

## EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The essays of Hans-Georg Gadamer that are collected in this book present his thought as an applied hermeneutics. But Gadamer's is not the sort of theory that becomes constituted all by itself in the first place, then to find application in some sphere. Gadamer's hermeneutics incorporates the aspect of application right from the beginning. The essays gathered here are not an application of hermeneutics that came after he wrote the theory down in *Truth and Method*: they highlight the moment of application that accompanied every step of his thinking. So our title is using the word "application" in the sense which Gadamer himself sought to define in *Truth and Method*.

Only an age of engineering would suppose that the application of a science or a theory would take the results of a theory erected in its own domain, and then impose it somewhere, hoping to produce results useful to human life. Such an understanding also shows up in contemporary discourse about social science and practical politics, on the one hand, or psychology and practical education, on the other hand. By this account, the original science or theory is supposed to be erected without any thought for human welfare. But this is a late and derivative concept, whereas Gadamer himself always understood *applicatio* in an earlier sense that was first generated in antiquity, and which then produced a series of further meanings, articulated well prior to the modern experience of engineering.

In the usage of the ancients, notably in rhetoric, *applicatio* was the joining or attaching of oneself to a thing—it might have been the attachment of a lesser being to a ruler, or an attachment to a city or to some principle or to a rule of life. In the rhetoricians, *applicatio* could then take on the movement in the opposite direction: the application of a rule or a principle to oneself and one's mode of life. In the Protestant hermeneutics of the seventeenth century, it was this movement of *applicatio* that was made central to the undertaking of interpreting the Scripture: the understanding or interpretation of the Word was accomplished not only by understanding (*intelligentia*), and not only by exegesis or exposition (*explicatio*), but also by applying the Word to one's own life (*applicatio*). Gadamer himself is the one who set this out in Part Two of *Truth and Method*, while showing the import of this theological idea for every experience of interpretation.<sup>1</sup> In the same text he showed the analogy

between interpretation and the Aristotelian account of practical wisdom, a virtue whose principle could only be discerned through the effort of trying to live by it. This meaning of *applicatio* is addressed in our collection by way of a discussion of themes and issues from contemporary historical experience. Attention is given to problems of university education and the university as an institution in contemporary society (Part 1), to poetry and its relation to modern culture and society (Part 2), to the humanities, philosophy, and their relation to the changing context of history in the modern world (Part 3). In each and every case the central question is one of *paideia*, of the education needed for contemporary human beings to be in an adequate relation to their times, to be able to "apply" themselves to it, to its promises as well as frustrations. The interviews, which were undertaken by the editors during the summer of 1986 in Heidelberg,<sup>2</sup> all address these themes as well, especially because they have the philosopher's and scholar's relation to his times in Germany between the 1920s and the present as their focus and center. When the interviews are read in conjunction with Gadamer's essays here, it becomes clear how central an adequate relation to the times and events of the twentieth century is for Gadamer. He began his career as a scholar in a small German university town, but in response to the worldwide recognition of his work, he now reaches beyond his original attachment to a global one. His work culminates in inquiring into a world civilization that only now begins to emerge. The application of hermeneutical thought to the times seeks out experiences through which new and more encompassing cultural and social attachments and identities can be formed. It foreshadows the creation of a new *paideia*, or *Bildung*, one which moves from its European origins toward the worldwide communication of cultures.

Thus a further meaning of *applicatio* comes to the fore: Both in the original Latin and in later formations in various European languages, *applicare*, apply, also had the meaning of steering a boat, a meaning akin to that of our English root word "ply" and one sense of the Latin original *plicare*. To direct our ship, we ply its course, we ply the waves and the wind, or, as we also say, the ship will ply the waves and the wind. The application of the ship to its element may bring storm and stress, but the ship will not consent, ultimately, to be driven off course, even though it bends to the waves and the wind. This sense is also a relevant one for Gadamer's applied hermeneutics. It is present not only in the opening of the mind to the realities of the academic institution or of the society and culture in which it lives. More dramatically, it informs hermeneutics when it is applied to modern poetry. Because reading is an application in this sense, it is open to the storm, and can never be certain of the pathway or even of the destination. It would be wrong to think that the

hermeneutical intelligence that sets sail upon the waves and the wind of poetry has defined in advance any particular destination. One who is prepared to set sail in this spirit is embarking on an adventure. With this, we have introduced another of the fundamental themes of Gadamer's hermeneutics, for this is the actual sense of the hermeneutical concept of *experience* that is likewise set out in Part Two of *Truth and Method*.<sup>3</sup> Here, Gadamer builds upon the sense of experience, *Erfahrung*, that Hegel<sup>4</sup> expressed in his *Phenomenology* and that Heidegger<sup>5</sup> singled out in his commentaries on Hegel. An *Erfahrung* is the sequence of things that befall you when you undertake to travel, *Fahren*. The journey in the eminent sense is one that is made for the very first time. Although there is a destination, it is at the start nothing but an unreal sketch for guiding the traveler. Although there is a route set up in advance, most of it is utterly unknown ahead of time, and the beings and the experiences that will make their appearance along the route cannot be anticipated. It cannot be known in advance whether experiences to be had enroute may outweigh the journey's end in their eventual importance and impressiveness. Nor can one know in advance whether the journey may change one utterly, in body or in mind. In this particular sense, it is clear that life itself is an adventure. This is the concept of experience that guides not only Hegel's *Phenomenology*, and all the concurrent philosophies of *Bildung*, but also the account of reading and interpretation in Gadamer. It is utterly different from empiricist concepts of experience, and those of most philosophers of science, just as the Humboldtian ideal of education is different from the behaviorism of Pavlov and Skinner. At its core there lies the concept of self-consciousness, basis of the possibility of self-formation (*Bildung*). In the modern variant of the idea that we find in Heidegger and Gadamer, self-consciousness needs an adventure, an experience—it needs *applicatio*. It cannot constitute itself in advance of its application upon another; it constitutes itself only through application. Our modern English-language empiricism and behaviorism, on the other hand, have processed *Erfahrung*, or experience, through a preconstituted atomistic grid. Thereby, of course, they have remained oblivious of the very adventure of travel on which they themselves have been embarked since the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. The adventure that is the very essence of modern science must be relived, rethought, and its very character as adventure brought to the fore, just as the *Odyssey* relived in words the wanderings of Odysseus.

In these relationships, of hermeneutics and the sciences, of hermeneutics and poetry, of hermeneutics, the humanities, and modern society, it is notable that hermeneutics has donned the robes, actually, of philosophy itself. And just as the university has formed the essential, irreplaceable environment, in the contemporary age, for philosophy itself, so

the university is the condition of the possibility for scholarly interpretation and for the hermeneutical reflection upon interpretation. The university that the hermeneutical philosopher studies is of course his own irreplaceable matrix and environment. There is a circularity in this practice. And in an age like ours, caught in the conflict between education in the humanities and scientific forms of planning, every reflection on this conflict is itself caught in the conflict, making a response to the history which produced it. And there is a similar circularity, though at a deeper level, the level of the very existence of language, between the poems, on the one hand, and the scholarly, philosophical interpreter of them, on the other hand. The hermeneutical philosopher, as a philosophical interpreter, thinks and speaks with an impressive endowment of self-consciousness. And yet the experience is one of listening for the poem, for the poet, or for the voices of history and those of many cultures. As such it is open for *more* experience.

## I.

Hermeneutics is the opposite of management or of social engineering as a method for the steering of human behavior. Adaptation and adaptability are not the human qualities it favors. Therefore hermeneutics also is a *critique* of the present. Whether Gadamer reflects on the university and contemporary education, on poetry in relation to the mass media, or on the encounter between modern science and the culture-forming force of the humanities, the present age is always in question; for it is too deeply defined by a concern with social engineering. It is shot through with the consequences of the belief that social forecasting, rational planning and scientifically informed administration can make a profound difference, and lead to improvements. For Gadamer such expectations are illusory, frequently troublesome, and often dangerous. They make it impossible for members of contemporary societies, especially in Europe and North America, to appreciate properly the history of which they themselves are a part, to respond fully and openly to the claims of other cultures and to situate themselves in relation to the problems and possibilities of the present.

In every essay published in this collection, the question is raised whether the modern ideal of method which arose with the development of the natural sciences in Europe may be allowed to define and circumscribe one's entire view of the world. Were we to accept this ideal without reservation, we would lose the capacity for understanding that we require to overcome the tightening of our world picture. Modern science

and its ideal of method, ultimately rooted in Greek philosophy, have led to the planetary expansion of technology and a confidence in the manageability of everything, from sequences of events in nature to the organization of human relations and of the relation between states and economies. Therefore Gadamer points to experiences and forms of learning and acculturation which do not fit the model of action defined and determined to have a foreseen and foreseeable effect.

First, there is the place of humanistic learning in the universities—institutions which in Germany as much as elsewhere have mushroomed into oversized organizations processing large numbers of students and making the experience of scholarship impossible. Gadamer claims that scholarship can only be experienced if students are confronted with scholarship as a way of life, exemplified in the experienced scholar's commitment. University education is not merely training to become an expert. For someone like Gadamer the classical German university of the Humboldtian type still remains alive, insofar as it at least suggested education as a form of life, a form of cultivation of the person which required a persistently maintained encounter with a subject matter, an encounter which would demand personal growth as much as the development of cognition and understanding, thus linking one with the other. Ours may no longer be the way of "solitude and freedom," of the Humboldtian university,<sup>6</sup> to which philosophy appeared to be integral, as Gadamer shows. But we still need a form of education—*Bildung*—which does not separate learning from its application to oneself (as happens in the case of technical or administrative knowledge and managerial action) but encourages a person's development through knowledge, learning as a form of self-encounter and encounter with what is other and different. This kind of learning still requires a presence, face to face and in dialogue, the teacher exemplifying to the student his or her presence to a subject-matter, as if he or she belonged to it, rather than its being in the teacher's possession.

Gadamer's essays on education, with special attention to university education and the structure of the university institution particularly in Germany, are not proposals for the reform of universities that might bring them into line with the ideas of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Instead they are the application of the hermeneutically attuned mind to the reality of the university. What claims attention, first and foremost, when Gadamer applies his learned and questioning mode of thought to this institution, is the character of the claims that are made in Western societies for the ideal of science. In particular, there is the question of the place of the scientific research ethos in the life of the professions. For mainly it is the practitioners of a certain group of professions that receive university training. Why is it that academies of science are also the

schools that train lawyers, doctors, engineers, architects, and so on? Are these professions defined as applied science? Gadamer proposes several answers that go much deeper than that proposal. For one, the emergence of universities shows us the central role of the very ideal of science in generating all civilizations that we call modern and Western. And he also sketches at two or three places a clear-cut conception of the essence of universities, an interpretation of the Humboldtian idea embodied in the foundation of the University of Berlin. It is the mark of a profession that the education of its practitioners incorporate a prolonged and intense exposure to the life of science or scholarship as it is undertaken at the highest, most advanced level of research (today we call it "the cutting edge"). The professional life of the doctor or lawyer would receive the imprint of science at the outset. For this idea, it matters *not at all* whether that science be relevant *in its content* to the professional's later practical duties. The formative mark of science qualifies the professional and the citizen at once—the professional is therefore for the rest of his life a kind of scientist or scholar. This idea embodies a more subtle concept of *applicatio* than does the usual idea of "applied science." And yet Gadamer's essays raise the hard question whether the Humboldtian idea of the university could possibly apply in modern conditions.

We might also ask, however, whether service to an ideal of scholarship, which is the ultimate authority in a university teacher's activities, is still possible under conditions which undermine the independence of the university from society. Gadamer's idea of university education, exemplified in one version in his 1947 response to the Soviet government of East Germany,<sup>7</sup> and most recently in his reflections on university education and research in the present,<sup>8</sup> always points to the opposite from being trained in one's profession or acquiring the pertinent skills. The primary achievement of education is to have learned to apply oneself to the possibility of experiences which awaken our questions. The hermeneutical account of education (*Bildung*) is one of the formation of *persons* through an encounter with the subject-matter. Therefore the scholar must not merely strive to be an outstanding scholar, but also to be an exemplary teacher. He or she has to stimulate the need and desire for *more* education.

This is the idea of research operative here, one inseparable from the belief that research itself is formative, educational, but only as long as we do not treat it as a means for subjecting the materials researched to pre-given interests and needs. And in order to become fully aware of the educational force of the idea of research defended by Gadamer, one merely needs to consult Gadamer's critique of German scholarship during the Nazi period (in Chapter 2), in order to see that he advocates the uncompromising pursuit of truth as the route of *paideia* through scholarship.



One also might usefully compare this essay, as well as the two most recent essays (Part 1, Chapters 4 and 5), with Heidegger's rectoral address of 1933. Gadamer comments on it in the interview introducing Part 1 of the book. Clearly, Gadamer never harbored Heidegger's misplaced expectations. In fact, it seems, Heidegger's rectoral address was something like a negative turning point for him. Therefore the issue for him became that of reflecting on failure, the failure to resist. But for our times, other hopes and dangers are central. Among them are how to keep alive a consciousness of cultural traditions and modes of communication, ways of reading and saying—which neither can be made part of nor replaced by the major organizing forces of modern societies, forces associated with the engineering of perceptions and understanding carried forward by the electronic media or the practices of administrative coordination.

## II.

The probing of these dimensions of modern life and of its openness or resistance to education is the theme of the two other sections of our book. Underlying the most subtle and supremely respectful interpretations of poems by Paul Celan or Stefan George, Hölderlin or Benn, there is always the disquieting question whether the poets and poetry might not fall silent, whether they might not voluntarily retreat from a world defined by the loudness of electronically magnified voices. For Gadamer makes it clear that poetry and the poets educate only insofar as they bring a disconcertedness to our lives: a distrust of all too facile reconciliations, an incredulity, (*Glaubensunwilligkeit*), as he puts it in another one of his Celan interpretations.<sup>9</sup> And as we read on, and consider the essays on Europe and the humanities (including the role of Jewish philosophers in it), on planning and expertise, a constellation of attitudes appears constitutive of the meaning of *paideia*, of being educated, which indicates more than an individual's capacity to survive with integrity. It is the very solidity of cultural traditions and of their conviction-forming force, noticeable for example in the universal presence of burial rites in human societies,<sup>10</sup> which for Gadamer outlasts and has outlasted the brutality of twentieth-century history and especially the cold frenzy of bureaucratically organized mass-murder in Germany.

In a constant reactivation of historical consciousness reaching across the entire range of Western-European cultures, Gadamer attempts to educate us about the strengths of European culture, even while its underpinnings in the former European nation-states are disappearing and it is driven on into a more encompassing civilization. We learn to ask

whether a philosophy formed in the encounter with literature and poetry, the humanities and classical studies, can help us perceive a new challenge: to grow beyond the limits of history as it has been and slowly to become ready to enter into a set of global relations.

Gadamer's sense of and respect for non-European civilizations is deeply formed by romanticism. It replicates, for example, Herder's appreciation of the varieties of histories and peoples. There is a richness of experience and expression to be found on a world scale which can become our own, as we learn to recognize what is specific to us in comparison to other cultures and civilizations. Europe in its intellectual history has produced a system of differentiations—between art and science, philosophy and religion, religion and art—which Gadamer shows was not found in Asian societies and cultures.<sup>11</sup> But noting this should not have us adopt the “Eurocentric” standpoint that truly developed societies everywhere must accept such a system of differentiations. Gadamer's is not a theory of universal patterns of development.<sup>12</sup> Rather the learning which can take place, is to see the otherness of other societies as something complementary to one's own. One reflects on this otherness because of respect for it and lets oneself be called to account by it.<sup>13</sup> The drama of a worldwide conversation of cultures is situated here. *Paideia*, *Bildung*, always expresses a concern with what human beings can *become*, over against what they already are.

In the case of poetry and the poets, poets of the German tongue in the instance of our selections, there are the voices of Benn and Celan, for example: They reach us from the depths of hopelessness and destruction caused by Nazism and the Second World War. As such they express a loss of metaphysical and transcendent hope. They call into question much that has guided the West. They find words for experiences largely hidden from public view and, in ways which move and unsettle, call the hardened and hurried citizens of an achievement-oriented world into a slower pacing and rhythm of existence, one that fosters listening. Without listening there can be no becoming. It is for these reasons, for reasons of the need for cultivation—and education—by way of a most intimately speaking (therefore never to be silenced) voice, that poetry and the poets are singled out from among the genres of literature and writing. A poem must be read, as if by at least silently moving one's lips, by *not* simply letting oneself be driven along in the pursuit of mastery, one could gain an understanding of the whole of existence. This is a perspective which usually eludes us.

One of the most beautiful statements about Gadamer's life-long interest and love of poetry occurs in an essay which has modernist poetry as its theme. In “Are the Poets Falling Silent?” (Chapter 7), two poems are cited, one by Paul Celan and one by a less-known poet of the Ger-



man language, Johannes Bobrowski. For both poets destruction and human destructiveness are a central theme. It informs their view of the entirety of our being. And the fate of Germany as well as the murderous terror unleashed by Germans in 1933, a terror which then rebounded on Germans themselves with the Second World War, provides a perspective on the whole, as it does for Gadamer himself. This perspective has a latent presence in his work and is frequently addressed in our interviews with him.

Contrary to what is often believed, Gadamer does know of the limits of classical and traditional learning, and his sincere and lasting dedication to the poetry of Paul Celan has to do with this sense of limits. It also has to do with the question, what future, what space there is for the human voice, human speech, under conditions in which this voice may be amplified so to overwhelm and overpower millions and more than millions, as with the radio broadcasts of Hitler's raving speeches, or, as now, with the soft sell of the insistent commercial propaganda that mobilizes all conceivable wantings among human beings toward a "need" for consumption.

Therefore the serious and moving question: Are the poets falling silent? That amounts to asking: Can there be speech, from human to human, across the abysses of terror and the grim and brutal perversion of all that binds us? In his own way, Gadamer endorses what Paul Celan says about Osip Mandelstam, the Russian Jewish poet (who appears to have died as a consequence of Stalin's purges in Siberia): Mandelstam's poems are 'poems of one who notices and is attentive, one who is turned toward what shows itself, who questions it and addresses it. They are *dialogue*. In the space of this dialogue, that which is addressed constitutes itself, becomes present, assembles itself around the I who addresses and names. But the addressed brings its otherness and alienness to this presence. In being named it has become a You. It lets its remoteness speak even in the here and now of the poem, in its immediacy and nearness. It preserves what is most its own, its time.'<sup>14</sup> These are reflections on being, time, and poetry,<sup>15</sup> as are Gadamer's. And it is no coincidence that in another one of his essays addressing the poetry of recent times, and its relation to these times, he interprets the much quoted poem by Paul Celan, *Todtnauberg*, which was written after Celan's visit with Heidegger in the Black Forest.<sup>16</sup>

The poets, we might say, have not fallen silent. They merely have become quieter. Their "messages" are uttered discreetly.<sup>17</sup> This is the side of Hans-Georg Gadamer, the philosopher of language, of human speech, and communication who has learned so much from the quietly insistent words of modernist poets in the symbolist tradition, and who has also, working against the grain of the times, persistently remained

absorbed in the classics of the European tradition, while never yielding to the temptation of either treating them as if they had given the final word or wanting to overcome and correct them (and with them the course of European history as Heidegger at times appears to intend).

Gadamer knows of the limits of the philosopher, and sincerely seeks the voices of those who are not. He draws attention to the poet's presence, and therefore the presence of culture *in* the society, even in a society such as German society was after Hitler, saddled—directly or indirectly, willingly or unwillingly—with responsibility for the genocidal policies of the Nazi regime.

There is present, then, in Gadamer's thought, an awareness of the problem of culture in the late twentieth century, and of the unwillingness of modern European societies, and also of North American societies—as our interviews show—to fully respond to those voices which most profoundly call them into question. This is why his essays on poetry and the poets are so important.<sup>18</sup>

### III.

Gadamer's essays on poetry matter not merely because they say much that is valuable and highly perceptive regarding particular poets or poems, or regarding poetry as a genre of writing, but also because they provide a contrast to his more tradition-bound reflections on the university and education, or on planning in the new "world-order" of the decades after the Second World War. They also provide a contrast to his belief that the tradition of the *Geisteswissenschaften* representing for him the cultural and intellectual spirit of Europe, can survive the various pressures of modern society, pressures for which he uses terms such as mass society, the anonymity of a society of order (*Ordnungsgesellschaft*), technological mass civilization, etc. It can hardly be doubted that in Gadamer's reflections on our times—the theme of our collection—a vocabulary occurs which reminds one of forms of cultural criticism having their origins in an aristocratic culture of the intellect and in an exclusive order of communication between scholars only at home in the universities (especially the "unpolitical" German university of the past, an origin to which Gadamer openly admits<sup>19</sup>). But it is also apparent, that there is a more radical sensibility at work, a willingness to step beyond the limits of the continuity of tradition and the integrity of an intellectual culture dating back to the Greeks. The selection of essays which we present to the reader thus displays a dimension of this urbane philosopher which is not usually noticed. Gadamer, a citizen of the former Federal

Republic of Germany, who was born in Wilhelminian Germany and also has his intellectual roots in it (as, e.g., with Neo-Kantian philosophy), who then experienced his most formative years during the Weimar Republic, does indeed strongly respond to the loss of social and cultural bearings which we must regard as the legacy of two world wars and a total regrouping of cultures and societies since then. He does not live or work in isolation from the times. The new historical constellations which have become visible since then therefore become the central object of reflection in the last section of this book. It contains two recently published large essays on Europe and the *Geisteswissenschaften*, accompanied by a third considering similar themes.<sup>20</sup>

An extensive interview covers the period between the two wars and its consequences. Much ground is covered in it with occasionally startling frankness. The essays on the limits of planning and expertise display the hermeneutic philosopher's ability to move into the very terrain of applied scientific thinking. These essays, as well as the interview, present us with the cautious open-mindedness characteristic of the hermeneutical philosopher's attitude to modernity. And while all these texts were written prior to the dissolution of Eastern-European and Soviet Communism and the completely unexpected reunification of Germany, they reveal a concern for Europe and its future which might be even more to the point after the occurrence of these epochal and still unfathomable changes.

For these essays, especially the two essays addressing "The European Humanities" (Part 3, Chapter 16) and "The Diversity of Europe" (Part 3, 18) raise the question of the legitimacy of Europe in the face of the slow evolution of new global linkages. The legitimacy of Europe is situated beyond the exercise of economic and political power. Here Gadamer definitely overcomes the legacy of the German 1920s (and before), of Bann and of Jünger, of Spengler and even of his teacher Heidegger, who saw Europe hovering on an abyss and losing its cultural force, as it could no longer muster the political will for the formation of empires and nation-states. Here he draws closer to a perspective recently put forward, albeit on very different grounds, by Jürgen Habermas.<sup>21</sup> Both Habermas and Gadamer situate Europe and its possible world role outside of and beyond the pursuit of power. They side with European intellectual traditions fostering capacities for conversation and having a conviction forming force. The *paideia*, the *Bildung*, envisaged here is one tied to the recognition of difference and the need for, and worthwhileness of, open and nonmanipulative communication. As such the *Geisteswissenschaften*, in the hermeneutic philosopher's idealizing<sup>22</sup> interpretation of their history, are located beyond the amassment of cultural capital required for a global struggle for power.

Thus hermeneutics applies itself to itself: It draws its sustenance from traditions to which hermeneutical reflection itself has given form. A pru-

dent and frequently shrewd observer of the times such as Hans-Georg Gadamer knows, of course, that this is an idealizing projection: The *Geisteswissenschaften* certainly have been—and sometimes still are—part of the struggle for power among nation-states and large economic or political blocs. But they cannot be consistently harnessed to these competitive endeavours. They suggest to the educated members of the middle classes in late twentieth-century societies, that there are voices to be listened to and claims to be accepted which are not backed up by coercive force or pragmatic calculation. Those who can listen to these voices and respond to these claims show themselves to be educated, to have entered on the path of *paideia*: They can relinquish their claims to superiority and free themselves of the need for guarded and reserved self-possession, thus foresaking the preoccupation with control characteristic of managerial thinking and the mentality of social engineering. They can risk to take the step out into the open, to ply the intellectual seas, thus making good on the full meaning of *applicare*. They can find new attachments, as Gadamer suggests to Europeans, in our final interview with him (Part 3, Chapter 12): 'And if we then have to become part of a new world civilization, if this is our task, then we shall need a philosophy which is similar to my hermeneutics, a philosophy which teaches us to see the justification for the other's point of view and which thus makes us doubt our own.'

#### IV.

The reader may wonder, then, what made the editors undertake to question Hans-Georg Gadamer through the course of long and elaborate interviews. For the interview as a form does not usually allow for the interviewer's views to come into question. But our experience was different. Because of our knowledge and familiarity with Hans-Georg Gadamer's work and because Hans-Georg Gadamer did *not* practice the studied and calculated reserve of a well-known public "figure," the interviews became vigorously pursued conversations, which, however, had as their focus "Hans-Georg Gadamer and his times." As these times came into view and the philosopher with them, the interviewers—representing another generation—found themselves driven toward the future, the future of their own and of coming generations.

A very strong sense of the *openness* of the future and of history emerged for them, as it had for Hans-Georg Gadamer through the events and reflections of a life filled to the limit with unexpected change and events for which there was no model and for which no one could therefore be prepared. These events had to be responded to in their

immediacy. It is this sense of immediacy which the interviews convey. In their entire recorded length in German (about fifteen hours) they would constitute a smallish book by themselves. So our procedure has been to condense the material considerably at the very same time as we translated it into English and turned it into a written text. Our English text was made directly from the tape-recorded voices. We have not preserved every question and every answer from the tapes, but on the other hand there is nothing printed here that is not in the tapes.<sup>23</sup>

Thus we have treated the interviews as *texts* which require a form of their own. We have transformed them into texts to be read in *conjunction* with the essays, rather than to be studied as separate documents. The interviews do contain some startling observations and revelations; but primarily they are not news. Thus there is the example (in the interview [Chapter 1] introducing Part 1) of Gadamer describing how shocked he was when Heidegger concluded a letter written to him with 'Mit deutschem Gruss.' This phrase was taken to be equivalent to 'Heil Hitler' at the time. And Gadamer used this example quite deliberately in his conversation with us. But he also makes clear that Heidegger withdrew from Nazism over time, thus making it possible for Gadamer to reestablish contact with him. But no such detail should detract from the primary point of the interviews: To illustrate the relation of Hans-Georg Gadamer the *philosopher* to his and our times. Thus the interviews convey the lively presence of a most influential philosopher who is deeply involved in the events of the times with all their shocking unexpectedness, but never lost in them. His is the response of a receptive, but also most active intelligence. Gadamer's capacity to exist in the midst of things—and his willingness to put his classical scholarship to the test of the times should move us.

### Notes

1. *Truth and Method*, Second, Revised Edition. New York, 1990 Crossroad (translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall), 307–62. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Band 1. Tübingen, Germany. J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).

2. All in all, the editors completed six separate interviews with Hans-Georg Gadamer, over a period of four days. Five interviews were conducted in German, and one in English. Dates and locations for the interviews are given at the end of the interviews included in the collection. We are indeed grateful for Professor Gadamer's generosity on all these occasions.

3. *Truth and Method*, as quoted, 346–62.

4. G. W. F. Hegel, "Introduction." *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

5. M. Heidegger. *Hegel's Concept of Experience*. New York: Harper and Row, 1970

6. See Helmuth Schelsky, *Einsamkeit und Freiheit*. Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1963. See also: Karl Jaspers, *Die Idee der Universität*. Heidelberg, Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1923 and 1946. Revised edition 1961 (with K. Rossmann). Max Scheler, *Bildung und Wissen*, Frankfurt, 1947. Jürgen Habermas, "The Idea of the University: Learning Processes." In J. Habermas: *The New Conservatism*, translated by S. Weber Nicholsen, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989, and "Vom sozialen Wandel akademischer Bildung" (1963), in: J. Habermas, *Kleine Politische Schriften I-IV*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981, 101-19. All these authors build on the writings on the university and academic study by the classical philosophers of German idealism, such as Fichte, Schleiermacher, Schelling, and, of course, Humboldt.

7. See Hans-Georg Gadamer "On The Primordality of Science," Chapter 2, Part 1, in this collection. But obviously, these ideas are cast in a more classical form in essays 3 and 4, essays which offer significant insights into Gadamer's relation to the historical emergence of major universities in Germany and the ideological and social factors which contributed to it.

8. See Hans-Georg Gadamer: "The Idea of the University—Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow." Chapter 5 of Part 1 of this collection. This essay is based on a lecture delivered by Gadamer as part of a series organized by the Municipal Theater of the University of Heidelberg, in celebration of the 600th anniversary of the founding of the University. Four other prominent German scholars (including Jürgen Habermas) participated in the lecture series as well. See publication references at the end of this book. Gadamer's lecture on the University of Heidelberg (essay 4 of Part 1 in this collection) was held as the opening lecture for the festivities surrounding the 600th anniversary of the university.

9. See Hans-Georg Gadamer: "Celans Schlussgedicht." In: A. D. Colin (ed.), *Argumentum e Silentio: International Paul Celan Symposium*. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter Verlag, 1987, p.71. The relevant sentence reads in German as follows: 'Zwar ist in allen Gestalten von Kunst immer etwas von Zeugenschaft für eine heile Welt, aber doch auch etwas wie Misstrauen gegen zu leichte Versöhnungen, eine Art Glaubensunwilligkeit. Das scheint mir der eigentliche Hintergrund in Celans poetischem Schaffen....' The poem referred to in this essay is the same poem by Celan as the one interpreted in Part 2, Chapter 10, of this collection: "Under the Shadow of Nihilism."



10. See "The Future of the European Humanities" (Part 3, Chapter 16, p. 207).

11. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Future of the European Humanities" as quoted.

12. Despite the absence of such a theory, Gadamer does not share the antimodernist disposition of some German social philosophers of his time, such as Arnold Gehlen, Hans Freyer, or Helmuth Schelsky. He has usually retained considerable distance from them, as from younger "neo-conservative" philosophers in Germany, such as Hermann Lübbe. Gadamer clearly indicates, however, that he agrees with the diagnosis, given in German social thought since Max Weber and Georg Simmel, that modernization processes imply the dominance of objective and objectifying methods of social organization, and that the movement from a culture rooted in personal/communal relations (*Personalkultur*) to one based on objective exigencies of administration (*Sachkultur*) is typical of processes of rationalization which are fundamental to life in our times. This theme is present in most of our essays. See also the interview "The 1920s, the 1930s, and the Present—National Socialism, German History, and German Culture."

13. See the interview "Writing and the Living Voice" (Part 2) and the interview introducing Part 3 of this collection, especially its final pages and the discussions in Chapters 15 and 17 of Part 3 in this collection.

14. See Paul Celan "Die Dichtung Osip Mandelstams" in R. Dutli (ed.): *Osip Mandelstam. Im Luftgrab. Ein Lesebuch*. Zürich, Switzerland: Amman Verlag, 1988, 69–83. The passage which we have summarized can be found on p. 72.

15. Clearly, there is an affinity to be found in the passage quoted above to the later Heidegger's thinking about philosophy, poetry, and being. Celan mentions that Mandelstam had studied philosophy in Germany, in Heidelberg. But in Celan's view, elements of Latin and Greek thought are present in Mandelstam's poetry, beside the primary presence of Russian and Jewish traditions. One may therefore wonder whether this does not hold for Celan as well, thus making it possible for Gadamer to regard Celan as the poet who marks something like a watershed in German language poetry. Celan represents post-World War Two and post-Holocaust poetry, as Stefan George represents an earlier phase responding to and identifying the decline of liberal Wilhelminian culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

16. See the essay "Under the Shadow of Nihilism" (Chapter 10, Part

2). Further pertinent interpretations of Celan are contained in Gadamer's widely read book *Wer bin Ich und wer bist Du?* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986. It is a commentary to the series of poems entitled *Atemkristall*. See also references to Gadamer's interpretations in V. M. Fóti "Paul Celan's Challenges to Heidegger's Poetics" in K. Wright (ed.), *Festivals of Interpretation*, 184–208. Fóti mentions that Celan was "an assiduous reader of Heidegger's writings" (p. 185). Despite his respect for Heidegger which—as Fóti shows—clearly was reciprocated, Celan expected a 'coming word' (see the poem "Todtnauberg," written on the occasion of a visit with Heidegger at his Black Forest hut) of atonement, as Fóti says. This word had not been forthcoming from Heidegger, a matter on which Gadamer comments with great frankness in our interview introducing Part 1 of this collection entitled: "The German University and German Politics: The Case of Heidegger."

17. See Hans-Georg Gadamer: "Are the Poets Falling Silent?." Chapter 7 of Part 2 of this collection.

18. See Dieter Misgeld: "Poetry, Dialogue, and Negotiation: Liberal Culture and Conservative Politics in Hans-Georg Gadamer's Thought," 161–83 in K. Wright (ed.), *Festivals of Interpretation. Essays on Hans-Georg Gadamer's Work*.

19. See the interview introducing Part 1 of this book.

20. See Chapter 16 of Part 3 in this book. It has the relation between the human and natural sciences as its theme.

21. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987.

22. There is a tendency, on Gadamer's part, to remove the discussion of the *Geisteswissenschaften* from the imperial history of Europe and the formation of nation-states in this history. But one may raise the interesting question—not to be answered in this introduction—whether Gadamer's critique of German historicism and Romanticism to be found in *Truth and Method* may not be extended to a critique of aspirations to power, domination and cultural hegemony in the Europe of the past. For this critique is itself implicit in his recent writings. But it is rarely turned against the *Geisteswissenschaften* and the traditions of European humanism, despite Gadamer's general openness to non-European cultures and civilizations. See the interview: "The 1920s, the 1930s, and the Present: National Socialism, German History, and German Culture." It introduces Part 3 of our collection.

23. The English text of the interviews included in this collection was made available to Professor Gadamer and approved after perusal by our editor, Professor Dennis Schmidt, whose generous and unfailing support for this project we wish to acknowledge.

