15

Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Ideology-Critique

Hans-Georg Gadamer

Translated by G. B. Hess and R. E. Palmer

Philosophical hermeneutics takes as its task the opening up of the hermeneutical dimension in its full scope, showing its fundamental significance for our entire understanding of the world and thus for all the various forms in which this understanding manifests itself: from interhuman communication to manipulation of society; from personal experience by the individual in society to the way in which he encounters society; and from the tradition as it is built of religion and law, art and philosophy, to the revolutionary consciousness that unhinges the tradition through emancipatory reflection.

Despite this vast scope and significance, however, individual explorations necessarily start from the very limited experiences and fields of experience. My own effort, for instance, went back to Dilthey's philosophical development of the heritage of German romanticism, in that I too made the theory of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (humanistic sciences and social sciences) my theme. But I hope to have placed it on a new and much broader footing linguistically, ontologically, and aesthetically; for the experience of art can answer the prevailing presumption of historical alienation in the humanistic disciplines, I believe, with its own overriding and victorious claim to contemporaneousness, a

claim that lies in its very essence. This should be evident already from the essential linguisticality of all human experience of the world, which has as its own way of fulfillment a constantly self-renewing contemporaneousness. I maintain that precisely this contemporaneousness and this linguisticality point to a truth that goes questioningly behind all knowledge and anticipatingly before it.

And so it was unavoidable that in my analysis of the universal linguisticality of man's relation to the world the limitations of the fields of experience from which the investigation took its start would unwittingly predetermine the result. Indeed, it paralleled what happened in the historical development of the hermeneutical problem. It came into being in encounter with the written tradition that demanded translation, for the tradition had become estranged from the present as a result of such factors as temporal distance, the fixity of writing, and the sheer inertia of permanence. Thus it was that the many-layered problem of translation became for me the model for the linguisticality of all human behavior in the world. From the structure of translation was indicated the general problem of making what is alien our own. Yet further reflection on the universality of hermeneutics eventually made clear that the model of translation does not, as such, fully come to grips with the manifoldness of what language means in man's existence.[1] Certainly in translation one finds the tension and release that structure all understanding and understandability, but it ultimately derives from the universality of the hermeneutical problem. It is important to realize that this phenomenon is not secondary in human existence, and hermeneutics is not to be viewed as a mere subordinate discipline within the arena of the *Geisteswissenschaften*.

The universal phenomenon of human linguisticality also unfolds in dimensions other than those that would appear to be directly concerned with the hermeneutical problem, for hermeneutics reaches into all the contexts that determine and condition the linguisticality of the human experience of the world. Some of those have been touched upon in my *Truth and Method*, for instance, the *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein* (consciousness of effective history, or the consciousness in which history is ever at work) was presented in a conscious effort to shed light on the idea of language in some phases of its history. And of course linguisticality extends into many different dimensions not mentioned in *Truth and Method*.[2]

In rhetoric, linguisticality is attested to in a truly universal form, one that is essentially prior to the hermeneutical and almost represents something like the "positive" as over against the "negative" of linguistic interpretation. And in this connection the relationship between rhetoric and hermeneutics is a matter of great interest.[3] In the social sciences, one finds linguisticality deeply woven into the sociality of human existence, so that the theorists of the social sciences are now becoming interested in the hermeneutical approach. Preeminently, Jürgen Habermas has recently established a relationship between philosophical hermeneutics and the logic of the social sciences in his significant contribution to the *Philosophische Rundschau*,[4] evaluating this relationship from within the epistemological interests of the social sciences. This relationship too raises important questions as to the proper interests and purposes of hermeneutical reflection as compared with those characteristic of the sciences and social sciences.

It seems advisable, then, if not imperative, to take up the question of the interdependence of rhetoric, hermeneutics, and sociology as regards the universalities that run through all three and to try to shed some light on the various kinds of legitimacy possessed by these elements. This endeavor is the more important in view of the fact that the claim to being strictly a science is in all three cases rendered rather ambiguous because of an obvious relationship to *praxis*. Of course, this relationship applies most openly and clearly to rhetoric and hermeneutics; but it also applies to sociology, as we shall see presently.

For it is clear that rhetoric is not mere theory of forms of speech and persuasion; rather, it can develop out of a native talent for practical mastery, without any theoretical reflection about ways and means. Likewise, the art of understanding, whatever its ways and means may be, is not dependent on an explicit awareness of the rules that guide and govern it. It builds, as does rhetoric, on a natural power that everyone possesses to some degree. It is a skill in which one gifted person may surpass all others, and theory can at best only tell us why. In both rhetoric and hermeneutics, then, theory is subsequent to that out of which it is abstracted; that is, to *praxis*.

Historically it is worthy of note that while rhetoric belongs to the earliest Greek philosophy, hermeneutics came to flower in the romantic era as a consequence of the modern dissolution of firm bonds with tradition. Of course, hermeneutics occurs in earlier times and forms, but even in these it represents an effort to grasp something vanishing and hold it up in the light of consciousness. Therefore, it occurs only in later stages of cultural evolution, like later Jewish religion, Alexandrian philology, Christianity as inheriting the Jewish gospel, or Lutheran theology as refuting an old tradition of Christian dogmatics. The history-embracing and history-preserving element runs deep in hermeneutics, in sharp contrast to sociological interest in reflection as basically a means of emancipation from authority and tradition. Reflection in rhetoric, like that in hermeneutics, is a meditation about a *praxis* that is in itself already a natural and sophisticated one. I should like to recall something of the early

history of both rhetoric and hermeneutics in order to characterize and compare the scope and functions of the two fields.

RHETORIC AND HERMENEUTICS

The first history of rhetoric was written by Aristotle, and we now possess only fragments of it. It is clear, however, that basically Aristotle's theory of rhetoric was developed to carry out a program originally projected by Plato. Plato, going back behind all the shallow claims put forward by the contemporary teachers of rhetoric, had discovered a genuine foundation for rhetoric that only the philosopher, the dialectician, could carry out: the task is to master the faculty of speaking in such an effectively persuasive way that the arguments brought forward are always appropriate to the specific receptivity of the souls to which they are directed. Certainly this statement of the task of rhetoric is theoretically enlightening, but implicit in it are two Platonic assumptions: first, that only he who has a grasp of the truth (i.e., the ideas) can unerringly devise the probable *pseudos* of a rhetorical argument; second, that one must have a profound knowledge of the souls of those one wishes to persuade. Aristotelian rhetoric is preeminently an expansion of the latter theme. In it is fulfilled the theory of the mutual accommodation of speech and soul demanded by Plato in the *Phaedrus,* now in the form of an anthropological foundation for the art of speech.

Rhetorical theory was a long-prepared-for result of a controversy that represented the breaking into Greek culture of an intoxicating and frightening new art of speaking and a new idea of education itself: that of the Sophists. At that time an uncanny new skill in standing everything on its head, the Sicilian art of oratory flowed in on the straitlaced but easily influenced youth of Athens. Now it became paramountly necessary to teach this new power (this great ruler, as Gorgias had called oratory) its proper limits—to discipline it. From Protagoras to Isocrates, the masters of rhetoric claimed not only to teach speaking but also the formation of a civic consciousness that bore the promise of political success. Yet it was Plato who first created the foundations out of which a new and all-shattering art of speaking (Aristophanes has depicted it for us blatantly enough) could find its limits and legitimate place.

The history of understanding is no less ancient and venerable. If one acknowledges hermeneutics to exist wherever a genuine art of understanding manifests itself, one must begin, if not with Nestor in the *Iliad,* then at least with Odysseus. One can point out that the new philosophical movement represented by the Sophists was concerned with the interpretation of sayings by famous poets and depicted them very artfully as pedagogical examples. Certainly this was a form of hermeneutics. Over against this, one can place the Socratic hermeneutics.[5] Still, it is far from a full-fledged theory of understanding. It seems, rather, to be generally characteristic of the emergence of the "hermeneutical" problem that something *distant* has to be brought close, a certain strangeness overcome, a bridge built between the once and the now. Thus hermeneutics, as a general attitude over against the world, came into its own in modern times, which had become aware of the temporal distance separating us from antiquity and of the relativity of the lifeworlds of different cultural traditions. Something of this awareness was contained in the theological claim of Reformation biblical exegesis (in the principle of *sola scriptura*), but its true unfolding came about only when a "historical consciousness" arose in the Enlightenment (although it was influenced by the novel insights of Jesuit chronological information) and matured in the romantic period to establish a relationship (however broken) to our entire inheritance from the past.

Because of this historical development of hermeneutics, hermeneutical theory oriented itself to the task of interpreting expressions of life that are fixed in writing, although Schleiermacher's theoretical working out of hermeneutics included understanding as it takes place in the oral exchange of conversation. Rhetoric, on the other hand, concerned itself with the impact of *speaking* in all its immediacy. It did, of course, also enter into the realm of effective *writing,* and thus it developed a body of teaching on style and styles. Nevertheless, it achieved its authentic realization not in the act of reading but in speaking. The phenomenon of the orally read speech occupies an in-between, a hybrid, position: already it displays a tendency to base the art of speaking on the techniques of expression inherent in the medium of writing, and thus it begins to abstract itself from the original situation of speaking. Thus begins the transformation into poetics, whose linguistic objects are so wholly and completely art that their transformation from the oral sphere into writing and back is accomplished without loss or damage.

Rhetoric as such, however, is tied to the immediacy of its effect. Now the arousing of emotions, which is clearly the essence of the orator's task,[6] is effectual to a vastly diminished degree in written expression, which is the traditional object of hermeneutical investigation. And this is precisely the difference that matters: the orator carries his listeners away with him; the convincing power of his arguments overwhelms the listener. While under the persuasive spell of speech, the listener for the moment cannot and ought not to indulge in critical examination. On the other hand, the reading and interpreting of what is written is so distanced and detached from its author—from his mood, intentions, and unexpressed tendencies—that the grasping of the meaning of the text takes on something of the character of an independent

productive act, one that resembles more the art of the orator than the process of mere listening. Thus it is easy to understand why the theoretical tools of the art of interpretation (hermeneutics) have been to a large extent borrowed from rhetoric.[7]

Where, indeed, but to rhetoric should the theoretical examination of interpretation turn? Rhetoric from oldest tradition has been the only advocate of a claim to truth that defends the probable, the *eikos* (verisimilar), and that which is convincing to the ordinary reason against the claim of science to accept as true only what can be demonstrated and tested! Convincing and persuading, without being able to prove—these are obviously as much the aim and measure of understanding and interpretation as they are the aim and measure of the art of oration and persuasion. And this whole wide realm of convincing "persuasions" and generally reigning views has not been gradually narrowed by the progress of science, however great it has been; rather, this realm extends to take in every new product of scientific endeavor, claiming it for itself and bringing it within its scope.

The ubiquity of rhetoric, indeed, is unlimited. Only through it is science a sociological factor of life, for all the representations of science that are directed beyond the mere narrow circle of specialists (and, perhaps one should say, insofar as they are not limited in their impact to a very small circle of initiates) owe their effectiveness to the rhetorical element they contain. Even Descartes, that great and passionate advocate of method and certainty, is in all his writings an author who uses the means of rhetoric in a magnificent fashion.[8] There can be no doubt, then, about the fundamental function of rhetoric within social life. But one may go further, in view of the ubiquity of rhetoric, to defend the primordial claims of rhetoric over against modern science, remembering that all science that would wish to be of practical usefulness at all is dependent on it.

No less universal is the function of hermeneutics. The lack of immediate understandability of texts handed down to us historically, or their proneness to be misunderstood, is really only a special case of what is to be met in all human orientation to the world as the *atopon* (the strange), that which does not "fit" into the customary order of our expectation based on experience. Hermeneutics has only called our attention to this phenomenon. Just as when we progress in understanding the *mirabilia* lose their strangeness, so every successful appropriation of tradition is dissolved into a new and distinct familiarity in which it belongs to us and we to it. They both flow together into one owned and shared world, which encompasses past and present and which receives its linguistic articulation in the speaking of man with man.

The phenomenon of understanding, then, shows the universality of human linguisticality as a limitless medium that carries *everything* within it—not only the "culture" that has been handed down to us through language, but absolutely everything—because everything (in the world and out of it) is included in the realm of "understandings" and understandability in which we move. Plato was right when he asserted that whoever regards things in the mirror of speech becomes aware of them in their full and undiminished truth. And he was profoundly correct when he taught that all cognition is only what it is as recognition, for a "first cognition" is as little possible as a first word. In fact, a cognition in the very recent past, one whose consequences appear as yet unforeseeable, becomes what it truly is for us only when it has unfolded into its consequences and into the medium of intersubjective understanding.

And so we see that the rhetorical and hermeneutical aspects of human linguisticality completely interpenetrate each other. There would be no speaker and no art of speaking if understanding and consent were not in question, were not underlying elements; there would be no hermeneutical task if there were no mutual understanding that has been disturbed and that those involved in a conversation must search for and find again together. It is a symptom of our failure to realize this and evidence of the increasing self-alienation of human life in our modern epoch when we think in terms of organizing a perfect and perfectly manipulated information—a turn modern rhetoric seems to have taken. In this case, the sense of the mutual interpenetration of rhetoric and hermeneutics fades away and hermeneutics is on its own.

HERMENEUTICS AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

It is in keeping with the universality of the hermeneutical approach that hermeneutics must be taken into account with regard to the logic of the social sciences and especially in relation to the intentional alienation and distancing present in sociological methodology. Jürgen Habermas in his article on the subject worked with my analysis of the *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein* and the model of translation as both were given in *Truth and Method* with the hope that they could help to overcome the positivistic ossification of sociological logic and move sociological theory beyond its historical failure to reflect upon its linguistic foundations. Now Habermas's use of hermeneutics stands on the premise that it will serve the methodology of the social sciences. But this premise is, in itself, a prior decision of greatest significance, for the purpose of sociological method as emancipating one from tradition places it at the outset very far from the traditional purpose and starting point of the hermeneutical problematic, with all its bridge building and recovery of the best in the past.

Admittedly, the methodical alienation that comprises the very essence of modern science is indeed to be found also in the *Geisteswissenschaften*, and the title of *Truth and Method* never intended that the antithesis it implies should be mutually exclusive.[9] But the *Geisteswissenschaften* were the starting point of my analysis in *Truth and Method* precisely because they related to experiences that have nothing to do with method and science but lie beyond science—like the experience of art and the experience of culture that bear the imprint of their historical traditions. The hermeneutical experience as it is operative in all these cases is not in itself the object of methodical alienation but is directed against alienation. The hermeneutical experience is prior to all methodical alienation because it is the matrix out of which arise the questions it then directs to science. The modern social scientists, on the other hand, insofar as they recognize hermeneutical reflection as unavoidable, nevertheless advance the claim (as Habermas has formulated it) of raising understanding up out of a prescientific exercise to the rank of a self-reflecting activity by "controlled alienation"—that is, through "methodical development of intelligence."[10]

It has been the way of science from its earliest stages to achieve through teachable and controllable ways of proceeding what individual intelligence would also occasionally attain, but in unsure and uncheckable ways. But is this way to be absolutized and idolized? Is it right that social scientists should believe that through it they attain human personal judging and practice? What kind of understanding does one achieve through "controlled alienation"? Is it not likely to be an alienated understanding? Is it not the case that many social scientists are more interested in using the sedimented truisms inherent in linguisticality (so as to grasp "scientifically" the "real" structures, as they define them, of society) than in really understanding social life? Hermeneutical reflection will not, however, allow a restriction of itself to this function, which is immanent in the sciences. And most especially, it will not be deterred from applying hermeneutical reflection anew to the methodical alienation of understanding practiced by the social sciences, even though it exposes itself to positivistic detraction.

But let us examine first how the hermeneutical problematic applies within social scientific theory and how it would be seen from that vantage point. Habermas sees in its analysis of historicity one of the principal values of hermeneutics for social theory. So it is the claim of hermeneutics that the idea of *Wirkungsgeschichte* (effective history) furnishes a means of access to the realm of objects treated by sociology. The *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein* (consciousness of effective history) seeks to be aware of its prejudgments and to control its own preunderstanding; and thus it does away with that naive objectivism that falsifies not only the positivistic theory of science but also any project of laying either a phenomenological or language-analytical foundation for sociology.

Yet the question arises as to what hermeneutical reflection really does. Habermas answers this question in reference to universal history, a goal that unavoidably lifts itself out of the multiple goals and conceptions of goal in social actions. He asserts that if hermeneutical reflection were simply satisfied with general considerations, such as that nobody is able to reach beyond the limitedness of his own standpoint, then it would be ineffectual. The claim to a material philosophy of history may be contested by such a consideration, but historical consciousness nevertheless constantly will project an anticipated universal history. What is the good, after all, Habermas asks, of knowing merely that a projected futurity cannot be other than preliminary and essentially provisional? So, where it is effective and operational, what does hermeneutical reflection do? In what relationship to the tradition of which it becomes conscious does this "historically operative" reflection stand?

My thesis is—and I think it is the necessary consequence of recognizing the operativeness of history in our conditionedness and finitude—that the thing hermeneutics teaches us is to see through the dogmatism of asserting an opposition and separation between the ongoing, natural "tradition" and the reflective appropriation of it. For behind this assertion stands a dogmatic objectivism that distorts the very concept of hermeneutical reflection itself. In this objectivism the understander is seen—even in the so-called sciences of understanding like history—not in relationship to the hermeneutical situation and the constant operativeness of history in his own consciousness, but in such a way as to imply that his own understanding does not enter into the event.

But this is simply not the case. Actually, the historian—even the one who treats history as a "critical science"—is so little separated from the ongoing traditions (for example, those of his nation) that he is really *himself engaged* in contributing to the growth and development of the national state. He is one of the "nation's" historians; he belongs to the nation. And for the epoch of national states, one must say: the more he may have reflected on his hermeneutical conditionedness, the more national he knows himself to be. J. F. Droysen, for instance, who saw through the "eunuch-like objectivity" of the historian in all its methodological naïveté, was himself tremendously influential for the national consciousness of bourgeois nineteenth-century culture. He was, in any case, more effective than the epical consciousness of Leopold von Ranke, which was inclined to foster the nonpoliticality appropriate to an authoritarian state. To understand, we may say, is itself a kind of happening. Only a naive and unreflective historicism in hermeneutics would see the historical-hermeneu-

tical sciences as something absolutely new that would do away with the power of "tradition." On the contrary, I have tried to present in *Truth and Method,* through the aspect of linguisticality that operates in all understanding, an unambiguous demonstration of the continual process of mediation by which that which is societally transmitted (the tradition) lives on. For language is not only an object in our hands, it is the reservoir of tradition and the medium in and through which we exist and perceive our world.

To this formulation Habermas objects that the medium of science itself is changed through reflection and that precisely this experience is the priceless heritage bequeathed us by German idealism out of the spirit of the eighteenth century. Habermas asserts that although the Hegelian procedure of reflection is not presented in my analysis as fulfilled in an absolute consciousness, nevertheless my "idealism of linguisticality" (as he calls it)[11] exhausts itself in mere hermeneutical appropriation, development, and "cultural transmission," and thus displays a sorry powerlessness in view of the concrete whole of societal relationships. This larger whole, says Habermas, is obviously animated not only by language but by work and action; therefore, hermeneutical reflection must pass into a criticism of ideology.

In taking such a position, Habermas is tying directly into the central motif in sociological interest in gaining knowledge. Rhetoric (theory) stepped forward against the bewitching of consciousness achieved through the power of speech, by differentiating between the truth and that which appears to be the truth (and which it teaches one to produce). Hermeneutics, being confronted with a disrupted intersubjective understanding, seeks to place communication on a new basis and, in particular, to replace the false objectivism of alienated knowing with new hermeneutical foundations. Just as in rhetoric and hermeneutics so also in *sociological reflection,* an emancipatory interest is at work that undertakes to free us of outer and inner social forces and compulsions simply by making us aware of them. Insofar as these forces and compulsions tend to legitimate themselves linguistically, Habermas sees the critique of ideology as the means of unmasking the "deceptions of language."[12] But this critique, of course, is in itself a linguistic act of reflection.

In the field of psychoanalytical therapy, too, says Habermas, we find the claims for the emancipatory power of reflection corroborated. For the repression that is seen through robs the false compulsions of their power. Just as in psychotherapy it is the goal to identify through a process of reflective development all our motives of action with the real meaning to which the patient is oriented (this goal is, of course, limited by the therapeutic task in the psychoanalytic situation, which therefore itself represents a limiting concept), so in social reality also (as Habermas would have it) hermeneutics would be at its best when such a fictitious goal situation is operative. For Habermas, and for psychoanalysis, the life of society and the life of the individual consist in the interaction of intelligible motives and concrete compulsions, which social and psychological investigation, in a progressive process of clarification, appropriates in order to set man, the actor and agent, free.

One cannot dispute the fact that this sociotheoretical conception has its logic. The question we must ask ourselves, however, is whether such a conception does justice to the actual reach of hermeneutical reflection: Does hermeneutics really take its bearings from a limiting concept of perfect interaction between understood motives and consciously performed action (a concept that is itself, I believe, fictitious)? I maintain that the hermeneutical problem is universal and basic for all interhuman experience, both of history and of the present moment, precisely because meaning can be experienced even where it is not actually intended. The universality of the hermeneutical dimension is narrowed down, I think, when one area of understood meaning (for instance, the "cultural tradition") is held in separation from other recognizable determinants of social reality that are taken as the "real" factors. But is it not true that we can understand precisely *every* ideology as a form of false linguistic consciousness, one that not only might show itself to us as a conscious, manifest, and intelligible meaning but also might be understood in its "true" meaning? Take for example the interest in political or economic domination. In the individual life, the same thing applies to unconscious motives, which the psychoanalyst brings to conscious awareness.

Who says that these concrete, so-called real factors are outside the realm of hermeneutics? From the hermeneutical standpoint, rightly understood, it is absolutely absurd to regard the concrete factors of work and politics as outside the scope of hermeneutics. What about the vital issue of prejudices with which hermeneutical reflection deals? Where do they come from? Merely out of "cultural tradition"? Surely they do in part, but what is tradition formed from? It would be true when Habermas asserts that "hermeneutics bangs helplessly, so to speak, from within against the walls of tradition,"[13] if we understand this "within" as opposite to an "outside" that *does not enter* our world—our to-be-understood, understandable, or nonunderstandable world—but remains the mere observation of external alterations (instead of human actions). With this area of what lies outside the realm of human understanding and human understandings (our world), hermeneutics is not concerned. Certainly I affirm the hermeneutical fact that the world is the medium of human understanding or not understanding, but it does not lead to the conclusion that cultural tradition should be absolutized and fixed. To suppose that it does have this implication seems to me erroneous. The principle of hermeneutics simply

means that we should try to understand everything that can be understood. This is what I meant by the sentence: "Being that can be understood is language" [*Truth and Method*, p. 474].

This does not mean that there is a world of meanings that is narrowed down to the status of secondary objects of knowledge, mere supplements to the economic and political realities that fundamentally determine the life of society. Rather, it means that the mirror of language is reflecting everything that is. In language, and only in it, can we meet what we never "encounter" in the world because we are ourselves it (and not merely what we mean or what we know of ourselves). But the metaphor of a mirror is not fully adequate to the phenomenon of language, for in the last analysis language is not simply a mirror. What we perceive in it is not merely a "reflection" of our own and all being; it is the living out of what it is with us—not only in the concrete interrelationships of work and politics but in all the other relationships and dependencies that comprise our world.

Language, then, is not the finally found anonymous subject of all social-historical processes and action, which presents the whole of its activities as objectifications to our observing gaze; rather, it is by itself the game of interpretation that we all are engaged in every day. In this game nobody is above and before all the others; everybody is at the center, is "it" in this game. Thus it is always your turn to be interpreting. This process of interpretation takes place whenever we "understand," especially when we see through prejudices or tear away the pretenses that hide reality. There, indeed, understanding comes into its own. This idea recalls what we said about the *atopon*, the strange, for in it we have "seen through" something that appeared odd and unintelligible: we have brought it into our linguistic world. To use the analogy of chess, everything is "solved," resembling a difficult chess problem, where only the definitive solution makes understandable (and then right down to the last piece) the necessity of a previous absurd position.

But does this mean that we "understand" only when we see through pretexts or unmask false pretensions? Habermas's Marxist critique of ideology appears to presuppose this meaning. At least, it seems that the true "power" of reflection is evident only when it has this effect, and its powerlessness, when one would remain occupied with the supposed phantom of language and spin out its implication. The presupposition is that reflection, as employed in the hermeneutical sciences, should "shake the dogmatism of life-*praxis*." Here indeed is operating a prejudice that we can see is pure dogmatism, for reflection is not always and unavoidably a step toward dissolving prior convictions. Authority is not always wrong. Yet Habermas regards it as an untenable assertion, and treason to the heritage of the Enlightenment, that the act of rendering transparent the structure of prejudgments in understanding should possibly lead to an acknowledgment of authority. Authority is by his definition a dogmatic power. I cannot accept the assertion that reason and authority are abstract antitheses, as the emancipatory Enlightenment did. Rather, I assert that they stand in a basically ambivalent relation, a relation I think should be explored rather than our casually accepting the antithesis as a "fundamental conviction."[14]

For in my opinion this abstract antithesis embraced by the Enlightenment is a mistake fraught with ominous consequences. In it, reflection is granted a false power, and the true dependencies involved are misjudged on the basis of a fallacious idealism. Certainly, I would grant that authority exercises an essential dogmatic power in innumerable forms of domination: from the ordering of education and the mandatory commands of the army and government all the way to the hierarchy of power created by political forces or fanatics. Now the mere outer appearance of obedience rendered to authority can never show why or whether the authority is legitimate, that is, whether the context is true order or the veiled disorder that is created by the arbitrary exercise of power. It seems evident to me that *acceptance* or *acknowledgment* is the decisive thing for relationships to authority. So the question is On what is this acknowledgment based? Certainly such acceptance can often express more a yielding of the powerless to the one holding power than true acceptance, but really it is not true obedience and it is not based on authority but on force. (And when anyone in an argument appeals to authority, he only pretends.) One need only study the processes of forfeiture and decline of authority (or its rise) to see what authority is and that out of which it lives and grows. It lives not from dogmatic power but from dogmatic acceptance. What is this dogmatic acceptance, however, if not that one concedes superiority in knowledge and insight to the authority, and for this reason one believes that authority is right? Only on this crucial concession, this belief, is acceptance founded. Authority can rule only because it is freely recognized and accepted. The obedience that belongs to true authority is neither blind nor slavish.

It is an inadmissible imputation to hold that I somehow meant there is no decline of authority or no emancipating criticism of authority. Of course, whether one can really say that decline of authority comes about *through* reflection's emancipatory criticism or that decline of authority is expressed in criticism and emancipation is a matter we shall leave aside (although we may say that it is perhaps a misstatement of the genuine alternatives). But what is really in dispute, I think, is simply whether reflection always dissolves substantial relationships or is capable of taking them up into consciousness.

In this regard, my presentation in *Truth and Method* of the teaching and

learning process (referring principally to Aristotle's *Ethics*) is taken by Habermas in a peculiarly one-sided way. For the idea that tradition as such should be and should remain the only ground for acceptance of presuppositions (a view that Habermas ascribes to me) flies in the face of my basic thesis that authority is rooted in insight as a hermeneutical process. A person who comes of age need not—but he also, from insight, can—take possession of what he has obediently followed. Tradition is no proof and validation of something, in any case not where validation is demanded by reflection. But the point is this: Where does reflection demand it? Everywhere? I would object to such an answer on the grounds of the finitude of human existence and the essential particularity of reflection. The real question is whether one sees the function of reflection as bringing something to awareness in order to confront what is in fact accepted with other possibilities—so that one can either throw it out or reject the other possibilities and accept what the tradition de facto is presenting—or whether bringing something to awareness *always dissolves what one has previously accepted.*

The concept of reflection and bringing to awareness that Habermas employs (admittedly from his sociological interest) appears to me, then, to be itself encumbered with dogmatism and, indeed, to be a misinterpretation of reflection. For from Husserl (in his doctrine of anonymous intentionalities) and from Heidegger (in demonstration of the ontological abridgment evident in the subject-object concept in idealism), we have learned to see through the false objectification inherent in the idealist conception of reflection. I would hold that there is most certainly an inner reversal of intentionality in reflection, which in no way raises the thing meant to a thematic object. Franz Brentano, using Aristotelian insights, was aware of this fact. I would not know, otherwise, how the enigmatic form of the being of language could be grasped at all. Then one must distinguish "effective reflection" (*die "effektive" Reflexion*), which is that in which the unfolding of language takes place, from expressive and thematic reflection, which is the type out of which Occidental linguistic history has been formed.[15] Making everything an object and creating the conditions for science in the modern sense, this latter type of reflection establishes the grounds for the planetary civilization of tomorrow.

Habermas defends with extraordinary emotion the sciences of experience against the charge of being a random game of words. But who, from the vantage point of having the technical power to place nature at our disposal, would dispute their necessity? The researcher might disclaim the technical motivation of his work and defend his relationship to pure theoretical interests—with full subjective justification. But nobody would deny that the practical application of modern science has fundamentally altered our world, and therewith also our language. But precisely so—"*also* our language." This by no means suggests, however, what Habermas imputes to me: that the linguistically articulated consciousness claims to determine all the material being of life-practice. It suggests only that there is no societal reality, with all its concrete forces, that does not bring itself to representation in a consciousness that is linguistically articulated. Reality does not happen "behind the back" of language;[16] it happens rather behind the backs of those who live in the subjective opinion that they have understood "the world" (or can no longer understand it); that is, reality happens precisely *within* language.

Obviously this fact makes the concept of "natural situation" discussed by Habermas highly questionable.[17] Marx had already persuasively held that this concept was the counter-idea to the working world of modern class society, but Habermas willingly uses it in his reference not only to the "natural substance of tradition" but also to "the causality of natural patterns." I believe it is pure romanticism, and such romanticism creates an artificial abyss between tradition and the reflection that is grounded in historical consciousness. However, the "idealism of linguisticality" at least has the advantage that it does not fall into this sort of romanticism.

Habermas's critique culminates in questioning the immanentism of transcendental philosophy with respect to its historical conditions, conditions upon which he himself is dependent. Now this is indeed a central problem. Anyone who takes seriously the finitude of human existence and constructs no "consciousness as such," or "intellectus archetypus," or "transcendental ego" to which everything can be traced back will not be able to escape the question of how his own thinking as transcendental is empirically possible. But within the hermeneutical dimension that I have developed I do not see this difficulty arising.

The well-known young theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg has presented a highly useful discussion of my book in his article "Hermeneutics and Universal History,"[18] which relates to the question of immanentism but more particularly to the question of whether my philosophical hermeneutics necessarily but unconsciously rehabilitates the Hegelian concept of universal history (such as in the concept of fusion of horizons, where the ultimate horizon is, says Pannenberg, implied or presupposed in the direction of every individual event of fusion). In particular, his discussion brought home to me the vast difference between Hegel's claim to demonstrate the presence of reason in history and the conceptions of world history, those constantly outstripped conceptions, in which one unconsciously always behaves like the latest historian.

Hegel's claim to a philosophy of world history can certainly be disputed. Hegel himself knew how finite it was and remarked that the feet of his pallbearers could already be heard outside the door,* and one finds that behind all the disavowals of world history the goal, the end-thought, of freedom possessed a compelling evidentness. One can as little get beyond this as one can get beyond consciousness itself.

But the claim that every historian must make and operate within, namely, to tie the meaning of all events to today (and, of course, to the future of this today), is really a fundamentally more modest one than asserting a universal history or a philosophy of world history. Nobody can dispute that history presupposes futurity, and a universal-historical conception is unavoidably one of the dimensions of today's historical consciousness from a practical point of view or for practical purposes ("In praktischer Absicht"). But does it do justice to Hegel to want to reduce him to the limitations implied by this pragmatic interpretive requirement that the present demands? "In praktischer Absicht"—nobody today goes beyond this claim, for consciousness has become aware of its finitude and mistrusts the dictatorship of ideas or concepts. Even so, who would be so foolish as to try to reduce Hegel to the level of practical purposes? I certainly would not, even while criticizing his claims to a philosophy of universal history. So on this point I think there is really no dispute between Pannenberg and myself, so far as I understand him. For Pannenberg does not propose to renew Hegel's claim either. There is only the difference that for the Christian theologian the "practical purpose" of all universal historical conceptions has its fixed point in the absolute historicity of the Incarnation.

All the same, the question of universality remains. If the hermeneutical problematic wishes to maintain itself in the face of the ubiquity and universality of rhetoric, as well as the obvious topicality of critiques of ideology, it must establish its own universality. And it must do so especially over against the claims of modern science to universality, and thus to its tendency to absorb hermeneutical reflection into itself and render it serviceable to science (as in the concept, for instance, of the "methodical development of intelligence" Habermas has in mind). Still, it will be able to do so only if it does not become imprisoned in the impregnable immanence of transcendental reflection but rather gives account of what its own kind of reflection achieves. And it must do it not only within the realm of modern science but also over against this realm, in order to show a universality that transcends that of modern science.

*Gadamer expresses this more picturesquely with a quote: "Die Füsse derer, die dich hinaustragen, sind schon vor der Türe." [Translators' note]

ON THE UNIVERSALITY OF HERMENEUTICAL REFLECTION

Hermeneutical reflection fulfills the function that is accomplished in every bringing of something to a conscious awareness. Because it does, it can and must manifest itself in all our modern fields of knowledge, especially science. Let us reflect a bit on this hermeneutical reflection. Reflection on a given preunderstanding brings before me something that otherwise happens *behind my back*. Something, but not everything, for what I have called the *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein* is inescapably more *being* than consciousness, and being is never fully manifest. Certainly, I do not mean that such reflection could escape from ideological ossification if it does not engage in constant self-reflection and attempts at self-awareness. Thus, only through hermeneutical reflection am I no longer unfree over against myself but rather can deem freely what in my preunderstanding may be justified and what unjustifiable.

And also only in this manner do I learn to gain a new understanding of what I have seen through eyes conditioned by prejudice. But this implies, too, that the prejudgments that lead my preunderstanding are also constantly at stake, right up to the moment of their surrender—which surrender could also be called a transformation. It is the untiring power of *experience* that in the process of being instructed, man is ceaselessly forming a new preunderstanding.

In the fields that were the starting points of my hermeneutical studies—the study of art and the philological-historical sciences—it is easy to demonstrate how hermeneutical reflection is at work. For instance, consider how the autonomy of viewing art from the vantage point of the history of style has been shaken up by hermeneutical reflection (1) on the concept of art itself, and (2) on concepts of individual styles and epochs. Consider how iconography has pressed from the periphery to the forefront, and how hermeneutical reflection on the concepts of experience and expression has had literary-critical consequences (even in cases where it becomes only a more conscious carrying forward of tendencies long favored in literary criticism). Although it is, of course, evident how the shake-up of fixed presuppositions promises scientific progress by making new questions possible, it should be equally evident that this applies in the history of artistic and literary styles. And we constantly experience what historical research can accomplish through becoming conscious of the history of ideas. In *Truth and Method* I believe I have been able

to show how historical alienation is mediated in the form of what I call the fusion of horizons.

The overall significance of hermeneutical reflection, however, is not exhausted by what it means for and in the sciences themselves. For all of the modern sciences possess a deeply rooted alienation that they impose on the natural consciousness and of which we need to be aware. This alienation has already reached reflective awareness in the very beginning stages of modern science in the concept of *method*. Hermeneutical reflection does not desire to change or eliminate this situation; it can, in fact, indirectly serve the methodological endeavor of science by making transparently clear the guiding preunderstandings in the sciences and thereby open new dimensions of questioning. But it must also bring to awareness, in this regard, the price that methods in science have paid for their own progress: the toning down and abstraction they demand, through which the natural consciousness still always must go along as the consumer of the inventions and information attained by science. One can, with Wittgenstein, express this insight as follows: The language games of science remain related to the metalanguage presented in the mother tongue. All the knowledge won by science enters the societal consciousness through school and education, using modern informational media, though maybe sometimes after a great—too great—delay. In any case, this is the way that new sociolinguistic realities are articulated.

For the *natural* sciences, of course, this gap and the methodical alienation of research are of less consequence than for social sciences. The true natural scientist does not have to be told how very particular is the realm of knowledge of his science in relation to the whole of reality. He does not share in the deification of his science that the public would press upon him. All the more, however, the public (and the researcher who must go before the public) needs hermeneutical reflection on the presuppositions and limits of science. The so-called humanities, on the other hand, are still easily mediated to the common consciousness, so that insofar as they are accepted at all, their objects belong immediately to the cultural heritage and the realm of traditional education. But the modern social sciences stand in a particularly strained relationship to their object, the social reality, and this relationship especially requires hermeneutical reflection. For the methodical alienation to which the social sciences owe their progress is related here to the human-societal world as a whole. These sciences increasingly see themselves as marked out for the purpose of scientific ordering and control of society. They have to do with "scientific" and "methodical" planning, direction, organization, development—in short, with an infinity of functions that, so to speak, determine from outside the whole of the life of each individual and each group. Yet this social engineer, this scientist who undertakes to look after the functioning of the machine of society, appears himself to be methodically alienated and split off from the society to which, at the same time, he belongs.

But is man as a political being the mere object of the techniques of making public opinion? I think not: he is a member of society, and only in playing his role with free judgment and politically real effectiveness can he conserve freedom. It is the function of hermeneutical reflection, in this connection, to preserve us from naive surrender to the experts of social technology.

Of course, a hermeneutically reflective sociologist like Habermas cannot conceive himself in these shallow terms of social engineering. Habermas's lucid analysis of social-scientific logic has resolutely worked out the authentic epistemological interest, which distinguishes true sociologists from technicians of social structure. He calls it an *emancipating interest* (what a contrast to the interest of the social engineers!), which takes reflection alone as its objective. He points in this regard to the example of psychoanalysis. And it is in psychoanalysis, as a matter of fact, that hermeneutical reflection plays a fundamental role. This is because, as we have emphasized earlier, the unconscious motive does not represent a clear and fully articulatable boundary for hermeneutical theory: it falls within the larger perimeter of hermeneutics. Psychotherapy could be described as the work of "completing an interrupted process of education into a full history (a story that can be articulated in language)," so in psychotherapy, hermeneutics and the circle of language that is closed in dialogue are central. I think I have learned this fact, above all, from Jacques Lacan.[19]

All the same, it is clear that even this is not the whole story, for the psychoanalytic approach turns out not to be universalizable even for the psychoanalyst himself. The framework of interpretation worked out by Freud claims to possess the character of genuine natural-scientific hypotheses, that is, to be a knowledge of acknowledged laws. This orientation inevitably shows up in the role that methodical alienation plays in his psychoanalysis. But although the successful analysis wins *its* authentication in its results, the claim to *knowledge* in psychoanalysis must not be reduced to mere pragmatic validation. And this means that psychoanalysis is exposed again to another act of hermeneutical reflection, in which one must ask: How does the psychoanalyst's special knowledge relate to his own position within the societal reality (to which, after all, he does belong)?

The psychoanalyst leads the patient into the emancipatory reflection that goes behind the conscious superficial interpretations, breaks through the

masked self-understanding, and sees through the repressive function of social taboos. This activity belongs to the emancipatory reflection to which he leads his patient. But what happens when he uses the same kind of reflection in a situation in which he is not the doctor but a partner in a game? Then he will fall out of his social role! A game partner who is always "seeing through" his game partner, who does not take seriously what they are standing for, is a spoilsport whom one shuns. The emancipatory power of reflection claimed by the psychoanalyst is a special, rather than general, function of reflection and must be given its boundaries through the societal context and consciousness, within which the analyst and also his patient are on even terms with everybody else. This is something that *hermeneutical reflection* teaches us: that social community, with all its tensions and disruptions, ever and ever again leads back to a common area of social understanding through which it exists.

Here, I think, the analogy Habermas suggests between psychoanalytical and sociological theory breaks down, or at least raises severe problems. For where are the limits of this analogy? Where does the patient relationship end and the social partnership in its unprofessional right begin? Most fundamentally: Over against what self-interpretation of the social consciousness (and all morality is such) is it appropriate to inquire *behind* that consciousness—and when is it not? Within the context of the purely practical, or of a universalized emancipatory reflection, these questions appear unanswerable. The unavoidable consequence to which all these observations lead is that the basically emancipatory consciousness must have in mind the dissolution of all authority, all obedience. This means that unconsciously, the ultimate guiding image of emancipatory reflection in the social sciences must be an anarchistic utopia. Such an image, however, seems to me to reflect a hermeneutically false consciousness, the antidote for which can only be a more universal hermeneutical reflection.

NOTES

Bracketed information has been supplied by the editors.

1 Thus what O. Marquard (Heidelberger Philosophiekongress, 1966) calls "das Sein zum Texte" does not at all exhaust the hermeneutical dimension unless the word *Texte* is taken not in the narrow sense but as "the text that God has written with his own hand," i.e., the *liber naturae*, which consequently encompasses all knowledge from physics to sociology and anthropology. And even in this case the model of translation is implied, which is not fully adequate to the complexity of the hermeneutical dimension.

2 See Johannes Lohmann, *Philosophie und Sprachwissenschaft* [Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1965], and his review of my book in *Gnomon* 37 (1965): 709–18. Lohmann's treatment may be seen as a greatly expanded application of what I had briefly sketched as the imprint of the concept of *Sprache* (language in Occidental thought). He traces "the emergence of the concept (*Begriff*) as the intellectual vehicle by which given objects are momentarily subsumed under one cogitated form" (714). He recognizes in the stem-inflecting verbs of Old Indo-Germanic the grammatical expression of this idea, especially in the copula. From this, he says, we can deduce the possibility of theory, which is a creation peculiar to the Occident. The significance of this is more than historical; it also extends into the future. Not only does Lohmann take the transition from stem-inflecting to word-inflecting language types to interpret the history of thought in the Occident by showing the development of language forms, he shows that this latter-day development to word-inflecting types makes possible science in the modern sense—science as the rendering disposable to us of our world.

3 I have considered some aspects of this in *Warheit und Methode* [*Truth and Method*, 2d rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989)] but they can be greatly expanded; see, for instance, the extensive supplements and corrections contributed by Klaus Dockhorn to the Göttingen *Gelehrten-Anzeigen*, 218, nos. 3–4 (1966), 169–206.

4 Jürgen Habermas, ["Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften"], *Philosophische Rundschau* (hereafter *PhR*) 14, no. 5 (1967), 149–80. See also his more recent book, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).

5 Hermann Gundert has done this in his contribution ["Die Simonides—Interpretation in Platons Protagoras"] to *Hermeneia* [(Heidelberg: C. Winter], 1952), a festschrift for Otto Regenbogen.

6 Klaus Dockhorn has shown, with profound scholarship, in *Gelehrten-Anzeigen*, the extent to which the arousing of emotions has been considered the most important means of persuasion from Cicero and Quintilian to the political rhetoric of the eighteenth century in England.

7 I discussed this in my book [*Truth and Method*], and Dockhorn, *Gelehrten-Anzeigen*, has carried out the exploration on a much broader basis.

8 Henri Gouhier in particular has shown this in his "La résistance au vrai," [in *Retorica e Barocco*], ed. E. Castelli (Rome: [Fratelli Boca], 1955).

9 In this regard see the preface to the second edition (1965).

10 Cf. Habermas, *PhR*, 172–74.

11 Ibid., 179.

12 Ibid., 178.

13 Ibid., 177.

14 Ibid., 174.

15 On this point I am agreeing with Lohmann in *Philosophie und Sprachwissenschaft*.

16 Habermas, *PhR*, 179.

17 Ibid., 173–74.

18 Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Hermeneutik und Universalgeschichte," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 60 (1963): 90–121. English translation: Paul J. Achtemeier in *History and Hermeneutic*, ed. Robert W. Funk and Gerhard Ebeling (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 122–52.

19 See the collection of Lacan's writings now published as *Ecrits* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966).

16

Rhetoric and the Politics of the Literal Sense in Medieval Literary Theory: Aquinas, Wyclif, and the Lollards

Rita Copeland

It is well known that late medieval literary theory owes much to Aquinas's reconciliation of human rhetoric with the divine revelation of truth in the text of Scripture. Aquinas and those theorists who followed his method accomplished this rapprochement by redrawing the boundaries between the literal and the spiritual senses of Scripture and assimilating rhetorical language to the literal sense. Aquinas's critical move has been much studied for its impact on the exegetical theory and practice of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially for its new emphasis on the contributions of human authors to Scriptural discourse. But at what cost to rhetoric was this remarkable synthesis achieved? Medieval attempts to reconcile rhetorical figures and tropes with the literal sense left many conflicts about the status of rhetoric unresolved. I would like to consider how the role of rhetoric was reconfigured as theories of the literal sense evolved from the relatively restricted context of clerical academic theory to the popular polemics of Wycliffite hermeneutics. I suggest here that scholastic efforts to legitimize the language of human rhetoric by containing it within the fixed domain of the literal sense represented an impossible solution to what was already an impossible problem. How can rhetorical