text, the horizon of the past and the horizon of the present—what Gadamer called the **“fusion of horizons.”**

11. Gadamer distinguishes between **epistemological understanding, based on techniques and mechanisms, and ontological understanding, based on participation and dialogue**. He sees the latter as a valid foundation upon which a hermeneutics supporting human sciences can be established.
12. Gadamer identifies his interpretive tools within general objectives: the necessity for the text to be open to existence (historical, social, epistemological) first, then reading the text in its traditional context, followed by the fusion of horizons in a continuous process that takes dialogue as an effective tool for understanding.
13. Gadamer's understanding of reading and interpretation in his book *Truth and Method* closely resembles Heidegger's stance. He accepts responsibility for confronting the prior Enlightenment demand based on Descartes' principle of critique and the autonomous self, which for Gadamer resulted in what he called "**prejudice against prejudice**." Gadamer agrees with Heidegger that **prejudice (or fore-understanding) is not an obstacle to interpretation but the sole basis upon which it is built**. This referential framework is the horizon that accompanies us in understanding the other. For Gadamer, history does not belong to us, but we belong to history. Before we understand ourselves through self-examination, we understand ourselves intuitively in family, society, and state. Subjectivism is a distorted mirror; individual self-awareness is merely a disturbance in a separate circle of historical life. Therefore, individual prejudice is far greater than individual judgments and constitutes the historical truth of one's existence.
14. Gadamer argues that instead of discarding prejudices to adopt others, the foundation of understanding should be built on **testing, clarification, modification, and expansion of our assumptions**. The act of interpretation and understanding occurs when the horizon of our prejudice's merges with the horizon of the text or person we seek to understand. The task of hermeneutics is to clarify this miracle of understanding, which is not a mysterious exchange of souls but participation in shared meaning.
15. Gadamer shares Heidegger's commitment to viewing understanding not merely as a possible act of the self but as a **human mode of being that constitutes the entire human experience of existence in the world**, which can subsequently be made intelligible in terms of temporality and historicity. Therefore, it is important to realize that Gadamer's focus is primarily on a matter logically separate from the real diversity of cases of interpretation and their appropriate methodologies because it is ontologically prior to them.
16. Gadamer's seminal work, *Truth and Method*, is an extensive explanation and extension of Heidegger's idea. Gadamer focuses mainly on the distorted interrelation of truth with natural sciences in modernity. His idea is that the empirical method is not the sole means of attaining truth, as embraced by natural sciences. The "and" in the title signifies separation rather than conjunction. Gadamer proposes a more important level of access to truth that coincides with interpretive reflection. In response to natural science's tendency to overlook the primordial view of understanding, Gadamer proposes a twofold theory of interpretation: one reformist and the other metaphysical, alongside other cultural phenomena, thus predicting all methodological attempts. He is concerned with explaining understanding as a comprehensive concept, seen as the essence of our being in the world. To illustrate how we arrived at the current state and facilitate recovering prior concepts of truth and interpretation, Gadamer presents two intertwined narratives in his book. The first recounts in the Western philosophical tradition as a fall from heights and a potential future salvation in this humiliating fall. Scientific methods began to dominate the concept of truth post-Descartes. The subject and object, existence and thought were not fully separated, but with the advent of Cartesian duality, alienation became foundational to Western philosophy. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is the most important document in this legacy, providing a sophisticated justification based on knowledge of natural sciences. Art challenged this legacy; according to Gadamer, art was systematically isolated from the world of truth due to the dominant discourse of natural sciences. Therefore, Gadamer's critique of aesthetic consciousness aims to restore this legacy to interpretive theory. "Play" or "game" is especially important because it can overcome the subject-object divide. In a game, for instance, we commit to a set of rules beyond individual subjectivity, participating in it as an event rather than confronting it as an object. Through this participation, the self is transformed. Similarly, our relation to art is analogous: we do not face literary

work as a self-recognizing an object but participate in the play that is true art, thus transforming ourselves. For Gadamer, play is the truth and essence of authentic art.

17. The second narrative concerns **interpretive heritage**. Gadamer holds that the foundational roots of interpretive theory are intimately connected to the quest for the correct meaning of texts, seeking the original meaning regardless of whether the text has religious or secular roots. When the legitimate activity of interpretation is added to these two traits, we can understand why pre-Romantic hermeneutics was powerfully based on threefold stages: understanding, explanation, and application. According to Gadamer, hermeneutic theory deviates from its original mission. With Schleiermacher, hermeneutics became tied to reconstituting psychological states. Even when possessing important insights into the nature of interpretation, nineteenth-century hermeneutics reverted to the subject-object split, a duality reinforced by methodological thinking.

In conclusion, I can only echo Paul Ricoeur's words: Something important happens when writing replaces speech: it calls for a reader so that the meaning it carries becomes the joint product of writer and reader. Writing permits separation from the author's intention; to read it is to follow the intellectual direction opened by writing. Writing is openness—it opens the space for the reader's self to perform its act, the act of appropriating the written text. Reading is the concrete act in which the meaning of the text is completed.

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