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The Subjectivity of Effective History and the Suppressed Husserlian Elements in Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics

Sebastian Luft

Marquette University, sebastian.luft@marquette.edu

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By Sebastian Luft

This essay makes two claims. The first, exegetical, point shows that there are Husserlian elements in Gadamer's hermeneutics that are usually overlooked. The second, systematic, claim takes issue with the fact that Gadamer saw himself in alliance with the project of the later Heidegger. It would have been more fruitful had Gadamer aligned himself with Husserl and the enlightenment tradition. Following Heidegger in his concept of "effective history," Gadamer risks betraying the main tenets of the enlightenment by shifting the weight from subjectivity to effective history as the "agent" in history. This is not a wholesale dismissal of Gadamer's project, however. The problem in Gadamer's effective history can be remedied by insisting, with Husserl, on the subjective character of effective history. Gadamer was right to criticize Husserl's idea of a transcendental genesis, but went too far in giving up the idea of human subjectivity as the agent in history.

It seems to me that there is a clear connection between [Husserl's] concept of passive synthesis and the doctrine of anonymous intentionalities and hermeneutic experience; a doctrine that at all times, when it has shed the methodological constraints of the transcendental way of thinking, corresponds to my phrase: "one understands differently, if one understands at all."—H. G. Gadamer¹

Introduction

In this essay, I am making essentially two claims, one is rather exegetical, the other systematic. The first, exegetical, point is to show that there are genuine Husserlian elements in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics that are usually overlooked or not treated as such—i.e., as genuine Husserlian. This is to say, they are *not* at the same time Heideggerian in the sense of a seemingly seamless development in phenomenology from Husserl to Heidegger. This is a claim that goes against what one might call the "standard interpretation." This standard reading consists in two related claims: (a) that there is a logical continuity from Husserl to Heidegger and Heidegger to Gadamer. Moreover (b), Heidegger and henceforth Gadamer supposedly

exploited the “best” from Husserl, whereby one is well justified in treating Husserl as a “sublated” rung in a development of phenomenology. I will show that this standard interpretation, proposed among others by Gadamer himself, is both wrong and problematic.² It is wrong simply because one can show that one cannot map Heidegger on to Husserl in the way that some believe. And it is problematic due to the systematic claim that I make, as I shall show. The method for demonstrating this first claim will be a hands-on demonstration by delving directly into Husserl’s late genetic phenomenology, the mature final stage of his thought. In so doing, I attempt to show how Gadamer’s hermeneutics as an account of the effective history of the tradition decisively takes up some key insights of Husserl’s that are *not* to be found in Heidegger; indeed, they go *against* Heidegger’s intentions. If this demonstration is convincing, it will automatically disprove the standard interpretation. In other words, I intend to treat as separate two strains of thought that are usually taken as continuity and argue that they do not and, indeed, *should* not be treated as belonging together. Sections II and III, in which I deal first with Husserl, then with Gadamer, are hence more “phenomenological,” i.e., demonstrative, rather than argumentative.³

The second, systematic claim that I deal with in the final section IV states that the fact that Gadamer saw himself in alliance with the philosophical project of the later Heidegger, rather than Husserl, is problematic and ultimately counter-productive for a successful philosophical hermeneutics, for a genuine philosophical position rather than a mere “theory of interpretation.” positively speaking, it would have been more productive had Gadamer aligned himself more with Husserl and the tradition he represents. This tradition one can call the tradition of enlightenment, whereas Heidegger represents a decidedly anti-enlightenment tendency in twentieth-century philosophy.

This point in favor of Husserl is made not for the sake of appeasing disgruntled Husserlians who feel that “their man” did not get his fair share. Instead, Husserl is merely a representative of the enlightenment tradition that Gadamer shunned under Heidegger’s influence. Husserl, however, presents a particular strain within the enlightenment tradition, a strain that can be associated with the project of “foundationalism” (*Letztbegründung*). The reason why Gadamer should have been more “Husserlian” turns on the question of foundationalism that Heidegger (among others⁴) perceived as a problematic offshoot of the enlightenment. The main critique Heidegger has of the enlightenment tradition in modern philosophy is of the idea of having to establish an ultimate foundation of knowledge in the subject. The problem is that, following Heidegger’s anti-foundationalism in forming his concept

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of “effective history,” Gadamer effectively gives up the main tenets of the enlightenment and falls—similarly to Heidegger, albeit not quite in the radical gesture of his teacher—into an irrationalism, relativism and fatalism, all of which are unacceptable for many reasons. Moreover, by shifting the weight from subjectivity to effective history as the “agent” in history, Gadamer falls back into a new sort of foundationalism that he wanted to overcome in the first place.⁵ Effective history might not be an epistemological foundation in the way that Husserl and the neo-Kantians—these being Heidegger’s and Gadamer’s main enemies—saw the transcendental subject—as a constructing or constituting subject. effective history remains, however, a foundation or ground in the sense in which Gadamer oftentimes likes to refer to Schelling’s notion of the “unforethinkable” (*das Unvordenkliche*), i.e., as a structure that functions as a background but which cannot itself be elucidated or made transparent but must be ultimately accepted and, what is worse, trusted as last authority.⁶

After spelling out this critique of Gadamer, I will conclude by emphasizing that it does not mean a wholesale dismissal of Gadamer’s hermeneutics; an attempt that has, I believe, made significant headway compared to Husserl’s mature phenomenology *against* Heidegger, whose ultimate radicalism Gadamer did not follow either. The problem in Gadamer’s account of effective history can be remedied by insisting instead, in a Husserlian vein, on the *subjectivity*, i.e., the thoroughly *subjective* character, of effective history.⁷ While I think that Gadamer was right to criticize Husserl’s idea of a *transcendental* genesis and philosophy as “rigorous,” i.e., eidetic, supra-temporal science, he chucked out the baby with the bath water, when giving up the idea of human subjectivity as that which shapes and forms history. acknowledging, rightly to my mind, our “passivity” in being born into a tradition does not justify seeing history as an anonymous force over which we have no control whatsoever. one need not dismiss the *subjective* element in the attempt to overcome a *transcendental* account of history. While Gadamer is, I believe, correct to put Husserl “on his feet,” when insisting on the *factual* history and tradition of our inherited culture, he should have emphasized in the same instance that this history is one that is formed and shaped by subjects, by historically and (at least potentially) responsibly acting agents over the course of history. Effective history must be conceived as subjective through and through—even in its passive elements—in order to drive away the specters of fatalism, mysticism, escapism and irrationalism.

Section I intends to provide the general contextual framework for the exegetical and systematic discussions to follow. Its purpose is to assess the issue of foundationalism and prepare the way for presenting Husserl’s genetic phenomenology and Gadamer’s philosophical

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hermeneutics as organically following from this first draft of what may be called a phenomenology of the historical life-world.

I. The Context of Gadamer's Hermeneutics

i. The Issue of Foundationalism and Gadamer as Anti-Foundationalist

Like so many philosophies in the twentieth century, one can, too, consider Gadamer's overall philosophical endeavor as an intent to dislodge and overcome the alleged major wrongdoing of modern philosophy: foundationalism.⁸ In this attempt Gadamer could find himself in the company of his teacher Heidegger as well as other philosophers, such as the existentialists, logical positivists, pragmatists and the early analytical philosophy, all of which, despite their differences, share an anti-fundamentalist bent. But to understand this critique, who is this common enemy? Foundationalism, as a term coined not until the twentieth century, begins with the cartesian attempt to base all knowledge on the self-knowledge of the ego as an absolute, apodictically certain foundation. In this sense, foundationalism is a spin-off of Cartesianism. As the standard story continues, this tendency was radicalized in Kant's transcendental philosophy and the Copernican turn and came to a climax in the attempts of the neo-Kantians in the late nineteenth century who proclaimed the transcendental subject as the ultimate foundation that grounds and justifies all knowledge about the world. This perceived need to anchor all knowledge in a constituting subject spilled over, the saga continues, into other philosophical schools, e.g., the phenomenological movement, especially Husserl, thereby contaminating its original impulse of describing "the things themselves." In this sense, Heidegger could speak of Husserl temporarily "between 1900 and 1910" falling "into the clutches of neo-Kantianism,"⁹ by which Heidegger presumably referred to Husserl's notorious *Logos*-article "philosophy as rigorous Science" (1911) and the transcendental turn presented in his programmatic treatise *Ideas to a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, book I (1913).

Let us briefly review what Husserl claims here in order to see how Husserl formulates a version of foundationalism. In the article published in *Logos*—the main neo-Kantian publication outlet besides *Kant Studien*—Husserl spells out the two fatal consequences when one does not follow a foundationalist agenda, thereby confirming his alliance with his erstwhile enemies, the neo-Kantians.¹⁰ The common enemies are naturalism and historicism.¹¹ Naturalism, as the name indicates, naturalizes consciousness and thereby treats it as a mere phenomenon of the positive sciences. As a side effect, it also naturalizes ideas and construes them as mere

occurrences in a contingent consciousness. Historicism holds that philosophical theories do not have any atemporal validity but only historical relevance. Both tendencies, hence, deny the supra-temporal status of truth and end up in a relativism. In order to avoid this fatal result and attain these “absolute” truths, one has to make a shift to pure consciousness that equally has no empirical contaminations. The transcendental turn presented in *Ideas I* in the form of the transcendental reduction to a constituting transcendental subject was the mere cashing-in of the promise to battle naturalism and historicism and to establish philosophy as a “rigorous,” i.e., eidetic science that could attain results with a precision comparable to other rigorous sciences such as mathematics. To be sure, the Husserlian project of transcendental constitution of the world from the bottom up was different from the neo-Kantians. He shared with them, however, the belief in a foundationalist agenda that lays its ground in a pure subject. Thus, the main proponents of foundationalism around 1900 and 1925 were the neo-Kantians and Husserl—the big names in German philosophy at the time.

Gadamer, who had studied in Marburg under the aegis of the leading neo-Kantians, especially Paul Natorp, as well as under Husserl in Freiburg, knew all too well which enemy he was battling. In this battle he was, however, entirely following his teacher Heidegger who had early on fought against foundationalism. Heidegger’s famous project of a “destruction of Western ontology” had as its main intention the overturning of the emphasis on the subject in Modern philosophy, to him a fatal move that had begun already with Greek philosophy. Framing the human “subject” as *Dasein*, as Being-in-the-World, was a clear departure from this tradition; *Dasein* is not a founding subject of apodictic knowledge, but a site, an opening, where Being makes an appearance. It is this anti-foundationalism in Heidegger that Gadamer picked up on immediately. Indeed, in Gadamer’s presentations of his teacher’s philosophy, he always points out the continuity in Heidegger’s early thought and the later philosophy after the so-called “turning” (“*Kehre*”) that was merely interrupted by his “transcendental” phase in *Being and Time*. The early Heidegger’s focus on the “worldhood” of the world and its character of “worlding” (“*es weltet*,” “it worlds,” being the operative term here) and his later reflections on the history of being in its process of uncontrollable revealing and concealing are attempts to overcome foundationalism. Heidegger’s philosophy can be seen as the radical attempt to “destruct” the focus on the subject in a supposedly even more radical turn than Kant’s Copernican turn. It is a turn from the subject to being itself that appears and gives itself to us, who are mere receivers.

Yet Heidegger’s critique aims at more than just the idea of laying an absolute foundation in the subject; rather, Heidegger for his part tried to overthrow the entire subject-object

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distinction that has plagued Western philosophy ever since its inception in Greek philosophy and its cementation in Aristotle's substance ontology. The result in Heidegger's late philosophy was a mystically inspired new thinking that overcomes these oppositions and listens to the voice of Being and the coming of the new God in the age of nihilism.

Gadamer did not go quite so far and explicitly shied away from the later Heidegger's mysticism; a term that he himself used to label Heidegger's last phase. He did, however, share with Heidegger the latter's assessment of modern philosophy's seeming obsession with foundationalism and the need to overcome it. What Gadamer proposed instead of Heidegger's reconstruction of the "history of being," and more modestly than his teacher, was a focus on tradition and what he called its "effective history" ("*Wirkungsgeschichte*") in the way it informs our every world view. The essential claim is that the way in which we understand ourselves is always mediated through a tradition in which we stand and that has a manner of "effecting" us historically, e.g., through the prejudices that have been handed down to us or the things that we consider "classic" in our culture. In this effective history, however, the subject is—to quote Gadamer's famous phrase—but a "flickering light in the closed circuits of historical life." Though less radical than Heidegger, this is still intended as a clear departure from modern philosophy's foundationalism and the main paradigms of what is thought of as philosophy as we know it in the Western tradition. That is, philosophy, in the form of philosophical hermeneutics, is no longer concerned with laying ultimate foundations or "getting things right," nor even with the truth, if we mean by "the truth" the way things "*really are*" "in and of themselves." rather, philosophical hermeneutics is about mutual understanding and dialogue and emphasizes the truth of "classical" elements of our tradition and the truth of art. In Rorty's influential reading of modern philosophy in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Gadamer is, interestingly, invoked as proposing a new style of philosophizing that is purely "edifying" and instrumental in continuing the conversation of educated and intelligent individuals and is unconcerned with absolute truths or foundations, "while sparks fly upwards"¹² in thoughtful conversations. Indeed, this reading is too extreme, precisely because Gadamer is not able to rid himself of foundationalist motives in the characterization of effective history. Foundationalism comes back with a vengeance. My point is not that Gadamer *should* have overcome foundationalism, but that he should have reframed it in the way Husserl attempted with his genetic phenomenology, although Husserl remained bound to transcendentalism. Gadamer went the right way in criticizing Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, but went too far in overcoming his subjectivism.

ii. The Standard Interpretation: Husserl as “aufgehoben” (Sublated) in Heidegger

In view of Gadamer’s alleged “departure from foundationalism,”¹³ where does Husserl fit into the picture? If Husserl was such a clear foundationalist, as mentioned earlier, would it not seem that any connection to Husserl would be of little help? It is undeniable that Gadamer almost always mentions the founder of phenomenology in recounting his own philosophical development. Yet in the way Gadamer presents Husserl, he merely repeats the “standard interpretation” of Husserl’s position in the history of twentieth-century philosophy. This interpretation stems essentially from Heidegger, and it has been since been repeated like a mantra by most twentieth-century philosophers who see their own philosophizing as related to the phenomenological movement.¹⁴ The standard interpretation holds that, essentially, Husserl founded phenomenology as a new style of philosophizing (with the vague and ultimately empty catch phrase “to the things themselves!”) but was superseded by Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. While Husserl’s merit lay in opening up a new horizon of research under the new paradigm of intentionality and evidencing intuition, he was ultimately displaced and “*sublated*” in Heidegger’s philosophy because Heidegger saw through, and overcame, the problematic paradigms that Husserl was not able to shed, most importantly his foundationalism or Cartesianism. In this story, Husserl’s merit lay solely in “stylistic” matters, such as his devotion to detailed analysis, his shunning of systematizing speculation and his unflinching adherence to the ideal of philosophy as “rigorous science.”¹⁵ What is understood as “rigorous science,” however, has for the most part little to do with Husserl. Those within the standard interpretation who obey by this principle see it not as implying a foundationalist agenda as Husserl had intended; rather, the label is oftentimes invoked by those who want to insist that their philosophizing is the opposite of “lofty,” “vague,” or “fuzzy.”

The truth is, however, more complicated than that. Although this essay is ultimately not concerned with Husserl interpretation, rectifying this oversimplifying interpretation has, in itself, no small merit. Indeed, upon closer inspection, Husserl was *equally* influential for Gadamer as Heidegger was. Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics cannot be adequately assessed and appreciated without elucidating some Husserlian key insights. Indeed, these insights are original Husserlian in the sense that Heidegger did *not* exploit them and thus they did not reach Gadamer via Heidegger—which is not to say that Heidegger did not himself also heavily “borrow” from Husserl, while always concerned with covering over his tracks. That Gadamer adheres to the “standard interpretation” is displayed by the fact that Gadamer never was able to really recognize a decisive *difference* between Husserl and Heidegger but instead emphasized

their continuity. Gadamer liked to refer to Husserl's phenomenology as a method that opened vast new horizons that Husserl himself was not able to penetrate to his own full satisfaction. Thus, the standard interpretation continues, Heidegger expanded, though with significant modifications, those horizons that were opened up by Husserl.¹⁶ The tacit implication for Gadamer was that the same could be said for himself as well. Concerning Gadamer's own self-interpretation, one can adopt for Gadamer's relationship to Husserl what Tugendhat once said with regard to Heidegger's relationship to the founder of phenomenology: that Gadamer "from the very outset stands in the dimension that was opened up by Husserl and now merely unfolds it" in his own manner.¹⁷ This unfolding, however, takes its point of departure where Husserl left off prematurely. What is problematic in this "standard interpretation" is *not* that Husserl was not rightfully criticized in this manner by Heidegger and Gadamer. There are plenty of problems in Husserl's phenomenology in the shape that he left it when he died. What is problematic is that this "teleological" reading renders Husserl unnecessary and "obsolete" because all of his valid insights were already exploited by Heidegger. I propose, instead, that Husserl and Heidegger in their key intentions present two unrelated strains of thought that ultimately do not square with one another.

iii. Gadamer's Foundationalism and Husserl's Genetic Phenomenology. A Preview

While there can be no doubt concerning Gadamer's kinship with Heidegger's thought,¹⁸ there are certainly elements in Husserl's philosophy that Gadamer unequivocally rejects, mainly of course Husserl's Cartesian project of laying an ultimate foundation and his concomitant doctrine of the phenomenological reduction. However, Gadamer pays tribute to the Husserlian impulses that he incorporated into his philosophical hermeneutics.¹⁹ When discussing Husserl, Gadamer always treats him with greatest respect and commends him both on his original phenomenological discoveries as well as his eye for detail in his intricate analyses and his philosophical innocence that allowed him to see phenomena with new eyes.²⁰ In so doing, however, Gadamer, too, merely repeats the standard interpretation. That is, he sees himself as furthering Heidegger's agenda. In his hermeneutics, Gadamer merely replaces Heidegger's history of being with *effective* history as the way the tradition has an effect on us in our self-understanding and our prejudices that inform our judgments.

The problems begin here, however. What exactly is effective history? If this "instance" is supposed to be the remedy to the plagues of modern philosophy, it deserves a closer look. As I will show in more detail in part IV, this "structure" is no longer to be conceived along the lines of

subjectivity; rather, Gadamer sees it as an anonymous force that comes over us like the weather and over which we as acting subjects (“flickering lights”) have no control.²¹ It is the way the tradition reveals and gives itself to us and forms, as it were, the condition of the possibility of our understanding. As such, I would like to claim, it is equally an ultimate foundation, namely, a non-uptiltable foundation of our understanding. It is the ground on which we stand and which we cannot leap out of due to our finitude. Effective history is the foundation forming our prejudices which, in turn, found our judgments and understandings in our daily lives in the world. In this sense, Gadamer, against all intents and purposes, has been unable to shed the notion of foundationalism; the main difference is that the role of the ultimate foundation has been shifted, from a constituting subject, over to effective history. But who or what is this effective history? Does the idea of such an anonymous force in history not amount to mysticism and fatalism with respect to the events in history just as in Heidegger’s history of being? Could it not equally be construed as exculpation from humanity’s responsibility in this world as well as escapism from the “hard facts” of life? Finally, taking away the responsibility for the course of history from acting agents in history opens the door to an irresponsible and dangerous irrationalism. Gadamer’s concept of effective history is, in truth, a *lucus a non lucendo*, a dimension that raises more problems than it solves and is, therefore, to be resisted at all costs.

But we must first see how Gadamer arrived at this doctrine. In the following, I want to show where Gadamer has drawn from Husserlian insights in the development of his philosophical hermeneutics. In this assessment, it is possible to entirely ignore Heidegger and focus on the genuine Husserlian elements of Gadamer’s thought. Thus, I am not interested in enumerating where Gadamer “borrowed” from Husserl. Rather, I want to attempt to show where and how Gadamer fruitfully *expanded* Husserlian ideas. To Gadamer, there is a systematic necessity to advance Husserl’s philosophy; yet, I believe, both work on the same issue. This issue is a philosophical account of the life-world construed as intrinsically *historical*. The life-world is Husserl’s and Gadamer’s *common problem*. as mentioned, in most presentations of Gadamer’s thought scholars rarely explicitly focus on Husserl and immediately jump to Heidegger.²² A closer look will reveal that Gadamer not only took up some decisive Husserlian elements; moreover, one can find traces of genuinely Husserlian thought in Gadamer that *Heidegger* himself shunned in his project of a “destruction of Western metaphysics.” Indeed, two of Gadamer’s key concepts, “tradition” and “authority,” already indicate that he, *like Husserl*, was more interested in a creative appropriation of the tradition and the history of philosophy rather than overcoming it.

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The obvious starting point for launching into the exegetical part is Husserl's theory of the life-world, stemming from the doctrine of *horizon*.²³ I shall first present in section II the decisive elements of this theory of the mature Husserl, with an eye toward those points that Gadamer took up and integrated in his philosophical hermeneutics. Then, in section III, I will show how Gadamer expanded Husserl's original account into a theory of historical understanding in a world that is essentially "traditioned." What was only vaguely anticipated in Husserl finds its full-fledged presentation in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, thereby dropping Husserl's transcendental framework. Most of Gadamer's thoughts are truly phenomenological insights in working through these unresolved problems. Most importantly, the concept of horizon, as well as Gadamer's notion of *fusion* of horizons, expand on Husserlian elements that have no equivalent in Heidegger and ultimately do not agree with Gadamer's Heidegger-inspired notion of effective history.

II. Husserl's Late Phenomenology as Genetic Analysis of Transcendental History

The term "life-world" is a concept that Husserl does not employ until late in his career, although it is merely a terminological "lucky find" for the topics that Husserl had been working on ever since he declared intentionality as the main topic of his philosophical work.²⁴ It is fair to call intentionality Husserl's term for *experience*. When systematically unfolded, intentionality reveals the basic elements of what Husserl later expanded into a universal theory of the life-world as the world correlated to subjective experiencing. The basic character of intentionality is that all consciousness is always consciousness-*of* something, perceiving is perceiving-*something*, thinking is thinking *of* something etc. Intentionality is not merely an empty cognitive intending of something; instead, every intentional act bestows *meaning* upon that which is intended.²⁵ I intend this object here not as an empty X with a meaning "attached" to it in a separate act, but I see it and immediately *comprehend* it as, e.g., a table. Intentional acts in their pursuit in different contexts always are meaningful in the sense of meaning-bestowing. Meaning reveals itself only *in* acts. That means, in intentional acts as conscious activities I *understand* (as Gadamer would say) things, artifacts and persons in my environment as what they are. But how is this possible?

Certainly, a meaning-bestowing act does not come out of nowhere. The significant meaning in which I "approach" an object is not created in the instant that I carry out this act. Rather, the meaning must have already been established in my everyday life. This meaning is not one among a fixed set of propositions that I can revert to. It is a silent "pool" of implicit "knowledge" or "know-how" that I carry with me and that becomes "actualized" in a given act

situation. Husserl metaphorically calls it a “*horizon*” in which I live at all times and from out of which single acts come forth. The horizon is a horizon of *meaning*. For example, in order to understand this thing here as a table, I must have dealt with tables or similar objects before, and I must know the context in which a table has a certain meaning, i.e., in the context of a house, more specifically a kitchen, a dining room, etc. This knowing is thus not propositional knowledge in the sense of cognition, but a horizon of meaning in which I am at all times immersed.²⁶ Thus, the concept of horizon is but an *expansion* of the intentional relation of act and intended object. Intentional acts are a concrete *instantiation* of our meaningful existence in the world as a horizon of meaning; intentions are, in other words, something that *always takes place within* a horizon of meaning. The discovery of horizon is arguably the most important innovation in Husserl’s mature thought in expanding the original intentional relation of act and fulfillment.²⁷ The horizon is the constant “background” or “halo” of individual acts and hence part of the intentional structure itself. Husserl will utilize this concept in two directions, as a horizon of *acts* (on the “noetic” side) and as the *context* at which acts are directed (the “noematic” aspect).

The horizon from which intentional acts come forth Husserl calls *attitude*. An attitude is the horizon of understanding that I always carry with me in living in a certain meaningful way. Yet, we do not just live in one way of understanding, but we have a manifold of such attitudes at our disposal, e.g., the work attitude, the leisure attitude, the artistic attitude etc. Husserl illustrates this with the example of a house: there is no such thing as a “pure” seeing of the house, but this “X” will be understood as something depending on the attitude that one takes toward it. For example, the real estate agent will view the house very differently from a potential buyer or a contractor or an artist, depending on the specific *interest* that governs their specific attitude.²⁸ Attitudes are different intentional perspectives that one can have on an individual object and that will in each case render a wholly different “understanding” or “interpretation” of this object. In this sense, all experiencing is interpreting, because it takes place within a certain horizon of understanding. This point refutes any kind of realism: there is no “real thing” out there that I can approximate myself to with ever more descriptions. It is entirely what it is by the way it is intended and in the way it gives itself in different profiles (“adumbrations”). This is a phenomenological restatement of transcendental idealism. The thing in itself is nonsense for phenomenology; it is given as *phainomenon* in different ways of approaching it. The thing is in this sense an idea as the sum total of meanings that I can bestow upon it in different attitudes, but nothing beyond that.

Being in a specific attitude means, moreover, that no matter what I see, I can perceive it

from the standpoint of this attitude, e.g., the artist can potentially view *all* objects as works of art, the businessman can potentially perceive all objects in his surroundings in terms of their market value etc. Thus, an attitude is not limited to a certain fixed set of entities but can be expanded to all possible entities. Being in an attitude is like wearing tinted glasses that let everything appear in a certain hue. An attitude is an intentional structure, not a literal standpoint. Now something similar can be observed on the “noematic” side: This potential “everything” intended in an attitude is, in turn, not a certain, limited set of objects but can be potentially anything upon which I set sight from a certain attitude. Everything that is present to me in an intentional act implies a co-presence of an innumerable amount of *possible* objects of intention. Thus, on the side of that which I intend, or can potentially intend, we also find a horizon. The horizon is not an anonymous “clearing” that opens itself up to me (or not); rather, it is the field of that which *can potentially* be intended. It, too, is an element, i.e., the noematic correlate, of the intentional relation itself.

This horizon on the side of that which “gives itself” in specific attitudes is the phenomenological concept of *world*. a world is not a certain number of objects but a region or sphere of meaning that allows for objects to be understood in a certain way.²⁹ yet, the original meaning of horizon (cf. the Greek *horízein*) is “to delimit.” That is, one horizon of meaning that corresponds to a certain attitude (the artistic attitude correlates to the world of art) is merely one region of meaning besides others. “Region” here is an epistemological, not ontological, term; it does not refer to regions of nature, but regions of *possible intending* and, correlatively, *potential meaning*. In point of fact, we always already live in different worlds of meaning, in different meaningful contexts, of which there are more than we can ever know. It depends on the processes of maturation, education and learning to become acquainted with ever more worlds of meaning. We all live in *one world*, Husserl maintains, but this world is already differentiated for us into special worlds of meaning that we always and readily inhabit in our everyday life, starting from when we wake up in the morning in our “home world” and switch to the “business world” on our job and pass through the “world of leisure” on our walk through the park. The totality of these worlds as horizons is the *horizon of all these horizons*. This is Husserl’s formal concept of the life-world.³⁰ The life-world is the horizon that makes possible all these horizons, as the openness that allows for all these different contexts of meaning. As such, it is also an idea; because we know that all of these different regional worlds ultimately coincide in one world, though we live in it differently. The one world, the life-world, is in this sense again not to be misunderstood “ontically” (e.g., as earth) but as the epistemological concept of region of all

possible regions of potential and actual intending. The noetic correlate is the formal potentiality to be in an attitude. This formal structure Husserl calls the “natural attitude.”

The life-world is, thus, a formal concept designating the totality of all possible regions of meaning that correlates to the totality of all potential meaning-bestowing intentional acts. That is, Husserl construes at all times intentionality as *correlational*. To the life-world corresponds on the side of the “subject” the total sphere or horizon of consciousness that enables all these horizons of meaning to be experienced. This is the “natural attitude,” which is “natural” in that we take all of this for granted. Husserl’s theory, hence, can be understood as a reaction to the following problem: how, despite the *plurality* of meaningful contexts, is it possible to have *one world*? How do we have *unity* in this *plurality*? Husserl’s starting point—which will lead to a fundamental problem—is plurality; the unity of the world is, as it were, a regulative idea in Husserl. However, one *can* posit it as such an idea because world is essentially a world of meaning. There are no regions that we intend that would be meaningless; conversely there are presumably regions of meaning that are not yet tapped into or discovered. Yet we always and for the most part live “in different worlds,” even if we might live together in the same geographical location. The stock broker and the artist might live geographically together in Manhattan, but have little in common. That we live in *one life-world* means, to Husserl, that the difference between horizons can in principle be bridged. Yet, the idea of the plurality of horizons that we inhabit while living in one world presents a problem in Husserl which, as we shall see, Gadamer sought to overcome.

This account of horizons, which Husserl calls “static,” raises the question, *where* these horizons come from. In order to answer the question of the *origin* of the horizons, we have to turn to genetic phenomenology that he develops in his late thought. Husserl’s transcendental theory³¹ so far—the “static” description of condition of possibility of experience—does not explain the *origin* of these horizons of meaning. This calls for a deepened account in expanding phenomenology from a static act-analysis to a “genetic phenomenology,”³² a theory toward which Gadamer is very sympathetic.³³ The main insight that Husserl advances in his mature phenomenology is that the expanded theory of intentionality expounded so far is merely the top “stratum” of an “historical” process. Metaphorically speaking, the horizons have a third “depth dimension.” Every intentional act that an agent performs comes forth from a horizon that this person did not *create on her own*. It is an ego who intends and understands this thing here as a table, but the ego created neither the table nor the horizon of meaning that enables her to identify this thing as a table. The horizon of meaning that one “has” is nothing that one has

created but something that one has taken over, something that one is, literally, born into. It has been created before me obviously by other subjects before me, and those in turn have taken over their horizon from subjects before them, etc. In this sense, we all stand on the shoulders of giants. A “static” description of horizons in reality *presupposes* a *genesis* of intentional activities. The “status quo” rests upon a layered structure of sedimented intentional activities that have been carried out before I came into being. My horizon is the product of a sedimentation of past intentionalities that have formed, and continue to form, the present horizon of understanding. Horizons are nothing that I or any *single* subject have constituted; rather, the horizons that have developed before my own “Intentional contributions” *constitute me*. Since they are nothing that I constitute but that I can merely take over (in agreement or disagreement), Husserl terms this process with the peculiar cognate “passivity.” My horizon is a product of a “passive genesis” for me insofar as I do not actively create it. Current acts with their meaningful attitudes and worlds in the here and now have a history, but this history is that of acts themselves. Genesis is not simple history (*res gestae*), but a *history of intentionality*. Thus, clarifying this “passive genesis” is Husserl’s answer to how it is that these horizons that we inhabit and that constitute us come about.

What does it mean for phenomenology to analyze passive genesis? As a reconstruction of the history of intentionality, such a genetic or developmental description is not a historical account in the sense of *res gestae*. Rather, Husserl’s aim is to account for the genesis of conscious interaction with the world, the history of intentionality *itself*. It is a *phenomenological* reconstruction, that is to say, it is about an *eidetic* account of how genesis *in general* is carried out and reconstructs “*laws of genesis*”³⁴ that govern this intentional history. It remains within the framework of transcendental phenomenology, as genesis is the depth dimension of the conditions of possibility for experience. For instance, to clarify an understanding of the table in this act of seeing, we have to perform an “un-building” of this “static” description, as this understanding already takes place on a very high level of culture, i.e., it takes a certain maturity of cultural knowledge to see this object here as a cultured artifact. Hence, un-building reverts to the most primitive level of simple perception and starts from there, a description of perception as intending something in profiles (the front side with the hidden back side). But this is not an isolated description; there is a continuity reaching up to the highest levels of understanding. The phenomenological description in the genetic register hence proceeds from the most basic level and reconstructs the developmental laws as well as intentional structures that build up the layered intentional structures that finally reach the “status quo” of experiencing this thing here as

a sophisticated object, e.g., a table designed to support components for a smart classroom. In this sense, Husserl's genetic account is inherently *teleological*.

Husserl's paradigm of this most simple stratum of intentionality is external perception. The analysis of perception reveals that this thing here is given first and foremost as three-dimensional X that I see with my eyes, its movements along with the movements of my body. due to my physical make-up I can only see this object from its front side with the back side hidden, in "adumbrations." from here, Husserl goes on to describe how this thing here becomes "constituted" through my bodily interaction with it; e.g., when I walk around it and discover ever new sides that were previously hidden. This simple process of perception, however, is a constant process of modification and rectification,³⁵ as my expectation of what I am about to see is always at least *somewhat* different than anticipated. Thus, the seeing of the back side can turn out differently than I thought, so that the new perception annuls my earlier anticipation. Yet, the old anticipation has not "vanished" but is sublated into a higher synthesis of a new unanimous perception of the thing (instead of "this round object" the newly established "this round object with a dent on the back side"). This is an excerpt of an analysis of a "genetic lawfulness" in the sphere of passivity. It is passive in the sense that this kind of "primitive" interaction is already presupposed on higher levels, e.g., when this thing here is intended within a meaningful context.³⁶ Hence, the horizons of meaning that we inhabit rest on a genesis of meaning that reaches far back but that always is a genesis of *subjective* interactions with the world as a life-world. Accordingly, passivity has different levels of meaning: a perception (of this thing as something) can be passive in that I do not have to go back to the primal instituting when I first learned about what it was; in this sense, it is passive with respect to *my own* intentional history. Going deeper, we find "absolute passivity" in that it is not a part of my history at all: it might have been established by people I never knew a long time ago. Yet, in all of these cases, "passivity" designates *some subject's activity at a given time in the past*. The "past" is here equally not to be understood as *historical time*, but it is a past in the transcendental account of internal time-consciousness. It is a past not in time but in temporality.

This example of a genetic account of perception gives a glimpse of how Husserl conceived of the genetic method. Obviously, this presents a gigantic field of research that Husserl envisioned. This is what Gadamer meant when he spoke of these "vast fields" that Husserl opened up but never succeeded in fully penetrating. For, it is true, Husserl never really achieved more than beginnings. The "perpetual beginner," as he referred to himself, always dwelled in these lower regions and, forever dissatisfied with his own work, never made his way

up to the surface to draft a full-fledged phenomenology of the life-world. The literally thousands of manuscripts that Husserl devoted in the last decades of his life to this single task show that he simply got stuck. He made a few attempts to give an account of the life-world on so-called “higher levels” and “personalities of higher order” such as communities, peoples, and societies. Yet he ultimately had to content himself with declaring phenomenology the task of an “infinite chain of generations” of researchers who would carry out this project.³⁷ Yet, Husserl at all times remains bound to the Cartesian, subjectivistic paradigm. Genesis is a genesis of meaning constituted by a genetic “buildup” of intentional acts of a *subject*. Factually carrying out a philosophical project—and the contingent factors involved in this—is one thing and itself cannot be an argument against a theory. There are, however, reasons why this theory is problematic.

Indeed, Husserl’s theory is a *transcendental* theory in the framework of philosophy as rigorous, i.e., eidetic science. Although Husserl ultimately wants to thematize the life-world in its full historical concretion, he never truly arrives at this concretion, and due to his concept of phenomenology as transcendental philosophy, he cannot. The reason for this is, however, *not* his subjectivist bent; rather, what prevents him from really getting to the concrete world is his ideal of philosophy as *rigorous science*. Husserl’s original idea of phenomenology simply cannot account for the concrete world because that would mean giving up the ideal for the contingent. There simply is no connection between transcendental genesis and historical development. Husserl’s phenomenology clarifies the transcendental conditions of possibility of concrete historical development and *therefore cannot* arrive at concrete history as a process of its own, divorced from the correlation with constituting transcendental subjectivity, ultimately conceived as intersubjectivity.³⁸ The life-world remains an equally formal concept. Thus, one has to conclude with respect to Husserl’s late thought: he never clarified the relation between genesis and history. In fact, there *is* no direct line from genesis to history. This is not merely an external critique, since Husserl himself wanted to thematize history in his late thought.³⁹ hence, Husserl envisioned something that his own method did not allow him to reach. he simply was not able to drop the tenet of transcendental philosophy and his proclivity toward a philosophy as *rigorous science*, meaning eidetic discipline establishing timeless truths for any conceivable subject. There is no way to square eidetics with history. In order to enter into the “fruitful bathos” of concrete life in its historical shape, one must leave the ivory tower of eidetic science.

The claim to be made in the next section is that Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics in principle has its locus within this direction of research and took up these threads, but essentially dropped Husserl’s transcendentalism and ideal of philosophy as eidetic science. but

this does not mean that one cannot retain Husserl's main phenomenological insight, the concept of horizon, in a "concrete" manner. To be sure, Gadamer sets different emphasis and special priorities in his work—most notably in the role that *art* plays for understanding—but his philosophy can be understood as an ingenious *expansion* and, as such, a *transformation of Husserl's account of the life-world* by essentially *historicizing* Husserl's transcendental theory of genesis. In the following, I will show that Gadamer took up and modified the methodological elements that Husserl developed in his rudimentary account of the life-world. What Gadamer thematizes is also nothing but the life-world, although he takes his point of departure on a higher level and places the emphasis on seemingly different phenomena. yet, he merely explicates elements that are implicit in Husserl and overcomes some problems in his theory. Gadamer builds upon the foundations that Husserl constructed.

The main lesson to be learned from this discussion of Husserl should be that *even those elements* that seem a-subjective, like history and horizon, are elements of *intentionality*, i.e., *subjective* interaction with the world. This means, Husserl's concept of horizon is located on a *fundamentally different* playing field than Heidegger's account of truth as "clearing" or "unconcealment" of the world's showing itself. Husserl's remains at all times a "subjectivistic" theory, albeit with a very original sense of "subjective." any attempts to harmonize Husserl's concept of horizon and Heidegger's notion of the worldhood of the world are, for this reason, wrong-headed.

III. Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics as a Phenomenological Analysis of Factual Tradition

I will take my point of departure with Gadamer's concept of experience and understanding as presented in *Truth and Method*. Gadamer's account of experience neatly maps onto Husserl's structure of horizon. The perhaps most familiar hermeneutic concept is that of understanding. The most crucial point about this notion is that it is not just a cognitive event in the present; instead, every experience is or rather presupposes already a certain understanding, because we already stand in a certain tradition that exerts its influence upon us, as its "heritage."⁴⁰ Thus, the "attitude" (in Husserl's terms) that we always already find ourselves in is in fact enabled by a *horizon of tradition*. This tradition obtains universally in that nobody is *without* a tradition when understanding. Tradition is our life's "element."⁴¹ a horizon in the "genetic" consideration is a horizon of tradition as our current horizon's depth dimension. What Gadamer calls "tradition" is, hence, nothing but the depth dimension of our current

understanding. It is not, however, that of transcendental intentional processes, but of our concrete, factual history, i.e., a history of human cultural achievements. It is for this reason that Gadamer considers actual cultural artifacts such as poems when putting his hermeneutics to work.

How does understanding as standing in a tradition work on supposedly simple levels of experience? Consider the Husserlian example that I immediately understand this object as a table, i.e., that I first and foremost do not question its meaning. To see this object as a table without firstly questioning the validity of this experience as well as the meaning experienced in it is a certain *prejudice*.⁴² Indeed, to have a horizon of meaning as a tradition means that I for the most part do not *question* the meanings that I inherit. As such, they are prejudices. My life is full of prejudices and biases that I harbor. The horizon that Husserl outlines is in fact a horizon of tradition, and a tradition is constituted by unquestioned prejudices that govern my daily life. For instance, it is a tradition to shake hands upon meeting; to adhere to this tradition is a prejudice in the sense that I do not give myself account for it rationally whenever I do it. It is inherited and has become part of my “second nature.”⁴³ What Husserl simply conceived of a horizon’s “background” character in Gadamer becomes concrete as field of prejudices, i.e., notions, opinions, beliefs that normally never become explicit. They are constant pre-judgments, not judgments, for then they would no longer have the character of prejudice and bias. The point about these prejudices is that, like in Husserl’s concept of horizon, they are simply part of what it means to have experience and to make judgments and are not inherently a bad thing. Another way of saying this is that the horizon of our everyday understanding in Husserl only comes into view in his notion of the “natural attitude” with its unquestioned prejudices as something to be left behind by philosophical reflection. Whereas in Gadamer it becomes the explicit theme of philosophical hermeneutics as a doctrine that intends to *understand* how these prejudices have come about through a tradition.

Thus, the depth dimension of my horizon of understanding is a *tradition* and this tradition exerts an *authority* over me in the sense that it is implicit in guiding my daily activities; I am usually not aware of any of my prejudices. Now contrary to the enlightenment sentiment according to which prejudices are to be overcome, Gadamer contends that prejudices as horizontal background are not necessarily a bad thing. Gadamer’s intention in the historical passages of *Truth and Method*⁴⁴ is to wrest the concepts of tradition and prejudice from the enlightenment tradition that intended to radically do away with all prejudices and base all knowledge on rational insight. This immanent critique of enlightenment is entirely in keeping

with Husserl's analysis of horizon and background as inherent part of experiencing and judging. To believe that one can entirely do without all prejudices is *itself* a prejudice. This is impossible to accomplish, just as it would be to get rid of the attitude from which acts emerge. We can never *entirely do away* with the "fore-structure" of understanding, according to which all understanding rests upon a *pre*-understanding, a prejudice, that we did not create on our own but that we can reflect upon using certain methods (e.g., art or philosophy). It would be a wrong-headed attempt to achieve full clarity of all prejudices, it would be a misunderstood enlightenment. This does not automatically make Gadamer an anti-enlightenist; having prejudices is not simply a result of a lazy reason (although it could be). Indeed, Gadamer distinguishes between good and bad prejudices. bad prejudices are those attitudes that we can *understand as* bad upon reflection and that out of rational insight should be abandoned, e.g., in the many forms of discrimination. This is the sense of prejudice that the enlightenment battled in order to rid oneself of, in Kant's words, of a "self-incurred tutelage" and Gadamer is adamant of being a part of the enlightenment in this sense of the term. "What Kant calls enlightenment in truth corresponds to what hermeneutics has in view. . . . The stubborn clinging to prejudices or even the blind appeal to authority is nothing but the laziness to think."⁴⁵ However, all other prejudices are "good" in the sense that they guide and underpin our daily interaction and our ordinary behavior in general. Prejudices *form* the horizon of our understanding. I am a functioning member in society when I act according to the prejudices of this society. Prejudices are the *contingent, empirical conditions of possibility* of any understanding.

Experience here and now is always already engrossed in tradition that we remember—unconsciously or implicitly. Concrete experience presupposes memory; memory *forms* our presence. Our current experience is merely the "static," uppermost stratum of a historical process that went on before my individual existence and that will continue after my death. History is the history of human beings and as such has a movement, the direction of which can only be vaguely anticipated. This means, we stand in a tradition that we did not create and choose to be born into; this accounts for our essential finitude, that Gadamer invokes, following Heidegger. But this does not necessarily mean that the self-reflection of the subject is nothing but a "flickering light in the closed circuits of historical life."⁴⁶ one less radical way of reading this phrase—indeed proposed here—is that all experience, *especially* conscious reflection, is historical and is not possible without the horizon from which it stems. The horizon of understanding both allows us to transcend our present situation as well as accounts for our essential finitude in that it is not possible to elucidate *all* prejudices that guide my current

understanding. In fact, normally I am not even interested in this kind of elucidation and it is not necessary to carry on with my life. Instead, I am steeped in tradition and my subjective experience of something is merely an abstraction from my concrete experience as immersed in a tradition.

This “immersion” Gadamer captures in the concept of *situation*. Being in a situation means that “one does not find oneself opposed to it and therefore cannot have objective knowledge of it.”⁴⁷ In a situation (and not just an isolated act), I find myself together with what I experience as “both” being there in one totality. I *find myself* in a certain attitude correlated to a certain horizon of experience. For instance, when going into a museum, I “attune” myself to having an aesthetic experience. But this is not really what goes on in a situation; the situation *draws me in*, it *attunes me*. What I experience is given to me in its entirety, as it brings about a switch of attitude (coming in from the noisy street). although I only experience an aspect of the possible horizon—a given painting—the horizon is given “holistically.” The situation engulfs me. The process of a concrete experience, however, can readily be described with Husserlian tools: as I enter a certain room and see a painting and approach it, being drawn to it “magically,” the experience of this painting will undergo a constant modification and will either confirm or alter itself; but it will certainly never stay the same. Even if a break of understanding occurs—it appears to depict a still life, but I understand the dead animals stand for life’s finitude, thereby changing the overall perception—this break will immediately be integrated into a new totality. The process of experience will never come to an end. I will never know this work of art in its entirety; I can always be surprised. However, I will always understand *somehow*, as every new experience rests upon a historical background that prefigures my current understanding. Thus, “one understands *differently if one understands at all.*”⁴⁸ There is no *one correct* understanding. The “difference” is due to the fact that the horizon of understanding displays a temporal structure, it is in constant change and flux and a “genesis” with no conceivable end. There is no one correct way in which human beings “must” view the mona lisa, yet my understanding in the year 2005 is inconceivable without a history of previous understandings that guide mine at this point in time. Thus, there is no way to eidetically prefigure the further experiences I, or mankind as a whole, will have of this work of art. All I can say is that, due to perhaps known, perhaps unknown prejudices of my understanding, this individual picture drew me in, whereas others in the same room did not. *Explicating* what it means to be in a situation transforms it into a *hermeneutical situation*.

The nature of a hermeneutical situation is such that the horizon in which I stand here

and now has a “tail,” as Gadamer alludes to Husserl’s image of the tail of a comet as the way past experience is “retained” in our lived-present.⁴⁹ Experience is not only surrounded by a pre-thematic historical horizon as a background for concrete experience; the background also determines the way in which I conceive of myself in the present *and from there*, the past. In other words, my own horizon becomes explicit when confronted with another. For example, in the experience of something like a historical text such as a novel, I first of all explicitly *acquire* a horizon of understanding when I recognize the *difference* in the hermeneutical horizon of the novel and that of my own understanding. What Gadamer says about the understanding of historical documents, however, applies universally. In all experience, I cannot reflect my way out of the historical setting that I have been born into; and I cannot just “leap” into another historical setting, either. For, this would presuppose that I was an essentially a-historical subject that just happened to be in a situation by chance. As a finite being, I am “traditioned,” and this means essentially *historical*. History has and at all times continues to exert its effect on me. History is a history of effects that at all times factors into my current understanding. Hence Gadamer’s key hermeneutical concept of *effective history* (*Wirkungsgeschichte*).

Effective history is more than a mere descriptive category; it comes with philosophical claims: experience is about understanding, and understanding is a never-ending historical process effected by history itself, a constant modification with no possible *telos* or *perfection*. Nobody can ever “exhaust” one’s understanding of the world, and humans never will as long as they exist. Understanding is a universal trait of human beings living in a historical world; this understanding is engrossed in a horizon of consciousness of the past that has an unceasing effect on us. The life-world is a historical world in that the horizons of our experience are horizons of understanding that govern our everyday life. The decisive difference that marks Gadamer’s development from Husserl is that this is not an *eidetic* analysis that presupposes the transcendental reduction. Instead, it describes the structure of what happens to us always already in our daily lives and what governs our understanding as essentially historical beings, not as transcendental subjects. As historical beings, we are part of a collective consciousness that we call tradition. consciousness that “happens” in history is a historically-effective consciousness that we are part of as figures in a tradition, as “catchers of a ball” that has been “thrown toward us” from the world itself (“an eternal partner”) within a game we are by necessity part of—alluding to Rilke’s poem that stands as a motto of *Truth and Method*.⁵⁰ history is the way the *world gives itself*, but this world is nothing but the correlate of subjects living *in* this world by projecting meaning onto it. Gadamer has brought Husserl’s transcendental theory

down to the level of the concrete, historical life-world.

Thus, Gadamer is not claiming to give us a radically new theory; instead, he merely explicates what always already governs our life-worldly existence; namely, prejudices that form our horizon. We are to gain an appreciation for the fact that our life is essentially historically prejudiced and that this is nothing bad in itself but part of our “ontological destiny.” In this sense, Gadamer’s hermeneutics lacks Heidegger’s radicality in wanting to overthrow the tradition and is in truth closer to Husserl’s method of a sound description of the life-world as an essentially historical horizon. It is about making explicit what is commonly implicitly valid in our conscious activity. In this formal sense, Gadamer is following Husserl’s intentions, with the difference that this account is not rigorous, i.e., eidetic, and it does not involve a world-constituting transcendental subjectivity; instead it is about concrete, factual human beings and their achievements in all activities that we consider specifically human, i.e., culture.

Now let us see how Gadamer makes headway with respect to this description of the life-world. Indeed, Gadamer overcomes a problem in Husserl’s method that Husserl never answered satisfactorily. Husserl’s transcendental turn is informed by the methodological consideration that in my normal life I am not aware of my subjective activities as constitutive of world. Hence I must make these implicit activities explicit, and the question is how this is possible. Gadamer raises the same question, but rephrases it in the following way: how it is possible in the first place to make implicit *prejudices* explicit. What motivates this? If it is the case that our ordinary life is governed by prejudices that we do not acknowledge, nor even understand as prejudices, how, then, can it be possible to make these explicit? In Husserl’s terms: how is it possible to leave the natural attitude? Husserl’s answer to this problem is that we must practice an *epoché*, a “bracketing” of this natural attitude in order to disengage ourselves from it to bring it into view. In a similar sense, Gadamer, too, suggests a *suspension* of the prejudices as prejudices in order to make their implicit character explicit.⁵¹ But this is just mentioned as an aside in Gadamer’s account of prejudices and plays no central role in his theory, yet it does for Husserl, where this bracketing is entirely a reflective activity. It is a matter of reflection, i.e., an activity of a thinking subject that deliberately reflects back upon itself. The transcendental reduction is but a radicalization of this reflection and is carried out in order to establish a sphere of immanence, in which I reflect upon my intentional acts in their world-constituting activity. Yet, this still does not answer the question as to how this is possible in the first place, what motivates this first move in which I realize that I have to bracket my ordinary way of life? And why should I do this at all? To Gadamer, this is an artificial problem arising from

Husserl's quest for an ultimate foundation. Instead of asking, "How is it possible to disengage myself from my normal way of life and access a radically different standpoint from where I can view the constitution of the world through transcendental acts?" Gadamer asks the analogous question, "how can I become aware of prejudices as prejudices?" Gadamer saw this analogy clearly and gives an elegant answer to this question in the context of his discussion of prejudices.⁵²

Indeed, our own horizon becoming explicit is something that occurs at all times, and it comes about through the confrontation with *another* horizon, for instance through the study of humanistic achievements of past writings.⁵³ Especially in his interpretations of poetry, Gadamer gives numerous examples of how the confrontation with the hermeneutical situation of a certain poet not only shows us that poet's horizon of understanding, but in so doing *challenges* our *own* horizon.⁵⁴ The actual work of interpretation that we perform in trying to understand a certain historical text is *not* to interpret it according to the horizon of understanding of the *author* and *her* time. Interpretation does not mean a "leap into" her horizon as if both horizons were two separate, closed-off circles. This was the method of historicism that Gadamer criticizes, i.e., the idea that one can recreate the author's hermeneutical situation as a necessary precondition for understanding the meaning of a certain work of art. Such a recreation is possible, but does not get us to the heart of the poem's meaning. Rather, in interpreting a text and realizing its timely relevance in 2008, I make it understandable *for myself*. Only then can it speak to me meaningfully and is not just a remnant of the past that should be studied for sheer reverence to a "grand tradition." The *explication* of the poem's meaning is at the same time an *application* to my own situation. Only in this way can I understand this text not as a dated, historical piece but as something that still *speaks* to me. If the poem has become "merely historical" it has lost the power to speak to me, i.e., to effect me in my current understanding. If the text, however, does speak to me, it is, to Gadamer, *classical* and this means, it is also standard-setting for other texts. To say that Shakespeare's plays are standard-setting, however, does not mean that we today should write like Shakespeare did. When we call him a classic we mean that he had the fascinating ability to be creative in a way that his writings have to this day not become historical in the sense of being dated. Thus, this application of the historical text to my current situation is in fact a *fusion of horizons*. In order for the text to truly "speak" to me requires that the gap between both horizons has been bridged. This does not happen automatically when understanding occurs—an event that can always fail. Yet it can only be successful if that with which I fuse my own horizon has been wrested from the historicizing tendency that is rampant in

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philological research. Interpretation of past material has to be in this sense “existential.”

This is the “philological” background of Gadamer’s hermeneutics, which was originally a doctrine of interpretation with respect to juridical and religious texts. “Fusion of horizons” is Gadamer’s response to historicism in philology and philosophical historiography. The history of philosophy must not be written as a mere history of problems but as history of effects that form our current horizon. Such a fusion, however, applies universally, and this is what Gadamer’s attempt at *philosophical* hermeneutics is all about. Understanding, conceived universally, is not merely understanding a certain *item*, but also its horizon. Understanding is nothing but a fusion of horizons that is always already taking place. Understanding is in all cases a fusion of horizons. Application of the text to my own situation, if correctly carried out, is not a violent appropriation in the sense of exploiting the text for my own purposes. Rather, all effective explication of another horizon is already an application *to* my own—otherwise it would not make sense for me—and at the same time an explication *of* my horizon that was otherwise unthematic to myself. Without a fusion of horizons, the text would remain forever alien to me, on the one hand. on the other, I could not even get to know my *own* horizon *as* horizon. But this fusion is not the result of a reflective act, but something that happens *always already*.

To return to the Husserlian question, how is it possible to become aware of my situation *as* situated, i.e., of my prejudices *as* prejudices? The answer is: my prejudices are *always already* being challenged by other prejudices, not only by texts, but also by others. Prejudices always already confront one another and not only when I visit, e.g., a foreign culture and experience a fundamental unfamiliarity, which is an extreme limit-case. Confrontation happens all the time. This does not mean that both “sets” of prejudices cancel each other out. Rather, only in this way do they clearly come to the fore and, ideally, complement each other. This is what understanding is all about. The fusion of horizons is not a synthesis of different orders of prejudices into one “pool” of indifference or a higher synthesis. Understanding is comprehending the otherness of the other; an otherness that both challenges, questions, confirms and expands *my own* horizon and, thereby, firstly *constitutes* it. This applies to the experience with other persons, societies and cultures. In order for fusions to come about, it requires an interest and a close attention to the other as other, i.e., to not “pull” her “into” my horizon but to accept her otherness and yet understand *why* she is different from myself. Thus, becoming aware of my prejudices does not automatically mean doing away with them—unless, of course, they turn out to be unfounded or unfair or in any other way “negative.” I can realize that someone else will always remain alien to me and that means, conversely, that I might have prejudices that I *see*

as prejudices but will never be able to fully give up, contrary to my better judgment.

The question hence, how it is possible to become aware of my prejudices, turns out being an artificial problem. Gadamer's point is that it is more appropriate to turn the whole problem around by saying, to the contrary, that it requires a deliberate ignoring or narrow-mindedness *not* to recognize that my way of viewing the world is always surrounded by competing other world views. Anyone who shows but the slightest interest in the other is already willing to put one's own prejudices on the line and be prepared to be proven otherwise. Only unenlightened people consider their own opinions to be set in stone. Hermeneutics, as Gadamer emphasizes, is about listening to the other, and this listening presupposes the willingness to grant the other that she might be right, no matter how I may disagree initially. This principal readiness to reconsider my own position points to the moral dimension of Gadamer's thought especially emphasized in his latest phase. The life-world as a moral playground is not a sphere of purely rational principles but of intersubjective relations guided by *phronesis*.⁵⁵ In this sense, Gadamer, while aligning himself with the enlightenment and Kant's critique, has also pointed to the importance of the completion of Kant's critical business through the critique of judgment.⁵⁶

Thus, the different horizons of understanding that we encounter are not self-enclosed spheres, as Husserl thought when he stressed that we need special methodological tools in order to switch from one attitude to another. The way he saw it, without such breaks through reflection the horizons are like endlessly expandable "bubbles." There is no limit to what I can view from the standpoint of a certain horizon. While this is descriptively true, it disregards the evident fact that we switch between horizons all the time, and this happens mostly without our own willing. Husserl never really considered possible this switch from one attitude to another other than through an unmotivated leap. In Husserl's scenario there can be no fusion; rather, there would occur a violent clash of horizons. Gadamer's idea of a fusion of horizons is a deliberate answer to this problem. When two horizons meet, a fusion occurs, but not in the sense of creating a new higher "synthesis," but in resituating the agents' standpoints.⁵⁷ The fusion means, on the lowest level possible, recognizing the other standpoint *as* another standpoint that I *can* potentially understand, even if I may not be *willing* to do this. But *recognizing* the difference of the other horizon is already a fusion of sorts. Yet even a "full" fusion does not mean that I become "dissolved" in it.⁵⁸ I can conceivably do away with my own horizon willingly but this is subordination under the dominance of another horizon, e.g., in a wholesale takeover of another's standpoint—something that politicians will know well who run

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on a common platform of their party. a fusion of horizons does not mean abandoning one's own standpoint but finding one's place in the world *vis-à-vis* the multitude of possible horizons. The world in its plurality presents always already a fusion of these pluralities into a complex world-view—not as a grand synthesis but as a horizon that is essentially plural. The question is not, 'how can I get from the plurality of horizons to the life-world as the horizon of all horizons?'; rather, the life-world is already "constituted" as a sphere of plurality of which a single, subjective standpoint is but an abstraction. Thus, Gadamer merely turns Husserl's paradigm on its head, without abandoning it altogether. This is a way of seeing the image of the subject as a "flickering light" in a new light, as the demand to assert ourselves in the wake of available standpoints in the world. Maybe it can even become an ideal to remain a flickering light that blows into different directions in considering different viewpoints, instead of lighting a torch that will not budge in any direction or, worse, igniting a bonfire that draws flies to the light.

Finally, it is a logical consequence that Gadamer's sketch of a philosophical hermeneutics in *Truth and Method* culminates with the turn to language and to the "logic of question and answer."⁵⁹ What is presented as a return to platonic dialectics is equally a modification of Husserl's theory of intentionality with the structure of intention and fulfillment. From the standpoint of hermeneutics, however, there is no such thing as an isolated intention. As Gadamer would agree, every intention comes forth from an attitude or a horizon, which is a horizon of pre-understanding. That which is intended finds its fulfillment from within this horizon of understanding. That is, every act is already an explicit articulation of a prejudice, e.g., as a judgment that comes from a pre-thematic sphere of pre-judgments. This means, however, that it can only become explicit when *questioned*. Thus, every intention must be understood as answering to a question posed beforehand from someone else and in turn as posing a new question. Every fulfillment of my intention is an *answer* to a question that comes forth from the unthematic horizon of my pre-understanding. In this sense, every intention is *already* an answer to a question that has already been posed. Every intention is, in truth, merely a moment within a dialogical relation with others and is already an answer to their questions, and this answer in turn poses a question to the partner(s) of a dialogue. Intentionality, thus, is not a structure of a solipsistically conceived consciousness but articulates the logic that underlies communicative interaction that, in turn, is guided by language. "*Being that can be understood is language.*"⁶⁰

Thus, to summarize the exegetical sections of this paper. Husserl's phenomenology offers a rich account of the life-world in the plurality of its meaningful horizons that correspond to a plurality of possible subjective interactions with, and compartments toward (through the

concept of “attitudes”), this life-world. The turn to the “genetic” phenomenological method opens the view to the life-world as an essentially “historical” phenomenon. Yet, Husserl only thematizes *transcendental genesis* as a history of intentionality, not factual history *itself* due to his transcendental commitment that is focused entirely on the “internal” genesis of intentionality as subjective “contributions” to the world, rather than on the history of the world itself as a world formed by human consciousness. Husserl’s genetic phenomenology cannot account for history itself. Gadamer applies the concept of genesis to the dimension of factual *history* and thereby *historicizes* Husserl’s concept of genesis, i.e., he applies genesis to history itself as a tradition that has formed our current horizon as a situation of prejudices. He thereby frees Husserl’s account of the life-world from his transcendental and eidetic bedrock. This is an important *transformation* of Husserl’s original theory as it allows for an account of the life-world in its *historical concretion*. In this recasting Gadamer accomplishes significant *advances* over Husserl’s conception of the life-world and *overcomes* problems in Husserl, such as the never clarified possibility of shifting back and forth between different horizons. At the same time, Gadamer *expands* Husserl’s account of experience as taking place within a horizon of acts by adding prejudices as necessary elements for understanding. Lastly, Gadamer’s concept of the *fusion of horizons* reveals Husserl’s question as to how one can become aware of one’s prejudices *as* prejudices as an artificial problem. It is a fiction to believe that we must take our starting point from one’s singular horizon and see how one can gain access to another horizon. Instead, our own horizon only *forms* itself in the first place through a constant interaction and fusion with other horizons. The life-world is inherently a *communicative* structure.

The result so far is that Gadamer, though he departed from Husserl’s transcendental-eidetic paradigm, fruitfully expands on Husserl’s phenomenology of the life-world stemming from the theory of intentionality expanded toward a notion of horizon. Giving up on the transcendental-eidetic paradigm means, at the same time, that Gadamer believes that he is not following Husserl’s foundationalism. He seemingly departs from Husserl’s Cartesianism because, to Gadamer, there is no ultimate transcendental consciousness that constitutes history. This sketch presented here, however, also intended to question this image of Husserl’s genetic phenomenology as being still “Cartesian.” Insofar as Husserl conceives of transcendental subjectivity as *intersubjectivity*, and the life-world as a product of an *intersubjective* constitution, the label “Cartesianism” is not applicable. It is thus not necessary to identify foundationalism with Cartesianism. While one cannot deny the problems with Husserl’s transcendental account, the anti-foundationalist critique targets “the wrong guy.” So far I was

able to carry out this discussion entirely without reverting to the Heideggerian element that helped shape Gadamer's account of effective history. In the last part, I will first show how Gadamer's theory of effective history ultimately does take up anti-subjectivist elements and conclude by pointing out why I think this is a fatal mistake and that it is better to insist on the subjective character of effective history.

IV. Why Effective History Needs to Be Construed as Subjective

In order to criticize Gadamer's concept of effective history, we need to distinguish the non-foundationalist reading from the one just given. For this purpose, let us review some of the critiques that Gadamer has faced in the history of his hermeneutics's reception. In the wake of the critique of ideology in the 1960s (especially through Apel and Habermas), Gadamer was charged with an over-emphasis and an "apotheosis" (Apel's phrase) of tradition. Accordingly, tradition in Gadamer can be read as an encompassing, overarching structure that one cannot escape and that leads to a fatalism over against the blind forces of history, very much in the sense of Heidegger's fate of being (*Seinsgeschick*) that humans can merely respond to but have no power to alter.⁶¹ a refusal to rationally legitimate the meaning that "reveals" itself in history amounts to a "capitulation of reason" (Apel).⁶² According to this reading, Gadamer went *too far* in his critique of enlightenment and ends up, in effect, in an anti-enlightenment (or pre- or post-enlightenment) stance. Gadamer moreover supported this reading by insisting that the effective-historical consciousness is "more being than conscious-being (more *Sein* than *Bewusstsein*)"⁶³—a modification that Gadamer felt necessary to counter Heidegger's critique that *Truth and Method* remained bound to a traditional concept of consciousness that Heidegger himself had long left behind. It is fate to which one is given over rather than something over which we as rational subjects have any control. The difference to Heidegger is that this fate is, in Gadamer, history and the tradition itself, not being with a capital 'b.'

Thus, how does Gadamer characterize this effective history proper? So far Gadamer's account has mapped tightly onto that of Husserl with the necessary modifications discussed. Another element now enters as Gadamer actually describes the way in which the fusion of horizons occurs with respect to the past. While Gadamer would acknowledge that history and tradition are things that pertain to human beings, he does not think it is something that these subjects can control and actively shape or form. It is something that we as people of the present have no control over in the way this tradition has effected our current understanding. Rather, it is the "essence" of history itself that shapes the way we understand ourselves. This history

effects us in its own manner and according to its own, impenetrable logic and is in this sense effective historical consciousness that is more being than conscious-being; it is *facticity* rather than reflection. What Gadamer battles with this concept is the ideal of reflective philosophy (*Reflexionsphilosophie*) as the philosophical belief that one could reflect one's way out of history to reach an ideal standpoint to reconstruct a teleological history of self-consciousness or from which one would be able to establish timeless, eidetic truths about humanity. This was his critique of Hegel and, in the same vein, also Husserl. But this critique also entails a critique of the idea that the understanding of ourselves *in the here and now* is a matter of reflection rather than an unthematic understanding of ourselves as having been shaped by our prejudices. Understanding is, to say it paradoxically, something that *achieves us*, rather than something that *we consciously achieve*.

In this sense, Gadamer explicitly invokes Husserl's concept of horizon to account for this situation, with a special emphasis that the horizon specifically refers to man's *finitude*.⁶⁴ Finitude has a lineage going back to Heidegger and Nietzsche that departs from Husserl. To be finite means that we cannot reflect our way out of horizons. However, the character of horizon is its essential openness. Specifically, our current horizon of understanding is open toward the past. Our horizon is always already historical in the sense of having been formed by the past. Thus, our current horizon "embraces all that which historical consciousness includes."⁶⁵ This historical consciousness that forms our current understanding is, however, nothing that we constitute; rather, it constitutes *us* as it forms the structure of our prejudiced horizon. The past and its tradition "obtain" and remain valid through tradition's being given in the way it hands itself down to us. This is why Gadamer likes to employ the impersonal term "*Überlieferung*" ("*being-handed-down*") as something that hands *itself down* to us and *creates* our understanding as a fusion between past and present. Even if we attempt to accomplish such an understanding of the past—and hence our present—*actively*, consciously, it can at best be described as "wakefulness of historical-effective consciousness"⁶⁶ itself. Tradition is something that obtains with its own force of authority "without reasoning."⁶⁷ In this sense, understanding is not something that we can accomplish; rather, it *happens in us*. Understanding is acknowledging the effective history that we find ourselves in when we realize that our current horizon of understanding is only what it is when it is open to the past. However, as we have seen, this past is itself an anonymous force that effects us without being able to say why—this is what our finitude is about. Thus, "*understanding is not to be conceived as so much like an activity of*

subjectivity but as moving into [Einrücken⁶⁸] an event of Überlieferung in which present and past are constantly mediated.”⁶⁹ It is in this context that we find the already quoted sentence that the subject is but a “flickering light”⁷⁰ in the closed circuits of historical life.

Gadamer does not say who it is that effects us, and deliberately so. For giving account of this “who” would again consider it as a subject that “does” something consciously—something he wants to overcome. History is a “closed circuit” and impenetrable by any kind of reflection on the part of a subject. It is not any reflection at all in the sense of rational thought. It is at the most a meditation upon the prejudices that we have been endowed with through our tradition. We cannot, Gadamer maintains, say why we have been given these rather than other prejudices. This is why “the classical” is Gadamer’s prime example of how effective history functions. The classical is something that prevails through history as something that speaks to us, no matter how much time has passed. A fusion is always possible. yet, what accounts for the fact that some items of our history speak more strongly than others, why Sophocles and not Kallimachos, why Shakespeare and not Marlowe, why Goethe and not Stifter? Gadamer’s point is precisely: we do not and we cannot know. We cannot give reasons why this is the case: history in its anonymous functioning simply phases out one thing in favor of something else and can be quite relentless at that. We simply cannot give *reasons* as to why one item prevails while another perishes and is lost forever to our historical consciousness. To establish “classics” is history’s way of “acting.” The dominance and prevailing of the classical can be seen by the fact that we cannot fight it but only accept it. “We call classical what prevails in the face of historical critique because its historical dominance, the binding power of its handed-down and conserving validity, lies already before all historical reflection and prevails within it.”⁷¹ History, in establishing classical traditions, exerts a normative⁷² effect on us, placing norms on us as to how we should think and act and how we must listen to history, for not listening to history would deliberately cut ourselves off from that which has made, and continues to make, our current understanding possible. Thus, effective history is entirely a-subjective if we mean by subjective something rational, understandable, scrutinizable and something that can be critiqued from (another) subjective standpoint. In this sense, Gadamer has attempted to move away from foundationalism. The force of history cannot be described in any way as subjective. History can at best be conceived as a force that comes over us and in the light of which we can be grateful to keep the flame of our self-consciousness burning. This is the sense in which Gadamer considers his hermeneutics as anti-foundational and anti-subjectivistic.

I begin my critique with questioning Gadamer's assumption as to the normative force of the classical. Is it really true that we cannot know why something is classical whereas everything else literally goes down in history, rather than *going down as historical*? Is historical research, say literary criticism armed with the methods of history, psychoanalysis, sociology etc., really not in the position to say why we consider Goethe a classic rather than a more minor figure at the same time such as an epigone? I would question this alleged impossibility and insist, rather, that one can—if not entirely, then at least to a very large extent and ideally in totality—reconstruct why Goethe became such a classic. The reasons would be, e.g., that he was able to accomplish a combination of random factors such as the following. For instance, he tackled themes that were prevalent in his society not only in Germany but larger Europe, i.e., he had a special way of addressing what people were especially concerned with in his time. Furthermore, he wrote in a way that appealed to the masses due to his outstanding linguistic talent. Also, the society he lived in was especially susceptible to the type of art that he turned out; in this case, in a nation that had come to a high linguistic level and appreciation due to historical, cultural and political circumstances. Moreover, due to these factors that made him famous already in his life time, he became a classic already before his death, raising him to a classic already before the “time gap” that Gadamer deems necessary for a classic. And he remains a classic because after all the society in Germany and the societies in the Western world have not changed as significantly so as to make him obsolete.

However, the Western world has changed in a way that certain topics simply do not speak to us Westerners any more, such as the much-talked about topic of *mésalliance* that only had an appeal before the possibility of divorce. However, this topic might speak to other cultures where this still presents an issue. Thus, in this sense it is entirely possible that what we consider classic—and that Western civilization has considered classic for over two thousand years—ceases to be considered classic. There is no reason to believe that the classic will last forever or even as long as there is an established “tradition” (modern Europe, “the West,” etc.). An element of historical consciousness is historical forgetfulness as its necessary downside. The reasons why something would cease to be classical can again be elucidated through historical, sociological etc. research—e.g., the advance of feminism and gender-equality in Western nations that render many variations on Goethe's presentations of gender relationships obsolete. Thus, it is true neither (a) that the classic has a normative effect for all times once established as classic; nor (b) that we cannot give reasons—historical, sociological, philosophical, psychological—for why something would *become* classic in the first place as opposed to

something ephemeral.

These reasons that I have recounted for why one author or text became a classic are, however, nothing but an account for activities of *subjects* that did certain things in the past. These subjects did not merely answer to a tradition that came over them as a blind force, but history is a history of human subjects who do certain things, are engaged in certain projects and effect each other, all for certain reasons. History and the way it shapes a tradition as the backdrop of our understanding is at all times a history of subjective acts. This does not mean that subjects have to be at all times aware of their deeds and thoughts and sentiments. The prejudices that I harbor might be unknown to me in my normal everyday life and deeply rooted, but I can make them explicit when I reflect upon them or at the very least I can be made aware of them when stumped upon them by another person. But, more importantly, prejudices (*Vor-Urteile*) were at one point someone else's active judgments (*Urteile*). As anonymous and implicit and hidden as they might be, they were at one point in time someone else's active and conscious judgments. These judgments needn't be rational and reasonable or moral; they can be borne out of hatred, disregard, disinterest, malinformedness, but they are judgments made by subjects like us out of certain motives that can always be reconstructed. This is essentially the notion of "passivity" in Husserl's idea of a genetic-reconstructive phenomenology: subjectivity is not the same as rationality, and rationality—in the sense of conscious thought and judgment—can be traced all the way down to pre-philosophical, pre-rational, pre-predicative *experience*.

Let us take the controversial issue of racism: the (to our enlightened mind) bad prejudices involved in discriminating against other human beings do not come out of nowhere and for no reason—admittedly no *good* reason, but reasons nevertheless. racism as the perceived inferiority of a people due to certain racial traits stems from judgments that a given group of subjects made with respect to others based on their own prejudices, which were once someone else's judgments etc. They are judgments and subjective all the way down to experience, in this case, the experience of someone else's physical otherness. Indeed, only this recognition is the full enactment of enlightenment, for only when this has been realized can one counter something like racism, *not* as some "weird belief" that certain people had at certain times that we can no longer understand, but as beliefs they held for certain reasons, even if, or especially because, these reasons are faulty, mistaken, misinformed or malicious. "Empathy" into others is always possible, even if we from our standpoint deem these others as "incredible" and rightfully outrageous. Only this realization makes injustice and bad presuppositions

understandable and not as beliefs that some people held whom we now consider monsters (e.g., slave owners). They might have been monsters, but *human* monsters that *therefore* can be understood. The remedy to avoid future monstrous behavior in the future history of humankind can only be a reconstruction of how these presuppositions came about in the first place, and not as a happening that just occurred and in the face of which one can merely throw up one's arms in the attitude of *je ne sais quoi* or even angry or saddened disbelief or resignation. It would be cynical with respect to victims of past atrocities to simply say "it just happened." One must at all times attempt to reconstruct the subjective viewpoints that informed people's actions. Only this is enlightenment: to bring light to dark, murky regions of the human soul that make atrocities possible.

This is why effective history if it is proposed as so fundamentally a-subjective winds up as a fatalism and irrationalism with respect to the events in history, and it potentially exculpates mankind from its actions and responsibilities and the necessity to explore the reasons that made subjects do what they did. This is the only appropriation adequate with respect to the past: to reconstruct the reasons and motives for certain events in history, in order to understand what made them come about to counter fatal developments at the moment of their inception. Gadamer's account of effective history renders this impossible. Effective-historical consciousness takes on the role of the *über*-subject in history. It may be conceived as anonymous but it acts as an agent nevertheless. In this sense, Gadamer remains a foundationalist, albeit not in the epistemological sense of Husserl, but perhaps in a more dangerous "fundamentalism." divorcing history from subjectivity is dangerous as it opens the door to irrationalism and fatalism just outlined. History and its logic would take on the role of a subject that acts "somehow," that is to say, in a way that we cannot comprehend. In this sense, Gadamer's account differs in no way from that of Heidegger (without Heidegger's mystical-eschatological elements). Such a scenario must be resisted at all costs. Contrary to Gadamer's own assertions, he parts with the tradition of enlightenment the moment he takes the step toward effective history. Gadamer believed to be a part of the "completed enlightenment" because he made a case for why prejudices cannot be overcome—we will always have them just as all of our acts will always presuppose a horizon. This cannot be doubted. But enlightenment is only complete when one realizes that prejudices need to be scrutinized by common sense at all times. acknowledging *having* prejudices is one thing, *accepting* them as something that cannot change is another.

In conclusion, one has to insist that this effective-historical consciousness is decidedly a

consciousness. As Husserl emphasized, the genesis of meaning is a genesis of rationally acting human *subjects*.⁷³ It is not an anonymous history of being but a history of human *agents* that always interact in the way of mutual discussion, disagreement, agreement, and new disagreement, with mutual checks and balances and reciprocal critique. History certainly does not always progress rationally, but it is at all times a history of human *consciousness*. In order to claim this, one does not have to endorse a Hegelian or Husserlian teleological view of humanity. Regardless whether we are headed toward a higher humanity, it does not change the fact that this history is a history of human consciousness that is a history of human *inter*-subjectivity in endless conversation questioning mutually held prejudices. This does not bar factual history from going awry, but it would indeed be a “capitulation of reason” to attribute fatal developments to a tradition that “comes upon us” as a dark, anonymous force. It does not mean that we are at all times in control of our destiny, but to take this possibility away from us would amount to an utter fatalism that is unacceptable in view of the catastrophes of the twentieth and the beginning twenty-first century. We are morally called upon to reconstruct where, and especially why, human reason went astray in order to counter any new dangerous developments from the outset. Gadamer’s emphasis on an anonymous effective history in truth runs counter to the moral dimension of his philosophical hermeneutics, according to which any moral reflection starts, and ends, with dialogue between equal partners in the life-world, governed by common sense, the Greek ideal of *phronesis* that Gadamer himself invokes. *Phronesis* as the common sense displayed in the natural attitude leads us back to the pre-philosophical life-world and its internal “logic,” a sphere that was opened up in its universal dimensions in Husserl’s phenomenology and further explored by Gadamer. This “ethos” of the life-world calls on us to continue the conversation of humankind in ever-expanding “fusions of horizons.”⁷⁴

Notes

1. This quotation is taken from Gadamer’s text of 1985, “Zwischen phänomenologie und dialektik. Versuch einer Selbstkritik” (“between phenomenology and dialectics. an attempt at a Self-critique”), in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2, *Hermeneutik II* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986), pp. 3–23, here p. 16. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are the author’s.
2. It is not necessary to engage with the proponents of the standard interpretation because the standard interpretation simply ignores the Husserlian influence. Since Husserl is passed over in silence, the reasons for why it is alright to overlook him are rarely argued for; Husserl is for the most part treated by omission, so it is hard to engage with someone

who simply ignores the claim I am trying to make (rather than refute it). It is usually taken as evident that the main tenets that essentially make up Husserl's phenomenology—e.g., subjectivism, transcendentalism and foundationalism—are simply not shared by Gadamer. This is true in a superficial way; but it is not true (a) that these -isms are all there is to Husserl and (b) it does not justify ignoring other aspects in Gadamer's hermeneutics that *are* genuinely Husserlian—for instance, the concept of horizon—which do not necessarily belong to other problematic issues, e.g., foundationalism. The standard interpretation is thus guilty of an illegitimate reductionism with regard to their image of Husserl; not to mention that one can also argue that it is a travesty of Husserl's main intentions to tag them with these -isms. For instance, is Husserl a foundationalist? Yes, but not in the sense of a vulgar foundationalism (Cartesianism). The ultimate foundation of meaning in the mature Husserl is the life-world (to be sure, as the correlate of transcendental constituting intersubjectivity). The question "Is Husserl a foundationalist?" cannot be dealt with in this context, as it would mean first discussing the origins of this idea in modern philosophy and how it has influenced Husserl through the interface of Neo-Kantianism. This discussion lies beyond the scope of this paper.

3. Despite the fact that I see no need to directly confront the proponents of the standard interpretation (see the above note), there are a number of volumes on Gadamer that all appeared around 2000, i.e., his one-hundredth birthday, from which I have drawn and will quote from in this essay. These volumes are: *Gadamer's Century. Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. J. Malpas, U. Arnsward, and J. Kertscher (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002); *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Library of Living Philosophers, vol. 24), ed. I. E. Hahn (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1997), with especially valuable comments on the essays by Gadamer himself); *Gadamer's Repercussions: Reconsidering Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. B. Krajewski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. R. J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and *Gadamer Verstehen/Understanding Gadamer*, ed. M. Wischke and Hofer (Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft, 2003). These voluminous collections of essays give a good overview and representation of the current status of international Gadamer scholarship.

4. This anti-foundationalist tendency in modern philosophy can be traced back to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in the nineteenth century and has been shared in twentieth-century thought by many phenomenologists, existentialists and in a different variant by the

Frankfurt School. Since I am drawing in broad strokes here, it is not necessary to go into detail in these critiques of the enlightenment.

5. As much as one can criticize Gadamer for falling back into foundationalism, I should like to note that I believe this is *not* something that one could charge Heidegger with. While Gadamer falls back into foundationalism because he shies away from the radical consequences of Heidegger's late philosophy, Heidegger indeed no longer is committed to any such figures of thought that he criticizes as being part of Western metaphysics. However, this self-declared departure from Western metaphysics also means that Heidegger willingly and consciously departs from any type of reasonable discourse from where one could *argue* with him. Heidegger is no longer foundationalist because he is beyond *arguing*.

6. Cf. *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10, *Hermeneutik im Rückblick* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), p. 64, where Gadamer speaks of "the limit of all opacity that constantly retrieves. As a philosopher, Schelling described this limit with the cognate 'the unforethinkable' ['das unvordenkliche']."

7. Gadamer's coinage *Wirkungsgeschichte*—presumably derived in analogy from similar terms such as *Problemgeschichte*, *Rezeptionsgeschichte* or *Begriffsgeschichte*—is translated here throughout as "effective history," following the standard translation. As Gadamer himself points out, effective history is also meant as a counterpoint to the neo-Kantian paradigm of writing the history of philosophy as *Problemgeschichte*, i.e., as a history of problems that philosophers tackled with throughout history in an ongoing discussion engendering a progress in furthering the issue. Examples of such *problemgeschichtliche* accounts can be found in Windelband's, Kuno Fischer's, and Cassirer's histories of philosophy. cf. also Husserl's term "*kritische Ideengeschichte*" ("*critical history of ideas*") as label for his own historical accounts of the history of philosophy, cf. *Husserliana* VII (volumes of the Husserl edition, the *Husserliana* [Dordrecht: Springer] will be quoted as "hua." with the corresponding volume number in roman numerals). This type of account is also clearly influenced by the neo-Kantians. What characterizes this approach—and this is, presumably, what Heidegger and Gadamer found most objectionable—is its decidedly *teleological* bent, i.e., guided by the presupposition that one could reconstruct the history of philosophy retrospectively *post factum*, i.e., backward from an existing status quo. Although most neo-Kantians shared their dislike of Hegel, there is indeed a lingering Hegelianism in this type of reconstruction. It would be a worthy enterprise to reconstruct Gadamer's effective history as

critical rejection of *Problemggeschichte*. This issue lies, again, beyond the scope of this paper.

8. Foundationalism is, again, the standard translation for the term *Letztbegründung* as a term for a philosophical quest to find a *fundamentum incocussum* of knowledge in the knowing subject, a quest that was historically inaugurated by Descartes and further developed by Reinhold, Fichte and Schelling and reaching a peak around 1880–1920 as a program proposed most vigorously by the neo-Kantians and also Husserl. It has just recently been established by Berndt Goossens, the editor of *Hua*. 35 (containing Husserl's *London Lectures* of 1922 and his lecture course of 1922/1923 entitled "Introduction to philosophy"), that this term was actually coined by Husserl as early as 1922 in the adjective form "*letztbegründend*" (cf. *Hua*. XXXV, pp. 27–28). To be sure, while Husserl may have coined the term, he was referring to an already firmly established tradition in modern transcendental philosophy that he wished to express his commitment to. As C.-F. Gethmann writes in his entry "Letztbegründung" in the *Historische Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 5 (Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft, 1980), this term has not been used as a label for this type of attempt until "the last decades" (p. 251), i.e., presumably as of the 1960s.

When talking about *Letztbegründung* in these contexts, it is usually identified as the overarching project of transcendental philosophy around 1900 and essentially as a dated project. Cf., however, the influential book that appeared in Germany in 1957, Wolfgang Cramer's *Grundlegung einer Theorie des Geistes*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt/M.: Klostermann, 1975). W. Cramer, sometimes also referred to as "neo-neo-Kantian," sees his project as again attempting a new theory of *Letztbegründung* in this work. Before him, after the "high time" of neo-Kantianism had faded at the latest by 1933 in Germany, the lineage of this tradition was upheld by Richard Höningwald, incidentally Gadamer's first teacher in Breslau before Gadamer's move to Marburg. Höningwald later received a call to the University of Munich, where he was removed from his position in 1933 due to a devastating "expert opinion" of Heidegger, then the president of the University of Freiburg. On Höningwald's and Cramer's projects of *Letztebegründung*, cf. r. Wiehl, "Denkpsychologie und Denkontologie. Richard Höningwalds und Wolfgang Cramers Philosophien der Subjektivität," in *Subjektivität und System* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2000), pp. 293–319.

9. M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. R. Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 193. Heidegger makes this statement in the famous debate with Cassirer in Davos in 1929. As we now know, Husserl's "falling into the clutches"

of the neo-Kantians was more than just temporary and was only exacerbated in his mature period as of 1922 onward.

10. In terms of the development of German philosophy in the first two decades of the twentieth century, this article was quite an event and in fact a “coup” for the neo-Kantians. Husserl had emerged as a major figure on the scene with the publication of the *Logical Investigations* and had become a professor in Göttingen in 1906. However, his early phenomenology had a clear anti-idealist and anti-transcendental bent. Natorp early on tried to downplay the difference between phenomenology and “criticism” (as the neo-Kantians called their tendency) and famously said about vol. I of the *Investigations*, the *Prolegomena*, that the neo-Kantians had “little to learn” from it. Husserl “discovered” the phenomenology reduction in 1905 and from then on worked out his phenomenology as transcendental philosophy. It was no small issue that Husserl in 1911 formally and publicly declared his alliance with his erstwhile enemies, an event that raised many eyebrows among his early followers, the phenomenological societies in Munich and Göttingen.

11. This article is reprinted in Hua. XXV, pp. 3–64.

12. Cf. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 389.

13. This is an allusion to an article by Husserl’s former assistant Ludwig Landgrebe that was very influential in the early days of Husserl reception after the second World War, entitled “Husserl’s departure from cartesianism” (first published in 1958). Its claim is, in a nutshell, that the late Husserl, under the influence of Heidegger, departed from Cartesianism (read as foundationalism) and was onto something new that was akin to Heidegger’s project of fundamental ontology. This reading—which has been proven wrong many times over—was highly influential in the reception of Husserl and still shapes the image of Husserl’s phenomenology and its development to this day.

14. Besides Gadamer, one would have to mention Becker, Fink, and Landgrebe (all assistants to Husserl at one point) and many contemporary Heidegger and Gadamer scholars.

15. This is how Gadamer explicitly sees Husserl; cf. the preface to *Truth and Method*: “[T]he conscientiousness of phenomenological description that Husserl has placed upon us as a duty” (*Truth and Method*, p. 5, quoted from the original, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer Philosophischen Hermeneutik* [Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1990]) (translations by the author).

16. Cf. Gadamer's well-known and oft-quoted presentation, "The Phenomenological Movement," in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, *Neuere Philosophie I* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986), pp. 105–146; English translation in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. and trans. D.E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). As Gadamer points out here (and elsewhere), the image of the Husserlian "open horizons" that were merely filled in by Heidegger was first utilized by Oskar Becker, Husserl's pupil and Heidegger's colleague in Freiburg; a claim that is repeated in Tugendhat's influential book on the problem of truth in Husserl and Heidegger (see the following note). Becker himself saw his own work in the same manner as a part of the phenomenological movement. His book *Mathematische Existenz*, published in the same yearbook-volume as *Being and Time* in 1927, intended to apply the phenomenological method to the sphere of mathematics.

17. E. Tugendhat, *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger* (berlin: de Gruyter, 1967), p. 263.

18. Indeed, Gadamer interprets Heidegger's sketch of a "hermeneutics of facticity," the so-called "fundamental ontology of Dasein" as presented in *Being and Time*, as an aberration of Heidegger's early intentions. The infamous "*Kehre*," turning, that Heidegger took some years after *Being and Time* is in truth, to Gadamer, a "*Rückkehr*," a return, to these early intentions. Gadamer's critique states that *Being and Time* has come all too close to transcendental philosophy ("philosophy of reflection") in the style of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and the transcendentalism of the neo-Kantians. Heidegger's early impulse Gadamer sees best captured in Heidegger's statement "*es welte*" ("it worlds") as the original event of Being (the world) that reveals *itself* to us, rather than being something that we, as representing subjects, can control (as an intentional object or horizon of objects), cf. Heidegger's last early Freiburg lecture of 1923, *Ontology. The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. J. Van Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). This is the first lecture of Heidegger's that Gadamer attended (in the summer semester of 1923 in Freiburg, where he heard Heidegger for one semester after finishing his dissertation with Natorp; Gadamer moved back to Marburg in the fall of that year following Heidegger who had been called to Marburg) and to which he refers oftentimes throughout his works (where he first felt Heidegger's language hitting him "like a lightning bolt"). Heidegger's later philosophy of "*Ereignis*" (translated as "event" or—to my mind, inaptly—as "en-ownment") to Gadamer merely reiterates this early insight and places it into the larger context of a *historicity* of this *Ereignis*. Gadamer repeats this assessment of Heidegger's thought on

several occasions; cf. *Truth and Method*, pp. 259–269, as well as the essays on Heidegger (collected in vol. 3 of his *Gesammelte Werke, Neuere Philosophie I* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), pp. 175–332), esp. the important critical article, “Die Sprache der Metaphysik” (“The language of metaphysics”), *ibid.*, pp. 229–237).

19. See note 18.

20. While there are few, and mostly implicit, traces of Husserl in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer’s writings that explicitly deal with Husserl stem from *after* the publication of *Truth and Method*. cf., e.g., the three essays explicitly devoted to Husserl and the phenomenological movement in general in volume 3 of his *Collected Works* from 1963, 1972, and 1974. While Gadamer knew Husserl from his published writings and his lectures as of his youth (Gadamer also attended Husserl’s lecture in the summer semester of 1923 in Freiburg alongside those of Heidegger), one can detect a new phase of studying Husserl beginning around 1968. This new phase, in which he also turned to newer volumes in the *Husserliana* making available hitherto unpublished material, was presumably motivated by external factors, in this case Gadamer’s lectures that he delivered in the United States (at the Catholic University) after his retirement from the University of Heidelberg in 1968. The title of his course at Catholic University in 1969 was “The phenomenological movement,” and, as preparation for the course, he freshened up on his knowledge of Husserl. On April 4, 1969, Gadamer writes to Heidegger: “my renewed Husserl studies make the tragic side of his thought increasingly clear, this continual self-complication from which he can never quite free himself, without falling back on the simplest, oldest motifs of his thought” (quoted in J. Grondin, *Gadamer: A Biography*, trans. J. Weinsheimer [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003], p. 468); cf. also Grondin’s account of Gadamer’s travels as an emeritus in the chapter of his biography entitled “Second Youth,” pp. 312–329. It is one of the strengths of Gadamer’s expositions of Husserl that he emphasizes the continuity of his thought from his first book, *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, to the *Crisis*. Thus, although one can not call Gadamer a Husserl scholar, he did have a keen sense of Husserl’s philosophical intentions and instincts. For an assessment of what Gadamer acknowledged of Husserl’s philosophical corpus (not just the published works that he knew already before the war), one can certainly mention *Husserliana* volumes I (*Cartesian Meditations*), III, IV, and V (*Ideas I–III*); *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (Hua. XVII), *Experience and Judgment* (not available in the Hua.), the *Crisis* (Hua. VI), as well as, as is clear from the later texts, the volumes on critical history of ideas and the theory of the phenomenological reduction (Hua. VII and VIII, the lecture

course of 1923/1924), time-consciousness (Hua. X), and the three voluminous tomes that collect manuscript material on the problem of intersubjectivity (Hua. XIII–XV). Thus, although the corpus of Gadamer's texts devoted explicitly to Husserl is rather slim (compared to the writings on Heidegger), one can certainly say that Gadamer was well aware of the intricacies of Husserl's phenomenology.

21. Though it would be an unfair *ad hominem* argument, it is worth mentioning that it is not unlikely that Gadamer's views, and in general those of his generation in Europe, were shaped by the events in Europe in his life time: the global economic crisis in the 1920s, the failure of the Weimar republic, most importantly the national socialist revolution and World War II, and last but not least, the student revolts in the late 1960s.

22. C.f., for example, M. Jung, *Hermeneutik zur Einführung* (Gamburg: Junius, 2002), which, apart from being an excellent exposition of the scope of hermeneutics, makes no mention of Husserl.

23. The linkage between Husserl's concept of horizon and Gadamer's doctrine of understanding is also emphasized by Sokolowski ("Gadamer's Theory of Hermeneutics," in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, esp. pp. 228–229) and Ramberg ("The Source of the Subjective," *ibid.*, p. 462).

24. Husserl does not employ the term "life-world" until his writings of the 1920s; however, it is already operative in Husserl's account of the "world of the natural attitude" in *Ideas I*, cf. Hua. III/1, p. 56ff. concerning the continuity of Husserl's thought, cf. the footnote in the *Crisis* in which Husserl emphasizes the continuity of his work since the breakthrough discover of intentionality and the correlational a priori in the course of working on the *Logical Investigations* in the last decade of the nineteenth century, cf. Hua. VI, pp. 169–170.

25. Cf. Hua. III/1, pp. 202–209.

26. Cf. Heidegger's similar analysis of ready-to-handness and the curious omission of the concept of "nature" in *Being and Time*, 5th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), chap. 3, pp. 63–130. "pure" nature is something that is never given to us as such, "stripped" of any meaning, but always as something that has a certain significance for us; e.g., the forest as a place for leisurely contemplation *or* as a supply of wood for heating, etc.; i.e., even in the most innocuous circumstances, the structure of "in order to" (*um-zu*) obtains—even in the attitude of what Kant has called (in the *Critique of Judgment*) "disinterested pleasure" (*interesseloses Wohlgefallen*).

27. C.f. the excellent presentation of Husserl's mature thought: D. Welton, *The Other*

Husserl: The Horizons of Transcendental Phenomenology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), esp. part 3, p. 331ff.). The idea of intentionality as being “surrounded” by a horizon of co-present objects is already prefigured in *Ideas I*, Hua. III/1, pp. 56–66. (the analysis of the “world of the natural attitude”).

28. Cf. the passage from Husserl’s *Analyses of Passive Synthesis*, Hua. XI, which gives an elaborate analysis of “external perception” and concludes in the following sentences: “[T]he house itself and in its true being, and specifically with respect to its pure bodily thingly nature, is quickly given optimally, i.e., experienced as complete for that person who regards it as a buyer or a seller. For the physicist and the chemist, such ways of experience would seem completely superficial and miles away from its true being” (p. 24, trans. A. J. Steinbock). Husserl’s criterion for what guides a certain attitude is, as mentioned, the *interest*, which again underscores his orientation ultimately at *knowledge*.

29. Some scholars claim that it is from here that Heidegger derives the concept of “clearing” that motivates—among other things—his reading of the Greek concept of truth, *alétheia*, as unconcealment. Especially the works by L. Landgrebe and K. Held have tried to harmonize Husserl and Heidegger in this way by comparing them on the basis of the concept of horizon. Cf. L. Landgrebe, “Husserls Phänomenologie und die Motive zu ihrer Umbildung,” in *Der Weg der Phänomenologie* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1963), pp. 9–39; and K. Held, “Die Endlichkeit der Welt. Phänomenologie im Übergang von Husserl zu Heidegger,” in *Philosophie der Endlichkeit*, ed. B. Niemeyer and D. Schütze (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1992), pp. 130–147. One should point out, however, that Heidegger’s idea of clearing has different roots and is informed by the Greek experience of nature (*physis*) as something that appears on its own and shows itself to man. Husserl’s concept of horizon derives directly from his analysis of intentionality and is a structure of *subjectivity*.

30. One should note that the correlation of attitude and horizon would be misunderstood as plainly that of subject and object; instead, it is an *intentional* relation, i.e., that of an intention-of and what is given-in the intention (fulfillment). The concept of horizon on both “sides” is part of intentionality itself, i.e., that what “governs” “between” subject and object or, more precisely, which engulfs any singular subject and singular object. Intentionality is about meaning and how it reveals itself to a given consciousness *within* intentionality. To the “subjective” and “objective” sides Husserl assigns the technical terms “noesis” and “noema” as immanent elements of the intentional relationship—the intentional act and what is given in it—a relationship that *encompasses* the simple subject-object

distinction. Hence, it would be misleading to charge Husserl with a naïve perpetuation of a problematic subject-object dichotomy. It is about *meaning* and how meaning reveals itself in experience.

31. However, in his presentation of Husserl's late philosophy (in "The phenomenological movement"), Gadamer is remarkably clear about declaring Husserl's transcendental turn as necessary for his theory of the life-world. That is, while he recognized the *immanent* necessity for Husserl to attach the science of the life-world to the transcendental theory of constitution, Gadamer himself, in his own positive hermeneutic approach, consciously did not follow along Husserl's path. This displays, on the one hand, his superb understanding and intimate knowledge of Husserl's philosophy as a whole. On the other, it marks the clear and well-reflected point of departure for Gadamer toward a more Heideggerian concept of world.

32. I am referring here mainly to Husserl's project of a "transcendental logic" in his shift from static to genetic phenomenology in the 1920s. Cf. Hua. XI as well as the detailed account in Welton, *The Other Husserl*.

33. Cf. the epigraph of this text.

34. Hua. XI, pp. 336–345. This is the key text on "Static and Genetic phenomenological method," in which Husserl discusses the shift from "static" to "genetic" methods.

35. Whereas Husserl emphasizes the "teleological" process of perception as a phasing-out of older, inadequate perceptions, hence as a process of "verification" (although at this level Husserl is not dealing with propositional judgment or logical truth), Gadamer in turn emphasizes the "negative," "falsifying" aspect of experience in the sense that new experiences primarily devalue old ones (cf. *Truth and Method*, pp. 352–358). In this sense, both merely emphasize different sides of the same coin. Also, by recognizing the "negative" aspect, Gadamer implicitly criticizes Husserl's underlying presupposition of a *teleological* process of experience, a process that supposedly moves from pre-predicative experience all the way up to logical, rational judgment.

36. One should mention that Heidegger harshly criticized this account that he considered a construction; for it takes already a very high level of sophistication to perceive this thing here as a mere "thing" (as an experienced by the phenomenologist as the alleged "unparticipating observer"). Our experience of things—and *this* is the real foundation for an unbiased analysis—is first and foremost in fact our quotidian interaction with them not as

mere objects but as artifacts that we use and whose meaning we take for granted. cf. *Being and Time*, p. 61: “Knowledge itself is grounded beforehand in an already-being-with-the-world, which essentially constitutes the being of *Dasein*. This already-being-with is not merely a fixated staring [*Begaffen*] at something purely present-at-hand [*Vorhandenen*].” This is worth mentioning because such a reading clearly ignores Husserl’s genetic phenomenology.

37. Cf. the *Crisis*, Hua. VI, pp. 12–17, 269–276. Similar formulations can be found in nearly all of Husserl’s latest writings that are to be found in Hua. VI and XXIX.

38. The “tragedy” of Husserl’s attempt to rein in history as part of transcendental phenomenology can be seen in his perhaps most famous statement concerning history: “history is the grand factum of absolute being.” (Hua.VIII, p. 506). “Absolute being” is a term for the ultimately founding transcendental subjectivity that “enworlds” itself in factual, concrete history. That is, history only comes into view as the expansion of Husserl’s concept of transcendental constitution.

39. Husserl deals with the topic of history very late in his life, in his late reflections in the context of his last work, the *Crisis of European Sciences* (Hua. VI), but his reflections do not go beyond mere musings about the manner in which one could expand phenomenology into a philosophy of history.

40. Gadamer uses the terms “*Tradition*” and “*Überlieferung*” synonymously; both can readily be rendered “tradition” in English.

41. In some late texts, Husserl, too, acknowledges that the life-world is a context of tradition; accordingly, the epoché that we must practice in order to access transcendental consciousness is an “epoché from all traditions.” cf. Hua. XXXIV, pp. 431–440.

42. There can be no doubt that in this respect Gadamer is inspired by Heidegger’s account of the “fore-structure of understanding” (cf. *Being and Time*, §2, p. 5ff.) as well as Heidegger’s terminology in these passages. However, this fore-structure that Gadamer calls attention to here is nothing but an explication of Husserl’s analysis of horizontal intentionality—this goes for Heidegger’s account as well! In other words, both Heidegger and Gadamer merely draw from an unacknowledged Husserlian insight here.

43. McDowell has recently reverted to this Aristotelian theme in a similar way as Gadamer. The experience that we make and that we inherit through tradition actually form us, they form our second nature. Cf. *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard university press, 1996), pp. xi–xxiv. One presupposition that Gadamer makes here (in the framework

that R. Brandom calls “gadamerian platitudes”) is that tradition is at all times given, as it were “automatically,” and is not something that requires any actual work of an active *acquisition*. Yet, things are not that easy; as Goethe famously says, “What you have inherited from your forefathers, acquire it in order to own it.” (“*Was Du gelernt von Deinen Vätern, erwirb es, um es zu besitzen.*”) In other words, the sheer givenness of a tradition does not necessarily account for “owning” it, i.e., understanding it. To do so requires an explicit “fusion of horizons” that throws into relief both my own horizon and that of the tradition that is mine only potentially. While it is true that Gadamer seems to take this “givenness” of tradition for granted, it can be remedied by the fact that he thinks that a fusion of horizons does not just take place “horizontally” between partners in a dialogue but also “vertically” between my present and the tradition I find myself in. for a discussion of these “gadamerian platitudes,” cf. r. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 92–94, 105–106).

44. Especially part I of the second division of *Truth and Method*, pp. 177–269.

45. Gadamer (in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, p. 287), in response to D. Detmer’s essay (“Gadamer’s critique of the enlightenment,” *ibid.*, pp. 275–286). It is interesting to note that Gadamer’s response to Detmer’s essay, in which Detmer presents Gadamer as an anti-enlightenist, is unusually harsh. Gadamer starts out his reply as follows: “It is extremely astonishing to me that my project of a philosophical hermeneutics as well as some other such projects are being discussed under the title ‘critique of enlightenment’ and not with reference to the idealist concept of the ‘completed enlightenment’ which was coined by Fichte” (p. 287).

46. *Truth and Method*, p. 281. The passage continues: “Therefore the prejudices [*Vorurteile*] of the individual, far more than his judgments [*Urteile*], form the historical reality of his being.”

47. *Ibid.*, p. 307.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 302.

49. Cf. Hua. X, esp. p. 23ff. (§§7–18).

50. Cf. *Truth and Method*, p. xvi (on the unpaginated frontispiece).

51. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 304.

52. It was especially Husserl’s last assistant Eugen Fink who confronted Husserl with this question in the *VIth Cartesian Meditation* and other texts during the collaboration with

Husserl (1929–1938). This critical inquiry is motivated, among other things, by Heidegger's seeming rejection of the phenomenological reduction and the concept of the natural attitude that is implied in it. Cf. chapter 2 of my "*Phänomenologie der Phänomenologie*" (dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), where I discuss this particular dispute between Husserl and Fink.

53. In this respect one can rightfully apply Habermas's verdict, that the experience Gadamer articulates is primarily that of a philologist (Gadamer's original formation in classics at the university of Marburg). In this context, Habermas also famously speaks of Gadamer's philosophy as an "urbanization of the Heideggerian province." cf. J. Habermas, *Philosophisch-politische Profile* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1987), p. 393.

54. This challenge is evinced, e.g., in Rilke's well-known poem "Archaischer Torso Apolls," which ends with the phrase (in this poem, spoken by the art work to the spectator): "*Du mußt Dein Leben ändern*" ("You must change your life"). Gadamer on several occasions makes reference to this poem. cf. the essays on Rilke that are assembled in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 9, *Ästhetik und Poetik II. Hermeneutik im Vollzug* (Tübingen: mohr, 1993), pp. 271–319.

55. Cf. Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, pp. 159, 171.

56. Cf. *Truth and Method*, pp. 48–61.

57. Mcdowell, in his article "Gadamer and Davidson on Understanding and Relativism," makes the same point that a fusion can change the position of the viewer, rather than bringing about a whole new "horizon" altogether: "When we come to understand the other subject, that can involve a change in how we view the world. When the horizons fuse, the horizon within which we view the world is no longer in the same position" (*Gadamer's Century*, p. 180).

58. This is true even if I immerse myself in it, through traveling, e.g., to a country with a culture radically different from my own.

59. Division three of *Truth and Method* is entitled "hermeneutics' ontological Turn Guided by language," pp. 387–494. Division two ends with the sub-section β), "The logic of Question and answer," pp. 375–386.

60. *Truth and Method*, p. 450.

61. Cf. H. Blumenberg's comments on Heidegger's "history of Being": "It [sc. the *Seinsgeschichte*] allows for the thought that subjects remain unchanged because the history of being . . . severs the whole realm of causal agency from subjects and attributes it to an objective sphere. This objective sphere is no longer the history formed by humans but

historicity as the unauthorized [*eigenmächtig*] power of Being. It is supposedly Being that changes in order that the subjects do not have to change. Indeed, they could not change in any case and for which giving good reasons would be all but vain, reasons that had already been experienced and endured throughout history. The empirical futility of changing subjects gives rise to the evidence of the only remaining possibility of change, i.e., of letting the totality of objects change radically by means of a mysterious fatality coming from out of their background, and by so doing, to change the behavior of the subjects. If that were the case, understanding this type of thought, like Heidegger's, would merely be a symptom of something that would not be effected, but only indicated, by this understanding." H. Blumenberg, *Ein mögliches Selbstverständnis* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996), pp. 35–36), from a text entitled "What if Heidegger Were understood?" referring to a text by Heidegger's friend Egon Vietta, in which the latter claims that *if* Heidegger's philosophy were understood, the age of technology would be "finished."

62. Cf. K.-O. Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie*, vol. 1, "Sprachanalytik, Semiotik, Hermeneutik" (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1973).

63. Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2, p. 495–496.

64. *Truth and Method*, p. 307. Here Gadamer also mentions Nietzsche as a philosopher who emphasized the notion of horizon as man's essential situatedness and perspectivalness.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 309.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 312.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 285.

68. It should be noted that *Einrücken* is military term, denoting an army's moving into a city or region.

69. *Truth and Method*, p. 295.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 292.

72. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 293.

73. Indeed, Husserl's "genetic logic" intends to show, precisely, how rationality has developed by necessity (i.e., according to "laws of genesis") from the most "primitive" experiences on the pre-predicative level of perception. This is the path Husserl attempts to reconstruct in his *Experience and Judgment* that has the subtitle "on the Genealogy of logic." even the "passive" level is subjective through and through.

74. A shorter version of this paper was presented at Marquette University in the spring of 2004. I would like to thank the participants of the discussion following my presentation, especially John D. Jones, Richard Taylor, and Pol Vandavelde, now my esteemed colleagues, as well as David Weberman and Eric Wilson, for their helpful criticisms and questions concerning the claims that I make here.