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1. Text and Interpretation

A New Translation by Dennis J. Schmidt and Richard Palmer*

The problems with which hermeneutics deals were initially defined within individual areas of study, especially theology and jurisprudence, and ultimately also the historical disciplines. But it was a deep insight of German Romanticism that understanding and interpretation not only come into play in what Dilthey later called "expressions of life fixed in writing," but they have to do with the general relationship of human beings to each other and to the world. In the German language, this insight has also left an imprint upon words that are derived from the word for understanding: *Verstehen*. For instance, the word *Verständnis* means comprehension, insight, appreciation. Thus, in the German language, *Verstehen* also means "to have appreciation for something," to comprehend it [*für etwas Verständnis haben*].[1] The ability to understand is a fundamental endowment of man, one that sustains his communal life with others and, above all, one that takes place by way of language and the partnership of conversation. In this respect, the universal claim of hermeneutics is beyond all doubt. On the other hand, however, the linguisticality of the event of agreement in understanding [*Verständigungsgeschehen*], which is in play between people, signifies nothing less than an insurmountable barrier, the metaphysical significance of which was also evaluated positively for the first time by German romanticism. It is formulated in the sentence: *Individuum est ineffabile*. This sentence

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points to a limit of ancient ontology (at any rate, it cannot be documented in the medieval period). However, for the romantic consciousness it meant that language never touches upon the last, insurmountable secret of the individual person. This expresses the feeling for life that characterized the romantic age in a particularly telling manner, and it points to an inherent law of linguistic expression, which not only sets the limits of linguistic expression but also determines its significance for the formation of the common sense that unites people.

I believe that it is helpful to recall these historical antecedents of our present formulation of the question. The consciousness of method found in the historical sciences, which flourished as a result of romanticism, and the influence exerted by the successful model of the natural sciences led philosophical reflection to restrict the universality of the hermeneutical experience to its scientific form. The full extent of the fundamental hermeneutical experience is to be found neither in Wilhelm Dilthey, who attempted to ground the social sciences in their historicality by way of the conscious continuation of the ideas of Friedrich Schleiermacher and his romantic compatriots, nor in the neo-Kantians, who worked toward an epistemological justification of the human studies within the framework of a transcendental critique of culture and values. This lack of any view encompassing the full extent of hermeneutic experience might even have been more pronounced in the homeland of Kant and transcendental idealism than in countries where literature plays a more determinative role in public life. In the end, however, philosophical reflection everywhere went in a similar direction.

Thus, I took as my own point of departure the critique of the idealism and methodologism in our era dominated by epistemology; and in my critique Heidegger's extension of the concept of understanding to an existential, that is to a fundamental categorical determination of human existence, was of particular importance for me. That was the impetus that induced me to go critically beyond the discussion of method and to expand the formulation of the hermeneutic question so that it not only took science into account, but the experience of art and of history as well. With a critical and polemical intent in his analysis of understanding, Heidegger followed the example of former discussions of the hermeneutic circle, maintaining it in its positivity and conceptualizing it in his analysis of Dasein. What one should not forget, however, is that circularity is dealt with here not as a metaphysical metaphor, but rather as the structure of a logical concept drawn from the theory of scientific proof, where it is the doctrine of the "vicious circle." The hermeneutic circle says that in the domain of understanding there can be absolutely no derivation of one from the other, so that here the logical fallacy of circularity does not represent a mistake in procedure, but rather the most appropriate description of the structure of understanding. Thus, Dilthey introduced the discussion of the hermeneutical circle as a means of separating himself from the post-Schleiermacherian scientific epoch. If, along with this, one bears in mind the true extent to which everyday speech

accords with the concept of understanding, then one sees that the discussion of the hermeneutic circle is in fact directed toward the structure of Being-in-the-world itself; that is, toward overcoming of the subject-object bifurcation, which was the primary thrust of Heidegger's transcendental analysis of Dasein. Just as one who uses a tool does not treat that tool as an object, but works with it, so too the understanding in which Dasein understands itself in its Being and in its world is not a way of comporting itself toward definite objects of knowledge, but is rather the carrying out of Being-in-the-world itself. With this, the hermeneutical doctrine of method inherited from Dilthey was transformed into a hermeneutics of facticity that was guided by Heidegger's inquiry into Being and that included the retrospective questioning of historicism and of Dilthey.

As is well known, the later Heidegger completely abandoned the concept of hermeneutics because he realized that it would never enable him to break out of the sphere of transcendental reflection. His philosophizing, which in the 'Kehre' attempted to accomplish this withdrawal from the concept of the transcendental, increasingly encountered such difficulties with language that many readers of Heidegger came to believe that there was more poetry than philosophical thought to be found in his work. I believe of course that this view is a mistake.[2] Therefore, one of my own interests was to look for ways in which Heidegger's discussion of that Being, which is not the Being of beings, can be legitimated. That effort led me once again to intense work on the history of classical hermeneutics, and it compelled me to show the new insights that were brought to light by the critique of this history. It seems to me that my own contribution is the discovery that no conceptual language, not even what Heidegger called the 'language of metaphysics', represents an unbreakable constraint upon thought if only the thinker allows himself to trust language; that is, if he engages in dialogue with other thinkers and other ways of thinking. Thus, in full accord with Heidegger's critique of the concept of subject, whose hidden ground he revealed as substance, I tried to conceive the original phenomenon of language in dialogue. This effort entailed a hermeneutical reorientation of dialectic, which had been developed by German Idealism as the speculative method, toward the art of the living dialogue in which the Socratic-Platonic movement of thought took place. This reorientation of dialectic was not intended to lead to a merely negative dialectic even though it was always conscious of the fundamental incompletability of the Greek dialectic. Rather, it represented a correction of the ideal of method that characterized modern dialectic as fulfilling itself in the idealism of the Absolute. This same interest led me to search for the hermeneutical structure in the experience of art and of history itself, which the so-called social sciences have as their 'objects,' rather than initially in the experience that is treated by science. No matter how much the work of art may appear to be an historical given, and thus a possible object of scientific research, it is always the case that it says something to us, and it does so in such a way that its statement

can never finally be exhausted in a concept. Likewise, in the experience of history we find that the ideal of the objectivity of historical research is only one side of the issue, in fact a secondary side, because the special feature of historical experience is that we stand in the midst of an event without knowing what is happening to us before we grasp what has happened in looking backwards. Accordingly, history must be written anew by every new present.

Ultimately, the same basic experience holds true for philosophy and its history. Plato, who wrote only dialogues and never dogmatic texts, is not alone in teaching us this lesson. For, in what Hegel calls the speculative element in philosophy (which was at the basis of his own observations of the history of philosophy), we are constantly confronted with a challenge to bring into view this same element in the dialectical method. Thus, I tried to hold fast to the inexhaustibility of the experience of meaning by developing the implications for hermeneutics of the Heideggerian insight into the central significance of finitude.

In this context, the encounter with the French philosophical scene represents a genuine challenge for me. In particular, Derrida has argued against the later Heidegger that Heidegger himself has not really broken through the logocentrism of metaphysics. Derrida's contention is that insofar as Heidegger asks about the essence of truth or the meaning of Being, he still speaks the language of metaphysics that looks upon meaning as something out there that is to be discovered [*vorhandenen und aufzufindenen*]. This being so, Nietzsche is said to be more radical. His concept of interpretation does not entail the discovery of a preexisting meaning, but the positing of meaning in the service of the 'Will to Power'. Only then is the logocentrism of metaphysics really broken. This development and continuation of Heidegger's insights, which understands itself as their radicalization, must, in order to be consistent, discard Heidegger's own presentation and critique of Nietzsche. In this view, Nietzsche is not regarded as the extreme case of the forgetfulness of Being that culminates in the concepts of value and will, but as representing the true overcoming of metaphysics, the very metaphysics within with Heidegger remains trapped when he asks about Being, or the meaning of Being, as if it were a Logos to be discovered. Thus, it was not enough that the later Heidegger developed his special quasipoetical language in order to escape the language of metaphysics, a language that with each new essay by Heidegger seemed to be a new language and was always one that required that each reader be constantly engaged as his or her own translator of this language. To be sure, the extent to which one can succeed in finding the language that fulfills this task is problematic, but the task is posed: it is that of 'understanding'. Since my confrontation with the French continuation of Heideggerian thought, I have become aware that my efforts to 'translate' Heidegger testify to my own limits and especially indicate how deeply rooted I am in the romantic tradition of the humanities and its humanistic heritage. But it is pre-

cisely this very tradition of 'historicism,' which has sustained and carried me along, against which I have sought to take a critical stand. In a letter that has since been published,[3] Leo Strauss got to the heart of the matter in saying that for Heidegger it is Nietzsche, while for me it is Dilthey, who forms the starting point for critique. It could be said that the distinctive feature of Heidegger's radicality is that his own critique of the Husserlian brand of neo-Kantianism put him in the position of recognizing in Nietzsche the extreme culmination of that which he called the history of the forgetfulness of Being. But this critical observation is immanent and is one that rather than being inferior to Nietzsche's thought goes beyond him. I find that the French followers of Nietzsche have not grasped the significance of the seductive in Nietzsche's thought. Only in this way, it seems to me, could they come to believe that the experience of Being that Heidegger tried to uncover behind metaphysics is exceeded in radicality by Nietzsche's extremism. In truth, however, a deep ambiguity characterizes Heidegger's image of Nietzsche, in that he follows Nietzsche into the most extreme positions and precisely at that point he finds the excesses [*Un-wesen*] of metaphysics at work insofar as in the valuing and revaluing of all values Being itself really becomes a value-concept in the service of the 'Will to Power'. Heidegger's attempt to think Being goes far beyond such dissolving of metaphysics into values-thinking: or better yet, he goes back behind metaphysics itself without being satisfied, as Nietzsche was, with the extreme of its self-dissolution. Such retrospective questioning does not do away with the concept of Logos and its metaphysical implications, rather it recognizes the one-sidedness and concedes its superficiality. In this regard it is of decisive importance that 'Being' does not unfold totally in its self-manifestation, but rather withholds itself and withdraws with the same primordiality with which it manifests itself. This is the deep insight that was first maintained by Schelling in opposition to Hegel's logical idealism. Heidegger takes up this question once again while applying to it a conceptual power that Schelling lacked.

Thus, my own efforts were directed toward not forgetting the limit that is implicit in every hermeneutical experience of meaning. When I wrote the sentence "Being which can be understood is language,"[4] what was implied thereby was that that which is can never be completely understood. This is implied insofar as everything that goes under the name of language always refers beyond that which achieves the status of a proposition. That which is to be understood is that which comes into language, but of course it is always that which is taken as something, taken as true [*wahr-genommen*]. This is the hermeneutical dimension in which Being "manifests itself." In this sense, I retained the expression the "hermeneutics of facticity," an expression that signifies a transformation of the meaning of hermeneutics. Of course, in my attempt to describe the problems, I took as my guide the experience of meaning that takes shape in language in order to bring to light the limits that are posited for it. The Being-toward-the

text from which I took my orientation is certainly no match for the radicality of the limit experience found in Being-toward-death, and just as little does the never fully answerable question of the meaning of art, or the meaning of history as that which happens to us, signify a phenomenon that is as primordial as the question put to human Dasein of its own finitude. I can, therefore, understand why the later Heidegger (and Derrida would presumably agree with him on this point) was of the opinion that I never really abandoned the sphere of phenomenological immanence to which Husserl consistently held fast and which formed the basis of my early training in neo-Kantianism. I can also understand why one could believe that it is possible to recognize methodological 'immanence' in my holding fast to the hermeneutical circle; and in fact it does seem to me that the desire to break out of the circle cannot be fulfilled, indeed such a demand is truly absurd. For after all, this immanence is nothing other than what it was for Schleiermacher and his successor Dilthey, that is, a description of what understanding is. But since Herder, we recognize 'understanding' to be more than merely a procedure to uncover a given meaning. In view of the scope of understanding, the circularity that moves between the one who understands and that which he understands can lay claim to genuine universality, and it is precisely on this point that I believe that I have followed Heidegger's critique of the phenomenological concept of immanence, a critique that is directed against Husserl's notion of an ultimate transcendental justification.[5] The dialogical character of language, which I tried to work out, leaves behind it any starting point in the subjectivity of the subject, and especially in the meaning-directed intentions of the speaker. What we find happening in speaking is not a mere reification of intended meaning, but an endeavor that continually modifies itself, or better: a continually recurring temptation to engage oneself in something or to become involved with someone. But that means to expose oneself and to risk oneself. Genuinely speaking one's mind has little to do with a mere explication and assertion of our prejudices; rather, it risks our prejudices—it exposes oneself to one's own doubt as well as to the rejoinder of the other. Who has not had the experience—especially before the other whom we want to persuade—of how the reasons that one had for one's own view, and even the reasons that speak against one's own view rush into words. The mere presence of the other before whom we stand helps us to break up our own bias and narrowness, even before he opens his mouth to make a reply. That which becomes a dialogical experience for us here is not limited to the sphere of arguments and counterarguments the exchange and unification of which may be the end meaning of every confrontation. Rather, as the experiences that have been described indicate, there is something else in this experience, namely, a potentiality for being other [*Andersseins*] that lies beyond every coming to agreement about what is common. This is the limit that Hegel did not transgress. To be sure, he did recognize the speculative principle that holds sway in 'Logos', and he even introduced proofs

of this principle in dramatically concrete ways: he unfolded the structure of self-consciousness and of "self-knowledge in the Being of the other" as the dialectic of recognition and sharpened this into a life and death struggle. In a similar fashion, Nietzsche's penetrating psychological insights brought into view the 'Will to Power' as the substrate even in all devotion and self-sacrifice: "There is the will to power even in the slave." However, for me, Heidegger remains definitive when he finds the logocentricism of Greek ontology in the self-centeredness of this tension between self-abandonment and self-insistence to be continued in the sphere of arguments and counter-arguments, and in the factual confrontation wherein it is embedded.

A limitation of the Greek models of thought can be detected here, one that was persuasively pointed out by the Old Testament, Saint Paul, Luther, and their modern reinterpreters. It is a dimension of dialogue that still does not come into conceptual consciousness even with the celebrated discovery of Socratic dialogue as the basic form of thought. This fits in quite well with the fact that a writer with the poetic imagination and linguistic powers of Plato knew to portray the charismatic figure of a Socrates so that the erotic tension that vibrates about the person is really brought into view. But because Plato's presentation of Socrates shows that when leading the conversation Socrates always insisted upon demanding an account from the other and upon leading others back to themselves by convicting them of their pretended wisdom, it is presupposed that the Logos is common to all and does not belong to Socrates alone. Yet, as we already indicated, the true depth of the dialogical principle first enters philosophical consciousness in the twilight of metaphysics, in the epoch of German romanticism, and then is rehabilitated in our century in opposition to the subjective bias that characterized idealism. This is the point from which I proceeded in asking two further questions: First, How do the communality of meaning [*Gemeinsamkeit des Sinnes*], which is built up in conversation, and the impenetrability of the otherness of the other mediate each other? Second, What, in the final analysis, is linguisticality? Is it a bridge or a barrier? Is it a bridge built of things that are the same for each self over which one communicates with the other over the flowing stream of otherness? Or is it a barrier that limits our self-abandonment and that cuts us off from the possibility of ever completely expressing ourselves and communicating with others?

In the framework of this general formulation of the question, the concept of the text presents a special sort of challenge. This is something that unites and perhaps even divides me from my French colleagues. However that may be, this was my motivation in confronting the theme "Text and Interpretation" once again. How does the text stand in relation to language? What is communication [*Verständigung*] between speakers? And why is it that something like texts can be given to us in common? What does it mean that in this process of communication with one another something emerges that, like texts, is one and the same

thing for us? How has the concept of the text been able to undergo such a universal extension? It is obvious to anyone who watches the philosophical tendencies of our century that more is at stake in this theme than reflections upon the methodology of the philological sciences. Text is more than a title for the subject matter of literary research. Interpretation is more than the technique of scientifically interpreting texts. In the twentieth century, both of these concepts have acquired a new importance in our view of knowledge and the world.

Of course, this shift is connected with the role that the phenomenon of language has come to occupy in our thought. But such a statement is tautological. That language has acquired a central position in philosophical thought is, on its part, related to the turn that philosophy took in the course of the last decades. That the ideal of scientific knowledge which modern science follows came out of the model of nature as mathematically ordered (a model that was first developed by Galileo in his mechanics) meant that the linguistic interpretation of the world, that is, the experience of the world that is linguistically sedimented in the lived-world, no longer formed the point of departure and the point of reference for the formulation of questions or the desire for knowledge; rather, it meant that the essence of science was constituted by that which could be accounted for or analyzed by rational laws. In this way, natural language lost its unquestioned primacy, even if it did retain its own manner of seeing and speaking. A logical consequence of the implications of this modern mathematized natural science was that in modern logic and the theory of science the model of language was replaced by the model of univocal notation. Thus, it is in the context of certain limited experiences, which restrict the claim to universality of the scientific access to the world, that meanwhile natural language as a universal has recaptured the center of philosophy.

Of course, this does not signify a mere return to the experiences of the lived-world and their linguistic sedimentation, which we know as the dominant theme of Greek metaphysics, the logical analysis of which led to Aristotelian logic and to *grammatica speculativa*. Rather, it is no longer the logical achievement of language that is being considered, but language as language and as the schematization of our access to the world. In this way, the original perspectives are displaced. Within the German tradition, this move is represented by a return to romantic ideas—of Friedrich Schlegel, Alexander von Humboldt, and others. Neither in the neo-Kantians nor in the first phenomenologists do we find the problem of language considered at all. Only in a second generation did the midworld [*Zwischenwelt*] of language become a theme; thus, we find it in Ernst Cassirer and especially in Martin Heidegger, as well as in the interesting contributions of Hans Lipps. In the British tradition, something similar is to be found in the developments that Ludwig Wittgenstein made from his starting point in Bertrand Russell. Here, the issue is not really one of a philosophy of language that is constructed upon the basis of comparative linguistics, or of the ideal of

constructing a language that takes its place in a universal theory of signs; rather, the issue is the enigmatic nexus between thinking and speaking.

Thus, on the one hand, we have sign theory and linguistics, which have led to new knowledge about the way in which linguistic systems function and are constructed; and, on the other hand, we have the theory of knowledge, which realized that it is language that mediates any access to the world. And both of these, working together, have caused us to see the starting point for philosophical justification of scientific access to the world in a new light. The assumption in this starting point is that the subject takes hold of empirical reality with methodological self-certainty by means of its rational mathematical construction, and that it then expresses this reality in propositional statements. In this way the subject fulfills its true epistemological task, and this fulfillment climaxes in the mathematical language with which natural science defines itself as universally valid. The midworld [*Zwischenwelt*] of language is left out of consideration here in principle. Insofar as it once again comes into view as such, it demonstrates against mathematical language the primary mediatedness of all access to the world, and more than this, it demonstrates the inviolability of the linguistic schema of the world. The almost mythical status of self-consciousness—which was adopted in its apodictic self-certainty and elevated to the status of origin and justification of all validity, and the ideal of an ultimate grounding [*Letztbegründung*] in general, over which apriorism and empiricism fight—loses its credibility in the face of the priority of the domain of language, a domain that we cannot undermine and in which all consciousness and all knowledge articulates itself. From Nietzsche we learned to doubt the grounding of truth in the self-certainty of self-consciousness. Through Freud we became acquainted with the astonishing scientific discoveries that resulted from taking these doubts seriously. And in Heidegger's fundamental critique of the concept of consciousness we have seen the conceptual prejudice that stems from Greek Logos-philosophy and that, in the modern turn, put the concept of the subject in the center. All of this lent a certain primacy to the 'linguisticality' of our experience of the world. Over against the illusion of self-consciousness as well as the naïveté of a positive concept of facts, the midworld of language has proven itself to be the true dimension of that which is given.

In light of all this, one can understand the rise of the concept of interpretation. It is a word that originally arose out of the mediating relationship, the function of the intermediary between speakers of different languages; that is, it originally concerned the translator and was then transferred to the deciphering of texts that are difficult to understand. And in the moment when the midworld of language presented itself to philosophical consciousness in its predetermined meaning, interpretation had to take a key position in philosophy. The career of the word began with Nietzsche and became a challenge to all positivism. Does the given exist from whose secure starting point knowledge can search for the

universal, the law, the rule, and so find its fulfillment? Is the given not in fact the result of an interpretation? It is interpretation that performs the never fully complete mediation between man and world, and to this extent the fact that we understand something as something is the sole actual immediacy and givenness. The faith in certain agreed-upon theses, or *Protokollsätze*, as the foundation of all knowledge did not last long even in the Vienna Circle.[6] Even in the domain of the natural sciences, the grounding of scientific knowledge cannot avoid the hermeneutical consequences of the fact that the so-called "given" cannot be separated from interpretation.[7]

Only in the light of interpretation does something become a fact, and only within processes of interpretation is an observation expressible. Heidegger's critique of the phenomenological concept of consciousness, and—similarly in Scheler—of the concept of pure perception as dogmatic, revealed itself as even more radical. Thus, the hermeneutical understanding of something as something was discovered even in the so-called perception itself. In the final analysis, however, this means that for Heidegger interpretation is not an additional or appended procedure of knowing but constitutes the original structure of "Being-in-the-world."

But does this mean that interpretation is an insertion [*Einlegen*] of meaning and not a discovery [*Finden*] of meaning? This question, posed by Nietzsche, is obviously a question that decides the rank and extent of hermeneutics as well as the objections of its opponents. In any case, the point that must be firmly adhered to is that only on the basis of the concept of interpretation does the concept of the text come to constitute a central concept in the structure of linguisticality; indeed, what characterized the concept of text is that it presents itself only in connection with interpretation and from the point of view of interpretation, as the authentic given that is to be understood. This is true even in the dialogical process of coming to an understanding insofar as one lets the disputed statements be repeated and thereby pursues the intention to a binding formulation, an event that generally results in a transcript or protocol. In a similar manner, the interpreter of a text asks what is really in the text. This too can lead to a biased and prejudicial response to the extent that everyone who asks a question tries to find a direct confirmation of his/her own assumptions in the answer. But in such an appeal to that which is in the text, the text itself still remains the first point of relation over and against the questionability, arbitrariness, or at least multiplicity of the possibilities of interpretation directed towards it.

This is confirmed by the history of the word. The concept of "text" has entered into modern speech essentially from two fields. On the one hand, there is the text of scripture, whose interpretation was carried out in sermons and church doctrine; in this case, the text represents the basis of all exegesis, which in turn presupposes the truths of faith. The other natural use of the word "text"

is found in connection with music. Here it is the text for song, for the musical interpretation of words, and here too such a text is not so much a pregiven as it is a residue of the performance of the song. Both of these natural ways of using the word "text" point back to the linguistic usage of the Roman jurists of late antiquity who, by the Justinian codification of the laws, used this text to overcome the disputability of its interpretation and application. From here the word found a wider extension so that it covered all that which resists integration in experience and represents the return to the supposed given that would provide a better orientation for understanding.

The metaphorical talk of the book of nature rests upon the same foundations.[8] It is a book the text of which was written by the hand of God and that the researcher is called upon to decipher, namely, to render readable and comprehensible by way of his interpretation. Thus, we find the hermeneutical relationship involved in our concept of text whenever we encounter resistance to our primordial assumption of the meaningfulness of the given. The intimacy with which text and interpretation are interwoven is thoroughly apparent insofar as even the tradition of a text is not always reliable as a basis for an interpretation. Indeed, it is often interpretation that first leads to the critical restoration of the text. There is therefore a methodological gain to be realized in making this inner relation of interpretation and text clear.

The methodological gain resulting from this observation made about language is that here "text" must be understood as a hermeneutical concept. This implies that the text is not regarded from the perspective of grammar and linguistics, and as divorced from any content that it might have; that is, that it is not to be viewed as an end product the production of which is the object of an analysis whose intent is to explain the mechanism that allows language as such to function at all. From the hermeneutical standpoint—which is the standpoint of every reader—the text is a mere intermediate product [*Zwischenprodukt*], a phase in the event of understanding that, as such, certainly includes a definite abstraction, namely, the isolation and reification involved in this very phase. But this abstraction moves in precisely the reverse direction from the one upon which linguists rely. The linguist does not want to enter into the discussion of the topic that is spoken of in the text; rather, he wants to shed light upon the functioning of language as such, whatever the text may say. He does not make that which is communicated in the text his theme, but instead asks how it is possible to communicate anything at all by whatever means of punctuation and symbolization that occur.

For the hermeneutical approach, on the other hand, comprehending what is said is the sole concern. For this, the functioning of language is merely a precondition. So also a first precondition is that an expression be acoustically intelligible, or that a printed text be decipherable, so that the comprehension of what is spoken, or written, is at least possible. The text must be readable.

Once again linguistic usage offers us an important clue. We speak of the readability of a text in a rather pretentious sense when we merely wish to express a minimum qualification for evaluating a style or judging a translation. Naturally, this is a figurative way of speaking. But, as is often the case with such speech, it makes things thoroughly clear: the negative correspondence here is unreadability, and this always means that as a written expression the text did not fulfill its task of being understood without any difficulties. We find further confirmation here that we always already look ahead to an understanding of that which is said in the text. It is only from this point that we grant and qualify a text as readable.

From philological work this is well-known as the task of restoring a readable text. However, it is clear that this task is always posed in such a way that it takes as its starting point a certain understanding of the text. Only where the text is already deciphered and the deciphered does not allow itself to be unhesitatingly transformed into understandability, are questions raised about what is really in the text and whether or not the traditional reading, that is, the commonly accepted reading, is correct. The treatment of the text by the philologist who produces a readable text corresponds completely to what happens in direct, yet not only acoustical, auditory transmission. We say therefore that one has heard when one can understand. And correspondingly, uncertainty about a specific reading of a text resembles the uncertainty connected with one's grasp of an oral message. In both cases a feedback [*Rückkoppelung*] comes into play. Preunderstanding, anticipation of meaning, and thereby a great many circumstances that do not appear in the text as such, play a role in the reading of the text [*Auffassung des Textes*]. This becomes completely clear when it is a matter of translation from foreign languages. Here the mastery of a foreign language is a mere precondition. If the "text" can be spoken of at all in such cases, then it is because it not only has to be understood but also carried over into another language. In this manner it becomes a "text"; for that which is said is not simply understood, rather it becomes an object—the point is to reproduce that which was intended rather than the multiplicity of possible intentions. There is still another indirect hermeneutical relation here: every translation, even the so-called literal reproduction, is a sort of interpretation.

In sum, what linguistics makes its theme, insofar as it leaves out of account the matter of reaching agreement in understanding of content, represents for understanding itself only an extreme case of a possible way of viewing. In opposition to this view in linguistics, I believe that what makes understanding possible is precisely the forgetfulness of language, a forgetting of the formal elements in which the discourse or the text is encased. Only where the process of understanding is disrupted, that is, where understanding will not succeed, are questions asked about the wording of the text, and only then can the reconstruction of the text become a task in its own right. In everyday speech, we differenti-

ate between the wording of the text and the text itself, but it is not accidental that both of these designations can always also act as a substitute for the other. In Greek, too, language and writing are both contained in the concept of "*grammatikè*." Indeed the extension of the concept of the text to include oral discourse is hermeneutically well grounded. For in every case, whether of a spoken or written text, the understanding of the text remains dependent upon communicative conditions that, as such, reach beyond the merely codified meaning-content of what is said. One can almost say that if one needs to reach back to the wording of the text, that is, to the text as such, then this must always be motivated by something unusual having arisen in the situation of understanding.

This can be seen in the current use of the word "text" just as clearly as it can be demonstrated in the history of the word "text". Doubtless, there is a sort of vanishing point [*Schwundstufe*] of texts that we could hardly ever call a text, such as one's own notes that provided a support for one's recollections. Here the question of the text is posed only when memory fails and the notes appear alien and incomprehensible, and it is necessary to refer back to the signs and writing; that is, it is necessry to refer back to the notes as text. Generally, however, notes are not a text, because they appear as the mere trace of memory, a trace which is swallowed up in the return of what was intended by the entry.

But there is another extreme form of understanding that, in general, does not provoke a discussion of the text. Here I am referring to something like scientific communication, which presupposes definite conditions of understanding from the outset. The reason for this is to be found in the type of address it is. It is directed toward the specialist. As was true in the case of notes, which are only for myself, so too is scientific communication, even when it is published, not for everyone. It only tries to be understandable for one who is well acquainted with the level and language of research. When this condition is fulfilled, the partner will not generally return to the text qua text. He or she does that only when the information expressed seems to be implausible and he or she must ask whether or not there is a misunderstanding somewhere. The situation is, of course, different from that of the historian of science for whom the same scientific documents really are texts precisely because they require interpretation, in that the interpreter is not the intended reader, so the distance that exists between him and the original reader must be bridged. Indeed, the concept of the "original reader" is extremely vague, as I have emphasized elsewhere.[9] But perhaps in the course of further research it will gain more exact definition. For the same reasons, one does not generally speak of a personal letter as a text when one is its recipient. Then one enters smoothly into the written situation of a conversation, as it were, so long as no special disruption of understanding makes it necessary to refer back to the exact text. Thus, for a written conversation basically the same fundamental condition obtains as for an oral exchange. Both partners must have the good will to try to understand one another. Thus, the

question becomes one of how far this situation can be extended and its implications applied. What if no particular addressee or group is intended, but rather a nameless reader—or perhaps an outsider—wants to understand a text? The writing of a letter is an alternative form of attempting a conversation, and as in the case of immediate linguistic contact or in all smoothly functioning exchanges, only a disruption in communication provides a motive for reaching back to the text as the "given."

In any case, like one who is in a conversation, the writer tries to impart what he or she means, and that includes the other with whom one shared presuppositions and upon whose understanding one relies. The other takes what is said as it is intended, that is, he or she understands because he or she fills out and concretizes what is said and because he or she does not take what is said in its abstract, literal meaning. That is also the reason one cannot say certain things in letters that one can say in the immediacy of conversation, even when one sends them to a partner with whom one is very close. There is too much that is omitted in a letter that, in the immediacy of conversation, carries the proper understanding; and furthermore, in conversation one always has the opportunity to clarify or defend what was meant on the basis of some response. That is recognized especially in Socratic dialogue and the Platonic critique of writing. The *logoi* [sayings] which present themselves cut loose from any specific situation of communication [*Verständigungssituation*]—and this is collectively true of written words—risk misuse and misunderstanding because they dispense with the obvious corrections resident within living conversation.

Here we find a consequence suggested that is essential for hermeneutical theory. If every printed text is cut off from the communicative situation, then this implies something for the intention of writing itself. Because as a writer one knows all of the problems of putting words in print, one is always steered by the picture [*Vorblick*] one has of the recipient with whom one wants to reach an equivalent understanding. While in living conversation one tries to reach understanding through the give-and-take of discussion, which means that one searches for those words—and accompanies them with intonation and gesture—that one expects will get through to the other, in writing the openness that is implied in seeking the words cannot be communicated because the text is printed. Therefore a "virtual" horizon of interpretation and understanding must be opened in writing the text itself, one that the reader must fill out. Writing is more than a repetition in print of something spoken. To be sure, everything that is fixed in writing refers back to what was originally said, but it must equally as much look forward; for all that is said is always already directed toward understanding and includes the other in itself.

Thus, we speak of the text of a transcript because, from the start, it was intended as a document, and that means that what is fixed in it is to be referred to. Precisely for this reason, a transcript requires the special mark and signature

of the partner. The same is true of the closing of contracts in business and politics.

With this we come to a comprehensive concept that lies at the basis of all constitution of "texts" and simultaneously makes clear the embeddedness of the "text" in the hermeneutical context: every return to the "text"—whether it concerns a printed text or merely the repetition of what is expressed in conversation—refers to that which was originally announced or pronounced and that should be maintained as constituting a meaningful identity. What prescribes to all reifications in writing their task is precisely that this thing being announced should be understood. The printed text should fix the original announcement [*Kundgabe*] in such a way that its sense is unequivocally understandable. Here the task of the writer corresponds to that of the reader, addressee, interpreter; that is, to achieve such an understanding and to let the printed text speak once again. To this extent, reading and understanding mean that what is announced is led back to its original authenticity. The task of interpretation always poses itself when the meaning content of the printed word is disputable and it is a matter of attaining the correct understanding of what is being announced. However, this "thing that is being conveyed" ["*Kunde*"] is not what the speaker or writer originally said, but rather what he would have wanted to say to me if I had been his original interlocutor. It is well-known that in the interpretation of "commands" or "orders" ["*Befehlen*"] as a hermeneutical problem, such orders are to be followed "according to their general sense" ["*Sinngemäß*"] and not in their literal meaning. Accordingly, we must say that a text is not simply a given object but a phase in the execution of the communicative event [*Verständigungsgeschehen*].

This general state of affairs is particularly well illustrated by judicial codification and correspondingly in judicial hermeneutics. With good reason judicial hermeneutics functions as a sort of model: here the transference into written form and the continual reference to the text are in special proximity. From the outset that which is established as law serves to settle or avoid disputes. This is always what motivates both the seekers (the parties to a dispute) as well as the finders and speakers of justice (the judges) in their return to the text. The formulation of laws, of legal contracts or legal decisions, is thus especially exacting, and the fact that it is makes it all the more so. Here a verdict or an agreement is to be formulated so that its judicial sense emerges from the texts univocally and so that misuse or distortion is avoided. "Documentation" demands that an authentic interpretation must succeed, even if the authors themselves, the legislator or a party to a contract, are not available. This implies that from the outset the written formulation must take into account the interpretive free space that arises for the "reader" of the text who has to employ this space. Here—whether by proclamation or codification—the effort is always to avoid strife, to exclude misunderstandings and misuse, and to make univocal under-

standing possible. In contrast to the public proclamation of a law or the actual closing of a contract, putting the law or contract into print is only an effort to secure an additional guarantee. This implies, however, that here too there remains a free space of meaningful concretization, a concretization that has to carry out the interpretation for the purpose of practical application.

The claim to validity in the laying down of law, whether codified or not, rests on the fact that it is like a text. Therefore, law, like the statute, constantly requires interpretation for practical application, and conversely this means that interpretation has already entered into every practical application. Legal decisions, precedents, or the prevailing administration of the law therefore always have a creative legal function. To this extent, the judicial example shows with exemplary clarity just how much every construction of a text is related in advance to interpretation, that is, to its correct, analogous application. I would maintain that the hermeneutical problem is basically the same for oral and written discourse. One thinks, for example, of taking testimony from witnesses. In order to guarantee their neutrality, witnesses are not supposed to be initiated into the larger context of the investigation and the rigors of the process of making a judgment. So the question that is put to them is something they encounter as having the abstractedness of a "text," and the answer that they have to give is equally abstract. This means that it is like a written utterance. The discontentedness of a witness with the written transcript of his testimony bears this out. He or she certainly cannot dispute his/her language, but he/she does not want to let it stand in such isolation and would prefer right away to interpret it himself, or herself. It seems to the witness that the duty of the court stenographer in making the transcript is to render an account such that, when the transcript is read back, every possible justice is done to the intended meaning of the speaker. Conversely, this example of the testimony of a witness shows how the procedure of writing, namely, the written component in proceedings feeds back into the way in which the conversation is handled. The witness, whose assertions are already placed in an isolated context, is, so to speak, already isolated because the results of the investigation will be put into written form. A similar state of affairs obviously holds true in cases where one has given a promise, an order, or a question in writing: this situation also contains an isolation from the original communicative situation and must express the original living sense in the style of something fixed in writing. What remains clear in all these instances is a relating back to the original communicative situation.

One way this relating back to the original communicative situation can also be facilitated is through the adding of punctuation, which points to the proper understanding that was found meanwhile in the record. Thus, the question mark, for example, is such an indication of how the recorded sentence really must be articulated. The very appropriate Spanish custom of putting a question between two question marks makes this basic intent clear in a persuasive man-

ner: one already knows at the beginning of the sentence how one has to articulate the relevant phrases. On the other hand, the dispensibility of such punctuation aids, which were not to be found at all in many ancient cultures, confirms how understanding is, nevertheless, possible solely through the fixed givenness of the text. The mere sequence of written symbols without punctuation represents communicative abstraction in an extreme form.[10]

Now I should remark that there are doubtless many forms of linguistic communicative behavior that cannot possibly be subjected to this kind of finality. These are texts to such a degree that they are still regarded as self-evidently texts even when they are encountered totally apart from a person being addressed—as is the case, for instance, in literary representation. But even within the communicative event itself, we find texts that offer resistance and opposition to textualization. In order to throw into relief what it means for a text to fulfill its authentic being [*Bestimmung*] as text, and to do so in terms of textual forms, I would like first to distinguish three forms of opposition to textuality. These will form a backdrop that will enable the eminent mode of textualizing [*Textierung*] to become accessible to our view—and in the form of texts [*in Textgestalt*]. I shall call these three oppositional forms "antitexts" [*Antitexte*], "pseudotexts" [*Pseudotexte*], and "pretexts" [*Prätexte*].

By 'antitexts' I have in mind forms of discourse that oppose or resist textualization because in them the dominant factor is the situation of interactive speaking in which they take place. In this category falls every kind of joke. For, the fact that we do not mean something seriously but rather expect that it will be taken as a joke surely stations this form in the process and event of communication. It is in this event and not in the text itself that we find the signal that this is a joke—in the tone of voice, the accompanying gesture, the social situation itself, or whatever. Furthermore, a joking remark clearly belongs to the moment and thus really cannot be repeated.

Basically, the same applies to another quite classical form of mutual agreement, namely, irony. For the use of irony presupposes a common set of prior cultural understandings [*gemeinsame Vorverständigung*]. When one is able to say the opposite of what one means and still be sure that what one really means is understood, this clearly shows one is operating in a functioning communicative situation [*Verständigungssituation*]. The extent to which such "dissembling" or "pretending" ["*Verstellung,*" dissimulation, sham] (which really is none) is possible in the modality of writing depends on the degree of communicative preunderstanding and of reigning agreement [*der kommunikativen Vorverständigung und des Beherrschenden Einverständnisses*]. We know that the use of irony existed, for example, in very early aristocratic society and made a smooth transition into writing there. In this context we may mention the use of classical citations [popular in antiquity], often in a bowdlerized form. Here, too, the use of this form had the aim of societal solidarity. In this case, there was the proud

rule of certain presuppositions with regard to culture, and thus they served and validated the interests of the aristocratic class. However, in cases where the relations among these preconditions for mutual understanding are not so clear, the transition into the fixity of written form becomes problematical. Just for this reason, interpreting the use of irony often poses an extraordinarily difficult hermeneutical task, and even the hypothesis that one is dealing with irony may be hard to defend. It has been said, and probably not unjustly, that to interpret something as irony often is nothing but a gesture of despair on the part of the interpreter. On the other hand, in our everyday life, if we use irony and are not understood, this registers a clear breakdown in mutual understanding [*Einverständnis*]. All this makes it quite clear that for a joke or irony to be possible at all, one must presuppose the existence of a *supporting mutual understanding* [*ein tragendes Einverständnis*]. Of course, one might argue that we could build up mutual understanding among people by having everyone recast ironic expressions into straightforward formulations that could not be misunderstood. Even if that were actually possible, such straightforward and unambiguous meaning will fall far short of the communicative meaning ironic discourse possesses.

The second type of text-opposed texts or "countertexts" I have labelled "pseudotexts." I refer here to the linguistic usage in speaking, and also in writing, of elements that really do not actually transmit the sense but rather are fillers [*Füllmaterial*] that provide something like rhetorical bridges over the flow of speaking. One could define the role of rhetoric in our speech by saying it is that which is other than the factual matter of our propositions [*Äußerungen*, expressions] and that it is the meaning-content that is conveyed in the text. It is that which possesses the purely operational and ritual function of exchange through speaking, whether in oral or written form. It is that component or portion of language which is devoid of meaning that I label "pseudotext." Every translator knows this phenomenon when, in transferring a text from one language into another, he or she has to recognize what is self-evidently filler material in the text and deal with it in an appropriate way. Sometimes the translator assumes there must be some authentic meaning in this filler material and by carrying over this dead wood into the target language actually destroys the authentic flow of what is being transmitted in the text. This is a difficulty that confronts every translator. It is not to be denied that the translator can often find equivalent expressions for such filler material, but the true task of translating means translating only what is meaning-bearing in the text. Meaningful translation must recognize and purge such filler materials. However, glancing ahead, I should emphasize the following point: this does not apply at all to any text with true literary quality, those that I call a "texts in the eminent sense" [*eminente Texte*]. Precisely on this difference rests the limit of translatability with regard to literary texts, an untranslatability that shows itself in the most varied nuances of meaning.

The third form of text-opposing or counter-texts are "pretexts." I mean by pretexts all communicative expressions or texts the understanding of which is not completed when one grasps the meaning that is intended in them. Rather, in them something masked or disguised comes to expression. Pretexts are texts that we interpret on the basis of something that is precisely what they do not mean. What they mean is merely pretence, an excuse, behind which is concealed the "meaning" [»*Sinn*«]. The interpretive task is posed, then, in terms of seeing through the wall of pretence and mediating what is truly coming to expression in the text.

Belonging to this type are ideologically slanted texts that are designed to shape public opinion. The very concept of ideology wants to suggest that what is involved in media that shape public opinion is not real distribution of information but a hidden guiding interest for which the distributed information serves only as an excuse, a pretext. Therefore the critique of ideology strives to go back behind the thing said and to trace the interests that are masked in it; for instance, the special interest of the bourgeois class in the context of capitalistic conflicts of interests. Even so, it is interesting to note that the attitude of the "critique of ideology" [*Ideologiekritik*] can itself be criticized as ideological, in that it represents antibourgeois interests, or whatever interests they may be, while at the same time masking its own tendentiousness as critique. One could view as the general motivation of this effort to get back to the hidden, underlying interests a concern about the breakdown of consensus, something Habermas calls "distortion of communication" [*Kommunikationsverzerrung*]. Distorted communication manifests itself both as a disruption of possible agreement in understanding and possible consensus, and thus motivates us to search for the true meaning behind the distortions. This turns out to be something like a decoding process.

The role that dreams have played in modern depth psychology represents yet another example of interpretation as going back behind a wall of pretext. It is certainly a fact that the experiences in our dream life are inconsistent. In them the logic of ordinary experience is for the most part put out of play. Of course, that does not exclude the possibility that out of the surprise-logic of dream life there can also arise an immediately attractive meaning that is comparable to the un-logic of fairy tales. In fact, narrative literature has taken as one of its possessions the genre of dreams and of fairy tales, as we find, for example, in the German Romantic. But in this case it is an aesthetic quality that narrative literature enjoys in the play of dream fantasy and which naturally can be interpreted in a literary and aesthetic way. In contrast, the same phenomenon of the dream can become the object of a totally different kind of interpretation if one seeks to go behind the fragments of dream recollection in order to reveal a true meaning, a meaning which has only disguised itself in the dream fantasies and which is capable of being decoded. It is this that constitutes the tremendous significance

of dream recollection in psychoanalytic treatment. With the help of dream interpretation, the analysis is able to set in motion an associative conversation that removes mental blocks and ultimately frees patients of their neuroses. As is well-known, this process of so-called analysis goes through many complicated stages in reconstructing the original dream text and its meaning. Certainly this meaning is something quite other than that which the dreamer "intended" or even that which the two dream interpreters had read out at the beginning, a meaning which now, through its clarification, has resolved the unsettling element in the dream experience. Rather, what motivates the interpreters here to go back behind what is consciously "meant" [*das »Gemeinte«*], behind the wall of pretext [*Vorwand,* also excuse] is the fact that the occurrence [*Geschehen*] of consensual understanding on which mutual agreement rests has been totally disturbed, put out of order [*die totale Gestörtheit des auf Einverständnis beruhenden Verständigungsgeschehens*], which is what we call "neurosis."

The same general interpretive structure is also found in the well-known psychopathology of daily life, which is an area quite separate from concern with specific neurotic disturbances. In psychopathology, actions that go wrong [*Fehlhandlungen*] are rendered suddenly quite intelligible by recourse to unconscious feelings and impulses. Here again the motivation for going back to the unconscious is the incoherence, the incomprehensibility, of the action in question [the *Fehlhandlung*]. Through the light that is shed on it the puzzling action is rendered comprehensible and its irritating quality removed.

The relation between text and interpretation, which I have taken as the theme of this essay, in these instances takes a special form, a form which Ricoeur has called the "hermeneutics of suspicion." However, I believe it is a mistake to privilege these forms of distorted intelligibility, of neurotic derangement, as the normal case in textual interpretation.[11]

The point I have been trying to make, or prepare for, in everything I have said so far is that the connection between text and interpretation is fundamentally changed when one deals with what is called the "literary text." But before finally turning to this kind of text, let us sum up. In all the cases we have discussed, we saw the motivation for interpretation emerge and we saw that something in the communicative process was constituted as a text, but the interpretation, like the so-called text itself, was subordinated and ordered to the process of reaching agreement in understanding [*das Geschehen der Verständigung*]. This corresponds perfectly, of course, to the literal meaning of the term *interpres,* which refers to someone who speaks between and therefore has first of all the primordial function of the interpreter, someone who stands between speakers of various languages and through intermediary speaking brings the separated persons together. In the same way as an interpreter overcomes the barrier of a foreign language, so also within one's own language, when disturbances of agreement in understanding arise, something like this translation pro-

cedure is required, whereby the identity of the proposition being asserted is found by going back to the communicative event, and this means by potentially dealing with it as a text.

In this form of interpretation, whatever is alienating in a text, whatever makes the text unintelligible, is to be overcome and thereby cancelled out by the interpreter. The interpreter steps in and speaks only when the text (the discourse) is not able to do what it is supposed to do, namely be heard and understood on its own. The interpreter has no other function than to disappear completely into the achievement of full harmony in understanding [*Verständigung*]. The discourse of the interpreter is therefore not itself a text; rather it *serves* a text. This does not mean, however, that the contribution of the interpreter to the manner in which the text is heard is completely swallowed up. It is just not thematic, not something objective as text; rather, it has entered into the text. In general, this is the way the relation of text and interpretation is usually characterized. Interestingly enough, this is the point at which a hermeneutically structural moment pushes itself into bold relief. For this stepping between and speaking [*Dazwischenreden*] has itself the structure of dialogue. The linguistic interpreter, who is mediating between two parties, cannot avoid experiencing his/her own distance between the two positions as a kind of superiority over the partiality of each side. His/her help in reaching agreement in understanding is therefore not limited to the purely linguistic level; rather it always gets into mediating the matter itself, seeking to bring about a settlement of the claims and the limits of both parties. The one who was merely an "interlocutor" [*Der »Dazwischenredende«*] becomes a "go-between" [*»Unterhändler«*, negotiator, intermediary]. Now it seems to me that the relationship between text and reader is a similar one. When the interpreter overcomes what is alienating in the text and thereby helps the reader to an understanding of the text, his/her own stepping back is not a disappearance in any negative sense; rather, it is an entering into the communication in such a way that the tension between the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader is dissolved. I have called this a "fusion of horizons" [*Horizontverschmelzung*]. The separated horizons, like the different standpoints, merge with each other. And the process of understanding a text tends to captivate and take reader up into that which the text says, and in this fusion the text too drops away.

But then there is literature! That is to say, texts that do not disappear in our act of understanding them but stand there confronting our understanding with normative claims and which continually stand before every new way the text can speak. What is it that distinguishes these texts from all others? What does it betoken for the mediating discourse of the interpreter that a text can be "there" in this way?[12]

My thesis is this: These texts are only authentically there when they come back into themselves. Then they are *texts* in the original and authentic sense.

The words of such texts are authentically there only in coming back to them-
selves. They fulfill the true meaning of the text out of themselves. They speak.
Literary texts are such texts that in reading them aloud one must also listen to
them, if only with the inner ear. When such texts are recited, one not only
listens but inwardly speaks with them. They attain their true existence only
when one has learned them "by heart." Then they live. They live in the remem-
brances of the great bards, the chanting choruses [*Choreuten*], the lyric singers.
As if written in the soul, they are on their way to scripturality [*Schriftlichkeit*].
Thus, it is not surprising at all that in cultures that read, such distinguished texts
are called "literature."

A literary text is not just the rendering of spoken language into a fixed form.
Indeed, a literary text does not refer back to an already spoken word at all. This
fact has hermeneutic consequences. Interpretation in this case is no longer
merely a means of getting back to an original expression of something [*ur-
sprüngliche Äußerung*]. Rather, the literary text is text in the most special sense,
text in the highest degree, precisely because it does not point back to some
primordial or originary act of linguistic utterance but rather in its own right
prescribes all repetitions and acts of speaking. No speaking can ever completely
fulfill the prescription given in the poetic text. The poetic text exercises a nor-
mative function that does not refer back either to an original utterance nor to the
intention of the speaker but is something that seems to originate in itself, so that
in the fortune and felicity of its success, a poem surprises and overwhelms even
the poet.

Thus, it is far from accidental that the word "literature" has acquired a sense
of positive valuation, so that when something belongs to the category of litera-
ture this represents a special distinction. A text of this kind represents not just
the rendering of oral discourse into a fixed form; rather, it possesses its own
authenticity in itself. When we look at the basic nature of discourse, we find
that what constitutes it is that the listener needs both to follow it from beginning
to end and at the same time to be focussed on what the discourse is conveying to
him or her. But in literature we find that *language itself* comes to appearance in
a very special way.

This self-presentation of the word is not easy to grasp correctly. Words in
literary texts obviously still maintain their discursive meaning and carry the
sense of a discourse that means something. The quality of a literary text is
necessarily such that it leaves untouched this primacy of the content belonging
to all discourse; in fact, the primacy of the discursive meaning so increases that
the relation of its assertions to actuality is suspended. This does not mean,
however, that one should overemphasize how a text is said [*das Wie des Gasagt-
seins*, the how of its being said]. For then we will end up speaking not of the art
of the words but of artistry, not of a certain tone that prescribes how a song is to
be sung but rather about matters of poetising imitation. That is to say, we would

be speaking not of style whose incomparability we may rightly admire but rather of manner, whose presence now is disturbingly noticeable. Nevertheless it is true that a literary text demands to become present in its linguistic appearance and not just to carry out its function of conveying a message. It must not only be read, it must also be listened to—even if only mostly with our inner ear.

Thus, it is in the literary text that the word first attains its full self-presence [*Selbstpräsenz*]. Not only does the word make what is said present; it also makes itself present in its radiant actuality as sound. Just as style constitutes a very effective factor in a good text and yet such a text does not put itself forward as a piece of stylistic decoration [*als ein Stilkunststück*], so too is the actuality of words and of discourse as sound always indissolubly bound up with the transmission of meaning. Nevertheless, there is a profound difference between the functioning of words in ordinary discourse and in literature. On the one hand, in discourse as such we are continually running ahead in thought searching for the meaning, so that we let the appearance of the words fall away as we listen and read for the meaning being conveyed; on the other hand, with a literary text the self-manifestation of each and every word has a meaning in its sonority, and the melody of the sound is also used by the discourse to augment what is said through the words. In a literary work, a peculiar tension is generated between the directedness to meaning inherent in discourse and the self-presentation inherent in its appearance. Every part of speech, every member, every individual word that submits to the unity of meaning in the sentence, represents in itself also a kind of unity of meaning insofar as through its meaning something meant is evoked. So far as the word issues forth from the play within its own unity and does not function merely as a means of conveying the meaning of the discourse as a whole [*Redesinn*], to that extent the multiplicity of meaning within the word's own naming power is allowed to unfold. Thus, we refer to connotations that also speak along with a word when, in a literary text, the word shines forth in its full meaning [*in seiner Bedeutung erscheint*].

But the individual word as carrier of its own meaning and as co-carrier of the meaning of the discourse [*Redesinn*] is still only an abstract moment in the discourse. Everything must be seen in the larger whole of *syntax*. Of course, in a literary text this is a syntax that is not unconditionally and not only the customary grammar. Just as the speaker enjoys certain syntactic freedoms that the hearer is able to accommodate because he/she is also taking in all the modulations and gesticulations of the speaker, so also the poetic text—with all the nuances which it shows—has its own freedoms. These nuances are so subordinated to the actuality of sound that they help the whole of the text to a greatly strengthened power of meaning. Indeed, even in the realm of ordinary prose we know that a discourse is not the same thing as a written document [*eine Rede keine »Schreibe« ist*], and an address [*Vortrag*] is not the same thing as a lecture [*Vorlesung*]—that is to say, it is not a "paper." This applies even more strongly

in the case of literature in the eminent sense of the term. It overcomes not just the abstractness of being written in such a way that the text becomes readable, that is to say, intelligible in its meaning. Rather, a literary text possesses its own status. Its linguistic presence as text is such as to demand repetition of the words in the original power of their sound—not in such a way as to reach back to some original speaking of them, however, but rather looking forward toward a new, ideal speaking. The web of connections between meanings is never exhausted in the relations that exist between the main meanings of the words. In fact, precisely the accompanying play of relations of meaning that is not bound up with discursive meaning-teleology gives the literary sentence its volume. Certainly, these relations of meaning would never come to appearance at all if the whole of the discourse did not, so to speak, "hold onto itself" [*an sich hielte*], inviting the reader or hearer to tarry, and impelling the reader or hearer to listen and listen. This process of becoming a listener nevertheless remains, of course, like every listening, a listening to something, something that is grasped as the pattern or totality of meaning of a discourse [*die Sinngestalt einer Rede*].

It is very difficult to assign cause and effect here. That is to say: Is it this enhancement in volume that suspends a text's referential and message-conveying function and makes it a literary text? Or is it the reverse: that the suspension of the positing of reality that characterizes a text as poetry, and this means as the self-manifestation of language, lets the fullness of meaning first emerge in its total volume? Manifestly the two factors are inseparable, and in the continuum between artistic prose and pure poetry the place the text occupies will depend in each individual case on how strong a role is played by manifestation of language in the totality of the meaning.

How complex the role orderly sequence in discourse is for achieving unity and how important is the placement of its building blocks—that is, the words— becomes clear in extreme cases—for example, when a word in its polyvalence suddenly pops up and asserts itself as an autonomous carrier of meaning. Something like this we call a "play on words" [*Wortspiel*]. For instance, it is not to be denied that often a play on words is used only as a kind of discursive decoration [*Redeschmuck*]—an ornament that allows the spirit of the speaker to radiate forth, while it remains fully subordinated to the intentional meaning of the discourse. However, the play on words can elevate itself to a kind of autonomy [*Selbständigkeit*] and declare its independence. The result is that what the discourse as a whole is supposed to mean suddenly becomes ambiguous, and the clarity of its intention is lost. Behind the unity of the manifestation of the word in sound there suddenly shines forth the hidden unity of variegated and even opposing meanings. In this context, we recall that Hegel has spoken of the dialectical instinct of language, and Heraclitus found in the play of words one of the best tools for illustrating his basic insight that opposed things in truth are

one and the same. But that is a philosophical manner of speaking. Here, too, it is a matter of breakdowns [*Brechungen*] in the natural tendencies of meaning in discourse, which are productive for philosophical thinking precisely because language in this way is compelled to give up its immediate signifying of objects and to help bring to appearance mental mirrorings, mirrorings of thought [*gedanklichen Spiegelungen*]. The multiplicity of meanings found in word-plays represents the densest form in which speculative thinking comes to appearance, a thinking that explains judgments that oppose each other. Dialectic is the representation of the speculative, as Hegel says.

For the literary text it is a different matter, however, for precisely the following reason: The function of word-play is just not compatible with the many riches and dimensions [*vielsagenden Vielstelligkeit*] of the poetic word. In a literary text, the accompanying meanings that go along with a main meaning certainly are what give the language its literary volume, but they are able to do this by virtue of the fact that they are subordinated to the unity of meaning of the discourse and the other meanings are only suggested. Plays on words, however, are not simply plays on the polyvalence of words out of which poetic discourse is shaped; rather, in them independent meanings are played off against each other. Thus, play on words shatters the unity of discourse and demands to be understood in a higher relation of reflective meanings. Just for this reason, if someone persists in the use of word-play and witticisms, we become irritated because it disrupts the unity of the discourse. Certainly in a song or a lyric poem, indeed everywhere that the melodic figuration of the language predominates, the insertion of a play on words would scarcely enhance the effect. Naturally it is somewhat different in the case of dramatic speaking, where the interaction is there to govern the scene. One thinks, for instance, of stichomythia, or of the self-destruction of the hero that is already announced as a play on words in the hero's own name.[13] And again it is quite different where the poetic discourse takes the shape neither of the flow of narrative, nor the stream of song, nor dramatic presentation, but rather consciously engages in the play of reflection, to which obviously belongs the shattering of one's discursive expectations. Thus, in a very reflective lyric, the play on words can take on a productive function. One thinks, for instance, of the hermetic lyrics of Paul Celan. Yet one also must ask oneself here if the path of placing such a reflexive burden on the words does not in the end just become no longer passable. It is quite clear that Mallarmé, for instance, tried out word-plays in some of his prose pieces, like *Igitur*, but when he came to the full body of sound in poetic forms, he hardly plays with words. The verses of his *Salut* are certainly many-layered and fulfill expectations of meaning on such various levels as a drinker's toast and a balance sheet of life, wavering between the foam of champagne in the glass and the trail left in the waves by the ship of life. But both dimensions of meaning can

be carried out as the same melodious gesture of language and in the same unity of discourse.*

This also holds good for *metaphor*. In a poem, metaphor is so bound up with the play of sounds, word meanings, and the meaning of the discourse that it does not really stand out as metaphor. For in a poem the prose of ordinary discourse is not found at all. Even in prose poetry [*dichterische Prosa*] metaphor scarcely has a place. Metaphor disappears when intellectual insight which it serves is awakened. Actually, rhetoric is the realm where metaphor holds sway. In rhetoric one enjoys metaphor as metaphor. In poetry, a theory of metaphor as little deserves a place of honor as a theory of word-play.

This brief digression teaches us how multileveled and differentiated the interplay of sound and meaning is in discourse and in writing, when it comes to literature. In fact, one begins to wonder how the mediating discourse of the interpreter could be taken over into the act of interpreting the poetic text at all. The answer to this question can only be approached in a very radical way. For in contrast to all other texts, the literary text is not interrupted by the dialogical and intermediary speaking of the interpreter; rather it is simply accompanied by the interpreter's constant co-speaking. This allows the structure of temporality

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GW 2 355 offers the following footnote, superseding Forget's footnote in *TI:* "The sonnet of Mallarmé, of which I offer an artless German paraphrase [represented here in English translation] runs as follows:

Rien, cette écume, vierge vers	Nothing, this foam, innocent verse
A ne désigner que la coupe;	Points only to the edge of the cup;
Telle loin se noie une troupe	In the farther distance splash a troop
De sirènes mainte á l'envers.	Of sirens, mostly turned away.
Nous naviguons, ò mes divers	We travel thence, my so unlike
Amis, moi déjà sur la poupe	Friends—I already at the stern
Vous l'avant fasteaux qui coupe	You at the proud bow, which cuts
Le flot de foudres et d'hivers;	The flux of lightning and storms [not winter?]
Une ivresse belle m'engage	A fine intoxication lets me
Sans craindre mème son tangage	Without even fearing its oscillation
De porter debout ce salut	Offer, standing, this salute
Solitude, récif, étoile	Solitude, cliff, star
A n'importe ce qui valut	May be whatever it may be
Le blanc souci de notre toile.	Wherever the care of the white sail leads us.

Philippe Forget, the editor of *Text und Interpretation* (Munich, 1984), cites page 50 of Uwe Japp, *Hermeneutik* (Munich, 1977), pages 80ff. There three levels are distinguished (borrowing from Rastier): there "saturated analysis" [»gesättigte Analyse«] is carried to absurd extremes, *salut* is no longer understood as *greeting* but as *rescue* (*récif* !! [cliff, reef]) and the white care [*blanc souci*] is paper, something not to be encountered at all in the text, even not in the self-related *vierge vers* [virginal verse]. This is indeed method without truth.

[*Zeitlichkeit*], which belongs to all discourse, to be annulled. Indeed, the categories of time that we use in connection with discourse and works of art in language constitute a peculiar difficulty when it comes to literary texts. One speaks of presence in relation to literary texts and even of the self-presentation of the poetic word as I myself did above. But I must emphasize: One draws a false conclusion if one thinks one can understand such presence with the language of metaphysics as presence-at-hand [*des Vorhandenen*], or with the concept of objectifiability. That is not the presentness which belongs to the literary work, indeed, it does not belong to any text at all. Language and writing exist always in their referential function [*Verweisung*]. They *are* not, but rather they *mean*, and that applies also then even when the thing meant is nowhere else than in the appearing word. Poetic speaking comes to pass only in the act of speaking [*Vollzug des Sprechens*] or reading itself, and of course this entails that it is not there without being understood.

The temporal structure of speaking and of reading represents a largely unexplored problem. That one cannot apply the simple schema of succession here becomes immediately clear when one sees that such a schema really describes the process of spelling but not that of reading. Someone wanting to read by spelling things out is not reading. In general the same principles apply to silent reading and to reading aloud. To read aloud well to another means to so mediate the interplay of meaning and sound that it seems to occur for itself and to come forth anew. When one reads aloud one reads to someone, and that means one turns and addresses him or her. And the reader belongs to the text. Reading out loud, like lecturing, remains "dialogical" [*Vorsprechen wie Vorlesen bleibt »dialogisch«*]. Even the simple act of reading in which one reads something to oneself is dialogical, in that in it one must bring the sound and the meaning as much as possible into harmony.

The art of recitation is not fundamentally any different. It only demands special technique because the audience is an anonymous mixture of people and yet it is necessary that the poetic text be taken up and realized in each individual listener. We are all familiar with a practice we call "reciting" [*Aufsagen*] that actually corresponds to spelling out what we read. Again, this is not really speaking but merely arranging a series of fragments of meaning one after another. In German, this happens when children learn lines of poetry by heart and recite them to the joy of the parents. In contrast, a person truly skilled in recitation, or a great artist, will render a linguistic gestalt fully present, like the actor who must play his role as if the words had been newly found at that very moment. This cannot be a mere series of pieces of discourse; rather it must be a whole, made up of meaning and sound, which "stands" in itself. For this reason, the ideal speaker will make not him- or herself but only the text present, which must reach in its full power even a blind person who cannot see his gestures. Goethe once said, "There is no higher and purer pleasure than with

closed eyes to have someone recite to you—not declaim—in a naturally right voice a piece of Shakespeare."[14] There is some question, however, whether this kind of recitation is possible for every type of poetic text. Are there perhaps some where it is not possible at all? What about meditative poetry? Even in the history of lyric poetry this problem arises. Choral lyrics, and in general every- thing musical that invites one to sing with the singer, are completely different from the kind of tone one finds in the elegy. Reading meditative poetry seems possible only as a solitary process.

In any case, one sees that the schema of serial succession is totally out of place here. It is instructive to recall what in Latin class was called "construing," an art one learned in connection with parsing Latin prose: The student must look for the verb and then the subject, and from there articulate the whole collection of words until elements that at the outset seemed disparate suddenly come together into a meaning. Aristotle once described the freezing of a liquid when it is shaken as a *schlagartigen Umschlag,* a sudden reversal that comes like a blow from without. It is like this with the blow-like suddenness of under- standing, as the disordered fragments of the sentence, the words, suddenly crys- tallize into the unity of a meaning of the whole sentence. Listening and reading apparently both possess the time structure of understanding, whose circular character counts among the earliest insights of rhetoric and hermeneutics.

This general structure holds for all listening and all reading. In the case of literary texts the situation [*Sachlage*] is far more complex. There we do not just have to do with the gleaning of a piece of information transmitted by a text. In reading a literary text one does not just hurry impatiently and unswervingly to the end-meaning, the grasping of which signals that one has gotten the message. Certainly it is true that there is something like a sudden instant of understanding here in which the unity of the whole formulation is illuminated. We find this phenomenon both in relation to the poetic text as well as the artistic image. Relations of meaning are recognized—even if vague and fragmentary. In both of these cases the operation of copying the real is suspended. The text with its charge of meaning [*Sinnbezug*] constitutes the only present. When we utter or read literary texts, we are thrown back on the meaning and sound relations that articulate the framework of the whole, not just once but each time. We leaf back through the text, begin anew, read anew, discover new dimensions of meaning. What stands at the end is not the secure consciousness of having understood the matter so that now one can leave the text behind, but rather just the opposite. One goes ever deeper into the text the more the charges of meaning and sound in it enter into consciousness. We do not leave the text behind us but allow our- selves to enter into it. We then are in the text like everyone who speaks is in the words he says and does not hold them at a distance as if they were tools that one uses and puts away. For this reason, to talk in terms of "applying" words is incorrect in a rather curious way. It does not come to grips with actual speaking

but deals with speaking more as if speaking were like using the lexicon of a foreign language. One must set fundamental limits on all discourse about rules and prescriptions when one is dealing with actual speaking. This applies with a vengeance to the literary text. The literary text is not "right" because it says what anyone and everyone would have said but it has a new, unique kind of rightness that distinguishes it as a work of art. Every word "sits" there in such a way that it appears almost without possibility of substitution, and in a certain way it really can have no substitute.

It was Wilhelm Dilthey who, in a later development of Romantic idealism really pointed the way for us in this matter. In trying to defend himself against the prevailing monopoly of causal thinking, he spoke of a *matrix of effects—Wirkungszusammenhang*—instead of simple cause and effect, that is of a set of connections existing among the effects themselves, leaving fully aside the fact that they each had their causes. For this purpose he introduced the later highly respected concept of "structure," and showed how the understanding of structures necessarily has a circular form. Taking his lead from musical listening—for which absolute music with its extreme lack of conceptual content [*Begriffslosigkeit*] provides a prime example because it positively excludes all theory of representation—he spoke of a concentration into a middle point and he made the temporal structure of understanding a theme. This has a parallel in aesthetics where, whether of a literary text or a picture, one speaks of "form" or "structure" [*Gebilde*, something shaped into a certain form or structure; cf. *Wahrheit und Methode*, "*Verwandlung ins Gebilde*," "transformation into structure"]. The general meaning of "*Gebilde*" suggests something not understood from the vantage point of a preplanned finished state one knows in advance but rather something that has developed into its own pattern from within and thus is perhaps to be grasped in further formations [*Bildung*]. To understand this idea is, in itself, clearly an important task. The task is to build up and establish what a *Gebilde* [shaped form, structure] is; to construe something that is not "constructed"—and that means that all efforts at construction are withdrawn. With regard to literary texts, while it is true that the unity of understanding and reading is only accomplished in a reading that understands and at that moment leaves behind the linguistic appearance of the text, it is also true that something else speaks in the literary text that makes present the changing relationships of sound and meaning. It is the temporal structure of this movement [*die Zeitstruktur der Bewegtheit*], which we call "whiling" [*Verweilen*, tarrying, lingering], that occupies this presence and into which all mediatory discourse of interpretation must enter. Without the readiness of the person receiving and assimilating [*des Aufnehmenden*] to be "all ears" [*ganz Ohr zu sein*], no poetical text will speak.

In closing, perhaps a famous example may serve as illustration. It is the final line of a poem by Mörike, *Auf eine Lampe—On a Lamp*.[15] The line reads: "*Was*

aber schön ist, selig scheint es in ihm selbst." ["What is beautiful, however, shines blissfully in itself."]

This particular line was the focus of a discussion between Emil Staiger and Martin Heidegger. I am interested in it here, however, only as an exemplary case. In this verse, one encounters two apparently trivial and commonplace words: *"scheint es."* This can be understood in the sense of *"anscheinend"* [apparently], *dokei* [Greek: it appears], *"videtur"* [Latin], *"il semble"* [French], "it seems," *"pare"* [Italian], and so forth. This prosaic understanding of the phrase makes sense and for this reason has found its defenders. But one also notices that it does not obey the law of verse [*Gesetz des Verses*]. This will allow us to show why *"scheint es"* here means "it shines," or *"splender"* [Latin, radiates]. In this case, a hermeneutical principle can be applied: In cases of conflict [*bei Anstöße*] the larger context should decide the issue. Every double possibility of understanding, however, is an offense [*Anstoß*]. Here it is decisively evident that the word beautiful in the line is applied to a lamp. That is what the poem as a whole is asserting and is a message that should be understood throughout the poem. A lamp that does not light up any more because it has become an old-fashioned and bygone thing hanging in a *"Lustgemach"* [pleasure room] ("Who notices it now?"), here gains its own brightness because it is a work of art. There is little doubt that *das Scheinen* here was said of the lamp, a lamp which shines even when no one is using it.

In a very scholarly contribution to this whole discussion Leo Spitzer described in great detail the literary genre of such thing-poems and he presented in a very persuasive way their place in literary history. Heidegger, for his part, has correctly explored the conceptual connection between *"schön"* and *"scheinen,"* which is reminiscent of Hegel's famous phrase about the "sensory appearing/ shining forth of the Idea"—*sinnlichen Scheinen der Idee*. But there are other grounds immanent in the text, also. It is precisely the way the sound and meaning of the words work together that provide us with a clear further point that is decisive. The "s"-sounds in this final line form a firm web [*»was aber schön ist, selig scheint es in ihm selbst«*] and together with the metric modulation of the line (a metric accent falls on *schön, selig, scheint, in,* and *selbst*) this constitutes a melodic unity of phrase that leaves absolutely no place for a reflexive irruption such as *"scheint es"* in its prosaic sense would be. For in general we speak prose all the time, as Molière's Monsieur Jourdain learns to his surprise. In fact, precisely this has led contemporary poetry to extremely hermetic styles in order not to let prose break in. Here, in Mörike's poem, such a wavering in the direction of prose is never far away. Several times the language of this poem actually gets close to prose (*»wer achtet sein?«*). Given the place of this line in the whole, namely that it is the conclusion of the poem, it has a specially gnomic weight. In fact, the poem illustrates through its own assertion why the gold of this line is not of the order of some kind of note of instruction, like a

banknote, or a piece of information, but itself has its own value. This shining is not only understood but it radiates out over the whole of the appearing [*Erscheinung*] of this lamp that hangs unnoticed in a forgotten pleasure room. And it never shines more than in these verses. The inner ear hears the correspondences between "*schön*" and "*selig*" and "*scheinen*" and "*selbst*"; moreover, the "*selbst*" with which the rhythm ends and falls silent, lets the silent motion resound within our inner ear. It allows to appear to our inner eye the quiet self-streaming-away of the light [*Sich-Verströmen des Lichtes*], which we name "shining" [*scheinen*]. Thus, our understanding understands not only what is said about the beautiful and what is expressed there about the autonomy of the work of art, which does not depend on any context of use; our ear hears, and our understanding takes in, the shining of the beautiful [*den Schein des Schönen*] as its true nature. The interpreter, who gives his reasons, disappears— and the text speaks.