

INTRODUCTION TO HERMENEUTICS

[F.P.A. Demeterio III](#)

THE IDEA OF HERMENEUTICS

Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word ερμηνεύειν (hermeneuein), meaning to *interpret*, and its derivative ερμηνεία (hermeneia) meaning *interpretation*. It has a linguistic relationship with *Hermes*, the swift footed messenger of the Olympian gods, who necessarily had to master the language of the gods, understand and interpret what these immortal beings have in mind, and translate and articulate their intention to the mortal beings. The main reason why hermeneutics seemed to be a very complicated idea is that it has indeed become complex due to the inter-twining of its multiple layers of meanings and concerns. The first step, therefore, in understanding it is to untangle its multiple layers. In its barest sense, *hermeneutics* can be understood as *a theory, methodology and praxis of interpretation that is geared towards the recapturing of meaning of a text, or a text-analogue, that is temporally or culturally distant, or obscured by ideology and false consciousness*. Hermeneutics presupposes that texts and text-analogues that are distant in time and culture, or that are blanketed by ideology and false consciousness, would necessarily appear chaotic, incomplete, contradictory and distorted, and that they need to be systematically interpreted to unveil their underlying coherence or sense. As this working definition suggests, hermeneutics has three different layers of meanings and concerns: namely, 1) theory, which is concerned about the epistemological validity and possibility of interpretation; 2) methodology, which is concerned about the formulation of reliable systems of interpretation; and 3) praxis, which is concerned about the actual process of interpreting specific texts.

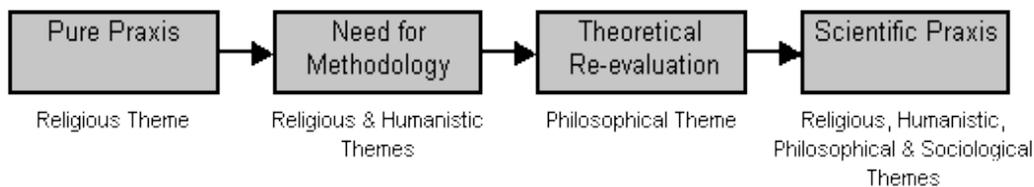
Hermeneutics, as a praxis of interpretation, emerged very early in the history of civilizations. The great cultures of the antiquity generally had their share of sacred literature that need to be interpreted and re-interpreted by their priestly and royal classes. Thus, hermeneutics had been practiced by ancient people long before philosophy ever thought of it as a discipline belonging to its own province. In late antiquity, the Greeks, the Jews and the Christians had been reading and re-reading their vital texts, namely the Homeric epics, the Torah, Tamud and Midrashim, and the Holy Bible, respectively. In the process of their textual labor, these people revised their own idiosyncratic sets of rules for doing interpretation: thus, hermeneutics, as methodology of interpretation, started to evolve from hermeneutics, as praxis of interpretation.

The full development of hermeneutics, as methodology of interpretation, however, happened some more centuries later during the Renaissance period. This development was triggered by a heightened need for hermeneutic praxis that transformed the once purely practical operation into a self-conscious procedure. This heightened need for praxis in return had been catalyzed by two landmark historical phenomena: the protestant reformation and the renaissance's fascination for classical Greek and Roman texts. The protestant reformation had spawned a whole process of debate regarding the christian's relationship with the sacred scriptures. Whereas the catholic church re-asserted, during 1546 the Council of Trent, its age-old position that it is its own authority which is the ultimate norm of interpreting the Holy Bible, the protestants insisted on the principles of perspicuity-the need for a keenness of the interpreter's discernment-and self sufficiency of the sacred scriptures. Freed from the blanketing dogma of the catholic church, the protestant theologians and scripturists, led by Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575), have to rely on more self-conscious hermeneutic systems. The renaissance's fascination with the classical Greek and Roman texts, as the second catalyst, had already generated a whole arsenal of interpretive methodologies, collectively known as *Ars Critica*, that are useful in establishing the authenticity of the texts as well as in reconstructing the text's most original and correct version. Side by side with this purely humanist concern, renaissance jurists were also struggling to re-

interpret the Roman Law, specifically, the Justinian Code of AD 533. Hermeneutics as methodology of interpretation, therefore, did not only fully develop during the renaissance period, it proliferated into a collection of contradicting, incoherent and confusing systems.

From the chaotic presence of hermeneutic systems, as methodologies of interpretation, there appeared a need for a more critical and foundational evaluation of interpretation itself, an epistemology into its validity and possibility. It was Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834), a German protestant theologian and philologist, who initiated philosophy's focusing on the problems of interpretation and the need for a unified systematic method of hermeneutics. Thus, hermeneutics, as a theory, or epistemology, of interpretation materialized.

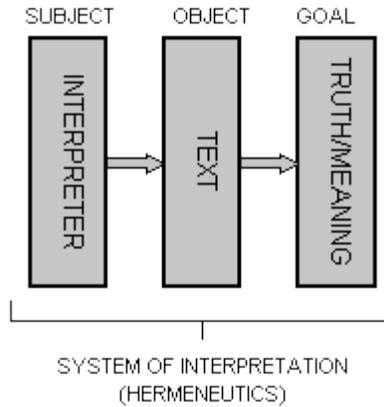
Placed in a crucible of intense philosophical analysis and further theorization, hermeneutics emerged as a more powerful system suitable not only for religion, and humanism, but also for the steadily growing social sciences. The contagion of hermeneutics from the world of religious and humanist textuality to the social sciences' sphere of human action, behavior and culture had been facilitated by the expansion of the meaning of textuality itself. What was traditionally understood as something that refers only to things that are or can be written has been stretched to cover almost anything that has something to do with man and culture. Today, not only documents, literary texts and scriptures can be called texts, but also symbols, rituals, practices and customs, myths, structures of power, kinship and social set-ups, and many more besides. The evolution of hermeneutics, therefore, from pure unreflective praxis that is solely concerned with religious themes to a highly systematic and reflective praxis that can be applied to any text or text-analogue, can be graphically represented by the following chart.



The fact that hermeneutics evolved from praxis into praxis demonstrates that it is its praxis component which is its most important layer of meaning, its ultimate aim and its reason for existence. Take away praxis from the picture, then theory and methodology theory would not make any sense at all. But the fact that it also evolved into its present status of being highly systematic and reflective scientific praxis dictates that before the modern-day praxis can ever commence a thorough knowledge of theory and methodology is necessary.

THE DIVERSE HERMENEUTIC SYSTEMS

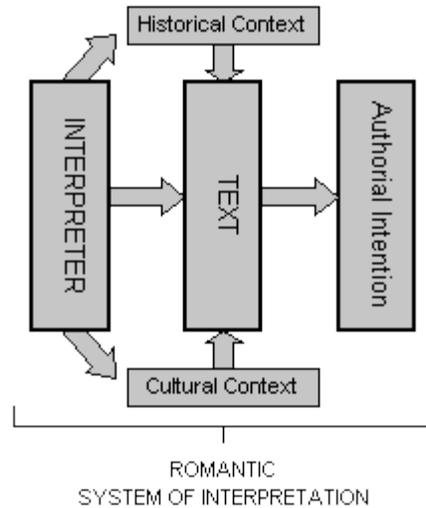
Even though Schleiermacher attempted to unify the pre-existing diverse hermeneutic systems, this diversity persisted through the present times. However, today's immense number of hermeneutic systems need not be seen as a chaotic mass, nor a dense cognitive forest, that are enough to discourage the neophyte from exploring further. These systems can be easily categorized into just five groups of hermeneutic systems: namely, 1) romanticist hermeneutics, 2) phenomenological hermeneutics, 3) dialectical hermeneutics, 4) critical hermeneutics, and 5) post-structural hermeneutics. This categorization, though admittedly a didactic attempt to organize diversity for the sake of presentation to the neophyte, is nevertheless not something that is purely arbitrary. Rather, our categorization of the diverse hermeneutic systems into just five groups is specified by the variations of the structural components of interpretation itself, of which there are three: namely, 1) the interpreter, or the subject; 2) the thing being interpreted, or the object, which is either a text or a text analogue; and 3) the goal of the interpretive act, which is either truth or meaning.



How a given hermeneutic system preconceives the subject, the object and its goal will determine not only its categorization to any of the aforementioned five systems, but also the structure of this given hermeneutic system itself. Hermeneutic systems are structured in accordance to their idiosyncratic notions of subjectivity, textuality, and truth/meaning. In the following sections we are going to take some cursory look on how the three components of interpretation actually give structure to each of the five groups of hermeneutic systems.

Romanticist Hermeneutics

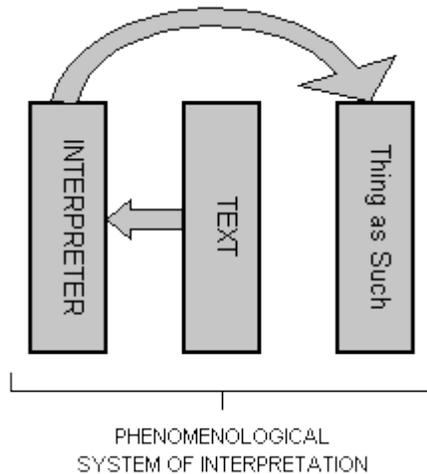
Schleiermacher and his follower Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) are the main proponents of romanticist hermeneutics.¹ As theorists of the 19th and the 20th centuries, both of them were heirs to a very dominant philosophy of the subject initiated by the French scientist, mathematician, and founder of modern philosophy Rene Descartes (1596-1650). With his famous statement *Cogito, ergo sum*, Descartes painted a subject who, though prone to commit cognitive errors and conceptual distortions, is nonetheless fully self-conscious and capable of attaining objective knowledge through a regimen of philosophical, scientific and mathematical methodologies. This Cartesian subject is the same subject that is presupposed by romanticist hermeneutics. As a biblical scholar and philologist, Schleiermacher had a first hand experience of the recurrent vagueness of texts, prompting romanticist hermeneutics to conceptualize textuality as some sort of a floating signifier that is incomplete without its temporal and cultural contexts.² reformation biblical scholar, Schleiermacher intended that the goal of romanticist hermeneutics is to recapture the truth of the text, which is defined in terms of the original authorial intent. Graphically, we may represent the structural components of romanticist hermeneutics as follows.



Romanticist hermeneutics' idiosyncratic notions of the subjectivity, textuality and truth had structured its own system itself. The process of interpretation, represented by the arrows, has to emanate from the interpreter through the text, and from the interpreter through the text via the historical and cultural context, in order to recapture the original authorial intention. The system, as a whole, has to be rigorous with its textual, historical and cultural methodologies because of its preconception of a single and unitary truth determined by a single and unitary authorial intent.

Phenomenological Hermeneutics

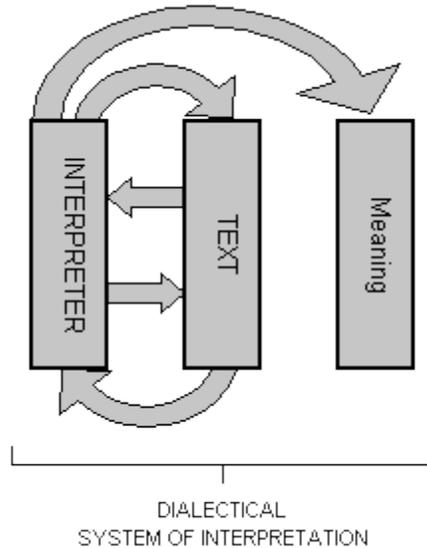
Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), the founder of the phenomenological movement, like Descartes, was also a mathematician and philosopher. Though he shared the same skepticism about scientific method that can be traced back as far as the romantic movement, he nonetheless believed that despite the human cognitive frailty, the human subject remains fully self-conscious and capable of attaining reliable knowledge through a more systematic approach. Husserl's philosophy of the subject remains Cartesian. Like the romanticist hermeneutics, phenomenological hermeneutics also assumes that in order for the object to be fully interpreted, a proper context, or a mental frame is needed. But instead of considering the extraneous historical and cultural contexts, phenomenological hermeneutics argued that the text reflects its own mental frame. Husserl stated his dictum *Zu den Sachen selbst!* ("to the things themselves"), because he considered objects as complete in themselves. To interpret a text, therefore, means to methodically isolate it from all extraneous things including the subject's biases and allow it to communicate its meaning to the subject. The goal of phenomenological hermeneutics is to capture to truth of the text as it is. Graphically, we may represent the structural components of phenomenological hermeneutics as follows.



Thus, phenomenological hermeneutics' idiosyncratic notions of the subjectivity, textuality and truth had structured its own system itself. The process of interpretation, again represented by the arrows, has to emanate from the text through the interpreter to come up with the truth of the text as such. From the phenomenological point of view, interpretation is not something that a reader does, but something that happens to him. Though this hermeneutic system lacked the rigorous textual, historical and cultural methodologies that characterized romantic hermeneutics, phenomenological system as a whole has to allocate painstaking and meticulous attention to the subjective bracketing off of biases, as well as detailed observation of and reflection on the text in order to capture the truth of text as it is.

Dialectical Hermeneutics

If both romanticist and phenomenological hermeneutics took for granted the Cartesian subject, dialectical hermeneutics is founded on, and in fact contributed to the emergence of, a new philosophy of the subject.⁴ Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), a German philologist, philosopher, and the main proponent of dialectical hermeneutics, though a student and follower of Husserl, questioned the possibility of the reader to actually prevent his biases and presuppositions to color his understanding and interpretation. Heidegger constructed a new subject whose mind and being are totally immersed in the subject's life-world, such that understanding and interpretation would always proceed from the perspective of the subject's life-world. The Heideggerian subject is a subject that is formed by the biases and presuppositions of his/her life-world making him/her incapable of attaining full self-consciousness and objective knowledge. Thus, instead of hypocritically scrapping these biases and presuppositions, dialectical hermeneutics argued for a better use of these cognitive baggage by using them as premises in conversing with texts and objects. By assailing the Cartesian subject, Heidegger also assailed the metaphysics of realism that served as the cornerstone for the Cartesian, romanticist and phenomenological philosophies of the object. A new philosophy of the object is needed. For dialectical hermeneutics, an object, or text, can contain an infinity of meanings. Hence, unlike the romanticist and the phenomenological hermeneutics, dialectical hermeneutics is not interested in capturing a single and unified meaning, but instead in an existential meaning, the meaning of the here and now. Graphically, we may represent the structural components of dialectical hermeneutics as follows.

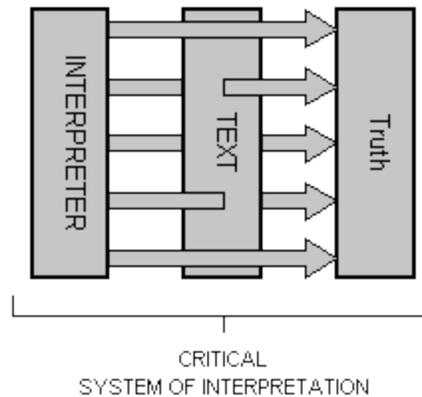


Hence, dialectical hermeneutics' idiosyncratic notions of the subjectivity, textuality and truth had structured its own system itself. The process of interpretation, again represented by the arrows, has to be circular, symbolizing the conversation between the world of biases and presuppositions of the reader and the world of biases and presuppositions of the text. More specifically, the reader has to project first his own biases and presuppositions onto the text, and allows the text to project its own biases and presuppositions in return to him/her. This circular process may go on and on, until a consensus is reached. This consensus constitutes the existential meaning of the text. It is a fact that this hermeneutic system lacked the rigorous textual, historical and cultural methodologies that characterized romantic hermeneutics, as well as the detailed observation and reflection that characterized phenomenological hermeneutics. These methodologies, however, are supplanted by a heightened attention to the radical differences between the subject's and the object's life-worlds, and sincere conviction to listen and to dialogue.

Critical Hermeneutics

The Heideggerian existential subject did not emerge unchallenged. The critical theorists from the *Institut für Sozialforschung* (founded, 1923), otherwise known as the Frankfurt School, a center known for its strategic combination of Marxist style philosophical investigation with the emerging methodologies of the social sciences, remained faithful to the Cartesian subject: the fully self-conscious mind who despite its frailty is capable of attaining reliable knowledge through a systematic approach.^x Yet, even though basically Cartesian in its conception of the subject, the theorists of critical hermeneutics have a radically new philosophy of the object that is very different from the realist metaphysics of romanticist and phenomenological hermeneutics, as well as from the existential object of dialectical hermeneutics. The new philosophy of the object is founded on the thoughts of the German philosopher and economist Karl Marx (1818-1883), the German philosopher and philologist Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900), and the Austrian physician and founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). These theorists demonstrated that textuality can be infiltrated with power and forces that are formerly considered extraneous to it and practically innocuous. Specifically, Marx argued that textuality can be warped by capitalist and class-based ideologies; Nietzsche, by cultural norms; and Freud, by the unconscious. These extraneous powers and forces are capable of penetrating deep into the text, by weaving into its linguistic fabric. Thus, even without the cultural and temporal distances that made romanticist hermeneutics anxious, or even without the differences of life-worlds that bothered both phenomenological and dialectical hermeneutics, there is no guarantee for the

reader to be brought side by side with the truth/meaning of a text, because textuality can be veiled by ideology and false consciousness. The goal of this hermeneutic system is to diagnose the hidden pathology of texts and to free them from their ideological distortions. Graphically, we may represent the structural components of critical hermeneutics as follows.

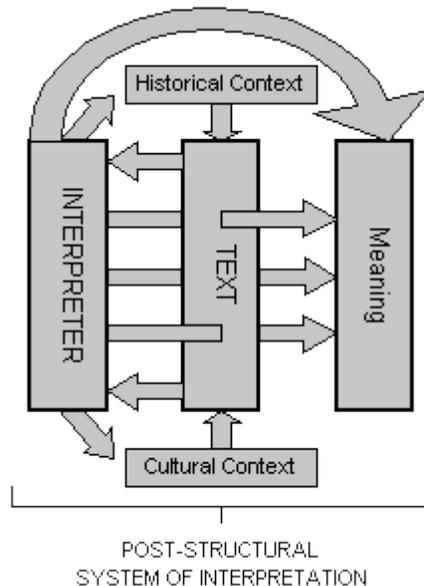


Again, we have seen how the idiosyncratic notions of subjectivity, textuality and truth had structured the critical system of interpretation. The process of interpretation, represented by the arrows, has to emanate from the reader from various points penetrating deeply into the linguistic fabric of textuality, in order to establish truth which is perceived as freedom from ideological distortions. Since ideological infiltration supposedly happens in a particular point in time and space, it is not unusual for critical theorists to employ the historical and cultural methodologies of the romanticist hermeneutics as auxiliary tools.

Post-Structural Hermeneutics

The radically new philosophy of the object generated by the path-breaking thoughts of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, were pursued further by the post-structuralists in the sphere of the philosophy of the subject, thereby giving birth to the post-modern subject.⁴ For the post-structuralists, the subject has lost its primacy that had been taken for granted by the previous philosophical systems, it is now decentered, and is presently considered a mere intersection of point of the various socio-economic and cultural forces that shape the human individual. This is the philosophy of the subject that post-structuralism is explicitly espousing. But to what extent do the post-structuralist theorists actually upholding such notion of subjectivity. They are a little ambivalent here. A human person, as an other, or as a text, is certainly viewed as a decentered person by the poststructuralist. But the human person, as the self, or as the reader, or as the post-structuralist critic, is viewed in a slightly different light. In the bottom-line, the post-structuralist philosophy of the subject wavers between the Cartesian and the existential paradigms of subjectivity. As heirs of the philosophies of suspicion of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, poststructuralist hermeneutics also adheres to a philosophy of the object that is similar to that of the critical hermeneutics: texts are warped by power and ideology. In addition to this critical conception of the object, post-structuralists also adhere to the idea of dialectical hermeneutics that texts may contain an infinity of meaning. They see texts as a web of other texts, whose meanings are determined by the readers instead of the original authorial intention. Hence, like their philosophy of the subject, the post-structuralist philosophy of the object, or of textuality, also wavers between the critical and the dialectical ideas of objectivity or textuality. If their philosophies of the subject and the object waver between two paradigms, their conception of the goal of interpretation would also be two-fold. First, like critical hermeneutics, post-structural hermeneutics aims to diagnose the hidden pathology of texts and to free them from their

ideological distortions. Second, like dialectical hermeneutics, post-structural hermeneutics is not interested in capturing a single and unified meaning, but instead in an existential meaning, the meaning of the here and now. Graphically, we may represent the structural components of post-structural hermeneutics as follows.



The distinctive ideas of subjectivity, textuality and truth/meaning had structured the post-structuralist system of interpretation. Post-structural hermeneutics, being at the receiving end of the developments in hermeneutic philosophy, side by side with its inherent suspicion for grand and unified methodological theorizing, is so fluid and dynamic to adapt several interpretive methodologies from the past. Thus, as graphically shown above, the process of interpretation emanated from a number of points representing the post-structuralist debt to the preceding hermeneutic systems. Above all, post-structuralist hermeneutics does not only explore the parameters of textuality, but also the institutional, social, and political structures that define the relationship between truth/meaning and power. Feminist and post-colonial criticism, and several other post-modern interpretive theories are the instances of this type of hermeneutic system.

Retrospect on the Organized Diversity of Hermeneutic Systems

Hence, we have seen that even with the immense diversity of hermeneutic systems, we need not plow through a confusing mass of chaotic materials, nor explore through a dense cognitive forest, for we have strategically organized these systems into just five groups. As we have mentioned, our strategic schematization is nothing purely didactic but is governed by the variations of the three structural components of the diverse hermeneutic systems themselves. The following table presents a concise comparison of the different preconceptions of subjectivity, textuality, and truth/meaning of each of the aforementioned hermeneutic systems, and how these preconceptions have determined the structure of the hermeneutic arrows.

HERMENEUTIC SYSTEM	CONCEPTION OF THE SUBJECT	CONCEPTION OF THE OBJECT	GOAL	STRUCTURE OF THE HERMENEUTIC ARROW
Romanticist Hermeneutics	Cartesian	Realist but incomplete without the temporal and cultural contexts	Truth as authorial intention	Emanates from the subject through the text via the contexts
Phenomenological Hermeneutics	Cartesian	Realist and complete in itself	Truth as the thing as such	Emanates from the text
Dialectical Hermeneutics	Heideggerian/ Existential	Contains an infinity of meanings	Consensus as existential meaning	Circular
Critical Hermeneutics	Cartesian	Warped by ideology and power	Ideologically purified truth	Emanates from the subject and penetrates deep into the linguistic fabric of the text
Postructural Hermeneutics	Decentered but wavers between Cartesian and Existential	Warped by ideology and power and contains an infinity of meanings	Ideologically purified truth and meaning of the here and now	Combination of the Romanticist, Phenomenological, Dialectical and Critical arrows

Though our strategic approach is nothing arbitrary, admittedly it is reductionist in nature. We should expect therefore to see fuller detail and further variations when we explore the specific hermeneutic systems within each of the five groups.

After going through the different layers of hermeneutic concerns, and after having an overview of the different groups of hermeneutic systems, two crucial questions may confront us at this point. First, among the three different layers of hermeneutic concerns—namely, theory, methodology, and praxis—which one is the most important? Second, among the five different groups of hermeneutic systems, which one is the most powerful interpretive tool?

For the first question, as it is already stated above, the fact that hermeneutics evolved from pure praxis to highly reflective praxis is enough proof that it is the praxis component of hermeneutics which is its most important layer. There is hermeneutic theory, and there is hermeneutic methodology, because there is a need for hermeneutic praxis in the first place. But, again as it is already stated above, the fact that hermeneutics evolved into its present status of being highly systematic and reflective scientific praxis dictates that before the modern-day praxis can ever commence a thorough knowledge of theory and methodology is necessary. In a similar flow of reasoning, this introductory essay to hermeneutics is ultimately intended to encourage the praxis of hermeneutics. But the fact that this essay is an introductory material to hermeneutics as a whole dictates that it focus more on the theoretical and methodological concerns of hermeneutics. The praxis of hermeneutics will only happen when a subject, having a thoroughly functional knowledge of the theory and methodology of hermeneutics, applies his/her knowledge in the actual interpretation of specific texts.

For the second question, among the five groups of hermeneutic systems, there is really no best system. Each of the five systems has its own advantages and disadvantages. The question "which is the best system?" can be answered only in relation to the specific hermeneutic task at hand. This means that we have to settle first the question "what is it that I want to do?" and looking for the most appropriate hermeneutic system will be an easier thing to do. There is no best hermeneutic system, there are only appropriate or suitable hermeneutic systems.

¹ The term romanticist is used with reference to romanticism, a literary, artistic, and cultural movement during the 18th and 19th century, within which Schleiermacher belonged.

▮ *Temporal context* refers to the historical circumstances surrounding the text, and *cultural context* refers to the cultural circumstances surrounding the text. In general, the wider the distance between the reader's present moment and the text's temporal context, the more laborious interpretation becomes, and the more necessary hermeneutics grows. A present-day Filipino history student, for instance, will find it more difficult to read a memoir a 19th century *Illustrado* than to read the diary of his *Manilena* friend, for the reason that there is a wider temporal distance between the student and the 19th century memoir compared to the temporal distance between the student and his friend's diary. On the other hand, the wider the distance between cultural background of the reader and the text's cultural context, again, the more laborious interpretation becomes, and the more necessary hermeneutics grows. Because of differences in cultural contexts, our reading of an epic belonging to an African tribe would be difficult compared to our reading of a modern Filipino novel.

▮ The term *phenomenology* is derived from the word *phenomenon* meaning *appearance*, which in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1894) was deployed to refer to how something appears in the subject's consciousness, and in contradistinction to *noumenon*, the thing-in-itself.

▮ The term *dialectical* is based on a Greek root that means *conversation*, and *debate*.

▮ The term *critical* is based on a Greek root that means *judge*, or *to pass judgement*.

▮ The term *post-structuralism* refers to a philosophical and cultural movement which is both an offshoot and antithesis to structuralism as advocated by Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Levi-Strauss.



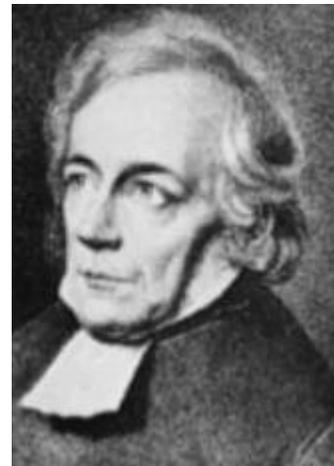
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THE ROMANTICIST HERMENEUTICS OF SCHLEIERMACHER AND DILTHEY

[F.P.A. Demeterio III](#)

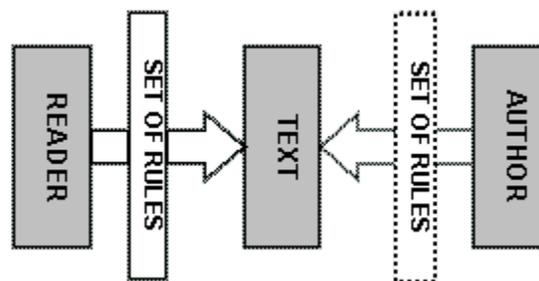
FRIEDRICH DANIEL ERNST SCHLEIERMACHER (1768-1834)

The theological and philological activities of the Renaissance had added a whole array of idiosyncratic hermeneutic systems on the existing ancient models. Collectively, the result was far from encouraging. Instead of methodic certainty, the scholarly atmosphere was littered with inconsistencies and chaos. A dialectical overturning was about to happen. It was Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834), a German Protestant theologian, classical philologist, preacher, church statesman, and educator, who marked as the dialectical node in between hermeneutics as praxis and hermeneutics as theory. It was this intellectual who invited philosophy to focus its attention on the problems of interpretation and the need to formulate a unified systematic method of hermeneutics. His most important question was concerning the possibility of a unified hermeneutic method that can be applicable to any hermeneutic concern. Like the other practitioners of interpretation, Schleiermacher also looked for ways and means to methodize interpretation and understanding, but he went outside this rather parochial parameter. Instead of problematizing the

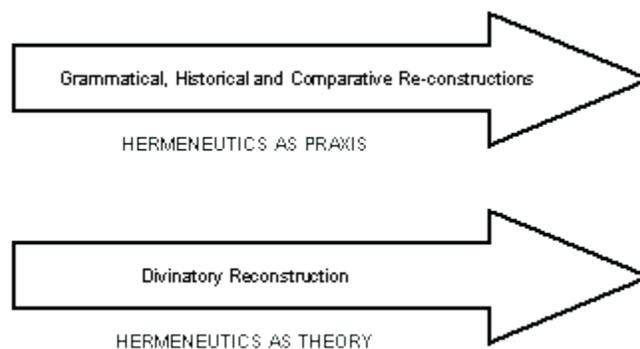


interpretation of particular texts, he problematized the process of interpretation itself.

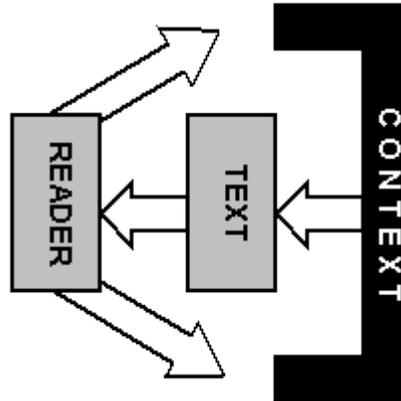
Schleiermacher had faith in the possibility of method interpretation, a faith that is in fact almost fanatical. One can find the recurrent assertion in his writings that interpretation is geared towards the understanding of a text "at first as well as and then even better than its author." That is to say, through interpretation a reader can understand a text even better than the text's own author. What appears to us as a grandiose and exaggerated claim is for Schleiermacher a logically and firmly grounded conclusion. For him, whenever a text is produced, its author follows a set of unconscious, and semiconscious rules and conventions of his own language, time and culture. The reader, who most often belongs to a different language, time and culture have to reconstruct these unconscious and semiconscious rules and conventions and bring them into full consciousness first before undertaking any interpretive move. When such a reader approaches the text, therefore, he is on a better position compared to the author.



Schleiermacher's career and training as a Protestant theologian, and classical philologist offered him a first hand experience with hermeneutic praxis. His background in philosophy affords him a critical perspective that is capable of reflecting on same hermeneutic praxis. It comes as no surprise, then, that when he undertakes his hermeneutic project, both the praxis and the theory aspects of hermeneutics are superbly and masterfully treated. His dual methodology, in fact, reflects these two different layers of hermeneutics. The first of which is a cluster of philological and exegetical tools, which he calls *grammatical, historical, and comparative re-constructions*, that obviously falls in the sphere of hermeneutic praxis. The second one of which is his own weapon in solving the theoretical problems spawned by the first methodology, as well as by the question on the possibility of human interpretation itself, which he calls *divinatory reconstruction*, that marked the beginning of hermeneutic theory.

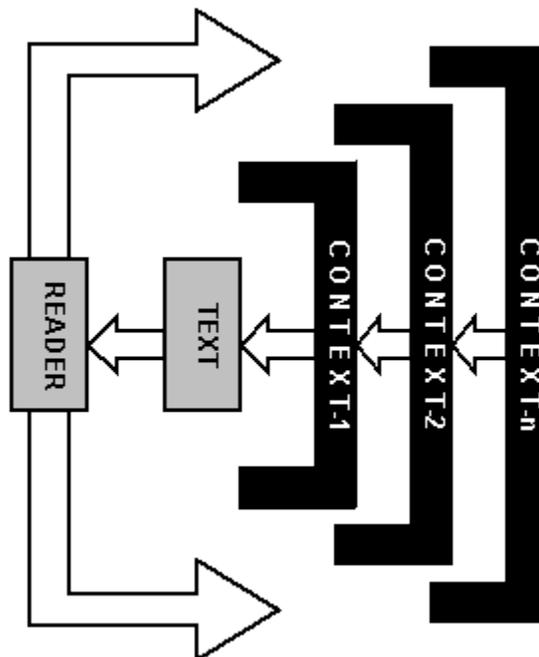


The first methodology, the grammatical, historical, and comparative re-constructions are varieties of contextual reading.



In grammatical re-construction, the reader interprets the text against the context its original linguistic and grammatical rules and structures. It goes without saying that the reader has to master first the language and idiom of the text. Here, Schleiermacher's philological and exegetical training manifest themselves rather clearly. In historical reconstruction, the reader interprets the text against the context of the socio-cultural, as well as economic and political events that circumscribe the production of the same text. Archeology and historical investigations are the auxiliaries of the reader in this methodology. In comparative reconstruction, the reader interprets the text against its inter-texts-that is, its related texts.

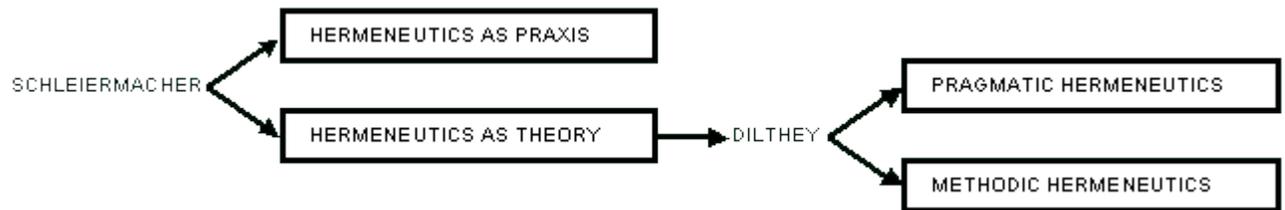
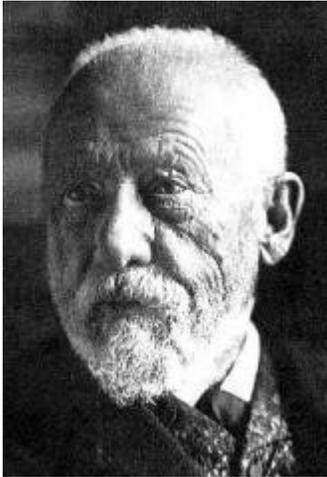
From the level of praxis, these methodological tools that Schleiermacher formulated are indeed very powerful. In fact, these changed the developmental course of sacred scriptural and historical investigations. But on the level sophisticated self-criticism, Schleiermacher discovered their radical contradictions. These re-constructions require a full knowledge of the text's grammatical structure, the text's historical circumstances, and the text's inter-texts. Yet, all of these-most specially, the second and the third one-can only be fully grasped through hermeneutics. In other words, the reconstruction of a context is in itself a hermeneutic endeavor that requires a preliminary batch of contextual re-constructions, which in themselves in return would be another set of hermeneutic endeavors.



This series of contextual re-constructions theoretically can regress to infinity. This is the theoretical problem that shakes the methodological tools at their very foundation. Such a potential regression to infinity undermines the ground upon which a text is based, and made Schleiermacher to admit that texts can have infinite number of meanings. Simultaneously, however, he believes that even with the infinite meanings that are latent in a text, the author who created that text had a single and definite meaning in mind. This intentional meaning is what obsessed Schleiermacher and led him to formulate his second methodology. He defines *divinatory reconstruction* as the process through which "one seeks to understand the writer immediately to the point that one transforms oneself into the other." Through the empathic move of leaping into the particularity of the author's intention, Schleiermacher sheds off the rationalism of enlightenment and joins the stream of romanticists' emphasis on feelings. Though in his first methodology, he rigorously applies a rational system, in the end he succumbs to the romantic sort of poetic transfiguration of the self into the other and eludes, in the process, the radical contradictions of the first methodology.

WILHELM DILTHEY (1833-1911)

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), German philosopher of culture, and epistemologist, is Schleiermacher's biographer and intellectual heir. He is the person who made the capital distinction between the *Naturwissenschaften* (natural sciences), and *Geisteswissenschaften* (human sciences). He saw in his contemporaries the grave sin of truncating and mutilating the *Geisteswissenschaften* by forcing them into the methodologies and paradigms of the *Naturwissenschaften*. He believes that the methodologies and paradigms of the *Naturwissenschaften* are hooked on the explanations based on the principle of causality, while those of the *Geisteswissenschaften* should deal with understanding the essentially unpredictable human nature. Dilthey thinks that if the Kantian critique of pure reason is the rational foundation of the *Naturwissenschaften*, then his hermeneutic project will be the rational foundation of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Dilthey starts with Schleiermacher's idea of romantic empathy as the basis of human understanding, but proceeds in a more stricter and rational way. If Schleiermacher balanced his attention to the praxis and theory aspects of hermeneutics, Dilthey considered only the theoretical side which he subdivided into pragmatic hermeneutics, or naïve interpretation, and methodic hermeneutics, or historical understanding.¹



As somebody who specialized in the theoretical aspect of hermeneutics, Dilthey had to deal with the problem of the possibility of human understanding. He adopted an earlier distinction between pragmatic and methodic hermeneutics, and respectively rooted them in his notions of *elementary* and *higher forms of understanding*.

PRAGMATIC HERMENEUTICS

Elementary Forms of Understanding

METHODIC HERMENEUTICS

Higher Forms of Understanding

For Dilthey, *elementary forms of understanding*, which is the foundation for pragmatic understanding, is in return based on his concept of *life-expression*. *Life expressions* are tangible human activities that in one way or another, intentionally or unintentionally manifest a given individual's mental contents. These expressions are classified into two groups. The first one of which consists of concepts, judgments and larger thought-structures. Dilthey explains: "As constituent parts of knowledge, separated from the experience in which they occurred, what they have in common is conformity to logic. They retain their identity, therefore, independently of their position in the context of thought." The second group of which consists of actions, which generally do not arise from an intention to convey or signify something, but is, as a rule, always purposive. Hence, there is a natural connection "between an action and some mental content which allows us to make probable inferences."

Elementary forms of understanding is possible because of the life-expressions' role in the pragmatic affairs of everyday life. When individuals inevitably have to interact and depend on each other for survival and development, they intentionally and unintentionally communicate through life-expressions. But what exactly makes these life-expressions meaningful as well as understandable to each an every individual. Dilthey thinks that circumscribing these life-expressions is the *objektiver Geist* (objective mind), a Hegelian term which he deployed to refer to the sum total of the intersubjective products and human creations, or the solidification of all and every life-expression of a given culture in a given time.¹ Influenced by Neo-Kantianism, he believes that works of art and literature, and all of human activities, are manifestations of the formal values and structures of feelings of their originary world. Texts and actions, therefore, are as much expressions of their culture as they are of their individual creators. It is in the world of the *objektiver Geist* that the individual "receives sustenance from earliest childhood," and it is through this world that the "understanding of other persons and their life-expressions takes place." It is the *objektiver Geist*, so to say, which acts as the overall context against which any given text or action can be understood. Within the context of the *objektiver Geist* not only will the life-expression be understood, but its mental content will be supplemented, yielding in the process a clearer and richer understanding. At this point, Dilthey presents the epistemological justification of all forms of contextual readings.

Dilthey believes that the *higher forms of understanding* presuppose the *lower forms of understanding*, as sentences and paragraphs presuppose the alphabet. The *lower forms of understanding* are the rudiments of the *higher forms of understanding*. The *higher forms of understanding*, the foundation of methodic hermeneutics, starts with the artificial reconstruction of the text's or action's original *objektiver Geist*. At this stage, Dilthey, who was not very keen on the praxis aspect of hermeneutics, is most probably endorsing the grammatical, psychological and comparative re-constructions of his intellectual predecessor, Schleiermacher, but like his master he also encountered a theoretical contradiction here. The reconstructed *objektiver Geist* is only capable of shedding light on the text's or action's generalities. As a collective mind, it will be incapable of understanding the text's or action's particular otherness. If Schleiermacher eludes this contradiction by taking the mystical leap into the text's otherness with his divinatory reconstruction, Dilthey was methodically more cautious.

In his effort to circumvent the theoretical contradiction, Dilthey deployed another category, the *Erlebnis*.² *Erlebnisse* are experiences that are vibrating with life, like love, anger, oppression,

revolution, beauty, pain, ambition, frustration and friendship, which Dilthey alleged to be understandable by all men of all times, based on the fact that all men of all times can experience them in one way or another. Instead of making the mystical leap into the text's otherness, Dilthey makes these *Erlebnisse* his moorings for his methodic hermeneutics. Dilthey says: "interpretation would be impossible if the expressions of life were totally alien. It would be unnecessary if there were nothing alien in them." Because of *Erlebnis*, the reader and the text share something in common to start with. The highest form of understanding happens with the reader's empathic reliving and recreating of the text's life experiences. Dilthey writes:

In a lyrical poem we can follow the pattern of lived experiences in the sequence of lines, not the real one which inspired the poet, but the one, which, on the basis of this inspiration, he places in the mouth of an ideal person. The sequence of scenes in play allows us to re-live the fragments from the life of the person on the stage. The narrative of the novelist or historian, which follows the historical course of events, makes us re-experience it. It is the triumph of re-experiences that it supplements the fragments of a course of events in such a way that we believe ourselves to be confronted by continuity.

‡ As the most authoritative biographer of Schleiermacher, Dilthey is oftentimes accused of inviting too much attention to Schleiermacher's divinatory re-construction at the expense of his rigorous grammatical, psychological and comparative re-constructions.

‡ For Dilthey the objektiver Geist's "realm extends from the style of life and the forms of social intercourse to the system of purposes which society has created for itself and to custom, law, state, religion, art, science and philosophy. For even the work of genius represents ideas, feelings and ideals commonly held in an age and environment."

‡ "Here, Dilthey makes an important distinction between two German words which can be translated as 'experience'. These are *Erfahrung* which is the common word meaning 'experience', and *Erlebnis*, a coined word from the infinitive *erleben* meaning 'to experience'. *Erlebnis* was virtually non-existent in German, until Dilthey used it in a special sense. *Erfahrung* is a general term but *Erlebnis* is a special term to connote our inner experiences or our 'lived experiences'." (Quito, *Philosophers of Hermeneutics*).

DIALECTICAL HERMENEUTICS

[F.P.A. Demeterio III](#)

MARTIN HEIDEGGER (1889-1976)

If Schleiermacher devoted his attention on the question concerning the possibility of a universal hermeneutics, and if Dilthey focused on the question concerning the epistemological foundation of hermeneutics, the German phenomenologist Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) was preoccupied with the question concerning the ontological foundation of hermeneutics, and was determined to prove that ultimately human understanding and existence are themselves hermeneutic. With such a project, Heidegger subsequently radicalized Dilthey's efforts of grounding the *Geisteswissenschaften* on hermeneutics by claiming that even the *Naturwissenschaften*, as an outcome of human understanding, are also grounded on hermeneutics. By combining Kierkegaardian and Nietzschean strains of existentialism with Husserlian phenomenology, this

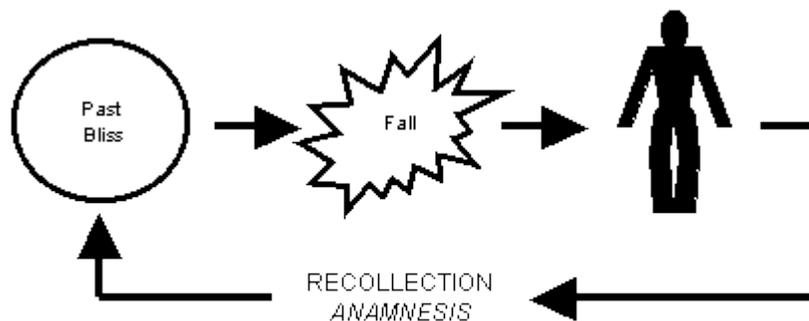


controversial, but extremely influential, contemporary thinker formulated his own distinctive hermeneutic theory in his celebrated work *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time).

Heidegger's Circular Ontology

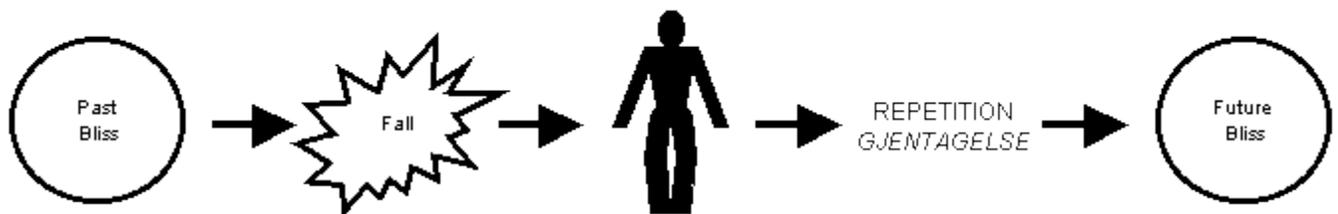
John Caputo, in his essay *Retrieval and the Circular Being of Dasein*, invites our attention to the circular motif in *Sein und Zeit*. He claims that there are three main circles in this dense and very difficult philosophical work: namely, the ontological circle, that demonstrated the circular nature of human existence; the hermeneutic circle, that proved the circular nature of human understanding; and the strategic circle, that applied the very same circular hermeneutics in investigating the question on the meaning of human existence.

In establishing the first circle—that is the ontological circle—Heidegger appropriated a religious theme present in Plato's mystical Pythagoreanism and in Kierkegaard's Christian philosophy: the idea of man's fallen nature. In Plato's philosophical anthropology, man is thought to be originally part of the Eternal One. But his birth into his earthly and material existence tainted, and made him forget about, his divine past. This is Plato's idea of man's fallen nature, and redemption for him can be attained by an ἀνάμνησις (anamnesis), meaning, a recollection of the past.



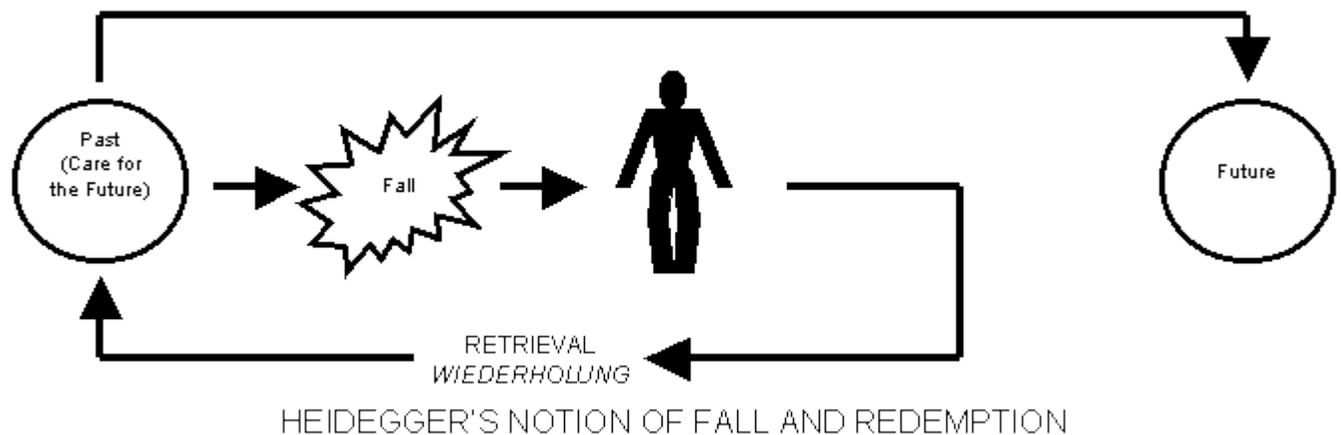
PLATO'S NOTION OF FALL AND REDEMPTION

As a Christian thinker, the Danish philosopher and theologian Soren Aabye Kierkegaard's (1813-1855) also believed that human nature is fallen. But his notion of redemption is radically opposite with that of Plato's backward moving anamnesis, for Kierkegaard thinks that Christian redemption can only be achieved by a spiraling movement towards the future, a Gjentagelse or repetition. Whereas Plato thought that eternity is essentially situated in the past, Kierkegaard believes that eternity is in the future.



KIERKEGAARD'S NOTION OF FALL AND REDEMPTION

Heidegger practically synthesized these two similar themes with diametrically opposed movements in his inquiry into the meaning of human existence. Like Plato and Kierkegaard, Heidegger also framed his investigation taking time as his backdrop. The past, the primeval and the originary concern of man is his care for the future, or his futuristic projection to actualize his possibilities. But the present, with all its hassles and other everyday concerns, tranquilizes this original concern for the future. Man subsequently forgets his futuristic projection, conforms to the worries, pleasantries and trivialities of the present, and go for the easy way. For Heidegger, falling means falling from the past as well as falling from the future. By losing his hold on the past and the future, man will start to drift into a life that is devoid of direction and meaning, but is filled with disillusionment, anxiety, and restlessness. This is what Heidegger meant when he claims that man has a fallen nature. Man, sooner or later, will lose his individuality and disappears into the same herd that was much detested by Nietzsche. If man has to search for his authentic existence, he has to retrieve his primeval and originary concern from his forgotten past. But such retrieval will only start to happen when man comes face to face with the idea of his own death as his ultimately real possibility. An authentic contemplation of his own death will forcefully remind him of his own individuality and the finiteness of his existence. This shock will make him retrieve his original concern and move on with his futuristic projection.



If redemption has a backward movement for Plato, and a forward movement for Kierkegaard, it has a circular movement for Heidegger. Here, redemption means *Wiederholung*, or retrieval, of the past's futuristic concern.

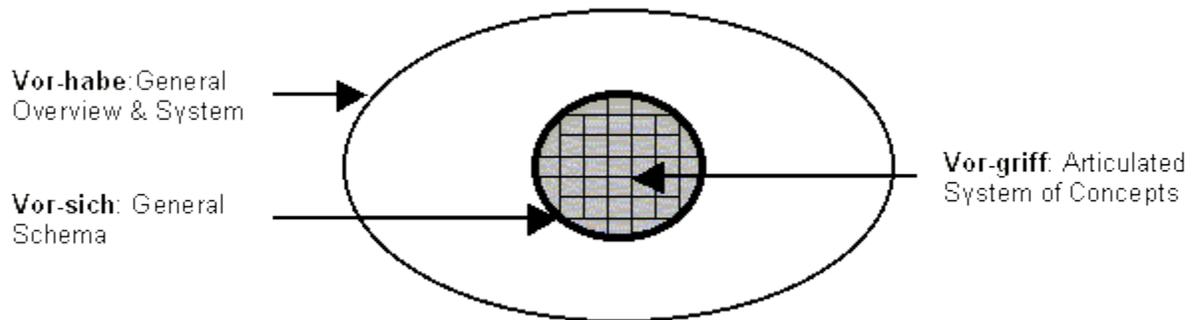
Heidegger's Circular Hermeneutics

Heidegger argues that since the Being of man is circular, his mode of understanding also is circular. This leads us, then, to *Sein und Zeit's* second circle, the hermeneutic circle. Here, Heidegger returns to the idea of man's fallen nature. Since man is falling and drifting away from his authentic being, the concepts that he sees are also concepts that are falling and drifting away from their authentic meanings. One of the hallmarks of man's fallen nature is his tendency to take the easy way, which in the sphere of understanding creates the tendency to passively accept the commonplace and superficial meaning of any given phenomenon. In relation to the fallen man, therefore, phenomena are also fallen in the sense that they are encrusted with inauthentic meanings. There are two basic ways in which phenomena can be hidden. Heidegger says: "In the first place, a phenomenon can be covered up in the sense that it is still quite undiscovered. It is neither known nor unknown. Moreover, a phenomenon can be buried over." The second type of being hidden refers to a phenomenon that has already been discovered but is being encrusted again with inauthentic meaning to the point of distortion. The second type of being hidden is the predominant form of covering, at the same time the more dangerous one for the reason of its being deceptive, misleading and stubborn.

With encrusted phenomena, interpretation has to commence by clearing the distorting crusts. Interpretation, in this sense, had to be violent. The violent procedures of *Abbau*, or *Destruktion*, are intended to shake loose and dismantle the crusts in order to retrieve the more originary meaning of a given phenomenon.¹ For Heidegger, this is phenomenology, based on the Greek idea of *αποφανεσθαι τα φαινόμενα* (*apophainesthai ta phainomena*), meaning "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself." At this point Heidegger still appears faithful to the phenomenological method established by his mentor Edmund Husserl (1855-1938). But a systematic bifurcation occurred that demarcated what was Husserlian and what eventually becomes distinctively Heideggerian. Heidegger could not accept the Husserlian requirement of *Einklamerng*, the bracketing of all subjectivities of the interpreter's life-world. In fact, Heidegger denied the possibility of such a transcendental procedure, and demonstrated instead that understanding and hermeneutics is mediated by the very same subjectivities of the interpreter's life-world.

For Heidegger *Verstehen* (understanding), which is primarily pragmatic, existential and non-methodic, is the starting point of *Auslegung* (interpretation). *Auslegung* is the *Ausarbeitung* (working out) of *Verstehen*. *Verstehen* and *Auslegung*, therefore, are different only in terms of quantitative degree. Qualitatively speaking, the two operations are the same. Both *Verstehen* and *Auslegung* proceed like fishing with nets, where the phenomenon is the fish and the net is the fore-structures of understanding. Just as the fisherman has to cast his net to get a catch, the subject also has to cast the fore-structures of his understanding over a phenomenon in order to capture its meaning. It is the casting (movement from the subject) and the capturing (movement towards the subject) that create the circular hermeneutic pattern.

For Heidegger, understanding has three forestructures: *Vor-habe* (fore-having), *Vor-sicht* (foresight), and *Vor-griff* (fore-grasping). *Vor-habe*, or fore-having, refers to the act of possessing in advance the holistic idea of the phenomenon under investigation including the system to which such a phenomenon belongs. It has something to do with the possession of a sweeping overview of the phenomenon. Graphically, we may represent the scope of *Vor-habe* with the outer circle of the configuration below.



Vor-sicht, or foresight, refers to act of seeing in advance the general schema of the phenomenon under investigation. Graphically, we may represent its scope with the inner circle of the configuration above. The difference between *Vor-habe* and *Vor-sicht* lies in the expanse of their focus. Whereas *Vor-habe* is concerned with the phenomenon and its circumscribing system, *Vor-sicht* is immediately concerned with the phenomenon itself. Lastly, *Vor-griff*, or fore-grasping, is the act of having in advance an articulated system of concepts useful in the capturing the details of the phenomenon under investigation. Graphically, we may represent its scope with the grids inside the inner circle of the configuration above. The difference between *Vor-griff* and *Vor-sicht* again lies in the expanse of their focus. Whereas *Vor-sicht* is concerned with the holistic idea, *Vor-griff* is concerned with the details.

Since Verstehen and Auslegung are qualitatively the same, both of them take these fore-structures as their starting point. Once cast, these forestructures will constitute the horizon, that will be filled later on by the phenomenon. The crucial difference between Verstehen and Auslegung is the fact that the latter involves a conscious accumulation of the hermeneutic forestructures.

Heidegger's third circle, the strategic circle, refers to his own application of the very same hermeneutic circle to unearth the mystery of human existence.

EMILIO BETTI'S OBJECTION

The integration of the objective and the subjective in the dialectical loop of Heidegger's hermeneutic circle was diagnosed by the modernist theologian and romanticist philosopher Emilio Betti (1890-1968) as eventually a subjective project. Though Betti accepted Heidegger's radical finding that human understanding must be an interplay of life-worlds, the former sees that such a process would ultimately neglect the total otherness as well as the autonomous logic of the text. The hermeneutic circle can only perceive the sameness of the other, and can be blind to the otherness of the other. In his work *Allgemeine Auslegungslehre als Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften* (Hermeneutics as the General Methodology of the Geisteswissenschaften), Betti wrote that Heidegger's circle is capable of "deriving only what is meaningful or reasonable to oneself and missing what is different and specific in the other or, as the case may be, bracketing it as a presumed myth."

EMILIO BETTI'S OBJECTION



With Heidegger's casting of the fore-structures of understanding and the capturing of a phenomenon's meaning, a circular pattern is formed. The German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (born 1900) gives this pattern a further turn, finally plotting the multiple loops of dialectical hermeneutics. Heidegger had a powerful influence on Gadamer. In the latter's essay *Reflections on my Philosophical Journey*, Gadamer admits: "writing remained a torment for me. I had the terrible feeling that Heidegger was standing behind me and looking over my shoulder." From Heidegger, he got his foundational idea that human understanding is historical. But his adherence to Heidegger's hermeneutic circle made him another target of Betti's objection that is founded on the radical difference between subjectivism and objectivism. But Gadamer, in his work *Wahrheit und Methode* (Truth and Method), eludes this objection, by pointing out that Betti's perceived distinction between subjectivism and objectivism is unwarranted. He claims that objectivism, Betti's ideal, is a double-faced stand. At one angle it appears to profess humility at the face of the object, and proclaims that it is the object that is the measure of truth. But at another angle it is pure human arrogance, as it struggles to secure the subject to become the ultimate locus and arbiter of truth. Gadamer explains that objectivism is in fact based on an extremely subjective conception of human understanding, which presumes that the human mind can objectively grasp the real. In this sense, objectivism is just a pretext of subjectivism.

By deconstructing the ideological moorings beneath the subjectivist-objectivist opposition, Gadamer is left with the more obvious tension between the subject and the object, or between the I and the other. Consequently, he also tried to disable this tension this time not by deconstructing its moorings but by constructing an entirely new model of the relationship between the subject

and the object, of the I and the other, through the idea of interpretation as a game. Gadamer argues that in playing a game, a player ceases to stand outside the game for he is totally and wholly participating in such a game. Consequently, he says in the same essay

For when one plays a game, the game itself is never a mere object; rather, it exists in and for those who play it, even if one is only participating as 'spectator'. In this context, I think, the inappropriateness of the concept of a 'subject' and an 'object' is evident.

In a game, the player loses the status of a subject just as the game loses the status of an object as they swirl into the dialectical logic of a play. This is for Gadamer the model that should be followed by the process of interpretation.

In *Wahrheit und Methode* Gadamer's greatest opponent is not Betti's objectivism but the Enlightenment's greatest prejudice: the prejudice against prejudice itself. What was originally a word that meant pre-judgment was transformed during the Enlightenment into a word that carries the most pejorative of connotations. Collectively speaking, prejudices are embodied in culture,¹ *sensus communis*,² judgment and taste. These humanist concepts are the essential parts of a body of practical knowledge that we inherit from tradition whose function is to make us understand and act in a given situation, to decide what is good or bad, and what is beautiful or not beautiful. These are the practical ideals of a community. But with the emergence of the Enlightenment's obsession for the for the scientific, the objective and the theoretical these humanist concepts of culture, *sensus communis*, judgment and taste were all seen as too subjective and were consequently anathematized. In the field of hermeneutics, this Enlightenment's prejudice against prejudice finds its fullest articulation in Husserl's methodic bracketing of all prejudices. But like his old master Heidegger, Gadamer sees the futility of such a Husserlian operation, and argues instead for the necessity of prejudice in human understanding and interpretation.

Not all prejudices, however, are useful. Gadamer makes a distinction between a blind prejudice, and an enabling prejudice. Yet he gives no foolproof set of rules in determining what particular type a given prejudice is. To know whether any given prejudice is blind or enabling can never be established by any mono-logical reflection, but only through the dialectical logic of the game. Gadamer's conception of the Heideggerian hermeneutic circle is precisely the process of sorting out the enabling prejudices from the blind ones.

What constitutes as the fore-structures of understanding for Heidegger, is what Gadamer calls the horizon. For him horizon means the set of given knowledge and prejudices that always circumscribes the subject, forming the starting point of human understanding. But unlike Heidegger, Gadamer is emphasizing the mutability and revisable nature of this horizon. This is the precise moment when Gadamer plots a second loop, as well as the other succeeding loops, over the Heideggerian hermeneutic circle, when he claims that a horizon can change by an exposure to other horizons. His model of the interaction between two subjective horizons is that of a dialogue. The aim of this dialogue is an eventual *Horizontverschmelzung*, or fusion of horizons, of two subjects as they accomplish through a common language a sharing of their prejudices.

Gadamerian hermeneutics is modeled after this same dialogue, and is aimed towards the same *Horizontverschmelzung*. But an obvious question confronts us at this point: how can we talk of a dialogue between a subject-that is, the reader or the interpreter-and an object-that is the text? How can a dialogue ensue between a person and a non-person? In the essay *Reflections on my Philosophical Journey*, Gadamer rhetorically raised this same question in the following manner?

But how is it with the artwork, and especially with the linguistic work of art? How can one speak here of a dialogical structure of understanding? The author is not present as

an answering partner, nor is there an issue to be discussed as to whether it is this way or that. Rather, the text, the artwork, stands in itself.

He insists that interpretation is indeed a dialogue, though dialogue here must be taken in a somewhat nuanced fashion. Between the subject/interpreter and an object/text, the dialogue takes place during the process of reading. When the former, with his/her given horizon, approaches the latter, and its given horizon, the former can reflect on his/her own horizon and be able to attain a critical level of self-consciousness. Along the process of struggle over meaning, the subject/interpreter may repeatedly transcend and modify his own horizon while simultaneously pulling the object/text from its initial horizon until some sort of a Horizontverschmelzung is achieved. In *Wahrheit und Methode*, Gadamer says:

He projects before himself a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the latter emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. The working-out of this fore-project, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there.

Thus, Gadamer is clear that the hermeneutic circle does not consist of a single loop, as suggested by Heidegger, but a number of loops until the fullest possible fusion is achieved.

With Gadamer's dialogue and Horizontverschmelzung, the temporal and cultural distances, which were perceived as dangerous epistemological precipices by both Schleiermacher and Dilthey, would no longer appear destructive to human understanding and interpretation. On the contrary, they are now seen as constructive to human understanding and interpretation. Cultural and temporal distances in effect can function as filters that discriminate the classical and the enduring prejudices from the mass of time-bound, and culturally idiosyncratic prejudices of any given text. With this, Gadamer liberated the text from its bondage to the authorial intention and declared it fully autonomous. In the field of historical investigation this Gadamerian stance over the Romanticist epistemological precipices is what is termed as effective-historical consciousness. In *Wahrheit und Methode*, he clarifies this concept:

If we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, we are always subject to the effects of effective-history. It determines in advance both what seems to us worth enquiring about and what will appear as an object of investigation, and we more or less forget half of what is really there...

The highly nationalistic trend in current Filipino historiography—a historiography that is busily engaged with the re-interpretation of history from our own perspective and from the point of view of our current problems and concerns, a historiography aptly labelled by Renato Constantino as partisan scholarship—finds its epistemological foundation and justification from this same concept of effective-historical consciousness.

Gadamer's notion of dialogue was actually modeled after the Hegelian dialectical movement of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. But there is a glaring difference between Gadamerian dialogue and Hegelian dialectics. For Hegel, dialectics is ultimately the plot-structure of his grand narrative that culminates with the attainment of the most sublime truth, the absolute spirit. But Gadamer opted to banish the Hegelian truth at the end of his dialogue. The ironies of the title *Wahrheit und Methode* unveil themselves at this point.⁴ First, the key word *Wahrheit* seems to promise truth, as we ordinarily understand truth to be. But Gadamer's notion of truth is radically different from that of Hegel's idea encapsulated in the phrase *das Wahr ist das Ganz* (truth is the whole), and much more from the classical idea embodied in the definition *adequatio intellectus rei* (conformity of the mind with the thing). His idea of truth is basically Heideggerian. He says: "what man needs is not only a persistent asking of ultimate questions, but the sense of what is feasible,

what is possible, what is correct, here and now!" His truth is always existential, the truth of the here and now. He even thinks that capturing the Hegelian, or the classical, truth, or the pretension of capturing such truth can be dangerous for humanity. Gadamer cited that science's obsession for such truth is transforming science into a total technocracy, heralding "the 'cosmic night' of the forgetfulness of being."^x

Second, the key word *Methode* seems to promise a method, as we ordinarily understand method to be. Surprisingly, the work does not deliver any method at all. Gadamer is determined to detach understanding and interpretation from the Enlightenment's obsession for the objective and the theoretical, that presupposes a rigorous and mathematical methodology. Ultimately the search for truth, in the Gadamerian sense, is not methodic endeavor but an inter-subjective as well as practical project. In this sense, understanding and interpretation resemble Aristotle's epistemological idea of *phronesis* (practical wisdom), which Gadamer defines, in his work *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, as "a knowledge within the concrete situation of existence." *Phronesis* is Aristotle's practical science that is intimately connected with moral judgment. Similar to moral judgment, interpretive judgment can happen only during the same moment of interpretation, and outside this concrete and existential moment interpretive judgment is nothing but an empty schema. Both *phronesis* and interpretation are things that do not possess the teachability of scientific methodology, but can only be exercised and perfected in *praxis*. "This implies," Gadamer says, in his the essay *Reflections on my Philosophical Journey*, "an inner link with *ethos*." Moral judgment, understanding and interpretation are an *ethos*, a way of life. Just as moral judgment can be achieved and perfected in a morally upright life, understanding and interpretation can be achieved and perfected in life devoted to understanding and interpretation. *Hermeneutics*, in this sense, is closer to art than to science, and closer to the art of life itself than to any other art. In the end, *Wahrheit und Methode* declares that *Wahrheit* can never be captured by any *Methode*, capturing the Gadamerian *Wahrheit* is reserved for the *phronetic* act of dialogue.

Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy ultimately is not a method, but a pathway of experience. It is the cure against objectivism's arrogance. Its doctrine of humility does not consist of proclaiming that it is the object that is the measure of truth, but of acknowledging the subject's inherent epistemological and horizontal limitations and of opening the subject's horizon to conversation. "This means, however," says Gadamer in the same essay, "constantly recognizing in advance the possibility that your partner is right, even recognizing the possible superiority of your partner." Indeed, hermeneutics is a way of life.

ⁱ "Abbau is a suggestive and less misleading word than *Destruktion*, which implies a sheer leveling or razing. *Abbau* means a dismantling or undoing of a surface apparatus which has been allowed to build up over an ordinary experience—a dismantling not in order to level but in order to retrieve. Its function then is positive, to break through the encrusted in order to recover the living experience, which has since grown old and stiff." Caputo, "Retrieval and the Circular Being of *Dasein*."

ⁱⁱ *Kultur*, or more appropriately *Bildung*, which he defines, following Wilhelm von Humboldt, as "something both higher and more inward, namely the attitude of mind which, from the knowledge and feeling of the total intellectual and moral endeavor, flows harmoniously into sensibility and character." Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*.

ⁱⁱⁱ It will be misleading to translate *sensus communis* common sense. According to Quito the correct equivalent of this term is "the French *les bon sens*, the good practical judgment." Quito, *The Philosophers of Hermeneutics*.

^{iv} Gadamer is aware that this title rings with ironies. In his essay *Reflections on my Philosophical Journey*, he explains how he ended up using this title. "The question of the title of the book was difficult enough. My colleagues in philosophy both in Germany and outside

Germany expected it to be labeled philosophical hermeneutics. But when I suggested this as the title, the publisher asked: "What is that?" Gadamer, Reflections on my Philosophical Journey.

* Gadamer shares the same sentiments with Heidegger who, in his work *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, eloquently assailed the triumph of science and technology which he alleged to have brought about "the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the transformation of men into a mass, the hatred and suspicion of everything free and creative" (die Flucht der Gotter, de Zerstörung der Erde, die Vermassung der Menschen, der Vorrang des Mittelmässigen).



CRITICAL HERMENEUTICS

[F.P.A. Demeterio III](#)

JURGEN HABERMAS (1929)



The evolution of the hermeneutic theorizing from Schleiermacher down to Gadamer, so far, had been focused on the problem of traversing, or not traversing, the historical and cultural distances that separates the interpreter and the text. A searing implication of such a limited focus would be the superfluity of hermeneutics once the two distances are taken away from the picture. The philosopher and sociologist Jurgen Habermas (born 1929) gave a new direction to both hermeneutic theory and praxis when he insists on the necessity of hermeneutics even without the two Romanticist epistemological precipices. As belonging to the second generation of theorists and critics of the *Institut fur Sozialforschung*-or the Frankfurt School, a center that has built a reputation for its strategic conjoining of Marxist inspired philosophical reflection with the emerging methodologies of the social sciences-Habermas shares the Institute's foundational ideas that knowledge is a product of the society which is often mystified and reified, and that through critical reflection such mystifications and reifications can be overcome. In his 1968 work *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (Knowledge and Human Interest), he already sketched the pathway of his critical hermeneutics when he delineated the three generic domains of human interest: namely, the technical, the practical and the emancipatory interests.

TYPE OF HUMAN INTEREST	RESEARCH METHOD	KIND OF KNOWLEDGE
TECHNICAL	Positivist (Empirical-Analytic Methods)	Instrumental Knowledge
PRACTICAL	Interpretive Research (Hermeneutic Method)	Practical Knowledge
EMANCIPATORY	Critical Method	Emancipatory Knowledge

Technical human interest makes use of empirical-analytic methods of positivism to yield the instrumental knowledge of the natural sciences, while practical human interest makes use of hermeneutic method to yield practical knowledge. Habermas places critical hermeneutics one step deeper than the conventional hermeneutics in the sense that it belongs to the emancipatory domain of human interest that makes use of critical theory in order to achieve emancipatory knowledge. Like the general trend among the Frankfurt style investigations, the critical hermeneutics that Habermas is proposing is a potent concoction of theory, praxis and a program of action designed to counteract the oppressive effects of the social construction of knowledge.

Habermas' Constructive Debate with Gadamer

Habermas' serious and sustained engagement with the theory and praxis of hermeneutics commenced after his shift from a critique of knowledge, that still characterizes the *Erkenntnis und Interesse*, to a critique of language which was occasioned by his internecine debate with Hans-Georg Gadamer that lasted for a number of decades. First, Habermas criticized Gadamer for being too eager to submit understanding and interpretation to the authority of tradition. With the former's Marxist background that predisposes him to perceive tradition as the receptacle of immense ideological distortions, mystifications and reifications, the latter's action was simply horrifying. Second, Habermas derided Gadamer's refusal to theorize on hermeneutic methodology. Satisfied with his mere presentation of the extremely abstract concepts of horizons and their fusions, Gadamer, Habermas claims, only justified and reinforced the denigration heaped by the positivists upon hermeneutics. Third, in reaction to Gadamer's Heideggerian principle regarding the futility of getting rid of prejudices, Habermas insists that hermeneutics can overcome them through a critical and self-reflective methodology. If Gadamer tried to dissolve the tension between objectivism and subjectivism, Habermas reinstated the reign of objectivism in hermeneutics.

The above-mentioned criticisms represent only some minor skirmishes of the Habermas-Gadamer debate. Habermas' greatest battle against Gadamer pierces through the heart of Gadamerian hermeneutics to become the foundation of Habermasian critical hermeneutics. Habermas claims that the radical problem with Gadamerian hermeneutics is that it assumes that every dialogue between a subject and an object, or between two subjects, is a genuine and authentic dialogue, and that every resultant *Horizontverschmelzung* is a genuine and authentic *Horizontverschmelzung*. Gadamer failed to anticipate the possibility of pseudo-dialogue and pseudo-consensus. He was unaware that the free flowing game of understanding and interpretation can be possibly warped by the dominating, violent and distorting forces of ideology that can be rarefied and subtle to be unseen and unfelt by the players themselves. Habermas agrees with Gadamer that a dialogue has to be a free interaction between two agents. But once it gets infected by ideology, its foundational freedom is destroyed and any resultant consensus would by logical implication be a pseudo-consensus. Ideology can permeate the totality of a life-world, or the horizon, but it can also weave itself into the very fabric of language. Thus, language, which is the indispensable tool of the Gadamerian dialogue, becomes the carrier of ideological infection. Gadamer, in effect, emerges as a caricature of dreaded surgeon with a chest of infected medical instruments.

Habermas, agrees with Gadamer that playing the game of interpretation meant playing the game of language. But playing the game of language for the former meant playing the game of domination, violence and distortion. If hermeneutics is geared towards truth, Habermas insists that it has to stand outside the play of the game as an objective spectator. The interpreter has to make a non-participative stand of an external observer to be able to diagnose accurately the sinister processes of ideology and language. But since both ideology and language pervades the life-world even that of the most critical intellectual, Habermas has to find an Archimedian point from which he could pry open the veiled secrets of ideology and language. He proved to be a

luckier person than Archimedes himself for the fact that he was able to discover not only one but two such points, specifically in Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxist style critique of ideology.

Freudian and Marxist Foundations

The psychoanalytic theory of the Austrian physician Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), provided Habermas with a model for treating the pathologies emanating from the ideology and language's systematic warping of the life-world. Like a psychoanalyst who encourages his clients to discursively counteract the maladies brought about by the unconscious memories and drives, critical hermeneutics has to encourage humanity to discursively counteract the oppressive mystifications and reifications of knowledge. The Marxist tradition of critique of ideology, the dominant form of investigation at the Frankfurt School, provided him with another model for peering into the foundational structures of a society and making a hypothetical view on the process of the social construction of knowledge. "Consciousness does not determine life, life determines consciousness," the German philosopher and economist Karl Marx (1818-1883) wrote in his work *The German Ideology*. But among the competing modes of consciousness and expressions in any given society, there are the dominant and the dominated ones. The dominant modes of consciousness and expressions, the consciousness of the ruling class, constitute the ideology of a given society, and it functions to legitimize the power and serve the interests of the dominant class. The Marxist style critique of ideology is geared towards the unmasking of the ideological deceptions of the dominant consciousness and expressions, and is premised on the emancipatory interest of liberating the dominated classes.

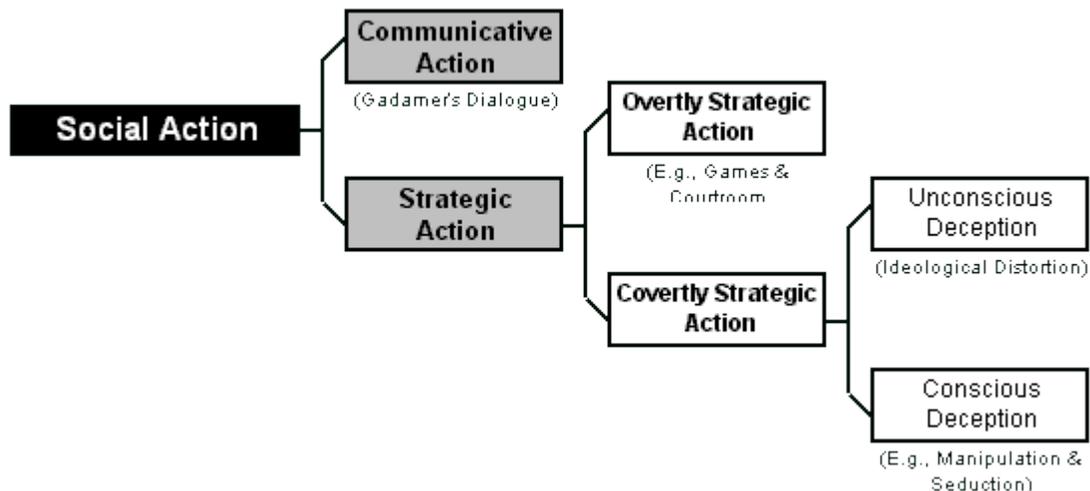
With the Freudian and Marxist traditions behind him, Habermas constructed his hermeneutic theory that starts with the assumption that every meaning brought about by consensus is a suspect of being a product of pseudo-consensus, and therefore of being a pseudo-meaning. The task of critical hermeneutics, therefore, is to search for authentic consensus and meaning. Since the process of reaching a consensus is ideally a rational venture, Habermas borrowed the idea of rationality developed by the German economist and social historian Max Weber (1864-1920), in particular the *concepts of action* and *rational action*.

The Theory of Communicative Action

Rational action, in its barest sense, is a planned and calculated action that is designed to achieve a given goal. It is usually the easiest and the surest procedure of attaining the maximum possible goal. Though clearly not all human actions are rational, most of the actions upon which the modern world is founded are rational actions, like business, scientific research, jurisprudence and bureaucratic management. Rational action can either be oriented towards success, or it can be oriented towards authentic understanding. Rational action can also have a social scope, or a non-social scope. Consequently, based on such distinctions there are three types of rational action, as shown by the chart below.

		ORIENTATION	
		Oriented to Success	Oriented to Real Understanding
SCOPE	Non-Social	Instrumental Action	
	Social	Strategic Action	Communicative Action

First is *instrumental action* which is a rational action with a non-social scope and is oriented towards success. Technological rationality is the modern day paragon of this type of rational action. Second is *strategic action* which is a rational action with a social scope and is oriented towards success. Strategic action has a social scope in the sense that it is a rational action that is contextualized in a field where other rational agents are also situated. Strategic action is necessarily a competitive and planned action aimed to quash, to surpass, or to circumvent the actions of the other agents. Third is *communicative action* which is the only type of rational action that is oriented towards real understanding. Because this action is also contextualized in a field where other rational agents are also situated, it has a social scope, and properly speaking it is intersubjective. Its specific difference with strategic action is that communicative action is never competitive. Though communicative action is rational, it is based on humility and is motivated not with selfishness and egoism, but with intersubjectively cooperative understanding. Habermas narrowed down his attention on rational actions with social scope: namely, on strategic action and communicative action. Strategic action, as graphically represented by the chart below, can be further classified into overtly strategic action, and covertly strategic action which in return can be classified into unconscious deception and conscious deception.



Overtly strategic actions refer to strategic actions that are known as such to both competing agents, like in games and court proceedings where all participating players and lawyers are aware that they are engaged in a competitive proceeding. *Covertly strategic actions* refer to strategic actions that are either totally unknown as such by both competing agents, or known as such only to the subjects of such actions. The first type of covertly strategic actions are the *unconscious deceptions* brought about by ideological distortions wherein practically all participating subjects are unaware of the covert strategic agenda. The second type of covertly strategic actions are the *conscious deceptions*, like manipulation and seduction, wherein only the subject of the action is ideally aware of the covert strategic agenda that is being pursued.

Whereas, communicative action needs critical hermeneutics to attain the mutually desired goal of understanding, strategic action--in particular the unconscious and the conscious deceptions--needs critical hermeneutics in order to unmask any of its underlying sinister agenda. Since both the communicative and the strategic actions are embodied in language, critical hermeneutics has to focus its attention to the latter. This realization marks Habermas' famous linguistic turn, when he shifted his concern from critique of knowledge to critique of language, which subsequently brought the Marxist style critique of ideology into the field of linguistics.

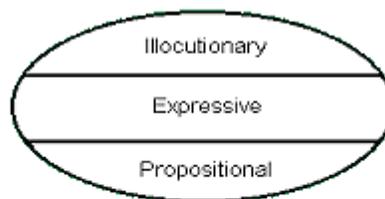
Habermas' Hermeneutic Method of Universal Pragmatics

The discipline of linguistics has six basic branches: namely, 1) phonetics, the study of the physical sounds of a language; 2) phonology, the study of the sound system of a language; 3) morphology, the study of the structure of words; 4) syntax, the study of the structure of sentences; 5) semantics, the study of the meaning of words and sentences; and 6) pragmatics, the study of the strategies that people use in carrying out communicative business in specific context. Habermas connects his critical hermeneutics with pragmatics, which, as having been accepted as a legitimate part of linguistics only during the second half of the 20th century, is linguistics' youngest branch. Pragmatics' late emergence and acceptance is probably caused by its radical deviation from the normal object of linguistics established by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857-1913) historic distinction between *langue* (language) and *parole* (speech). *Langue* is supposed to be the structure, or the template, of language that ideally exists outside a particular language's everyday usage, which is the *parole*. For Saussure, *parole* is the chaotic and unwieldy mass of everyday utterances that is unfit to be the object of a science such as linguistic. *Langue*, on the other hand, is orderly and ideally object of scientific investigation. Among the six branches of linguistics, it is only pragmatics that mustered enough courage to tame and study *parole*, the rest preferred the stable *langue*. However, Habermas did not just adapt pragmatics, he made finer tunings that suited the discipline into his critical needs. He was not really interested with pragmatics' too mundane concern for the Saussurian *parole*. On the contrary he is interested with the underlying principles that govern the pragmatic deployment of language. By looking for the order, structure and templates in the everyday utterances, he overturned pragmatics. By treating the *parole* like *langue*, he created what he calls *universal pragmatics*. If pragmatics starts with the empirical data gathering methods, Habermas' universal pragmatics is premised on a rational reconstruction of the strategies that people use in carrying out communicative businesses within specific contexts.

The universal pragmatics' project of reconstructing the ideal communicative transaction is founded on three key theories, two belonging to the Anglo-Saxon philosophical-linguistic tradition, and one to German psycho-linguistics. The first of this three foundational theories is the three-world schema proposed by the British philosopher Sir Karl Raimund Popper (1902-1994). Popper theorized that man simultaneously exists in three distinct worlds: namely, 1) the physical world of nature, 2) the internal world of ideas, thoughts, and emotions, and 3) the social world of inter-subjectivity. From this Popperian schema, Habermas draws out the insight that if there are substantial distinctions between its three worlds, then there are substantial distinctions between the languages deployed with reference to, or within the context of, each of these worlds. To pursue this initial insight, Habermas makes us of his second foundational theory, that of the speech acts as initiated by the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and developed by his British student John Langshaw Austin (1911-1960). The speech act theory, specifically the one proposed by Austin, explored the complex cluster of things that we perform with speech, which can be classified into: 1) *locutionary act* that refers to the simple speech act of generating meaningful and grammatical sounds; 2) *illocutionary act* that refers to the speech act of employing language for some purpose, like offering an advice, taking an oath, insulting, ordering, promising, begging, forbidding, challenging, apologizing, instructing, and others; and 3) *perlocutionary act* that refers to the speech act's actual effect on those to whom the speech act is

intended. Habermas believes that the speech act theory offers a pathway for his universal pragmatics in the sense that it deals with some general rules of communicative competence that are geared towards "the conditions for a happy employment of sentences in utterances."¹ For the reasons that universal pragmatics is concerned with the analysis of language deployed as social action--specifically, strategic and communicative actions--and such deployment necessarily is illocutionary, among the three types of speech acts proposed by Austin, it is the illocutionary act that interests Habermas most.

Habermas, however, noticed that Austin's speech act theory has a fundamental shortcoming, in the sense that it failed to realize that speech acts can be linked to a validity analysis that is far more complex than the sheer analysis of propositional truth. Habermas thinks that there are other dimensions of validity that are distinct from, but nonetheless equally important and legitimate as, the dimension of validity offered by propositional truth. Though the analysis of propositional truth is perfectly suited for language that is deployed in reference to and within the context of the Popperian physical world, it may not be well adapted as the criterion for analyzing validity claims of languages deployed with reference to and within the context of the other two Popperian worlds. Going back to the initial insight that if there are substantial distinctions between the Popperian scheme's three worlds, then there are substantial distinctions between the languages deployed in reference to and within the context of each of these worlds, but how come that philosophy of language up to the time of Austin and linguistics seem to be moored on a single and monological criterion for analyzing validity that is not sensitive to language's substantial differentiation. To move through the pathway carved by the speech act theory, Habermas makes use of his third foundational theory that belongs to the German psychologist and linguist Karl Buhler. In his 1934 work *Sprachtheorie*, Buhler brought attention to the fact that language can be communicatively deployed in three ways: namely, 1) to represent facts about the real world; 2) to express the intentions and experiences of the speaker; and 3) to establish a relationship with the hearer. Buhler's linguistic functions cast a striking parallelism with Popper's multiple world schema. Directly following Buhler, and indirectly Popper, Habermas reconceptualized language deployed as social action, as an Austinian illocutionary speech act, into something that is structured by three components: the propositional, the expressive, and the illocutionary components.



Structure of a Language Deployed as Social Action, as an Illocutionary Speech Act

For Habermas, though these structural components are present in every illocutionary speech act, their presence vary in predominance. Based on which structural component is the most predominant, there are therefore three types of illocutionary speech acts which Habermas calls constative, regulative, and avowals or representatives.

Type of Illocutionary Speech Act	Predominant Structural Component	Popper's World	Buhler's Function	Mode of Communication
Constatives	Propositional	Physical World	Representation of facts	Cognitive
Avowals or Representatives	Expressive	Inner world	Disclosure of speaker's subjectivity	Expressive
Regulatives	Illocutionary	Social World	Establishment of legitimate social relations	Interactive

Constative speech act is structurally predominated by its propositional component, refers to the Popperian physical world, does the Buhlerian function of representing facts, and has a primarily cognitive mode of communication. Avowal, or representative, speech act is structurally predominated by its expressive component, refers to the Popperian inner world, does the Buhlerian function of disclosing the speaker's subjectivity, and has a primarily expressive mode of communication. Regulative speech act is structurally predominated by its illocutionary component, refers to the Popperian social world, does the Buhlerian function of establishing legitimate social relations, and has a primarily interactive mode of communication. These different types of illocutionary speech acts demonstrate the substantial differences of language deployed with reference to and within the context of each of the Popperian worlds, by highlighting their structural, functional, and modal differences. It is but a consequence of this obvious substantial differences that the analysis for validity must thread three separate pathways preserving and respecting the illocutionary speech acts differences. Accordingly, constatives are analyzed in terms of their acts of reference and predication; avowals, or representatives, are analyzed in terms of their intention; and regulatives are analyzed in terms of their way of establishing interpersonal relations. Whereas Austin's speech act theory analyzes the validity of speech acts by covering their circumscribing institutional set-up and power relations, Habermas insisted that analyzing the speech acts' validity can be done independently of their contextual circumstances. Such an insistence can only be done by identifying the specific validity criterion for each of the three types of illocutionary speech acts. We have already alluded that for constative speech acts, truth (*Wahrheit*) is its specific validity criterion, Habermas assigned truthfulness (*Wahrhaftig*), or sincerity, as the specific validity criterion for avowal, or representative, speech acts, and rightness (*Richtigkeit*) or appropriateness for regulative speech acts.

Type of Illocutionary Speech Act	Predominant Structural Component	Popper's World	Buhler's Function	Mode of Communication	Thematic Validity Claim
Constatives	Propositional	Physical World	Representation of facts	Cognitive	Truth <i>Wahrheit</i>
Avowals or Representatives	Expressive	Inner world	Disclosure of speaker's subjectivity	Expressive	Truthfulness <i>Wahrhaftigkeit</i>
Regulatives	Illocutionary	Social World	Establishment of legitimate social relations	Interactive	Rightness <i>Richtigkeit</i>

Thus, instead of being moored on a single and monological criterion, universal pragmatics presents different criteria for the evaluation illocutionary speech acts that are well adapted to

each of these speech acts' distinct referential, structural, functional and modal constitution. Constatives are primarily evaluated by discerning whether their proposition is true or not; avowals or representatives are primarily evaluated by discerning whether their intention has truthfulness or not, or has sincerity or not; and regulatives are primarily evaluated by discerning whether their way of establishing interpersonal relationships is appropriate or not. Illocutionary speech acts for Habermas are primarily evaluated in terms of their most predominant structural component--that is either, propositional, expressive or illocutionary. But since for every predominant structural component, there are other two non-predominant structural components, universal pragmatics asserts that these two other remaining structural components must also be analyzed and evaluated. In this sense, every illocutionary speech act directly raises a single claim to validity, and indirectly raises two other claims to validity. It follows that every illocutionary speech act has to be analyzed primarily by a single validity criterion--corresponding to the speech act's predominant structural component--and has to be analyzed secondarily by two other validity criteria--corresponding to the act's non-predominant structural component. In other words, universal pragmatics stipulates that every illocutionary speech act can be evaluated, and must be evaluated, from three different perspectives, casting in the process a fine mesh that is theoretically designed to detect and rectify the sinister agenda of strategic action.

Universal Pragmatics and Habermas' Critical Agenda

After going through the abstruse pathway of universal pragmatics we might wonder how this theory is related to the Habermas' primordial concern for the critique of ideology? Universal pragmatics is in fact related to Habermas' concern in two ways. First and foremost, universal pragmatics present itself as a standard, or a norm, against which all strategic actions have to be critiqued in order to unveil their conscious or unconscious agenda and will to power. By subjecting every strategic action to a triple analysis for truth, sincerity, and appropriateness, the critical interpreter can easily reveal the action as strategic, and can pin-point in what way does action systematically distort the communication process. Any illocutionary speech act that fails in just one of these triple tests, is immediately suspect of being a conduit of strategic elements, and ideological distortions. Universal pragmatics, as envisioned by Habermas, is allegedly capable of tracing even the deep-seated ideological elements that are already woven into the fabric of language. This is the critical hermeneutics of Habermas in its strictest sense of the word. A method that technically, logically and linguistically refined the hermeneutics of suspicion that dates back to the great masters Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.

The second way in which universal pragmatics is related to Habermas' primordial concern for the critique of ideology moves away from the pessimistic world of the three masters of suspicion and towards the brighter world where rationality can possible reign. Universal pragmatics offers an ideal unto which, and a set of tools with which, communicative action may proceed. If Habermas' critical hermeneutics is suspicious and pessimistic, his theory of communicative action is almost utopian and highly optimistic, that makes his non-defeatist idea of rationality rather conspicuous in the postmodern world within which he theorizes. Habermas revives the Gadamerian dialogue, which he radically disabled previously, by injecting universal pragmatics to sterilized the Gadamerian horizons as well as the Gadamerian language from ideological infections and unconscious will to power. Habermas is Gadamerian in the sense that he has faith in dialogue as the ultimate road to rationality. He contextualized the Gadamerian dialogue in the parameters of an ideal speech situation, wherein all the communicative agents have an equal opportunity to participate in a fair dialogue, assert, defend or question all and any of the speech acts claim to validity, where interaction is not contrained by social hierarchies and unilaterally binding norms, and where the communicative agents are free from strategic agenda.

¹ Jurgen Habermas, "What is Universal Pragmatics" in Thomas McCarthy, trans. *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979),p. 26.



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