

Notes from

Hermeneutics:

Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer

—a book by Richard E. Palmer (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1969)

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PART I: ON THE DEFINITION, SCOPE, AND SIGNIFICANCE OF HERMENEUTICS

1. INTRODUCTION

3- The 'New Hermeneutic' is the dominant movement in Protestant theology in Europe (with Gerhard Ebeling). For Heidegger, philosophy should be 'hermeneutical'.

4- Hirsch proposes hermeneutics as a foundation for all literary interpretation. Palmer will provide here a general introduction to hermeneutics with a view to contribute to literary interpretation. Webster's definition: hermeneutics is "the study of the methodological principles of interpretation and exploration; *specif.*: the study of the general principles of biblical interpretation").

5- Palmer favours a phenomenological approach to interpretation.

Some Consequences of Common-Sense Objectivity in American Literary Criticism.

Suffering from naive realism, it thinks of the work as separate from one's perception or from the author's intention, as a 'being' in itself. "The preliminary separation of subject and object, so axiomatic in realism, becomes the philosophical foundation and framework for literary interpretation."

6- This may be fruitful but is questionable under phenomenological assumptions. Modern literary criticism imitates the scientist's approach; analysis and interpretation become synonymous [*for the New Criticism - JAGL*]. They denounce the affective fallacy and promote a technological approach to interpretation

7- —but these promote the indifference to literature bewailed by the same critics. Cf. Merleau-Ponty's observation: "Science manipulates things and gives up living in them." Palmer: "Dialogue, not dissection, opens up the world of a literary work. Disinterested objectivity is not appropriate to the understanding of a literary work." We should see works as "humanly created texts which speak"; Palmer opposes Frye's 'anatomies' and advocates "a humanistic

understanding of what interpretation of a work involves."

Literary Interpretation, Hermeneutics, and the Interpretation of Works

The work is not simply an "object". It is the work of a man or of God, and as such it needs to be seen as meaningful. "This 'deciphering' process, this 'understanding' the meaning of a work, 8- is the focus of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the study of understanding, especially the task of understanding texts." It is a humanistic and historical mode of understanding, beyond the (necessary) treatment of the work as object. Hermeneutics is not a set of devices, but an attention to (1) understanding a text, (2) the nature of understanding and interpretation. These are interacting foci in hermeneutics.

9- Existing is a constant process of interpretation. Interpretation exceeds linguistic interpretation; it is the basis of human interaction, more basic than language (although language is an essential element in human communication). Palmer favours a complex concept of interpretation in criticism. The work should be seen as a voice, not as an object—*hearing* it.

10- "understanding is both an epistemological and an ontological phenomenon"; understanding a work of literature is "an historical encounter which calls forth personal experience of being here in the world." "As a German current of thought, hermeneutics came to be profoundly influenced by German phenomenology and existential philosophy." Hermeneutics transcends disciplines: it is fundamental, more than interdisciplinary. And it clarifies the nature and the task of the humanities.

2. HERMENEUEIN AND HERMENEIA: THE MODERN SIGNIFICANCE OF THEIR ANCIENT USAGE

12- Meaning "to interpret", "interpretation." Cf. Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias*; a frequent word in Greek.

The Origins and Three Directions of the Meaning of *Hermeneuein-Hermeneia*

13- The "*Hermios*" was the priest at the Delphic oracle. Cf. Hermes, the messenger-god (derived from *hermeneuein* or vice-versa?). "Hermes is associated with the function of transmuting what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp." Hermes discovered language and writing, tools to grasp and transmit meaning. Cf. in Plato's *Ion*, the poets "hermenes eisin ton theon", are the messengers of the gods. *Hermeneuein* means 'coming to understand' in all three basic directions: (1) *to express* aloud in words, that is, 'to say'; (2) *to explain*, as in explaining a situation; and (3) *to translate*, as in the translation of a foreign tongue."

14- Critics are ignorant of theological hermeneutics.

***Hermeneuein* as 'to say' - 'express', 'assert'; it is the first basic meaning. Cf. the 'announcing'**

function of Hermes, cf. Lat. *sermo* and *verbum*?

15- Saying is 'proclaiming'; "Even simply saying, asserting or proclaiming is an important act of interpretation." Interpretation also understood as style, e.g. interpreting music. *Hermeneia* as oral recitation (of Homer, etc., e.g. in *Ion*). The 'interpreter' conveys more than he realizes, he is a vehicle for Homer's message. Homer too interprets. Even today, written language must be transformed into spoken, "it calls for its lost power."

16- Writing as an alienation of speech from itself, a "Selbstentfremdung der Sprache" (Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* 370-71); "language in its original form is heard rather than seen, and . . . there are good reasons why oral language is understood more easily than written language." Oral language is creative. Reading is a dialectical grasping of meaning, supplying attitude and emphasis to the text. A circle: Understanding guides the supplementation of meaning.

17- Implications for teaching; oral genres vs. written genres. But even in writing the 'inner ear' ears dialogues. "Every silent reading of a literary text is a disguised form of oral interpretation."

18- According to the New Criticism, the text speaks by itself. But the critic actually supplies the loss implicit in written words: "the New Critic would undoubtedly agree that a truly 'enabling' criticism is one that is aimed at a more adequate oral reading of the text itself, so that the text can exist as meaningful oral happening in time, a being whose true nature and integrity can shine forth." Criticism must restore the temporal, dynamic *being* of the work, not an atemporal essence or thing. "*An adequate literary criticism moves toward the oral interpretation of the work on which it is focused.*" Christianity emphasizes the power of the *oral* word.

19- Against 'speed-reading'. The Bible is a *message*, not 'information'. The scientific approach is different from literary, religious or historical interpretation. Not signs but sound; Palmer advocates transforming writing into speech, emphasizing the expressive dimension.

20- ***Hermeneuein* as 'to Explain'** - Explaining, accounting, as the second moment after 'saying'. It is also the second direction in Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias*:

21- "Aristotle defines *hermeneia* as referring to the operation of the mind in making statements which have to do with the truth or falsity of a thing. 'Interpretation' in this sense is the primary operation of the intellect in formulating a true judgment about a thing." Meaning understood as *statement*, for Aristotle: other [speech acts] are derived from this. *Interpretations* as statements of truth or falsity—not instrumental 'statements'. But it does not equal logic: "Enunciation is the formulation of the statements themselves, not the process of reasoning from known to unknown things." It is more fundamental than logic, rhetoric, or poetics: it has to do with the construction of statements.

22- There is a shading of statement into explanation, of principles into happenings. "Yet Aristotle was right to situate the moment of interpretation earlier than the processes of logical analysis"; this is correct, against the modern tendency which forgets that 'saying' is already interpreting; "the literary critic calls his analysis of a work interpretation; it would be correct

also to call his way of seeing the work itself interpretation"; "the 'understanding' that serves as the foundation for interpretation is itself already shaping and conditioning interpretation—it is a preliminary interpretation, but one that can make all the difference because it sets the stage for subsequent interpretation." —Even the interpretation of a poem as a poem.

23- "Indeed, method and object cannot be separated: method has already delimited *what* we shall see." The selection of tools for explanation is already interpretation: "analysis is not the primary interpretation but a derivative form; it has preliminary set the stage with an essential and primary interpretation before it ever begins to work with the data" —in *all* areas.

24- Jesus as hermeneut in the New Testament: he explains passages of the Old Testament relating to himself, thus providing the right context both for the text and for himself: "meaning is a matter of context . . . Only within a given context is an event meaningful." — "Significance is a relationship to the listener's own projects and intentions" . . . "an object does not have significance outside of a relationship to someone, and . . . the relationship determines the significance"; "all explanatory interpretation assumes intention in those to whom the explanation is directed." "Explanatory interpretation . . . must be made within a horizon of already granted meanings and intentions" called *preunderstanding*.

25- "It might be asked what horizon of interpretation a great literary text inhabits, and then how the horizon of an individual's own world of intentions, hopes, and preinterpretation is related to it. This merging of two horizons must be considered a basic element in all explanatory interpretation." "For the interpreter to 'perform' the text [orally], he must 'understand' it: he must preunderstand the subject and the situation before he can enter the horizon of its meaning. Only when he can step into the magic circle of its horizon can the interpreter understand its meaning. This is that mysterious 'hermeneutical circle' without which the meaning of the text cannot emerge."; "a partial understanding is used to understand still further", dialectically. "The function of explanatory interpretation in literary interpretation may be seen, in this context, as an effort to lay the foundation in 'pre-understanding' for an understanding of the text."

26- This is not 'psychologism', but rather the ground for both a psychologism and anti-psychologism. For Gurwitsch, "object and method can never be separated. Of course, this is a truth foreign to the realistic way of seeing" (Palmer).

27- **Hermeneuein as 'to translate'**. "Translation is a special form of the basic interpretive process of 'bringing to understanding'" —it makes us aware of how much language shapes our world-view.

28- The problem of translating cultural equivalents. The problem of Bultmann's project of demythologizing the New Testament: the same in literature, when we claim its universal significance.

29- "An approach to literature which sees the work as an object apart from perceiving subjects easily and automatically avoids the question of what really constitutes the human significance of a work." Palmer opposes formal analyses—a pastime for English professors—and advocates

keeping literature humanly significant and alive. "Teachers of literature need to become experts in 'translation' more than 'analysis'" — "recognizing the problem of a conflict of horizons and taking steps to deal with it, rather than sweeping it under the rug and concentrating on analytical games."

30- The world-view of a work is integral to its understanding, not some sort of historical fallacy. Palmer approves of Auerbach's view: "*the underlying sense of reality* is a key to understanding."

31- Early hermeneutics always involved translation among its problems (biblical, etc.).— Translation is the "very heart of hermeneutics." "There are always two worlds, the world of the text and that of the reader, and consequently there is the need for Hermes to 'translate' from one to the other."

3. SIX MODERN DEFINITIONS OF HERMENEUTICS

33- "the field of hermeneutics has been interpreted (in roughly chronological order) as (1) the theory of biblical exegesis; (2) general philological methodology; (3) the science of all linguistic understanding; (4) the methodological foundation of *Geisteswissenschaften* [i.e. the humanities]; (5) phenomenology of existence and of existential understanding; and (6) the systems of interpretation, both recollective and iconoclastic, used by man to reach the meaning behind myths and symbols."

34- Each of these, as a 'moment' and point of view, brings to light specific sides of interpretation.

Hermeneutics as a Theory of Biblical Exegesis. This is the earliest moment, and hermeneutics developed here.

The first occurrence as a book was in J. C. Dannhauer's (1654); *Hermeneutica sacra sive methodis exponendarum sacrarum litterarum* — not a work of exegesis, but of *methodology*, of the theory of exegesis. There were many protestant manuals between 1720 and 1820 as an aid to ministers without resource to authority in their interpretations.

35- Although the most common meaning in English is still the one referring to biblical interpretation, when the use of the word broadens, it refers to obscure texts requiring a special method to extract hidden meaning. E.g. in Edward Burnett Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871), I, 319: "No legend, no allegory, no nursery rhyme, is safe from the hermeneutics of of a thorough-going mythologic theorist." Hermeneutics is 'retroactively' extended to exegesis in "Old Testament times, when there were canons for properly interpreting the Torah." In the New Testament, Jesus relates to the Old Testament; also John's Gospel, and the Pauline letters: it is already a system:

36- "in a certain sense, theology itself as the historical interpreter of the biblical message is hermeneutics." Summary history:

"The history of biblical hermeneutics could be traced through the primitive Church; the patriarchs; medieval fourfold interpretation of the Bible; Luther's struggle against mystical, dogmatics, humanistic, and the other systems of interpretation; the rise of the critical-historical method in the eighteenth century and the complex forces at work in this period to reshape the interpretation of Scripture; Schleiermacher's contribution; the history-of-religions school in relation to interpretation; the rise of dialectical theology in the 1920's, and the New Hermeneutic of contemporary theology."

There is a tendency to rely on a "system", a search for a "hermeneutical principle" as a referential guide. "The text is not interpreted in terms of itself; indeed, this may be an impossible ideal." "In this sense hermeneutics is the interpreter's system for finding the 'hidden' meaning of a text."

Problem of the scope of hermeneutics. Does it include unstated, implicit principles in exegesis?

37- As such, it becomes a history of theology. A wholesale history of hermeneutics becomes unmanageable in this approach. Betti provides the greatest contribution (*Teoria generale della interpretazione*, 1955).

38- Besides, history by itself does not provide new principles.

Hermeneutics as Philological methodology

In the 18th century, both the 'grammatical' and the 'historical' schools of biblical interpretation affirmed that the interpretive methods applying to the Bible were precisely those for other books. Johann August Ernesti, *Institutio Interpretis Novi Testamenti* (1761) argues that "the verbal sense of Scripture must be determined in the same way in which we ascertain that of other books" (Ernesti). Spinoza, in *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (1670): "the norm of biblical exegesis can only be the light of reason common to all" (Spinoza).

39- The Bible was thus kept above history, was intellectualized. "The task of exegesis, then, was to go deeply into the text, using the tools of natural reason, and to find those great moral truths intended by the New Testament writers but hidden within different historical terms." — A kind of demythologization. Grammatical and historical techniques developed in the 18th c.

40- Similarly in classical philology. Hermeneutics became identified with philological methodology.

Hermeneutics as the Science of Linguistic Understanding

Schleiermacher's contribution. A radical critique of philology leads to a general hermeneutics applicable to all kinds of text interpretation. This is the beginning of a nondisciplinary hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics as the Methodological Foundation for the *Geisteswissenschaften*.

41- With Dilthey, Schleiermacher's biographer, hermeneutics becomes the methodological foundation of [the humanities] the *Geisteswissenschaften*, those "disciplines focused on understanding man's art, actions, and writings", which require an act of historical understanding (unlike the quantifying scientific grasp of the natural world). Dilthey advocates a "critique of historical reason" —but the basis for this on psychology fails; hermeneutics is required.

Hermeneutics as the Phenomenology of Dasein and of Existential Understanding

42- Heidegger. *Being and Time* (1927) as a "hermeneutic of Dasein," a phenomenological explication of human existence itself. "Understanding" and "interpretation" are seen as foundational modes of man's being. Hermeneutics is connected with ontology and phenomenology. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics in *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) provides a history of hermeneutics, and "an effort to relate hermeneutics to aesthetics and to the philosophy of historical understanding." In Gadamer, Hegel, and Heidegger we find the "concept of 'historically operative consciousness', dialectically interacting with tradition as transmitted through the text." "Hermeneutics is an encounter with Being through language" —due to the linguistic character of human nature.

43- Hermeneutics as a System of Interpretation: Recovery of Meaning versus Iconoclasm

Paul Ricœur, *De l'interprétation* (1965). Back to textual exegesis (in a wide sense) and insights from psychoanalysis. "Hermeneutics is the process of deciphering which goes from manifest content and meaning to latent or hidden meaning." Univocal vs. equivocal symbols—e.g. mathematical symbols vs. objects of hermeneutics; "hermeneutics has to do with symbolic texts which have multiple meanings."

44- A distrust of surface meaning in Freud, and iconoclasm. Ricœur opposes a loving interpretation to the destruction of the symbol as the representation of a false reality (2). Two opposing attitudes, the second is prominent in Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud; for them thinking is an exercise in suspicion. "Because of the two antithetical approaches to the interpretation of symbols today, Ricœur asserts, there can be no universal canons for exegesis but only separate and opposing theories concerning the rules of interpretation."

45- Ricœur advocates the former approach to interpretation. The challenge is to make philosophy creatively hermeneutical.

4. THE CONTEMPORARY BATTLE OVER HERMENEUTICS: BETTI VERSUS GADAMER

46- Two main traditions today: Schleiermacher & Dilthey's tradition vs. Heidegger's, i.e. hermeneutics as "a general body of methodological principles which underlie interpretation" vs. "hermeneutics as a philosophical exploration of the character and requisite conditions for all understanding"—now they are represented in the opposition between Betti and Gadamer.

46-47- "The demythologizing theologian Rudolf Bultmann and the two leaders of the New Hermeneutics, Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs— can be grouped together as allies of Gadamer's basically Heideggerian and phenomenological approach." E. D. Hirsch sides with Betti and pleads for a return to objectivity, "a reaffirmation that the study of history involves leaving behind the historian's own present standpoint." Gadamer claims that he describes what is —*ontology*, not methodology.

48- For Betti, there is a morass of relativity, a standardlessness, in Gadamer and Heidegger.

Hermeneutics in Bultmann, Ebeling, and Fuchs

Rudolf Bultmann is the major Protestant theologian of the 20th century, sets forth a demythologizing project in *Jesus* (1926) and *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (1941): "demythologization does not presume to delete or bypass the mythical elements in the New Testament but to emphasize in them the original and saving meaning"

49 —against the shallow literalism in the modern way of seeing; against language understood as mere information: it is a way to confront God and self-understanding. The mythical symbol is a window to the sacred. "To interpret the symbol is to recollect its original, authentic, but now hidden, meaning." Bultmann is influenced by Heidegger, whose ontology is unconsciously religious: in both man appears as a future-oriented, historically existing being. Language is full with personal import and a power to command; cf. Heidegger on the derivative character of logical assertions and of objectivity.

50- God or Being confronts man as Word, and Bultmann calls for an existential self-understanding. But "He still sees hermeneutics as the philosophy that should guide exegesis rather than as understanding theory per se". In "The Problem of Hermeneutics" (1950) he emphasizes freedom of inquiry; the Bible is equivalent to other books as respects interpretation:

51- the problem is "what is the character of historical knowledge?" The interpreter's preunderstanding guides interpretation (as in Heidegger). The historian sees from a viewpoint; "he is open principally to the side of the historical process disclosed to questions arising out of that viewpoint. However objectively he may pursue his subject, the historian cannot escape his own understanding." The objective is known through becoming subjective—a purely objective, standpointless meaning, does not exist. Meaning arises out of the interpreter's relation to the future.

52- Cf. Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy: the historian is part of the field he observes. "Historical knowledge is in itself an historical event" (a notion already found in R. G. Collingwood's *The Idea of History*, 1946); for Bultmann, it is only eschatologically, after history, that objectivity is possible.

53- Gerhard Ebeling (*Word and Faith*) and Ernst Fuchs follow Bultmann with greater emphasis on language: "word-event theology." According to Ebeling, "Hermeneutics as the theory of

understanding must therefore be the theory of words" (*Word and Faith*); the goal of hermeneutics is the removal of hindrances to understanding. History is understood as a living reality coming to expression in words: one should focus on its meaning, instead of its factuality.

54- Ebeling departs from the realistic objectivity of historical facts: in theology this position is attacked by Wolfhart Pannenberg, and outside theology by Betti.

Betti's Hermeneutics. Emilio Betti is a historian of law. In *Die Hermeneutik als allgemeine Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften* (1962) he opposes the hermeneutics of Gadamer, Bultmann and Ebeling arguing that "it does not serve as a methodology or aid to methodology for the humane studies and . . . it jeopardizes the legitimacy of referring to the objective status of objects of interpretation and thus renders questionable the objectivity of interpretation itself."

55- His *Teoria generale della interpretazione* (1955) presents itself as a renewal of the old German tradition. Its aim is

56- "to differentiate among the various modes of interpretation in the humane disciplines and to formulate a foundational body of principles with which to interpret human actions and objects. If a distinction is to be made between the moment of understanding an object in terms of itself and the moment of seeing the existential meaning of the object for one's own life and future, then it may be said that this latter is clearly the concern of Gadamer, Bultmann and Ebeling, while the nature of 'objective' interpretation has been Betti's concern." He differentiates the two aims: "If the object is not other than its observer, and if it does not, of itself, speak, why listen?" *Sinngebung* [understanding, ascribing a sense, application] is not interpretation or *Auslegung*.

57- — The object of interpretation appears as the "objectification of man's spirit . . . expressed in sensible form. Interpretation, then, is necessarily a recognition and reconstruction of the meaning that its author, using a special kind of unity of materials, was able to embody." This involves the translation of the interpreter to a foreign subjectivity. His own subjectivity is involved but it must penetrate the otherness of the object, which is essentially autonomous.

— Meaning arises from the overall unity of parts.

58- — Understanding is seen as an active reconstructive process which involves the interpreter's experience in the world and is based on it (a kind of preunderstanding). Explication (*Auslegung*) and understanding (*Sinngebung*) must be differentiated; our preunderstanding may be changed by the object. Gadamer lumps together many different modes of interpretation (legal interpretation is not the same as historical interpretation; the second does not involve an application to the present). Gadamer argues back that he tries to go beyond the concept of method to describe "what is" [what actually happens when we interpret].

59- In the preface to the 1965 edition of *Wahrheit und Methode*, Gadamer says that he seeks what *all* interpreters have in common, not focusing on special disciplines. He stresses objectivity in the sense that interpretation belongs to the being of what is understood. Two different directions: "Betti, following Dilthey in quest of a foundational discipline for the

Geisteswissenschaften, looks for what is practical and useful to the interpreter. He wants norms to distinguish right from wrong interpretation, one type of interpretation from another. Gadamer, following Heidegger, asks such questions as: What is the ontological character of understanding? What kind of encounter with Being is involved in the hermeneutical process? How does tradition, the transmitted past, enter into and shape the act of understanding an historical text?"

60- Their positions are not totally antithetical—although ultimately we must choose between a realistic and a phenomenological perspective.

E. D. Hirsch: Hermeneutics as the Logic of Validation

E. D. Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation* is the first full treatise of hermeneutics in English. Hirsch challenges current interpretive assumptions: in favour of intention, and of the separation of 'meaning' and 'significance' (equivalent to Betti's *Bedeutung* vs. *Bedeutsamkeit*).

61- The objective of hermeneutics is for him to determine verbal meaning, not significance. Verbal meaning cannot change—otherwise there is no norm of judgment. There is an Aristotelian flavour in Hirsch's position.

62- Validity as the problem of choosing one meaning over another: an issue sidestepped by Heideggerians. Significance is the province of criticism, etc. Hermeneutics is a modest philological task: knowing what the author meant. Interpretation is conceived by Hirsch as a foundation for criticism. He leaves out the subjective process of understanding, crucial in Schleiermacher and Dilthey, and also the relation to the present. Here he is concerned only "with the problem of umpiring between already understood meanings so as to judge among conflicting possible interpretations."

63- It is not a problem of 'translation' but of determination of meaning. This approach rests on his conception of objective and changeless verbal meaning (based on Husserl). Palmer opposes Hirsch's conception: "in fact the hermeneutical problem is not simply a philological problem, and it is not possible to relegate to limbo with

64- Aristotelian definitions the bulk of understanding theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer, not to mention the contributions both inside and outside theology, toward defining historical understanding." "The fact that a mental object can be viewed from several perspectives does not make it historically changeless and eternal; and to argue that objectivity would otherwise be impossible is circular, since the possibility of objective and ahistorical knowledge is itself the question." Palmer rejects the mechanical separation between meaning and significance: the separation is constructed *after* the act of understanding. Hirsch *presupposes* a theory of understanding as a "guess", and restricts hermeneutics to validation.

65- Hirsch rests on a basically Aristotelian epistemology and a questionable theory of language; his approach is an inadvisable oversimplification of the problem. Norms cannot be found in the original intent of the author: "even the standards for, and of, objectivity are manufactured out of

today's historical fabric" (Palmer). The notion of an objectivity of validation is opposed to the phenomenology of the historical event of understanding.

5. THE MEANING AND SCOPE OF HERMENEUTICS

66- There is room for all: "The diverse directions in hermeneutical theory illustrate in themselves a hermeneutical principle: interpretation is shaped by the question with which the interpreter approaches his subject." The question for validity is not the same as the question about the nature of understanding,

67- but both are valid. No school is absolutely valid; "the demand by Betti and Hirsch that Gadamer's hermeneutics should furnish an objective norm for distinguishing valid from invalid interpretations fails to take account of the basic intention of Gadamer's thinking: to examine the dynamics of understanding itself"; "essentially indirect debates on the nature and scope of hermeutics itself."

The Double Focus of Hermeneutics: Event of Understanding and the Hermeneutical Problem

Two foci in the development of hermeneutics:

68- 1) linked to linguistic understanding and general phenomenology, philosophy of sybols, ontology...

2) the hermeneutic problem: a specific instance of (1). It is linguistic, and historical. There are two phases: understanding itself, and its relationship to us. Hirsch only takes into account the first part. "The view of the hermeneutical problem presented by Hirsch would leave aside the moment of understanding itself and focus on the need to judge among several understandings; hermeneutics then becomes not the phenomenology of understanding but the logic of validation."

69- The hermeneutical problem "is not simply that of arbitrating among competing interpretations."

The Potential Contribution of Other Fields to Hermeneutics

There is no clear place for hermeneutics up to now. "The stepchild of theology, the ungainly offspring of philology, nontheological hermeneutics is only now coming of age as a field." Contributions from psychoanalysis (Ricœur), philosophy (Gadamer), translation theory, information theory, and the theory of oral interpretation." Literary criticism may contribute as well (and not only Ingarden and the phenomenologists). (3)

70- E.g. the New Criticism, and myth criticism. The phenomenology of language is indispensable. Also the philosophy of mind: Cassirer; and of other disciplines: legal, historical and theological interpretation... etc.

71- Palmer rejects Hirsch's limitations, and believes in the possibilities of a phenomenological hermeneutics. Witness the four major theorists studied here.

PART II: FOUR MAJOR THEORISTS

6. TWO FORERUNNERS OF SCHLEIERMACHER

75- Friedrich Ast and Friedrich August Wolf. Schleiermacher reacts to them: lectures in 1819, *Akademiereden* in 1829, "Ueber den Begriff der Hermeneutik, mit Bezug auf F. A. Wolfs Andeutungen und Asts Lehrbuch" (in *Hermeneutik*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle). Still valuable. (4)

76- **Friedrich Ast** (1778-1841)

Grundlinien der Grammatik, Hermeneutik und Kritik (1808) (the focus here)
Grundriss der Philologie (1808)

The aim of philological study for Ast is to grasp the 'spirit' of Antiquity, especially in its literary heritage. He sees *Geist* as an inner unity of work and age, derived from Herder's *Volkgeist*. The aim is to become more like the Greeks; Antiquity is seen as the paradigm of life in general. From the need to understand them arise grammar and hermeneutics; hermeneutics is here "the theory of extracting the *geistige* (spiritual) meaning of the text" (Palmer); understanding is possible because we all participate in *Geist*

77 —a spiritual unity of the humanities. This is the basis of the hermeneutic circle (Palmer): "because *Geist* is the source of all development and all becoming, the imprint of the spirit of the whole (*Geist des Ganzen*) is found in the individual part; the part is understood from the whole and the whole from the inner harmony of the parts." Thus, "one can only rightly grasp the combined unity of the spirit of antiquity if one grasps the individual revelations of it in individual ancient works, and on the other hand, the *Geist* of an individual author cannot be grasped apart from placing in its higher relationship [to the whole]" (Ast). The task of hermeneutics is for Ast "the clarification of the work through the development of its meaning internally and the relationshipi of its inner parts to each other and to the larger spirit of the age" (Palmer).

Parts of *understanding*:

1) historical (in relation to the content of the work)

2) grammatical, in relation to language

3) *Geistige*, understanding the work in relation to the total view (*Geist*) of the author and the *Geist* of the age [the spirit of the age].

78- (1) & (2) are developed by Semler and Ernesti, respectively; (3) by Ast, Schleiermacher and Böck. They are roughly the matter, the form, and the spirit of the work, which reveals both the general spirit of the age and the individual genius of the author. These aspects of understanding interact and illuminate each other.

Levels of *explanation*:

1) hermeneutics of the letter

2) hermeneutics of the sense

3) hermeneutics of the spirit

(1) includes linguistic and historical understanding; (2) the exploration of the genius of the age and of the author (contextual meaning);

79- (3) seeks the *Grundidee*, *Anschauung* (i.e. 'view of life') in historical authors, *Begriff*, basic conception, in philosophical authors. Only the greatest writers achieve a harmonious synthesis, "in which conceptual content and view of life stand in balanced complement within the controlling idea". The *geistige* [spiritual] explanation leads to a transcendence of the temporal (vs. Heidegger). History, Palmer argues, is not really historical in either the Enlightenment or the Romantics, "it is only the new material for deducing an atemporal truth or an atemporal *Geist*."

80- Understanding as reproduction or repetition of the creative process (similarly in Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Simmel). "Previously interpretation had not been seen in connection with any theory of artistic creation." This notion is not literally true, Palmer argues, although "it may be asserted that the experience communicated in the work must somehow rise again as event for the reader." The classics coincide here with the New Critics (against the hermeneutics of Ast and the Romantics), considering that the creative process is irrelevant. Palmer emphasizes the importance of our theory of knowledge and of the ontological status of the work,

81- "for they determine in advance the shape of our theory and practice in literary interpretation."

Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1825)

Vorlesung über die Enzyklopädie der Altertumwissenschaft (1831)

Wolf sees hermeneutics as "the science of the rules by which the meaning of signs is recognized" (Wolf). The rules vary with the object: there are different hermeneutics for each discipline. Rules are reached through practice—a practical, nontheoretical collection of rules. The aim of hermeneutics for Wolf is "to grasp the written or even spoken thoughts of an author as he would have them to be grasped" (Wolf; "Die Wissenschaft von den Regeln, aus denen die Bedeutung der Zeichen erkannt wird"; "[Die] geschriebene oder auch bloss mündlich vorgetragene Gedanken einer ander ebenso zu fassen; wie er sie gefasst haben will." The interpreter must have an aptitude for dialogue and empathy. Understanding is not the same as explanation:

82- "We understand for ourselves but we explain to others" — explanation depends on the audience, but "*Niemand kann interpretari, nisi subtiliter intellexerit.*" Wolf lacks a metaphysics of *Geist*: his three levels are 1) *interpretatio grammatica*, 2) *historica*, and 3) *philosophica*. The first refers to linguistic issues, the second to events and what the author knew, the third is conceived as a check on the other two, a control. Not a real system.

The trend to philosophy is carried over in Schleiermacher; a move to psychology and

83- "a systematic conception of the operation of human understanding in dialogue".

7. SCHLEIERMACHER'S PROJECT OF A GENERAL HERMENEUTICS

84- *Hermeneutik*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle (1954); *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, ed. Friedrich Lücke (1838, student notes).

"Hermeneutics as the art of understanding does not exist as a general field, only a plurality of specialized hermeneutics" (Schleiermacher). Schleiermacher's aim, Palmer says, is "to frame a general hermeneutics as the art of understanding," the same for all disciplines, with the general hermeneutics of language as a basis for more specific hermeneutics.

85- The basis is "the act of understanding, the act of a living, feeling, intuiting human being"; Schleiermacher opposes mere encyclopedism and idealism. Religion is not based on some rational ideal, but on dependence on God: hermeneutics similarly is based on the concrete human being understanding dialogue. Schleiermacher advocates a focus on the actual situation of understanding. The act of explanation falls outside hermeneutics: "Eigentlich gehört nur das zur Hermeneutik was Ernesti Prol. 4 [*Institutio Interpretis Novi Testamenti*] *subtilitas intelligendi* nennt. Denn die [*subtilitas*] *explicandi* sobald sie mehr ist als die äussere Seite des Verstehens ist wiederum ein Object der Hermeneutik und gehört zur Kunst des Darstellens."

86- "The understanding situation is one of dialogical relationship" (Palmer); hermeneutics as an art of hearing for Schleiermacher.

Understanding as a Reconstructive Process

Understanding is seen by Schleiermacher as "the experience of the mental processes of the text's author" (Palmer), the reverse of composition. Grammatical and psychological moments interact in the hermeneutical circle.

87- The Hermeneutical Circle

In understanding, as seen by Schleiermacher, parts define unities and unities define parts, reciprocally, etc. Palmer explains: "an individual concept derives its meaning from a context or horizon within which it stands; yet the horizon is made up of the very elements to which it gives meaning. By dialectical interaction between the whole and the part, each gives the other meaning; understanding is circular, then. Because within this 'circle' the meaning comes to stand, we call this the 'hermeneutical circle'." A logical contradiction? — "we must say that logic cannot fully account for the workings of understanding. Somehow a kind of 'leap' into the hermeneutical circle occurs and we understand the whole and the parts together." According to Schleiermacher, understanding is partly comparative, partly intuitive and divinatory. There is an initial community of meaning — "what is to be understood must already be known" in some measure.

88- The hermeneutic circle is active at the linguistic level and also at the level of the subject; meaning must be shared, a preknowledge is necessary in every act of understanding.

Grammatical Interpretation and Psychological Interpretation

In the late Schleiermacher, there is a tendency to separate language and thought: "grammatical" vs. "technical" or "psychological" interpretation. The first follows general hermeneutics; the second focuses on what is subjective and individual. "Just as every speech has a twofold relationship, both to the whole of language and to the collected thinking of the speaker, so also there exists in all understanding of the speech two moments: understanding it as something drawn out of language and as a 'fact' in the thinking of the speaker" (Schleiermacher). The first moment is negative, general, boundary-setting;

89- the second focuses on individual genius; this is a positive phase, in which congeniality is needed. Both phases interact, the specific and the general are involved in the whole act of interpretation. It involves seeing the part (of the author's thought) in a larger whole (e.g. his life, other lives...). The goal of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is, Palmer says, "the reconstruction of the mental experience of the text's author" — not a psychanalysis of the author, there is no analysis of the causes of thought, only reconstruction:

90- "a basically intuitive approach is required" (Palmer). "The divinatory [method] is that in which one transforms oneself into the other person in order to grasp his individuality directly" (Schleiermacher) — but the end is to understand the *text*, not the author.

Hermeneutical Understanding as Understanding of Style

A talent of *linguistic* understanding is necessary (not just empathy). We know the whole individuality through style: "The fulfilled understanding of style is the whole goal of hermeneutics" (Schleiermacher).

91- Hermeneutics as a Systematic Science (An ideal sought by Schleiermacher [with a *hope* of finding laws.]). **From a Language-centered to a Subjectivity-centered hermeneutics**

92- After 1819, "The decisive element in the move away from a language-centered hermeneutics to a psychologically oriented hermeneutics, according to Kimmerle, was the gradual relinquishment of the conception of the identity of thought and language."

93- "Thus the text could not be seen as the direct manifestation of inner mental process but something given up to the empirical exigencies of language" —which must be transcended, although it is a necessary step. Early (in 1813): "Essentially and inwardly, thought and its expression are completely the same." According to Kimmerle and Gadamer, Schleiermacher goes astray abandoning a language-centered hermeneutics and fall into bad metaphysics.

The aim is to reconstruct an author's meaning: "But this assumption" (Palmer writes) "is questionable, for a text is understood not by reference to some vague inner mental process but by reference to the subject, the matter, to which the text is referring." The earlier Schleiermacher is closer to present conceptions. He surrenders his fruitful standing point:

94- later he focuses on nonlinguistic individuality of which style is now but an empirical manifestation, a psychologizing approach [*Psychologizing* is a bad word in Palmer, as in the phenomenological tradition generally.]

The Significance of Schleiermacher's Project of a General hermeneutics.

"Regardless of the psychologizing element in the later Schleiermacher, his contribution to hermeneutics marks a turning point in its history." It is a general, foundational discipline, dialogical in nature (though blinded by its desire for coherence). But Schleiermacher pushes hermeneutics to a new direction, as science. Dilthey goes on with this project, with a "quest for 'objectively valid' knowledge and . . . his assumption that the task of hermeneutics is discovering the laws and principles of understanding." We may see here perhaps a mistaken assumption "that it is possible to occupy a point above or outside history from which atemporal 'laws' can be devised."

95- But they place a fruitful focus on understanding. Later Dilthey will speak of a *historical*, not *scientific* basis for hermeneutics. "Thus 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." Palmer advocates sound principles, "beyond the pyrotechnies of the new Criticism or the contradictions of present 'myth criticism'; "present-day literary interpretation certainly should consider more carefully its relation to the general nature of all linguistic understanding" and avoid psychologizing:

"Psychologizing, properly defined, refers to the effort to go behind the utterance to its author's intention and mental processes."

96- This is illegitimate for Palmer, but he is in favour of "seeing the interpretive problem as inseparable from the art of understanding in the hearer. Just this assertion helps to go beyond the illusion that the text possesses an independent, real meaning separable from every event of understanding it." He advocates a historic view. Schleiermacher's emphasis on the life experience of understanding is also important; it is related to previous experience. According to Gadamer, the problem for Schleiermacher was not the obscurity of history, but of the thou. This leads to a shift from history to psychology; a late misconception in Schleiermacher [cf. the intentional fallacy]. His work was influential on many, e.g. on Dilthey.

8. DILTHEY: HERMENEUTICS AS A FOUNDATION FOR THE *GEISTESWISSENSCHAFTEN*

98- Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) goes back to the idea of a general hermeneutics— not developed after Schleiermacher— as a foundation for all the humanities and social sciences. The aim is to develop methods of gaining "objectively valid" interpretation of "expressions of inner life." He opposes the scientific analogy and idealism, and was influenced by Comte.

99- "Concrete, historical, lived experience must be the starting and ending point for the *Geisteswissenschaften*"— "life itself." A conflict: a Romantic desire for immediacy and totality, even while seeking objectively valid data. In part he goes beyond historicism and psychologism. Positivism, empiricism on the one hand, and idealism & life philosophy on the other mix in Dilthey.

100- The Problem of Finding a Methodological Basis for the *Geisteswissenschaften*

The humanities need to get away from the reductionist perspective of the natural sciences. The problem of understanding is focused by Dilthey in epistemological, not metaphysical terms. He continues Kant's work with a "critique of historical reason". The Kantian categories are not significant for the inner life of man.

101- "This is a matter of [further] developing the whole Kantian-critical attitude; but in the category of self-interpretation [*Selbstbesinnung*] instead of theory of knowledge, a critique of historical instead of pure reason" (Dilthey); "Not through introspection but only through history do we come to know ourselves" (Dilthey). Life is grasped as concrete meaning in particular situations— Dilthey emphasizes the historicity of existence. For Dilthey, "These units of meaning require the context of the past and the horizon of future expectations; they are intrinsically temporal and finite, and they are to be understood in terms of these dimensions— that is, historically" (Palmer). Life philosophers (Nietzsche, Dilthey, Bergson), anticipated by some romantics, opposed the formalism, rationalism, and convention; against mere reason they set up the collected inner powers.

102- Later followed by James, Nietzsche, Simmel, Klages, Ortega y Gasset. Palmer: "There is a distinct tendency in Locke, Hume, and Kant to restrict 'Knowing' to the cognitive faculty in separation from feeling and will."

103- Dilthey sees life as "human experience known from within" (Dilthey). It is relative, not absolute (as against Hegel). Works: *Der Erlebnis und die Dichtung, Gesammelte Schriften...*

The 'Human Sciences' versus the 'Natural Sciences'

"Meaning", not "power"; "history", not "mathematics" (in the humanities).

104- The human sciences deal with phenomena "which are meaningful only as they shed light in man's inner processes, his 'inner experience'" (Dilthey). In the human sciences there is the "possibility of understanding the inner experience of another person through a mysterious process of mental transfer." This possibility is not available to the natural sciences. It is based on the likeness between mental experiences of persons, the "possibility of finding in another person the profoundest depths of our experience." "Dilthey, following Schleiermacher, sees this transposition as a reconstruction and reexperiencing of another person's inner world of experience"; but the end is the world, not the person—the socio-historical world of moral imperatives, feelings, the experience of beauty, penetrated through interpretation, not through introspection.

105- In the natural sciences there is an absence of reference to human experience, which is inevitable in human studies; they refer to another context of relationships. There are no mental facts in the natural sciences. In the human sciences, the external world is treated only in relation to feeling and willing men. Facts are significant only in relation to human purposes. In the humanities, the key word is 'understanding', not 'explaining'; the aim is to grasp individuality, versus the generalities of science.

106- But Palmer and others oppose the rigid separation between the human and the natural sciences: "both work together in varying degrees in every act of knowledge." Scientism creeps into Dilthey's thought, though, in his aim of 'objectivity'. But Heidegger goes back to Dilthey in his reflections, opposing Husserl's scientific tendencies.

Dilthey's Hermeneutical Formula: Experience, Expression, Understanding

106-7- Dilthey: "A science belongs to the human studies only if its object becomes accessible to us through a procedure based on the systematic relation between life, expression and understanding."

107- 1) **Experience**, *Erfahrung* (in general) or *Erlebnis* (especially in individual instances [Spanish *vivencia*]), or *Leben*. Experience is a unified set of parts of life bound together by a common meaning [e.g. a love, a picture...].

108- It is not the 'content' of a reflexive act of consciousness, but the act itself, experiencing as

such; not an object for consciousness but the act of consciousness. Experience does not perceive itself—it is previous to the subject/object separation of reflexive thought. Prereflexive consciousness was staked out by Husserl and Heidegger after Dilthey.

109- It is not a merely subjective reality; it is previous to the difference between subjectivity and objectivity, "a realm in which the world and our experience of it are given together" (Palmer); Dilthey wants to express "the freedom of life and of history" (Dilthey), against a shallow separation of feelings and objects, sensation and understanding. He places an emphasis on the temporality of experience: its meaning encompasses the recollection of the past and the anticipation of the future.

110- (Palmer): "The past and the future, then, form a structural unity with the presentness of all experience, and this temporal context is the inescapable horizon within which any perception in the present is interpreted." Against Kant, Dilthey holds that temporality is not imposed by consciousness; it is already implicit in experience as a given (we can speak of his realism in this sense). Temporality is not added to the experience. Consciousness merely brings to light the structural relationships implicit in experience, the meaning of an experience.

111- "*Experience is intrinsically temporal . . . and therefore understanding of experience must also be in commensurately temporal (historical) categories of thought*" (Palmer). A focus on historicity does not mean a focus on the past; "It means we understand the present really only in the horizon of past and future; this is not a matter of conscious effort but is built into the structure of the experience itself" (Palmer).

112- 2) **Expression** (*Ausdruck*). In Dilthey this is not linked to a subject/object "expressionism" or to feelings. Expression is anything that reflects the imprint of the inner life of man (a work, a law...), an 'objectification' of the mind. Against introspection, which produces ineffable intuitions or yet more objectifications in the form of concepts; Dilthey advocates the hermeneutical study of objectifications in all *Geisteswissenschaften*.

3) *The Art Work as Objectification of Lived Experience*

Kinds of inner experience:

(1) *Ideas*. They are conceptual, easily communicated and accurate.

113- (2) *Actions*. Their goal is clear, but their reasons are not so clear. Both ideas and actions are "manifestations of life."

(3) *Expressions of lived experience*—ranging from exclamations to art works. They are the fullest expression of lived experience. They contain "more of the content of inner life [*seelischen zusammenhang*] than any introspection can perceive, for it rises up out of the depths which consciousness never lights up" (Dilthey); "In the great works of art a vision [*ein Geistiges*] is set free [*sich loslöst*] from its creator, the poet, the artist, or the writer, and we step into a realm where deception by the expressor ends. No truly great work of art can try to mirror

a reality foreign to the inner content [*geistigen Gehalt*] of its author. Indeed, it does not wish to say anything at all about its author. True in itself, it stands there fixed, visible, enduring..." (Dilthey)—it points to life, not to its author.

114- "Of all art works, those in language have perhaps the greatest power to disclose the inner life of man" (Palmer); "for Dilthey, hermeneutics takes a new and larger significance: it becomes the theory not merely of text interpretation but of how life discloses and expresses itself in works." It posits "generally held structures in and through which objective understanding takes place"—a matter of social, historical expression, not merely individual.

(4) *Understanding (Verstehen)*—it is not only rational, but an operation in which a mind grasps another mind.

115- (Dilthey): "We explain by means of purely intellectual processes, but we understand by means of the combined activity of all the mental powers in apprehending." (Dilthey): "We explain nature; man we must understand." Understanding is a pre-reflexive transposition of thought into the other person, and it is valuable in itself, not just as a means. Dilthey: "The secret of the 'person' attracts [us] for its own sake to ever newer and deeper efforts to understand." He places an emphasis on the particular, on the individuality of the work, etc.

116- **The Meaning of 'Historicality' in Dilthey's Hermeneutics**

Man as "ein geschichtliches Wesen." History is not "the past," it is not an object:

- (1) Man's self-understanding is indirect, by means of objectifications; a hermeneutical detour, dependent on history.
- (2) Man's nature is not a fixed essence (cf. Nietzsche).

117- Man takes possession of framed expressions of heritage to become creatively historical. Historical relativism in Dilthey. History is a series of world-views, there are no ultimate standards of judgment. Palmer: Meaning always stands in a horizontal context that stretches into the past and into the future.

118- We depend on history for our self-interpretation, which involves a constant interpretation of the past; man as a hermeneutical animal (Palmer).

The Hermeneutical Circle and Understanding

According to Palmer, "Meaning is what understanding grasps in the essentially reciprocal interaction of the whole and the parts" —a sentence as an example. "And meaning is something historical; it is a relationship of whole to parts, seen by us from a given standpoint, at a given time, for a given combination of parts. It is not something above or outside history but a part of a hermeneutical circle always historically defined" (Palmer). Meaning is contextual.

119- This applies from particular statements to works: e.g. *King Lear* seen from a post-deistic universe; "there is a seventeenth-, an eighteenth-, a nineteenth- and a twentieth-century

Shakespeare." "Interpretation always stands in the situation in which the interpreter himself stands". But for Dilthey meaning is *not* free-floating, though:

120- "Meaningfulness fundamentally grows out of the relation of part to whole that is grounded in the nature of living experience" (Dilthey); Palmer: "Meaning is not subjective; it is not the projection of thought or thinking onto the object; it is a perception of a real relationship, within a nexus prior to the subject-object separation." There is an interaction of the individual with objective *Geist* in the hermeneutic circle. Without a starting point:

121- (Palmer): "There can be no 'presuppositionless understanding'; we always understand within our own horizon, by reference to our experience. The interpreter's task is not a complete immersion in the object, "but rather that of finding viable modes of interaction of his own horizon with that of the text" (Palmer).

The Significance of Dilthey for Hermeneutics: Conclusion

Dilthey broadens the horizon of hermeneutics: from psychology he moves to lived experience. He emphasizes the objective status of the interpreted object—which provides an objectively valid knowledge [¿¿??]. And its historicity:

122- "Great literature is rooted in the lived experience of the riddles of life." The work of art is good in itself because it speaks about life—it is not an aimless play with forms. Art is conceived by Dilthey as truth, an expression of lived experience. The work has a problematic status, as it opens up a reality that is neither subjective nor truly objective.

123- Dilthey is still scientific in his aim; Palmer does not approve of his quest for "objectively valid knowledge", which is for Palmer "a reflection of scientific ideals wholly contrary to the historicity of our self-understanding". He also opposes the notion of understanding as reexperiencing the author's experience (in Dilthey and in Schleiermacher); the processes of creating the work involve knowledge we need not have in order to 'understand' what is 'said' in the work.

9. HEIDEGGER'S CONTRIBUTION TO HERMENEUTICS IN *BEING AND TIME*

124- Husserl and Heidegger: Two Types of Phenomenology

Heidegger uses hermeneutics in the context of his quest for a more 'fundamental' ontology. He is similar to Dilthey in his aim of disclosing life on its own terms. Husserl provides a method "which might lay open the process of being in human existence in such a way that being, and not simply one's own ideology, might come into view"; he opens "the realm of the preconceptual apprehending of phenomena."

125- But "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." Being as lived escapes conceptual categories — not a matter of spatializing concepts, but of time. Heidegger is uneasy about Husserl's concerns for consciousness. Husserl "tended to regard even the facticity of being as a datum of consciousness." Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* as a "hermeneutic phenomenology," a rethinking of phenomenology.

126- Husserl never uses the term "hermeneutic"; for Heidegger, "the authentic dimensions of a phenomenological method make it hermeneutical." Heidegger is antiscientific (like Gadamer) [in his understanding of human experience]; Husserl conceives the aim of philosophy as a rigorous science, a quest for apodictic knowledge. Heidegger does not care for this, and becomes more hermeneutical, interpreting the early philosophers. An opposition between scientific and historical philosophy, thus.

127- Husserl denies the temporality of being: the realm of ideas is above the flux (idealism). Heidegger is a historicist. As Palmer puts it, "Phenomenology need not be construed as necessarily a laying-open of consciousness; it can also be a means of disclosing being, in all its facticity and historicity."

Phenomenology as Hermeneutical (in *Sein und Zeit*).

Phainomenon + *logos*. *Phainomenon* as "that which shows itself, the manifested, revealed" (Heidegger); cf. *phos*, light: 'becoming visible'. It is not a symptom of something more primary, but a disclosure of being as it is.

128- *Logos* as speaking; its function is letting something be seen *as* something, pointing to phenomena. Palmer: "The mind does not project a meaning onto the phenomenon; rather, what appears is an ontological manifestation of the thing itself." "[T]o let a thing appear as what it is becomes a matter of learning to allow it to do so, for it gives itself to be seen" [!!! — *See my comments on the hermeneutics of suspicion as opposed to this hermeneutics of trust (Note 2)-JAGL*]. Heidegger rejects our forcing our categories on things: things reveal themselves to us. Phenomenology is a way of being led by the phenomenon:

128-29- "Such a method would be of highest significance to hermeneutical theory, since it implies that interpretation is not grounded in human consciousness and human categories but in the manifestness of the thing encountered, the reality that comes to meet us."

129- Is Being interpretable thus? But Being is not a phenomenon, not an object; it is more encompassing and elusive. It is interrogated through appearing. Ontology becomes phenomenology. "Ontology must turn to the processes of understanding and interpretation through which things appear" — a 'hermeneutic' of existence. It is not an interpretation of an interpretation (i.e. of a text) but the primary act of interpretation which first brings a thing from concealment."

The methodological naming of phenomenological description is *interpretation* [*Auslegung*, laying open]. The *logos* of a phenomenology of *Dasein* has the character of *hermeneuein* [to interpret], through which are made

known to *Dasein* the structures of his own being and the authentic meaning of being given in his [preconscious] understanding of being. Phenomenology of *Dasein* is hermeneutics in the original sense of the word, which designated the business of interpretation. (Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* 37)

130- Palmer: "Hermeneutics as methodology of interpretation for the humanities is a derivative from resting as and growing out of the primary ontological function of interpreting". There is a historical tendency to expand the meaning of hermeneutics; now it is the ground of *Dasein's* being, not only of understanding in the humanities.

The Nature of Understanding: How Heidegger Moves Beyond Dilthey

'Understanding' suggests sympathy in English; it does not refer only to knowledge, and it is not the same in Heidegger as in Dilthey and Schleiermacher.

131- Here it is the basis for all interpretation, prior to understanding, it is the power to grasp one's own possibilities for being: it is a mode of being in the world. It is projective, understanding relates to the future on the basis of one's situation (*Befindlichkeit*). The essence of understanding is "the disclosure of concrete potentialities for being within the horizon of one's placement in the world": "Existentiality" (*Existenzialität*). "It always operates within a set of already interpreted relationships, a relational whole."

132- Heidegger "explores the implications of the hermeneutical circle for the ontological structure of all human existential understanding and interpretation." Understanding has become ontological.

World and Our Relationship to Objects in the World

World is not separate from self. Not the scientific world or the whole world, but the world in which we are immersed. It is prior to all objectivity and conceptualizing—prior, then, to subjectivity too.

133- World is fundamental to understanding, but yet we see through it, it is difficult to grasp (cf. those unobtrusive tools which are noticed only when a breakdown occurs).

Prepredicative Meaningfulness, Understanding, and Interpretation

134- "World" is more than preconsciousness: "it is the realm in which the actual resistances and possibilities in the structure of being shape understanding." It is the realm of the hermeneutical process, "the process by which being becomes thematized as language"; "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." "Understanding must be seen as embedded in this context, and interpretation is simply the rendering explicit of understanding" (Palmer). For Heidegger, the foundation of understanding is prior to any statement. Later he stresses even more the connection between language and being: "It is in words and language that things first come into being and are" (Heidegger). "Language is the house of Being" (Heidegger). Palmer:

"understanding has a certain 'prestructure' which comes into play in all interpretation."

The Impossibility of Presuppositionless Interpretation

The structure of presupposition puts into question the subject/object model of interpretation.

136- "Likewise it raises questions as to what can be meant by so-called objective interpretation or interpretation 'without presuppositions'." Heidegger: "Interpretation is never a presuppositionless grasping of something given in advance" (*Sein und Zeit* 150). "Self-evidence" rests on presuppositions, uncovered by Heidegger. E.g. the encounter of the critic with the work "is not in some context outside time and space, outside his own horizon of experiences and interests, but rather in a particular time and place. There is, for instance, a reason he is turning to this text and not some other, and thus he approaches the text questioningly, not with a blank openness" (Palmer). The prestructure rests not on consciousness, but on the world which already contains the subject and the object. Heidegger discusses things themselves, the ontological structure of understanding.

137- Hermeneutics is in Heidegger a theory of ontological disclosure, as present in human existence. "His analysis weds hermeneutics to existential ontology and to phenomenology, and it points to a ground for hermeneutics not in subjectivity but in the facticity of world and in the historicity of understanding".

The Derivative Character of Assertions

Assertions are grounded on preunderstanding. Without this, they have no meaning. The fundamental process of interpreting the world is not linguistic (a practical 'contact' with objects). Then they are posited as beings without properties, and they are concealed. (Palmer): "The hammer disappearing into its function *as* tool represents the 'existential hermeneutical' *as*."

138- The apophantic '*as*' cuts the hammer from the world, it posits it as an object to be looked at. (Heidegger is against presenting things as objects to be looked at). Against a theory of judgements "which sees assertions as the mere binding and representing of ideas and concepts, one which always remains on the shallow level of the objective, on-hand realities" (he favours the first '*as*').

139- Heidegger opposes the modern view of language in linguistics. He advocates a foundation of language on speaking, on the living context. A stress on the hermeneutical function of language; language is found on something ready-to-hand, transparent, contextual. The best language as speaking, or poetry, is not an expression of an inner reality; it is not a speaker that is disclosed, but the world which encompasses all.

10. HEIDEGGER'S LATER CONTRIBUTION TO HERMENEUTICAL THEORY

140- "A theme in later Heidegger will be the effort to go back behind the reality-founding event on the basis of which being itself is today thematized." E.g. in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (1959).

These works are footnotes to *Sein und Zeit*, deepening and radicalizing Heidegger's views.

141- He becomes more obscure and poetical, but the basic quest is still the same. Thinking as responsiveness, not as manipulation of ideas, a hermeneutic process by which Being can be brought to light, now through "an exploration of nonbeing, of the word 'being' itself, of Greek and modern conceptions of being and truth, of thinking, and of language" (Palmer). He turns increasingly to text interpretation.

The Critique of Foundational Thinking, Subjectism, and Technology

142- "In later writings Heidegger attempts to review how Western thinking came to define thinking, being, and truth in essentially presentational terms" — truth becomes unconcealment, correct seeing, and thinking becomes the proper manipulation of ideas. He opposes the "ideological" (i.e. theoretical) approach to metaphysics, and the abstracting of essence from existence.

143- (Palmer): "Western man no longer senses being as constantly emerging and receding from his grasp but as the form of a static presence of an idea." "[B]eing is conceived not in terms of living experience but in terms of idea — statistically, as a constant, atemporal presentness." Heidegger opposes the Platonic and neo-Platonic influence on Christianity (God as standing outside history, etc.).

144- He opposes the influence of Descartes: "Truth, for Descartes, is more than merely the conformity between the knower and the known, it is the *subject's rational certainty* of this conformity" — *all* is reduced to a subject/object polarity, the human subject appears as a reference point for everything. It is the syndrome of *Subjektivität*, subjectism" — pervading any philosophy that takes the human phenomenon as the ultimate reference point. It is latent in Plato, explicit in Descartes. Man is locked in the circle of his own projected world.

145- The world is de-divinized; nothing comes from God (or Being). Or religion is turned into a human feeling of dependence. The 'value' of objects is reduced to their usefulness. *Values* themselves soon become objects. Truth is conceived as correctness, a correspondence between the statement and the way the object is presented to us. "This presentation cannot really be a self-disclosure of something, since it is caught up in the overpowering act of objectification by the subject." Subjectism as an ever-increasing will to power, a frenzy for technological mastery. Thinking itself, Heidegger complains, is conceived in terms of mastery, it is technological,

146- thinking no longer conserves the world, "it exhausts the world in trying to restructure it to man's purposes." Interpretation is now a means for conceptual mastery; only an objectification is interpreted. Interpretation is no longer concerned with bringing things to light; "Then its task is not the primary 'showing' of the thing but that of achieving correctness among several possible interpretations" [Cf. *Hirsch's approach above*]. Language is conceived as a system of signs applied to an already known set of objects. The whole Western thought appears as a thematization of Plato's concept of truth.

147- "In Kant, in Hegel, in Nietzsche, Heidegger finds hints of the older, Greek approach to truth as unconcealment briefly asserting its claim, only to be overshadowed and lost." A concern for hermeneutics, in Heidegger, but going beyond mere 'correctness': an attempt to bring out a hidden meaning. The mere interpretation of the author's intention "would be to stop short at the very point where true interpretation must begin"; Heidegger wants to go behind the text, to see what the author could *not* say; he looks for evidence of struggle in the text (versions, etc.). "Interpretation must be creatively open to the as yet unsaid." Interpretation he conceives not as grasping, but as receiving a gift from the sacred.

148- Interpreting is resurrecting a text in a *new* light. "Thus every interpretation must do violence to the explicit formulation in the text"; "one does not understand an author better [than himself], but differently."

On the Way to Thinking

The problem for Heidegger is how to think Being.

149- Man as an enunciator of being. "Man is the being who bridges the gap between concealment and disclosure of being, between nonbeing (in other words) and being. Man, in speaking, interprets being." But much remains unspoken in a text; hermeneutics brings further disclosure. "Yet this secondary act of interpretation must continually go back to a loving repetition of the original disclosure, must keep itself as the border between what is concealed and revealed." With "almost a devotional passivity which will be completely open to the voice of being."

150- In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, questioning is addressed. Being in history as questioning; in the later writings, Heidegger emphasizes a wakeful openness to being. Being occurs historically as a gift,

151- not as the result of man's grasping. An emphasis on a nonsubject-centered stance. Later in Heidegger, "Not questioning but response is the key word." He opposes interpretation conceived as an objective analysis.

152- Language and Speaking

Language is a part of man's being; objective, logical thinking is a derivation.

153- (Palmer): "there can be no being without language and no language without being"; language is essential for disclosure, "For to be a man is to speak" (Heidegger). Questioning remains fundamental. Man did not invent language;

154- rather, *language* speaks; in itself it is not an expression or activity of man.

155- The essence of language is speaking; being (not man) is thereby disclosed; to say is to

show. The *Sprachlichkeit* (linguisticity) of man's way of being. The essence of language is hermeneutical—bringing a thing to show itself. Interpretation as a thinking dialogue with the text; helping the language event to happen, with attention and care. Great poetry is hermeneutical; Heidegger conceives of the poet as a messenger.

156- "The subject/object schema, objectivity, norms of validation, the text as an expression of life—all are foreign to Heidegger's approach." He proposes an ontological hermeneutics, giving hermeneutics too broad a scope for Ricoeur.

Explication and the Topology of Being

Three phases in interpreting a poetical work by Sophocles:

1) Attending to the intrinsic meaning.

157- 2) The delimitation of an area that is opened up by the poem.

3) Judging who man is according to the poem.

(Palmer:) "the explication seeks to locate the 'place' (*topos*) out of which the poem speaks, the location of the clearing within being that is lighted up by the passage." First phase: "What is said stands within a meaning that is not totally explicit, the meaning that is below and above the text". The third attends to the border between concealment and disclosure: "going beyond the poem to what was not said."

If we content ourselves with what the poem directly says, the interpretation is at an end [with the second phase]. Actually it has just begun. The actual interpretation must show what does not stand in the words and is nevertheless *said*. To accomplish this the exegete *must use violence*. He must seek the essential where nothing more is to be found by the scientific interpretation that brands as unscientific everything that transcends its limits. (Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* 148)

158- In *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Heidegger looks for the 'place' from which Trakl is poetizing. Each poet speaks out of a single overarching poem that is never spoken, and "Only out of the place of the [unspoken] poem does the individual poem shine and sound" (Heidegger). Above all, we should *hear* the poem. Explanation can only make a *hearing* questionable or more meaningful. (So, violence is moderate). Palmer: "The function of explication is to let *the line speak*, not to try to say better what it says."

159- For the New Criticism, the poem is supreme; the background is not the author but the subject matter; they promote the notions of the ontological autonomy of the poem, of the heresy of paraphrase, the intentional fallacy, etc. But the New Criticism objectifies the text, and provides an explication within the restrictions of scientific objectivity. Heidegger wants to go beyond what is indisputably given. But "Heidegger's hermeneutics might provide the basis for a revitalized form of New Criticism."

A Hermeneutical Conception of the Work of Art

The lecture "On the Origin of the Work of Art," published in *Holzwege* (1950). These works transpose Heidegger's previous conception of language and hermeneutics to the realm of art. There is a simultaneous revelation and concealment of truth through the work's speaking. All art is intrinsically poetical; it makes truth into a concrete historical happening. This is explained as a tension between 'earth' and 'world'. The work captures this tension in a form.

160- The work carves for itself a world precisely by showing the materiality of the materials: the work "lets earth be earth"; (Palmer:) "The essence of art, then, lies not in mere craftsmanship but in disclosure. To be a work of art means to open up a world. To interpret a work of art means to move into the open space which the work has brought to stand."

161- Art as revelation, not imitation. (Palmer): "The greatness of art, in other words, must be defined in terms of its hermeneutical function" — a hermeneutic theory of art. "Hermeneutics in Heidegger points to the event of understanding as such, not to historical methods of interpretation as over and against scientific methods."

162- Against Dilthey, for Heidegger *all* understanding is rooted in the historical character of existential understanding. Heidegger opens the way for Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.

11. GADAMER'S CRITIQUE OF MODERN AESTHETIC AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

163- Wach and Betti. Betti provides an organon, classifying kinds of interpretation, in the idealistic German tradition. His axioms had already been questioned by Heidegger. For Gadamer, hermeneutics no longer has a methodical basis: he questions the status of method; ironically (if we think of his title), "method is not the way to truth." "Understanding is not conceived as a subjective process of man over and against an object but the way of being of man himself." Gadamer does not deny the importance of formulating interpretive principles, but he studies understanding in itself, how is it possible. (5)

164- A consequence, however: if understanding pervades all, it cannot be limited. "Gadamer asserts that the experience of a work of art transcends every subjective horizon of interpretation, both that of the artist and that of the perceiver." The work does not exist in itself apart from its historical encounter. Like Heidegger, Gadamer opposes modern technological thinking. Knowledge is conceived as participation, as letting being speak,

165- — against the subject/object opposition, and against subjective certainty. In Gadamer, "the dialectical approach to truth is seen as the antithesis of method, indeed as a means of overcoming the tendency of method to prestructure the individual's way of seeing. Strictly speaking, method is incapable of revealing new truth; it only renders explicit the kind of truth already implicit in the method." It is not a matter of grasping the object through method, but of finding oneself interrogated by the object. Gadamer does not follow Hegel to ground dialectics

on subjectivity, on self-consciousness—it is grounded for Gadamer

166- "in the linguisticity of human being in the world." Not a dialectic of refining opposed theses, but a dialectic of horizons, our own and the tradition. A Heideggerian approach: "The objective of the dialectic is eminently phenomenological: to have the being or thing encountered reveal itself."

167- **The Critique of Aesthetic Consciousness**

Gadamer opposes the "aesthetic consciousness" which rests on a subject/object scheme. Art is not to be considered an object to be enjoyed; pro art as knowledge. Addressing art as subject/object ends in empty formalism and provides no grounds for the value of art. Whereas through the work of art we see a *world*, not a play of forms.

168- Art widens our horizon and makes us see objects (even common ones) in a new light. We understand art as a part of our own self-understanding, not as a foreign universe. Gadamer rejects the notion of stepping outside of time and history in enjoying art. In entering a great work we enter a whole but discover reality inside. For him, "The legitimation of art is not that it gives aesthetic pleasure but that it reveals being" (Palmer). We must hear the question put to us by the work of art; Gadamer advocates openness to the work.

169- "The artist has the power to transform into an image or a form his experience of being." A fusion of the represented thing and the form in the work, so that something new comes into being. In this sense we can speak of the 'autonomy of the work', not "the aimless and isolated autonomy of 'aesthetic consciousness', but the mediation of knowledge in the deeper sense of the term"; "total mediating", with no possibility of separating aesthetic elements from other elements in play.

170- Gadamer speaks of an "aesthetic indifferentiation," both between materials and form and between the work and its performance. [*Some of these notions though might seem to be pre-Brechtian - JAGL*]

Game and the Way of Being of a Work of Art

171- Gadamer opposes subjective theories of play as the enjoyment of an aesthetic moment outside the world;

172- —it is not a matter of freedom but of engagement in play; the game's rules go beyond the consciousness of the player, they become the true subject and they take place through us.

173- But art is, moreover, presentation— not just self-contained play.

174- The work of art as "a presentation, transformed into an image, of a truth of being as event"—etc. Do Gadamer's positions approach those of the New Criticism? There are similarities.

175- Stronger position in Gadamer because of his stronger concept of autonomy: "Hitherto the New Critics' defense of the autonomy of the literary work only served to undermine its relevance." The New Critical notion of "surrendering to the work", etc.— "Yet the New Criticism remained entangled in the illusions of subjectivized aesthetics without knowing it." Gadamer is stronger on the historicity of literature, and on the critique of isolated form.

176- The New Criticism is muddled when it discusses 'form' leaving present-day relevance out: there is no tension present/past there. Palmer agrees with Gadamer on the temporal character of the work.

The Critique of the Ordinary Understanding of History

Gadamer starts from Heidegger's intrinsic historicity of human existence. Notion of preconceptions: "There is no pure seeing and understanding of history without reference to the present." The present is only seen through tradition.

177- (In Heidegger, 'being' — but this is linguistic, as tradition, in Gadamer). Being, history and tradition, and language, are interfused. A critique of Droysen's and Ranke's historicism which strove after objectivity. "The task of the historian was not to inject his personal feelings into history but to enter completely the historical world of which he wished to give an account." Dilthey opposed complete scientism and promoted hermeneutics;

178- for Dilthey, understanding history is reflexive; it includes understanding our place in it. But for Gadamer, Dilthey still believes in objective knowledge, in the 'objectivation' of minds. Dilthey is still method-oriented, and this prevents his finding real historicity.

179- Husserl already opposes the 'objectively valid' world to the intentional horizon in which we live. Heidegger moves further: "away from transcendental subjectivity, to an objectivity which stands outside the subject-object distinction, an objectivity which takes the 'facticity' of human existence as its ultimate point of reference." (...) "It is the objectivity of allowing the thing that appears to be as it really is for us."

180- "One's lifeworld recedes from efforts to grasp it though any 'method', and one generally stumbles on its nature by accident, principally through some kind of negativity or breakdown." Heidegger's approach is to see not the way the world belongs to the subject, but the way the subject belongs to the world. Gadamer emphasizes this historicity of understanding—now, with relation to the past and projections to the future.

181- Some Hermeneutical Consequences of the Historicity of Understanding

1) The Issue of Prejudgment

Palmer rejects the 'open-mindedness' of not taking into account the ideas of the past in judging

art. "Regrettably, literature professors generally may be classified as either formalit-aesthetes or antiquarians."

182- "Actually the present cannot be left in order to go into the past; the 'meaning' of a past work cannot be seen solely in terms of itself. On the contrary, the 'meaning' of the past work is defined in terms of the question put to it from the present. If we consider the structure of understanding carefully, we see that the questions we ask are ordered by the way we project ourselves into the future." Preconceptions (coming from tradition) are necessary.

183- "what we call 'reason' is a philosophical construction and not a final court of appeal." Authority and tradition regain their enlightenment, and there is no interpretation which is 'right' in itself. (But this does not equal a thoughtless application of present-day standards!).

184- 2) *The Concept of Temporal Distance*

Temporal distance to the work as important aesthetic element to be taken into account. "What is mediated by the text is not important to its interpretation primarily as the feeling or opinion of the author but rather in its own right as something intended." Time eliminates the inessential,

185- "allowing the true meaning [—?; JAGL] that lies hidden in a thing to become clear." Cf. the notion of "aesthetic distance." [In *Edward Bullough et al.—JAGL*]

3) *On Understanding the Author of a Text*

"The task of hermeneutics is essentially to understand the text, not the author." "The text is understood not because of a relation between persons is involved but because of the participation in the subject matter that the text communicates." One lets the text address us in *our* world. "Understanding is a participation in the stream of tradition, in a moment which mixes past and present" [Again we find here the same disregard of otherness or distance with respect to other contemporary, present, cultures- JAGL].

186- 4) *On Reconstruction of the Past*

Gadamer opposes this notion, vs. Schleiermacher: "Integration, not restoration, is the true task of hermeneutics."

5) *The Significance of Application*

187- J. J. Rambach distinguished 3 phases of interpretation. Schleiermacher suppresses application. But for Gadamer it always takes place in all kinds of hermeneutics.

188- Juridical and theological hermeneutics appear now as models for literary hermeneutics (with their conscious effort to span distance).

189- "The interpreter must be governed by the claim of the text, yet translate the meaning of the

claim into the present." Bultmann, etc. The Bible is read as *kerygma*, message.

190- Reading is therefore an event, not merely a matter of entering another world, but of integrating our present horizon with that of the work. Staging a play is interpretation, a fusion of horizons which is linked to the very idea of dramatic illusion.

191- **Consciousness which is Authentically Historical**

"Authentically historical consciousness" is a translation of the term "wirkungsgeschichtliche Bewusstsein" ["*consciencia histórica efectual*," *JAGL*.] Not in the Hegelian sense; it is not based on self-mediation as a root for dialectic; it is rather the structure of experience itself.

192- There are three kinds of 'I-thou' relationships; only 'thou-as-tradition-speaking' is authentic historical awareness. The others are not ('thou-as-object' and 'thou-as-reflection-of-I')—corresponding to 'method' and 'historical consciousness' respectively, for Gadamer.

193- In the third kind, we are open, we allow something to be said to us. The text cannot be fully an 'other'. Gadamer opposes the notion of the present considered as the apex of the truth.

12. GADAMER'S DIALECTICAL HERMENEUTICS

The Structure of Experience and of Hermeneutical Experience

194- Gadamer vs. the idea of knowing as a perceptual act and of knowledge as a body of conceptual data. Against the ideal of data gathering and verification in philology; in favour of a historical and dialectical conception of experience.

195- Knowledge he understands as a happening and an encounter. Cf. Hegel: experience as a dialectical restructuring of awareness; the role of negativity (against our expectations) at origin. But for Gadamer fulfillment is not found in knowing but in openness for experience. A wider view of experience as necessarily including negativity and disillusionment. The experience of finitude, against our illusions, renders us open, not rigid and dogmatic.

197- Experience as coming to understand our heritage and ourselves as immersed in it. All dialogue has a question-answer structure,

198- (but not a matter of person to person: we must see this in terms of subject matter).

The Structure of Questioning in Hermeneutics

There is an encounter with negativity in all true questioning (dialectical). Cf. the Socratic *docta ignorantia*. "Method" presupposes that we only would need to understand more thoroughly in the way we already understand.—method is opposed to openness.

199- "The openness of questioning, however, is not absolute, because a question always has a certain direction." There is the problem, then, of the right question. Cf. Plato: to test is the assertions of the other person by trying to *strengthen* (not refute) them.

200- The problem is to restore the fixed text to conversation—a task for hermeneutics. Understanding the text means to understand the questions it poses to the interpreter. It is not merely a matter of rendering the text more explicit: we must reconstruct the question for which the text was one answer (and there always other possible answers).

201- It is not a matter of "intentions": "The heritage itself speaks in the text" through language.

The Nature of Language

202- The Noninstrumental Character of Language

Against the 'sign' theory of language—against the idea of unambiguous concepts. Palmer stresses participation in living language. Cf. 'logos'. Signs are not seen as revealing being but as designating a preknown reality. Palmer rejects the approach to language as a symbolic form.

203- Language is linked to and arising from experience.

204- "To take form as the starting point in language is to make essentially the same error as to take form as the starting point in aesthetics. Language cannot be divorced from thought and from the tradition it transmits.

205- Language and the Disclosure of the World

Of the lifeworld. World and language are both transpersonal (against subjectivist theories);

206- —an objectivity is thereby disclosed that is not the objectivity of science. The world is the communal ground recognized by everybody; "language and world transcend all possibility of being fully made into an object."

207- A text of the past can open a world different from our own and yet one we can understand.

Linguisticity and the Hermeneutical Experience

Linguisticity is for Gadamer the ground for the hermeneutical encounter.

208- We belong to language and to history and that opens the possibility of the emergence of a common horizon (fusion of horizons). Against the notion of mastery on the text; rather one should serve it, *hearing* it.

209- The interpreter is not so much a knower as an experiencer. Something new emerges from

the encounter.

The Speculative Structure of Language and of the Nature of Poetry

210- Language is always moving, shifting. The said and the unsaid form a unity in true saying, where people understand each other. A backdrop of ungraspableness is present in all language, especially in the poetic statement. Moreover, the poetic word brings

211- something new to the realm of the said, because "the poet is the speculative experienter par excellence, he opens up, through his own openness to being, new possibilities in being." The interpreter is like the poet; he must be open if he is to understand, and must interact dialectically with the text.

212- All this is grounded on the negativity of being and of experience.

The Universality of Hermeneutics

Gadamer advocates a new philosophical inquiry, a new objectivity.

213- "Hermeneutics is ... a universal way of being of philosophy and not just the methodological basis for the humane disciplines" (Gadamer). Against Hegel's conception, language is not the instrument of subjectivity, but "a repository and carries the experience of being" of the past. Gadamer's hermeneutics is speculative rather than dialectical.

Conclusion

215- "Hermeneutics is the ontology and phenomenology of understanding." From late Heidegger, Gadamer has developed something closer to Hegel. A liability?

216- No, since Heidegger's thought is also dialectical. Gadamer provides an extension, "probably an improvement over Heidegger's conception." Late Heidegger describes understanding in too passive a way—only as an event, not an act. Gadamer moves farther from the structuralists, which is OK for Palmer.

217- Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode* "could provide the foundation for a radical critique of the conception of interpretation prevailing in literary criticism today."

PART III: A HERMENEUTICAL MANIFESTO TO AMERICAN LITERARY INTERPRETATION

Preamble

221-22- There is confusion now about what literary interpretation does, in spite of so many methods. There is a way ahead in hermeneutics.

223- 13- TOWARD REOPENING THE QUESTION: WHAT IS INTERPRETATION?

What does Understanding a Text Mean?

"American literary interpreters and theorists have fallen into a crassly naturalistic and technological way of seeing their task." Understanding is dismissed as dealing "not with the object of analysis but with the subjective experience of it" [*in the New Criticism*]. But the work does not exist apart from the experience of it. "The abstract analysis of form and of logical contradictions comes to be the hallmark of subtle interpretation, and ultimately the dynamics of experiencing the work are unconsciously bypassed, or dropped as leading to 'fallacy'." Interpretation is decontextualized, dehistoricized. "The subject-object model of interpretation is a realist fiction."

224- Understanding and subject are always positional; a privileged access to works cannot be assumed. Literature and understanding are historical; formalisms ignore this deep historicity, the creative tension of horizons.

The Consequences of the Subject-Object Schema

Data, numbers, and schemas are privileged from the moment we see a work as an object.

225- Whatever is repeatable or measurable gets privileged. There is subjectivism beneath this shallow objectivism: since Descartes, an erroneous approach: "when human subjectivity is the final court of appeal, there is nothing left for man but to control the 'objects' in his world ever more completely." Now criticism is conceived as mastery (with the New Criticism as a partial exception). Palmer opposes dry historicism and philology—but the New Criticism rests on a shaky philosophy, it vacillates between realism and idealism (Murray Krieger).

226- Too often the work is presented by the New Critics apart from its perception: a formalistic Aristotelianism. Critics should remove hindrances to understanding, rather than trying to master the work. The reader is placed at a distance from the text—while the interpreter should be seized and transformed by the work, and listen to the work as a *thou*, not as an *it*.

227- Dangers of too much method. Palmer says we should know methods and their limitations, and advocates an experiential understanding.

Toward a More Comprehensive Conception of Understanding

228- Heidegger sees understanding as the medium by which the world comes to stand before us. Understanding is not a tool for consciousness, but the medium in which we exist. The temporal world "*is historically formed, and . . . every act of understanding contains the acting of history in and through understanding*"; "understanding is linguistic, historical, and ontological."

229- "what discloses itself is the being of the object *as it is disclosed to understanding*." A

shared understanding, historicity, and language, as ground. They are not 'subjective' since they precede the subject.

230- Palmer rejects the conception of language as instrument; against the notion of thought separate from language. "We do not originate meanings"; language is not coined, it appears.

231- [*One might see a partial contradiction in Palmer, when he denounces so many scientific "errors"—since these theories are also the product of a situated understanding and an act of interpretation. —JAGL*]

Defining understanding in terms of experience

Understanding is not conceptual knowing. In literature this confusion leads to "extensive analyses which contribute little to enabling one to experience in a compelling way the saying power of the work." Palmer rejects the kind of analysis which leads to the wrong questions and to shallow understanding. "To understand a work is to experience it"

232- —above all when it shatters our expectations, it teaches "the poverty of knowledge in comparison with experience." He advocates openness to the text.

The Dialectic of Question and Answer in the Hermeneutical Experience

233- "to experience is to understand not better but differently"; experience negates expectations. Analysis is testing—the answer is already implicit in the system. But great works transform our understanding, and their freshness of seeing escapes analytical blindness. "The truly creative moment lay in the creation of the method itself."

234- Palmer favours a "creative fusion of horizons", "a partial negation of one's own horizon, and through this a more encompassing understanding emerges."

On Being Able to Hear What the Text Did Not Say

"It is necessary to go behind the text and to find what the text did not, and perhaps could not, say." "Just as every question contains a preliminary assertion so every assertion may be seen as the answer to a question."

235- "Thus to interpret the work means to step into the question horizon within which the text moves. But this means also that the interpreter moves into a horizon within which other answers are possible." Palmer pro understanding the text in terms of those answers, thus going beyond the author's intention, "although this may be relevant." He rejects the fear to do violence to the text, and favors going beyond explicitness.

On the Significance of Application to the Present

Palmer rejects theories which (following Ranke) aim at the mere reconstruction of meaning—

the objectivist ideal of history.

236- Historical research has a purpose from the start: from the start, application is implicit. Historical interpretation involves an encounter, as happens in judicial and in theological hermeneutics. Etc.

On the category of the Aesthetic, and Attendant Misconceptions

237- "The idea, which has come down to us from the Enlightenment, of 'the aesthetic' or of a purely 'aesthetic' element in a work of art is a reflexive fiction." The aesthetic dimension is not separable from meaning, it is not 'form' or 'craftsmanship'. Aristotle rightly sees pleasure in art as a by-product.

238- "In literature, the pleasure of reading is the pleasure of understanding in and through form; it is not a response to the form as such." "To differentiate between the material of the work and the performance of it represents a falling away from the aesthetic experience"; "aesthetic pleasure is a by-product of one's encounter with the fresh truth of being set forth in the world of a work of art."

239- Heidegger's theory: the work opens up a space of being of being through form—both go together. The world of the work is continuous with our own and we modify our understanding when we understand it.

240- "The universality of art, then, is an ontological universality: all great art reveals being." It is not a matter of feeling projected into form (vs. subjectivism), but of truth projected into the work. Palmer rejects the isolation of the aesthetic phenomenon, and the alienation of art and the artist from society. "Beauty is truth, the truth of being which discloses itself to us in art." [But not the truth of verifiability].

242- 14. THIRTY THESES ON INTERPRETATION

On the hermeneutical experience

- 1) "*The hermeneutical experience . . . is intrinsically historical.*"
- 2) "*The hermeneutical experience is intrinsically linguistic.*"
- 3) "*The hermeneutical experience is dialectical.*"
- 4) "*The hermeneutical experience is ontological*" —our own being is disclosed.

243- 5) "*The hermeneutical experience is an event*"—a 'language event'.

6) "*The hermeneutical experience is 'objective'*"—(but not scientifically!). Against the Enlightenment and its subjective objectivity—data, reason, reflexive, etc. Pro 'participating', not *using*. The situation itself (and not our reflexivity) comes to expression in language. The ground of objectivity is linguistic reality.

244- 7) *The hermeneutic experience should be led by the text.* It is not an analysis or a rape of

the text, but a loving union of partners. Some aspects of the text recede and others come forward, etc.

8) *"The hermeneutic experience understands what is said*

245) *in the light of the present."*

9) *"The hermeneutic experience is a disclosure of truth."* (Of truth as "the dynamic emergence of being into the light of manifestness"). It 'happens'.

10) *"Aesthetics must be swallowed up in hermeneutics."*

246- "The aesthetic moment cannot be understood apart from the total interpretive encounter."

On Transcending the Subject/Object Schema

11) The subject/object schema must be transcended through phenomenology; cf. phenomenological literary criticism (Sartre, Bachelard, Richard, Blanchot) and French phenomenological philosophy (Ricoeur, Dufrenne, Gusdorf, Merleau-Ponty).

On the Autonomy and Objective Status of the Work of Art

12) The New Criticism is OK on this point; Palmer too is against the intentional fallacy, etc. The critic's interest falls on the thing itself, not on intentions or beliefs.

247- On Method and Methods

13) Method as an attempt to control the phenomenon—whereas in openness it is the phenomenon which leads. "Method is in reality a form of dogmatism."

14) Palmer rejects the rape theories of interpretation, and the "cold analysis of structure and pattern" which does not increase the pleasure of literature.

15) *"Form should never be the starting point of a literary interpretation."*

248- Against the isolation of form; the unity and fullness of the aesthetic moment should be preserved.

16) The beginning point must be the language event of experiencing what the work says.

17) The true love of literature is not the same as this beginning point.

18) "It is not the interpreter who grasps the meaning of the text; the meaning of the text seizes him."

249- 19) The craftsmanship of the work is not a criterion—only the experience provided.

20) Reading a work is not gaining conceptual knowledge but experience.

21) Against the conceptual methods of understanding; against Aristotelian formal analysis. Palmer advocates socratic dialogue.

250- 22) "A method receives its validation only if it works" —and they don't in literature.

23) One should hear the text, listen to it. Literary interpretation "needs to develop an openness for creative negativity."

The Need for Historical Consciousness in Literary Interpretation

24) There is now in America an inability to see the essential historicity of literature. There are only formalists and antiquarians.

251- 25) "*Literature is intrinsically historical.*"

26) "*The task of interpretation, then, is that of bridging historical distance*" —or "demythologizing."

[Again, Palmer underestimates or downplays here the task of interpretation and of criticism, which should also include a critical, sometimes oppositional, response and evaluation of the work - JAGL]

252- 27) Palmer advocates phenomenology as a critique of scientific seeing.

28) The understanding of the work is an event, and cannot be conceptualized as knowledge.

29) Literary interpretation is a historical, not a scientific (conceptual) activity; it is experiential; it is not a matter of rejecting conceptual knowing but of transcending and encompassing it.

30) Palmer calls for a recovery of a sense of the historicity of existing, and questions the idea of 'the right interpretation'.

[Although he believes in "the verdict of history"].

Our judgments of contemporaries are provisional. We should recognize the world of conflict in our daily lives, and conceive of interpretations as historical, like ourselves.

—oOo—

NOTES by JAGL

(1) These notes were taken c. 1990. Numbers on the left refer to the pagination of the 1969 edition (Northwestern UP). Line-breaks in this electronic file are thus somewhat atypical, but clear enough I trust.

(2) See on this issue my paper on the *hermeneutics of trust vs. hermeneutics of suspicion*: "Acritical Criticism, Critical Criticism: Reframing, Topsight, and Critical Dialectics." Online PDF at *Social Science Research Network* 28 August 2008; <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1259696>

(3) On Ingarden's phenomenology of literature, see my notes on *The Literary Work of Art* in *Vanity Fea*: <http://vanityfea.blogspot.com.es/2012/08/the-literary-work-of-art-roman-ingarden.html>

(4) My summary and notes on Schleiermacher's *Hermeneutics* (ed. Kimmerle) are available here: "Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts. (Notes on Schleiermacher)" *Vanity Fea* 13 May 2013.
<http://vanityfea.blogspot.com.es/2013/05/hermeneutics-handwritten-manuscripts.html>

(5) I provide a detailed summary and notes on Gadamer's *Truth and Method* in "Notas sobre *Verdad y método* de Hans-Georg Gadamer",
http://www.unizar.es/departamentos/filologia_inglesa/garciala/publicaciones/verdady metodo.html