

In previous articles, I have attempted to work out the elective affinities between Gadamer and Dewey and also between Dewey and Marx. It remains to construct the base of this triangle by drawing a line from Marx to Gadamer. In particular, for philosophical hermeneutics, pragmatism, and historical materialism alike, the notion of praxis is fundamental. In this paper, then, I aim to clarify the meaning of praxis in the light of Gadamer's phenomenological investigation in *Truth and Method* into the event of understanding. Gadamer's position is that inasmuch as understanding "happens" (*geschehen*) in its eventful character, it happens ontologically, in a lifeworld saturated in historicity, and it happens practically, in and through its application; or even more fundamentally, as I will argue here, it happens performatively, in the being-performed of a work (whether it is a work of art or any other kind of "work"). Hence, Gadamer's is a "practical philosophy," so that far from being a product of the epistemology industry, it heads towards "overcoming the epistemological problem through phenomenological research" (see TM, 242-64). The terms "practical" and praxis are not synonyms, since praxis is the dialectical integration of theory with practice. But it remains fundamental to Gadamer's purpose, as well as to Marx's and Dewey's, to criticize a one-sided, abstract, alienated theoreticism that neither arises from nor returns to its soils in practice; a theory for theory's sake that forgets its own rootedness, analogous to the nineteenth-century ideal of art for art's sake belonging to the "aesthetic consciousness" that Gadamer masterfully deconstructs in Part I of *Truth and Method*.

Recently, in "Marxist Critique and Philosophical Hermeneutics," Peter Amato has come out ahead of me by directly relating Gadamer to Marx without the intermediaries of Paul Ricoeur and Frederic Jameson, "[major] contributors to Marxist hermeneutics" who have nevertheless "engaged Marx at arm's length," so that "the voice of Marx's revolutionary politics isn't really heard" in their work (237). "Both Jameson and Ricoeur tend to operate from the side of language, literary and cultural criticism," whereas Amato aims to develop "a Marxism that would be more adequate to history and social action because it could conceptualize them as social experience mediated by language. This would properly be considered a kind of hermeneutical Marxism rather than a 'Marxist hermeneutics'" (237).

It will be to the point to observe that Amato is writing forty years after the famous debate between Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas first got underway. In the opening round of that debate, Habermas had accused Gadamer of "an idealism of linguisticity." My task here will be to demonstrate that this charge of linguistic idealism is a ship passing in the night. A corollary of this demonstration will follow that the nineteenth-century debate between a position typecast as "idealism" and a position typecast as "materialism" is otiose and obsolete, if not stillborn (featuring figures of the stature of

Feuerbach, Engels, the philosophers of the Second International, Plekhanov, and the Lenin of Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, poised against such swiftly passing rivals as British Idealists, Neo-Kantians, and logical positivists). The idealist-materialist debate thus occupies a twilight zone between two genuine and profound philosophical moments, the classical German philosophy behind it, Kant through Marx, and the phenomenological movement ahead of it, the thought of Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer.

Asking how phenomenology comports itself towards the idealist-materialist debate should facilitate what Bernard Lonergan calls an “inverse insight,” thereby catalyzing a “higher viewpoint.” Phenomenology does not comport itself towards the idealist-materialist debate at all. Rather, it shows that the terms of the debate rest on a philosophical mistake (the mistake of thinking either that “reality” must be an “idea” or else that an “idea” must be some sort of property of the physical organization of matter). The point would hardly be worth mentioning except that Marx’s thought was somehow assimilated into this materialist idea, Habermas accused Gadamer of linguistic idealism, and the late Richard Rorty wrote an essay called “Nineteenth-Century Idealism and Twentieth-Century Textualism,” explaining the latter as the successor to the former and more or less coming down on its side. As a corollary of his own position, Amato argues that despite his attempt to mediate the nineteen-sixties debate between Gadamer and Habermas, Ricoeur failed to resolve what was at issue (242, n.3). We might say that by being more or less one-sidedly “textualist” and “culturalist” in his approach, Ricoeur was insufficiently “historically-materialist.” Coming at the question anew, however, with the benefit of historical distance, Amato brings Gadamer together with Marx in an altogether different way. I will quote him at length:

Gadamer suggests that if any economic or social sub-system is ever to have any effect upon anything, or anyone, it must be mediated through and interwoven with the culture and history of a group of people and their language....The fundamentally misleading nature of economism and its inadequacy as a social theory become obvious from the standpoint of Gadamer’s notion of effective history. Economic forces from the “base” can produce an effect in the “superstructure” of ideas only by gaining the ability to have linguistic meaning. But for economic forces to become capable of linguistic effect, it has to occur within a tradition that already exists in effective history, through which it would have to pass for it to have meaning at all. But then economic forces cannot ultimately explain ideas, since their ability to affect thinking and language already depends on some linguistic and cultural tradition that is always already connected with definite ideas and a definite history. Effective history precedes and influences the ongoing interplay of material forces and ideas mediated

within and through language....If economic forces and structures are always already mediated by language and tradition, then there is no sense in talking about them as if they are mysterious “prime movers” of history, change, thought, and morality, and that these latter are merely derivative of economic forces and structures. If Marx and Gadamer are right, then there is always already a base, and always already a superstructure, and these interact. Surely Marx says nothing that contradicts this (239-40). In this passage, with Gadamer’s help, Amato brings the “base” and “superstructure” of classical Marxism together in the organic unity of their mutual transactions, as any reasonably astute reader of Marx would recognize to be Marx’s own view of the matter (were it not for the dense historical layers of obfuscation between Marx’s text then and our reading of it now).

In the meantime, between Ricoeur and Amato, as his debate with Gadamer receded, Habermas moved on about a decade and a half later, after his “communications-theoretic” turn, to write his magnum opus, the two-volumes of *The Theory of Communicative Action* (originally 1981). Even after Gadamer initially replied to him, in subsequent works Habermas relentlessly treaded the same ground. In *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, for example, he profiles Gadamer’s interpretation of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* in order to conclude, “But if philosophical ethics and political theory can know nothing more than what is anyhow contained in the everyday norm consciousness of different populations, and if it cannot even know this in a different way, it cannot then rationally distinguish legitimate from illegitimate domination.” Or in other words, Gadamer’s appropriation of Aristotle’s ethics degenerates into a philosophical “know-nothingism” worthy of American politics.

In *Volume One of The Theory of Communicative Action* (“Reason and the Rationalization of Society”), Habermas briefly takes up Gadamer again in connection with “the tradition stemming from Dilthey and Husserl,” in which “understanding has been characterized ontologically by Heidegger in *Being and Time* [1927] as a basic feature of human existence, and reaching understanding by Gadamer in *Truth and Method* [1960] as a basic feature of historical life” (107). So that when he comes to Gadamer specifically, commenting on the fusion of horizons, he writes, Gadamer gives the interpretive model of *Verstehen* a peculiarly one-sided twist. If in the performative attitude of virtual participants in conversation we start with the idea that an author’s utterance has the presumption of rationality, we not only admit the possibility that the interpretandum may be exemplary for us, that we may learn something from it; but we also take into account the possibility that the author could learn from us. Gadamer remains bound to the experience of the philologist who deals with classical texts...The knowledge embodied in the text is, Gadamer believes, fundamentally superior to the

interpreter's (134).

Aside from the consideration that such superiority of a classic text is often or perhaps usually the case, neither Gadamer nor in fact Habermas thinks that an author, when deceased, for example, Kant, who died in 1804, "could learn from us." But in any case, this is not even Gadamer's position, and although Habermas quotes from *Truth and Method*, he has no quotation in which Gadamer writes what he makes Gadamer say. On the other hand, Gadamer does write, for example, that "it is literally more correct to say that language speaks us, rather than that we speak it...[What] constitutes the hermeneutic event proper is not language as language [however], whether as grammar or its lexicon; it consists in the coming into language of what has been said in the tradition: an event that is at once appropriation and interpretation. Thus here it really is true to say that this event is not our action upon the thing, but the act of the thing itself" (TM, 463). How such can be "the act of the thing itself" raises a serious question and goes straight to our topic. But the reason is not because Gadamer "remains bound to...the philologist."

Nevertheless, Habermas goes on to write that "Gadamer endangers his fundamental hermeneutic insight because hidden behind his preferred model of philological concern with canonical texts lies the really problematic case of the dogmatic interpretation of sacred scriptures" (135). Therefore, although he recognizes "an internal connection between questions of meaning and questions of validity" (135), Habermas announces that this "does not mean assenting to its validity claim without regard to context" (135-36), a point so obvious it is astonishing to think that Habermas thinks that Gadamer thinks otherwise. Yet Habermas concludes that Gadamer's "identification of understanding and agreement is (at least) abetted by [his] hermeneutics-with-a-traditionalist-turn" (136). The "traditionalist" Gadamer is at least a familiar one, so that here Habermas echoes his earliest criticism, namely, that Gadamer's "traditionalism" obviates the possibility of ideology critique and blinds him to social structures of domination that can be recognized only in work and action; that is, work and action as opposed to language in the way Habermas thinks that Gadamer understands it. This is the actual object of Habermas's critical-theoretical interest in Gadamer, but it follows only from the charge he levels against Gadamer's putative linguistic idealism.

In the second volume of *The Theory of Communicative Action* ("Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason"), Gadamer makes no guest appearance, but Habermas finally generalizes his brief against "hermeneutic idealism" in a section entitled, "The Concept of the Lifeworld and the Hermeneutic Idealism of Interpretive Sociology" (119-52). Among several criticisms Habermas

develops of interpretive sociology, one in particular appears like boilerplate from his history of criticizing Gadamer. He writes,

A verstehende sociology that allows society to be wholly absorbed into the lifeworld ties itself to the perspective of self-interpretation of the culture under investigation; this internal perspective screens out everything that inconspicuously affects a sociocultural lifeworld from the outside. In particular, theoretical approaches that set out from a culturalistic concept of the lifeworld get entangled in the fallacies of “hermeneutic idealism,” as Albrecht Wellmer has called it. The other side of this is a methodological descriptivism that denies itself the justified explanatory claims of theory formation in the social sciences. This is true, above all, of the phenomenological, linguistic, and ethnomethodological variants of interpretive sociology, which as a rule do not get beyond reformulations of a more or less trivial everyday knowledge (148).

Once more, shades of phenomenological-linguistic, hermeneutic-idealist “know-nothingism”!

At least two questions can be posed, the first one bearing on the issue of whether Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics has or lacks the resources for a critical theory of society. Knowing what Habermas thinks, I will not pursue this question here. But the second question goes to the true heart of the matter, whether it is correct to interpret Gadamer as a “linguistic idealist” in the first place. The answer is no, and explaining why not will lead us directly to the promised clarification of praxis.

To find ourselves there, we are required to return to Gadamer’s initial reply to Habermas in the essay, “On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection” (1967). Setting up his reply, in which he still defends “the essential linguisticity of all human experience of the world” (19), Gadamer deems it “advisable ...if not imperative, to take up the question of the interdependence of rhetoric, hermeneutics, and sociology as regards the universalities that run through all three” (20). His guiding thread is the “obvious relationship to praxis” (20): “In both rhetoric and hermeneutics...theory is subsequent to that out of which it is abstracted; that is, to praxis” (21; emphasis added in both quotations). On this basis, he first draws the thread through rhetoric and hermeneutics (21-26) and next through hermeneutics and the social sciences (26-38). In the final section, he returns to what we can think of as the fundamental theme of Truth and Method, “On the Universality of Hermeneutical Reflection” (38-42).

Gadamer's specific reply to Habermas appears, naturally enough, in the middle section of his essay on hermeneutics and the social sciences. (We have already seen how Habermas remains unshaken.) His reply begins with a statement of his thesis:

My thesis is—and I think it is the necessary consequence of recognizing the operativeness of history in our conditionedness and finitude—that the thing which hermeneutics teaches us is to see through the dogmatism of asserting an opposition and separation between the ongoing, natural “tradition” and the reflective appropriation of it. For behind this assertion stands a dogmatic objectivism that distorts the very concept of hermeneutical reflection itself (28).

With respect to the objectivistic distortion of what Gadamer means by “reflective appropriation” and “hermeneutical reflection,” we could not ask him to be more explicit than he is in a remarkable monograph, “The Problem of Historical Consciousness,” originally written in 1963 (that is, written before the debate with Habermas).

In “The Problem of Historical Consciousness,” Gadamer writes,

It is a grave misunderstanding to assume that emphasis on the essential factor of tradition which enters into all understanding implies an uncritical acceptance of tradition and sociopolitical conservatism. Whoever reads the present sketch of my hermeneutic theory will recognize that such an assumption reduces hermeneutics to an idealistic and historical [i.e. historicist, T] self-conception. In truth the confrontation of our historic tradition is always a critical challenge of this tradition. Such confrontation does not occur in the workshops of the philologist or historian or in the eagerness of bourgeois critical institutions to impart historical education. Every experience is such a confrontation.

With this unequivocal affirmation in mind, we can return to Gadamer's reply to Habermas in “On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection,” written four years later.

Having put the thesis in play that it is dogmatic to separate and oppose a lifeworldly tradition and its reflective appropriation, since every lifeworldly experience (that is, *Erfahrung* as opposed to *Erlebnis*)—the milieu in which both tradition and reflection are situated and have their being—comes

forward as a critical challenge and confrontation, Gadamer never backs away from his fundamental commitment in *Truth and Method* to “the ontological shift of hermeneutics guided by language,” “language as the medium of hermeneutic experience,” and “language as [the] horizon of a hermeneutic ontology.” He writes that “language is not only an object in our hands, it is the reservoir of tradition and the medium in and through which we exist and perceive our world” (29). Against the backdrop of this thesis, together with its “obvious relationship to praxis,” Gadamer proceeds to summarize Habermas’s critique.

To this formulation Habermas objects that the medium of science itself is changed through reflection, and that precisely this experience is the priceless heritage bequeathed to us by German idealism out of the spirit of the eighteenth century. Habermas asserts that although the Hegelian procedure of reflection is not presented in my analysis as fulfilled in an absolute consciousness, nevertheless my “idealism of linguisticity” (as he calls it) exhausts itself in mere hermeneutical appropriation, development, and “cultural transmission,” and thus displays a sorry powerlessness in view of the concrete whole of social relationships. This larger whole, says Habermas, is obviously animated not only by language but by work and action; therefore, hermeneutical reflection must pass into a higher criticism of ideology (29; emphasis added).

At this point in his itinerary, Habermas’s criticism is based on the architectonic of *Knowledge and Human Interests*, with its tripartite division of the sciences into the positive sciences, oriented by a technical interest in prediction and control, the hermeneutic sciences, with their practical interest in interpretation and understanding, and the critical social sciences, with their emancipatory interest in criticism and liberation. For our purpose, the relevant dimension of Habermas’s criticism comes to the fore in the reference to “work and action” (at a point in his own development when he still organized his thought along the lines of a distinction or dualism between “purposive-rational action” on the one hand and “symbolic interaction” on the other hand).

In other words, in opposing “language” to “work and action” as discrete modalities of human endeavor, the charge of linguistic idealism gains its critical force only by counterposing two deeply embedded anthropological conceptions, *homo loquens* on the one hand and *homo faber* on the other. Since this paper is less about the Gadamer-Habermas debate than the persistent sense that the version of the “linguistic turn” that appears in Gadamer’s thought must be a type of idealism, it matters less whether Habermas is being given a fair shake than our recognition that Gadamer’s brief on the scope and function of hermeneutical reflection is situated on the terrain of praxis, guided by



the idea that it is praxis itself that arrives on the scene of philosophical investigation after Hegel as a radically new point of departure, anticipated, for example, by Husserl's masterful presentations of the lifeworld, historicity, and praxis in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, which we might say more informally and less technically than we can imagine Husserl wanting, are the sources in the human animal's lived experience of what Lonergan calls "the world mediated by meaning," which is in turn the unified field in which *homo loquens* and *homo faber* are one and the same animal. Or following Heidegger, the new point of departure opens onto a world where what is "present-at-hand" and what is "ready-to-hand" no longer belong to the separate and distinct universes of contemplation as opposed to action, theoretical as opposed to practical reasoning, and *theoria* as opposed to *praxis*, but one in which, despite Aristotle's own attempt to render the happiest life the life of *theoria* precisely as opposed to *praxis*—that is, the one-sided theoreticism of "pure thought thinking itself," the trademark of an unmoved, inert, or effete divinity—Hegel's aptly named "unhappy consciousness" might be overcome with the overcoming of ontotheology itself, in both its classical metaphysical-religious form and its modern, essentially secular form of disembodiment and alienation from life.

To return to Amato's account of a hermeneutical Marxism informed by Gadamer, then, not only does the dualism of "base" and "superstructure" belonging to classical Marxism vanish, but so too does the further dualism between "language" on the one hand and "work and action" on the other hand. Such an account cannot be made to fit the moribund opposition between "idealism" and "materialism." I will add that for both Marx and Gadamer, the unifying, integrating term is *praxis*.

As among the three terms, we can think of "action" as the middle term of a (Hegelian) syllogism mediating "language" and "work." Etymologically and with the reference to Aristotle that Hegel, Marx, and Gadamer alike intend, "action" in English translates (the transliterated) *praxis* in Greek, and in the context most germane to this paper Marx himself uses *praxis* in the German of his Eighth Thesis on Feuerbach. The convergence between Marx and Gadamer on a term—the term Gadamer adopts in his reply to Habermas—is not an accident.

Gadamer's philosophy is a "practical" one in several senses, one of which in *Truth and Method* I take to be primary. In presenting "play as the clue to ontological explanation" in Part I, Gadamer writes that "presentation is the mode of being of the work of art" (115). In his elaboration of this thesis, it turns out that what he means by "presentation" (*Darstellung*) is "performance" (116). In other words, Gadamer's ontology permits us to say that the "being" of a "work" consists in its "being-performed."



Moreover, in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer's way of proceeding is to extend the theses of Part I, "The question of truth as it emerges in the experience of art," to Parts II and III ("The extension of the question of truth to understanding in the human sciences" and "The ontological shift of hermeneutics guided by language"). Call this "being-as-being-performed" the performative character of some x, where x is a "work." Then, as Hopkins might have said, we have the work working. On Gadamer's extension, the performative character immanent in the work of art is likewise immanent (1) in the text as a work, (2) in the working of "historically effected consciousness," and (3) in whatever is mediated by "language as [a] medium," which turns out to be (ontologically enough!) "universal," i.e. the universal "horizon of a hermeneutic ontology." But precisely because the being of a work consists in its being-performed, Gadamer's philosophy cannot be a linguistic idealism. Finally, in not being a linguistic idealism, his philosophy is a "practical" one.

Praxis is the linchpin. Here it has been my intention to clarify the meaning of praxis with reference to the phenomenological categories of "lifeworld" and "historicity" as they operate in the seismic shift in first philosophy away from a one-sidedly theoretical and epistemological presence-at-hand to a lifeworldly existential-ontological readiness-to-hand, with respect to which Gadamer had written that "theory is subsequent to that out of which it is abstracted; that is, to praxis." In this respect, he could have been quoting verbatim from the Eighth Thesis on Feuerbach mentioned above: "Social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which mislead theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human [praxis] and in the comprehension of this [praxis]."

But the clarification of praxis, in turn, can be found in Gadamer's account of presentation as performance and the being of a work in its being-performed. Pertinent to the theme of our conference, in the first part of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer considers a counterexample in "the borderline position of literature" (159-64). Recalling that the Heideggerian critique of "subjectism" is the trace behind Gadamer's critique of aesthetic consciousness and aesthetic differentiation in Part I, Gadamer recognizes that reading "is a purely interior mental process" (160). On that basis, he asks, "Is not aesthetic differentiation—by means of which aesthetic consciousness claims to establish itself over against the artwork—legitimated by the autonomy of reading consciousness? Literature, the written word, seems to be poetry alienated from its ontological valence" (160). But then he asks whether "this is a correct conception of literature": "No doubt the idea that literature is an object to be read silently appears late" (160). He points out that "there is obviously no sharp differentiation between reciting and silent reading. Reading with understanding is always a kind of reproduction, performance, and interpretation" (160). Extending this wedge in "the concept of literature" to "the

human sciences as a whole,” Gadamer writes that there is no “sharp division” between “literary works that can be considered works of art,” and which must therefore be grasped performatively, and “other forms of literature” (160). “Meaning and the understanding of it are so closely connected with the corporeality of language that understanding always involves an inner speaking as well” (160; emphasis added). To this extent, “Literary art can be understood only from the ontology of the work of art, and not from the aesthetic experiences that occur in the course of reading. Like a public reading or performance, being read belongs to literature by its nature” (161; emphasis added). Having drawn this connection between “the corporeality of language” and the performative character of the being of a work, Gadamer then argues that “it is not by chance that literature is the place where art and science merge” (163). Having extended his argument concerning literary works to the written word per se, he affirms that “it is universally true of texts that only in the process of understanding them is the dead trace of meaning transformed back into living meaning” (164). But in that respect, “being understood [belongs] to the meaning of a text just as being heard belongs to the meaning of music” (164). Finally, to the extent that Gadamer successfully defeats the counterexample of literature as a borderline case potentially vindicating the autonomy—or rather the alienation—of the aesthetic consciousness, his treatment of “play as the clue to ontological explanation” stands. The being of a work consists in its being-performed, and in its performance, work is play.

On the basis of this core argument of Truth and Method, Gadamer ultimately transforms the meaning of “experience” from the (merely) “subjective experience” of the aesthetic consciousness (*Erlebnis*) into what I called a “unified field theory” of experience (*Erfahrung*) in affiliating Truth and Method with Dewey’s *Art as Experience*. Generalizing once more, the conception of language is alienated from the being of a work only if language appears as a shadow of reality in a “purely interior mental process,” its presence-to-hand unmoored in solipsistic isolation from its readiness-to-hand. But of course this disembodiment and phantom abstraction of linguistic idealism is defied by the corporeality of language itself, the materiality of signs, in the lifeworldly vitality of works working, their being-performed or enacted.

Taking praxis as the new point of departure for historical materialism and philosophical hermeneutics strikes me as so fundamental a transformation of “first philosophy,” relative to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and Descartes’ *Meditations*, that to call it a “paradigm shift” would be to trivialize it. Had I not run out of time, I would have gone on to document how basic it is to the Marxian account of alienated labor that dominates the horizon of Marx’s thought as a whole, from the Excerpt-Notes on James Mill

(1844)—“Suppose we had produced as human beings...”—to the Critique of the Gotha Program (1875)—“after labor has become not only a means of life but life’s prime want...”—; from his doctoral dissertation on *The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*, in which he first introduces the notion of praxis, to his very last marginal notes in the *Ethnological Notebooks*; in the *Communist Manifesto*; and indeed in *Capital* itself. I would have argued, following Raya Dunayevskaya, that the pervasive alienation between theory and practice, the opposite of praxis, is rooted in the separation between mental and manual labor. And I would have concluded that only if labor can be work, in the sense illuminated by Gadamer, can a human being live a truly human life and a life worthy of her humanity.

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February 13, 2009

## Endnotes

- 1 See “A Propaedeutic to the Philosophical Hermeneutics of John Dewey: ‘Art as Experience’ and ‘Truth and Method,’” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 15 (2001):1-13; “John Dewey on the ‘Practical Character of Reality,’” *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 21 (1998):144-55; and “A Marx/Dewey Dialogue on the Prospects for an American Socialism,” *International Journal of Social Economics* 21 (1994, nos.10/11/12):59-72.
- 2 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 2/e, translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989). Page numbers for quotations from this book are given after the abbreviation TM in parentheses in the text.
- 3 Peter Amato, “Marxist Critique and Philosophical Hermeneutics: Outlines of a Hermeneutical-Historical Materialism,” in *Philosophy Against Empire*, edited by Tony Smith and Harry van der Linden (Charlottesville, VA: Philosophy Documentation Center, 2006), 235-42; Volume 4 in the series *Radical Philosophy Today*. Quotations are cited by page number in parentheses.
- 4 See Alex Golub, “The Gadamer-Habermas Debate: A Bibliographical Note on Sources in English and German,” in *New German Critique* 18 (1979): 44-73. For a nuanced review of the fundamental issues, coming down mainly on Habermas’s side but with a sensitive appreciation of Gadamer’s position, and written thirty years ago just as Habermas was about to come out with *The Theory of Communicative Action*, see Jack Mendelson, “The Habermas-Gadamer Debate,” in *New German Critique* 18 (1979): 44-73.
- 5 As quoted by Gadamer in “On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection” (1967), in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, translated by David E. Linge (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press,

1976), 29. Gadamer quotes from Habermas, "Review of Truth and Method," originally appearing in *Philosophische Rundschau* in 1967 and made available in English in *Understanding and Social Inquiry*, edited by Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas McCarthy (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 335-63.

6 See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* 5/e, vol. 3 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990; orig. 1957), 37-43 for "higher viewpoints," 43-50 for "inverse insight."

7 See Richard Rorty, "Nineteenth-Century Idealism and Twentieth-Century Textualism," in *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 139-59.

8 Amato writes, "Major contributors to Marxist hermeneutics, most notably Paul Ricoeur and Frederic Jameson, have engaged Marx at arm's length, primarily as a philosopher for whom ideology critique and the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' were the central and perhaps only real matters of relevance to the phenomenological tradition. As such, I think, their focus is skewed toward epistemic and literary issues, and the concern for Marxist revolutionary politics and the critique of capitalism are greatly lessened" (237).

9 Jürgen Habermas, "Legitimation Problems in the Modern State," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979; orig. 1976).

10 Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984). Page numbers for this and subsequent quotations are given in parentheses in the text.

11 Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987). The page numbers for this and the subsequent quotation are given in parentheses in the text.

12 Subsequent quotations from Gadamer, "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection," are cited by page number in parentheses.

13 Gadamer, "The Problem of Historical Consciousness," in *Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look*, edited by Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982; orig. 1963), 87 (emphasis added).

14 These are the headings, respectively, of Part III of *Truth and Method* as a whole, and then the first and third sections of that part.

15 See Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971; orig. 1968).

16 See Habermas, *Towards a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970; orig. 1968 & 1969), especially Ch.6, "Technology and

Science as 'Ideology,'" 81-122 and the chart there on 93. Habermas is nothing if not a maker of great charts.

17 See Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, translated by David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970). For Gadamer's assessment of Husserl's contribution to his own project in *Truth and Method*, see the whole of his discussion of "Overcoming the Epistemological Problem through Phenomenological Research," 242-64.

18 See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (NY: Herder and Herder, 1972). Lonergan first introduces "the world mediated by meaning" on 28 and then returns to it recurrently throughout the book.

19 My imputation to Aristotle is controversial and it may appear to some as a cheap shot, but there is after all the text to consider of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book Ten, ch.7, 1177a11-1178a9. To which I would add that the presentation is framed by the claim concluding ch.6 that "no one would allow that a slave shares in happiness," and again by the opening lines of ch.8: "The life in accord with the kind of virtue concerned with action [praxis] is happiest in a secondary way, because the activities in accord with this virtue are human."

20 The Eighth Thesis on Feuerbach is misleadingly translated in English as follows: "Social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which mislead theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice" ("Eighth Thesis on Feuerbach" as it appears in *The Marx-Engels Reader* 2/e, edited by Robert Tucker [NY: Norton, 1978], 145). But again, praxis is not a synonym of practice. Marx wrote, "Alles gesellschaftliche Leben ist wesentlich praktisch. Alle Mysterien, welche die Theorie zum Mystizismus[us] veranlassen, finden ihre rationelle Lösung in der menschlichen Praxis und im Begreifen dieser Praxis" (from *Marx-Engels Werke* Band 3, at [http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me03/me03\\_005.htm](http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me03/me03_005.htm)).

21 See Gerard Manley Hopkins, "As Kingfishers Catch Fire": "I say more: the just man justifies..." The "work working" is the "act of the thing itself" (see 6 above). For *die Sache Selbst*, see "A Propadeutic to the Philosophical Hermeneutics of John Dewey," 6-10. "The thing itself," as dialectically opposed to the mystical Kantian *Ding-an-sich*, is the "unified field" of hermeneutic experience (*Erfahrung*). It is the field of language, action, and work. It is constituted by subject-object correlation, as opposed to the subject-object dualism of Cartesian, classical modern philosophy. That is, it is constituted by an internal, transactive relation between subject and object (which requires a third, or thirdness in C.S. Peirce's sense). As such, it is the ensemble of all of the elements—in their inexhaustibility—that enter into hermeneutic experience, for example, speaking and listening, writing and reading, authors and texts, texts and interpreters, texts and contexts, and so forth, which are in turn bound together by

what Gadamer calls “historically effected consciousness” (wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein; see TM, “Translators’ Preface,” xv), or what Amato foreshortens as “effective history.” The ongoingness of effective history, in turn, is transmitted by “action” or praxis, the “middle term” of the “Hegelian” syllogism I suggested above.

22 For the Heideggerian critique of “subjectism” and its impact on Gadamer, see Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 144-46 and 164-65.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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