On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality

I

Hermeneutics refers to a "capability" which we acquire to the extent that we come to "master" a natural language—with the art of understanding the meaning of linguistic communication and, in the case of disrupted communication, of making it understandable. Understanding of meaning focuses on the semantic content of speech, but also on the meaning contained in written forms of expression or in nonlinguistic symbol systems, so far as such meanings can, in principle, be "recovered" in speech. Not by accident do we speak of the "art" of understanding and of making something understandable, for the interpretive capability which every speaker has at his command can be stylized, even developed to the level of an artistic ability. The art of interpretation is the counterpart of the art of convincing and persuading in situations where practical questions are brought to decision. Indeed, the same thing that is true of hermeneutics is true of rhetoric as well; for rhetoric, too, rests on a capability which belongs to the communicative competence of every speaker but can be artificially developed into a special skill. Rhetoric and hermeneutics have their origin in arts which take in hand the methodical training and development of a natural capability.[1]

Philosophical hermeneutics is a different matter: it is not an art but a critique—that is, it brings to consciousness in a reflective attitude experiences which we have of language in the exercise of our communicative competence and thus in the course of social interaction with others through language. Because rhetoric and hermeneutics have to do with the teaching and disciplined development of communicative competence, hermeneutical reflection has been able to draw upon their realm of experience. But [hermeneutical] reflection on (1) skillful understanding and explication, on the one hand, and (2) convincing and persuading, on the other, serves in the interest not of an art but of a philosophical inquiry into the structures of colloquial communication.

(1) From the characteristic experience of the art of understanding and explication, philosophical hermeneutics has learned that the resources of a natural language are in principle sufficient to clarify the meaning of any configuration of symbols, however foreign and inaccessible it may at first be. We can translate from any language into any other language. We can place the objectifications of the most remote period and the most alien culture in understandable relationship to the familiar (that is, previously understood) context of our own surroundings.

At the same time, of course, the factual distance from foreign traditions forms part of the horizon of every natural language. And then, too, the long since understood context of familiar surroundings can at any time be revealed as something questionable; it is the potentially unintelligible. Only the two moments taken together encompass the whole of the hermeneutical experience. The intersubjectivity of colloquial understanding is in principle as limitless as it is fragmentary: limitless, because it can be enlarged at will; fragmentary, because it can never be exhaustively constructed. That is as much true of contemporary communication within a socio-culturally homogeneous language community as it is of communication which takes place over the distance between different classes, cultures, and time periods.

The hermeneutical experience raises to the level of consciousness the relationship between the speaking subject and language. The speaking subject can make use of the reflexive property of natural language metacommunicatively in order to paraphrase modifications of any kind. Indeed, it is possible to construct hierarchies of formal languages on the foundation of the colloquial language, which in each case serves as the "ultimate" metalanguage. These are related to each other as object-language to meta-language to meta-meta-language, and so forth. The formal construction of such languages precludes ad hoc stipulation, commentary on, or alteration of the rules of application for individual statements. And the logic of classes forbids metacommunication about statements within a formal language on the level of that object-language itself. Both, however, are possible in colloquial language. The system of a natural language is not closed but permits ad hoc stipulation, commentary on, or alteration of the rules of application for any given expression. And metacommunication in natural languages can make use only of the same language which is being spoken about as object: for every natural language is its own meta-language. On that rests the reflexivity of natural languages, which makes it possible, in contrast to class-logic languages, for the semantic content of linguistic expressions to carry, along with the manifest message, an indirect message as to its application. That is true, for instance, of the metaphorical use of language. Owing to the reflexive structure of natural languages, then, the native speaker has at his command a unique realm of metacommunicative free play.

The obverse of this freedom of movement is a palpable bondage to linguistic tradition. Natural languages are informal, and for that reason speaking subjects cannot come face to face with their language as they could with a closed system. Language competence remains, as it were, behind the backs of those who make use of it: they can be certain about the meaning of something only to the extent that they also remain dependent, explicitly, on a context which has been, on the whole, dogmatically transmitted and, implicitly, long since preestablished. Hermeneutical understanding cannot enter into a question without prejudice; on the contrary, it is unavoidably biased by the context in which the understanding

subject has first acquired his schemata of interpretation. Such a preconception can be thematized; it must be assayed as part of the question at hand in every hermeneutically conscious analysis. But even the modification of the unavoidable anticipations involved in understanding does not break through the objectivity of the language vis-à-vis the speaking subject: in the process of learning, he merely forms a new preconception, which in turn becomes the reigning preconception at the next hermeneutical step. That is the meaning of Gadamer's statement: "Effective historical consciousness is inescapably more existence than it is consciousness."[2]

(2) From the characteristic experience of the art of convincing and persuading, on the other hand, philosophical hermeneutics has learned that the medium of colloquial communication serves not only to exchange messages but as well to shape and alter the attitudes which inform behavior. Rhetoric has traditionally been seen as the art of producing a consensus on questions which cannot be decided on the basis of compelling proof. Classical antiquity thus reserved to rhetoric the realm of the merely "plausible," as opposed to that in which the truth of statements is discussed on theoretical grounds. It is a matter, then, of practical questions—questions which can be reduced to decisions about the acceptance or rejection of standards, of criteria of evaluation and norms of behavior. When such decisions are made rationally, they are arrived at by means which are neither theoretically compelling nor merely arbitrary; instead, they are motivated by convincing speech. In the notable ambivalence between conviction and persuasion which attaches to the consensus produced by rhetoric, one sees not merely the element of force, which to the present day remains an ineradicable part of any consensus—as, indeed, it has always been of processes aimed at the shaping of volition through discussion; that same equivocality is also circumstantial evidence that practical questions can be decided only through dialogue and therefore remain bound to the context of the colloquial language. Rationally motivated decisions are reached only on the basis of a consensus which is produced through convincing speech, and that means: in dependence on the cognitively *and* expressively appropriate resources of representation in colloquial language.

The rhetorical experience, too, teaches us something about the relationship between the speaking subject and his language. The speaker can make use of the creativity of natural language to respond spontaneously to changing states of affairs and to define new situations through fundamentally unpredictable expressions. In formal terms, that presupposes a language structure which, with the help of a finite number of elements and in conformity with general rules, makes it possible to produce and to understand an infinite number of statements. This productivity, however, is by no means limited to the short-term production of individual statements, but extends as well to the long-term process of shaping colloquially formulated schemata of interpretation—schemata which not only make experience possible but prejudice it at the same time. The skillful use of language

which brings about a consensus in the decision of practical questions marks only the point at which we consciously attempt to take a hand in this natural process and see what we can do to change ingrained schemata of interpretation, to learn (and teach others) to see things understood on the basis of tradition differently and to judge them anew. This type of insight draws its innovational power from its ability to choose the right word. Owing to the creativity of natural languages, then, the native speaker has at his command a unique power over the practical consciousness of corporate bodies of men—a power which, as the long history of sophism shows, can be used for the purpose of obfuscation and agitation as well as for enlightenment.

The obverse of this power is, of course, a specific powerlessness of the speaking subject vis-à-vis familiar language games. Anyone who wishes to modify a language game must participate in it first. That, in turn, is possible only through internalization of the rules which define the language game. Acclimating oneself to linguistic traditions thus demands, at least potentially, the kind of effort that is involved in a process of socialization: the "grammar" of language games must become a constituent part of the personality structure. Indeed, skillful speech owes its power over the practical consciousness to the fact that a natural language cannot be adequately grasped as a system of rules for the production of systematically ordered and semantically meaningful configurations of symbols; for it is also immanently and compellingly dependent on the context established by actions and gestural forms of expression. The rhetorical experience thus teaches us to see the connection between language and praxis. Colloquial communication would not just be incomplete, but impossible outside of a context that is grammatically regulated and includes certain shared standards of interaction, as well as the accompanying or intermittent presence of experiential expressions. Language and behavior interpret each other reciprocally: indeed, that idea is already present in Wittgenstein's conception of the language game, in which the game is also a way of life. The grammar of language games, understood as a complete life-praxis, governs not only the combination of symbols but the interpretation of linguistic symbols through actions and expressions.[3]

Philosophical hermeneutics, then—and my remarks are intended only to call this to mind—develops the insights into the structure of natural languages which are to be derived from a reflective use of communicative competence: *Reflexivity and objectivity are as fundamental to language as creativity and the integral relationship between language and life-praxis.* A reflective knowledge of this sort, which comprises the "hermeneutical consciousness," is obviously different from the artistic expertise which goes into disciplined understanding and speaking themselves. But hermeneutics is equally distinct from linguistics.

Linguistics does not concern itself with communicative competence and hence with the ability of the native speaker to take part in colloquial communication by understanding and speaking; it limits itself to "linguistic competence" in the

narrower sense—a term introduced by Chomsky[4] to characterize the ability of an ideal speaker who has full command of the abstract rule system of a natural language. The concept of a language system, in which language is understood as *langue,* leaves out of account the pragmatic dimension in which *langue* is transformed into *parole.* Hermeneutics, by contrast, concerns itself with the experiences of the speaker in this dimension. Further, the goal of linguistics is a reconstruction of the rule system which underlies the production of all the various grammatically correct and semantically meaningful elements of a natural language, whereas hermeneutics reflects on the principal experiences of a communicatively competent speaker (whose linguistic competence is tacitly presupposed). I should like to establish the distinction between rational reconstruction and self-reflection on an intuitive basis alone.

In the process of *self-reflection,* the subject becomes aware of unconscious presuppositions which underlie accomplishments he has taken for granted. Thus, hermeneutical consciousness is the result of a self-reflection in which the speaking subject becomes aware of his inherent freedoms and dependencies in regard to language. In the process, the naive consciousness is rid of a subjectivist as well as an objectivist illusion, under which it labors. Self-reflection throws light on experiences the speaking subject meets with in the use of his communicative competence, but it cannot define that competence. Rational *reconstruction* of a linguistic rule system, on the other hand, serves to define linguistic competence. It makes rules explicit of which the native speaker has an implicit command; but it does not, properly speaking, make the speaker aware of unconscious presuppositions. The subjectivity of the speaker, within the horizon of which the experience of reflection is alone possible, remains fundamentally untouched. One can say that a successful linguistic reconstruction raises the speech apparatus, which functions unconsciously, into consciousness; to do so, however, would be an inexact use of language. The consciousness of the person engaged in the act of speaking, in other words, is unchanged by such linguistic knowledge.

If philosophical hermeneutics, then, has as little to do with the art of understanding and speaking as it does with linguistics, if it yields as little for the prescientific use of communicative competence as it does for the scientific study of language, wherein lies the significance of the hermeneutical consciousness?

There are four respects in which hermeneutics is significant for the various branches of knowledge and the interpretation of their findings. (1) Hermeneutical consciousness demolishes the objectivistic self-conception of the traditional human sciences. Given the bond between the interpreting scholar and the hermeneutical situation from which he starts, it follows that impartiality of understanding cannot be secured by abstraction from preconceived ideas, but alone through reflection on the effective historical relationship in which the knowing subject always stands to its object.[5] Further, (2) hermeneutical consciousness calls to the attention of the social sciences problems which arise from the symbolic

"fore-structuring" of their investigative field. When data is gathered through colloquial communication instead of controlled observation, theoretical concepts can no longer be operationalized within the framework for empirical measurement provided by the prescientifically established language game. The problems which arise at the level of measurement recur at the level of theory formation: the choice of a categorical framework and of theoretical predications necessarily corresponds to a tentative prejudgment of the investigative field itself.[6] (3) Hermeneutical consciousness has a bearing as well on the scientistic self-conception of the natural sciences, though not, of course, on their method. The insight that the natural language always plays the role of an "ultimate" metalanguage for all theories expressed in formal language explains the epistemological rank of colloquial language in the research process. The legitimation of decisions which determine the choice of research strategies, the construction of theories and the methods of their verification, and consequently the course of "scientific progress," is dependent upon discussions within the research community. Such discussions conducted at the metatheoretical level, however, are bound inexorably to the context of natural languages and to the explicational mode of colloquial communication. Hermeneutics can show why, on this metatheoretical level, a consensus can be reached which is indeed rationally motivated but never compelling. Finally, (4) a realm of interpretation which demands hermeneutical consciousness as no other has today become a social reality: namely, the translation of momentous scientific information into the language of the social world at large: "What would we know of modern physics, which so visibly transforms our lives, from physics alone? All presentations of physics which are directed beyond professional circles owe their effect to the rhetorical element. . . . Every science which would be of practical significance is dependent on rhetoric" (p. 279).

The functions which have accrued to scientific and technical progress and which it performs in the maintenance and operation of developed industrial societies illustrate the objective need to set useful technical knowledge in rational relationship to the practical consciousness of the everyday world. This need, I believe, hermeneutics attempts to meet with its claim to universality; for then and only then is hermeneutical consciousness able to prepare the way for the reintegration "even of the experience of science into our own, our common and human experience of life,"[7] if one may point with justice to "the universality of human linguisticality as an inherently limitless element which carries everything within it—not merely the cultural heritage transmitted through language" (p. 279). Gadamer refers to Plato's remark that he who beholds things in the mirror of speech becomes aware of them in their full and undiminished truth—"everything that is reflects itself in the mirror of language" (p. 279).

Precisely that historical force, however, which first elicited the efforts of a philosophical hermeneutics is at variance with Plato's assertion. For obviously modern science can legitimately claim that it arrives at true statements about

"things," not by paying attention to the mirror of human speech, but by proceeding on the basis of a monologue: by advancing theories, in other words, which are formulated in its own language and supported by controlled observation. Because the hypothetical-deductive systems of statements one finds in science are not part of the elements of speech, the information which can be derived from them stands apart from the world of everyday life which is articulated in natural language. Doubtless the transposition of useful technical knowledge into the context of the world at large requires us to render monologically produced meaning understandable in the dimension of speech, and thus in the dialogue of everyday language; and to be sure such a translation poses a hermeneutical problem. But it is a problem which is new to hermeneutics itself. Hermeneutical consciousness originates in reflection on our activity *within* natural language, while the interpretation of the sciences for the world at large must mediate *between* natural language *and* monological language systems. This process of translation oversteps the boundaries of the art of rhetoric and hermeneutics, which had to do merely with the culture constituted in and handed down through colloquial language. If hermeneutics is to go beyond the hermeneutical consciousness which has been developed in the reflective exercise of that art, it must elucidate the conditions which make it possible to withdraw, as it were, from the dialogical structure of colloquial language and to use language monologically instead, for rigorous formation of theories and for the organization of rational goal-oriented behavior.

I would like to insert a thought parenthetically at this point. The genetic epistemology of Jean Piaget[8] lays bare the language-independent roots of operational thinking. To be sure, such thinking can reach full development only on the strength of an integration into the linguistic rule system of the cognitive schemata which originate prelinguistically in the sphere of instrumental action. However, there are ample indications that language is merely "superimposed" on categories such as space, time, causality, and substance, and on rules which govern the combination of symbols according to the laws of formal logic—both of which have a *pre*linguistical foundation. On this hypothesis, it would be possible to explain the monological use of language for the organization of rational goal-oriented behavior and the construction of scientific theories: in such cases natural language could be seen as freed, so to speak, from the structure of intersubjectivity—as functioning, in other words, without its dialogical element and severed from [colloquial] communication, subject only to the conditions of operative intelligence.[9] This complex of questions still awaits its resolution; whatever the outcome, however, it will be relevant for the answer to our question. If it proves true that operative intelligence originates in prelinguistic cognitive schemata and therefore can employ language instrumentally, then hermeneutics' claim to universality finds a limit in the language systems of science and in theories of rational choice. On this presupposition, in other words, it is possible to offer a

plausible explanation why monologically erected language systems, while they cannot be interpreted without reference to a natural language, can nevertheless be "understood" without involvement in the hermeneutical problematic: for on that presupposition the conditions of understanding were not the same thing as the conditions of colloquial communication. That would only be the case when the content of rigorous theories were translated into the context of speech in the everyday world.

That, however, is a problem I cannot deal with; I would like to put the question of the validity of hermeneutics' claim to universality a different way. Is it possible to have an understanding of colloquial configurations of symbols themselves that is not bound by the hermeneutical presuppositions of context-dependent processes of understanding, that in this sense cheats the natural language of its role as ultimate metalanguage? Since hermeneutical understanding must always proceed ad hoc and cannot be developed into a scientific method (can at most reach the level of an art through discipline and training), this question is equivalent to asking whether there can be a theory appropriate to the structure of natural languages which provides the basis for a methodologically ensured understanding of meaning.

I see two avenues of inquiry which we might pursue with promise of finding an answer.

On the one hand, we meet with nontrivial limits to the application of hermeneutical understanding in cases of the sort that psychoanalysis and, insofar as they involve collective behavior, the critique of ideologies undertake to explain. Both fields of endeavor have to do with colloquial objectifications in which the subject who so expresses himself is unaware of his own intentions. Such expressions can be grasped as parts of a systematically distorted communication. They can be understood only to the extent that the general conditions which govern the pathology of colloquial communication are known. A theory of colloquial communication, consequently, must first open the way to pathologically buried meaning. If the claim to produce such a theory were to prove valid, an explanatory understanding were then possible which would be able to pass beyond the limits of hermeneutical understanding of meaning.

On the other hand, the advocates of a generative linguistics have been engaged for more than a decade in a renewed search for a universal theory of natural language. The goal of such a theory is the rational reconstruction of a rule system which would adequately define universal linguistic competence. If this program were to be carried out in such a way that one could assign a structural description from the theoretical language unequivocally to every element of a natural language, then the structural descriptions expressed in the theoretical language would be able to take the place of hermeneutical understanding of meaning.

This problem, too, I am unable to deal with in the present context. In the pages that follow I shall limit myself to the question of whether a critical science like

psychoanalysis, through a theoretically grounded semantic analysis, can elude the bondage of trained interpretation to the natural competence of colloquial communication and thus render hermeneutics' claim to universality invalid. This investigation will help us to specify in what sense it is nevertheless possible to defend the fundamental hermeneutical thesis: that we cannot transcend, to use Gadamer's romantic phraseology, "the conversation that we are."

II

Hermeneutical consciousness is incomplete so long as it has not incorporated into itself reflection on the limit of hermeneutical understanding. The limit experience of hermeneutics is defined by specifically unintelligible expressions. Such specific unintelligibility cannot be overcome by the exercise, however artful, of naturally acquired communicative competence; its refractoriness may be taken as an indication that it is not to be explained alone in terms of the structure of colloquial communication which hermeneutics brings to consciousness. In such a case, it is not the objectivity of the linguistic tradition, the limitations imposed on linguistic understanding of the world by its own horizons, or the potential unintelligibility of the apparently obvious that presents the primary obstacle to interpretive effort.

When confronted with difficulties in comprehension which arise from a large distance between cultures, time periods, or social classes, we can say in principle what additional information we would have to have at our disposal in order to understand: we know that we must make out an alphabet, familiarize ourselves with the lexicon, or derive context-specific rules of application. In the attempt to throw light hermeneutically on unintelligible configurations of meaning, we can know, within the limits of everyday colloquial communication, what we do not (yet) know. Such hermeneutical consciousness proves inadequate in the case of systematically distorted communication: here the unintelligibility results from a faulty organization of speech itself. Openly pathological disturbances of speech—of the sort, for example, which appear in psychotics—hermeneutics can neglect without damage to its conception of itself; for so long as pathological cases alone elude the grasp of hermeneutics, its sphere of application remains coincidental with the limits of normal colloquial communication. The self-conception of hermeneutics can be shaken only if it becomes apparent that systematically distorted patterns of communication also occur in "normal"—that is to say, in pathologically inconspicuous—speech. That, however, is true in the case of pseudocommunication, in which a disruption of communication is not recognizable by the parties involved. Only a newcomer to the conversation notices that they misunderstand each other. Pseudocommunication produces a system of misunderstandings which remain opaque because they are seen in the light of a false consensus. Now we have learned from hermeneutics that so long as we have

to do with a natural language we are always interested participants and cannot escape from the role of the reflective playing partner. We thus have no universal criterion at our disposal which would tell us when we are caught up in the false consciousness of a pseudonormal understanding and are viewing something merely as the kind of difficulty which hermeneutics can clarify, when in fact it requires systematic explanation. The limit experience of hermeneutics thus consists in the discovery of systematically produced misunderstandings—without at first being able to "comprehend" them.

Freud has thoroughly explored systematically displaced communication in order to delimit a sphere of specifically unintelligible expressions. He consistently views the dream as the "normative model" of such phenomena. The phenomena themselves extend from harmless pseudocommunication and routine blunders to the pathological symptoms of neuroses, mental illnesses, and psychosomatic disturbances. In his cultural-theoretical works Freud expands his conception of systematically distorted communication, using the insights gained from clinical phenomena as a key to pseudonormality—that is, to the hidden pathology of entire social systems. We will concentrate at the outset on the most thoroughly elucidated kinds of neurotic symptoms.

There are three criteria which serve to define neurotically distorted, or specifically unintelligible, expressions. On the level of linguistic symbols, distorted communication makes itself felt through the application of rules which deviate from the rule system of public language. This can affect the semantic content of individual expressions and entire fields of meaning; in extreme cases, syntax, too, is involved. Freud notes, in particular, condensation, displacement, agrammaticality, and the role of "representation through the opposite" in dream-texts. On the behavioral level, a distorted language game makes itself felt through rigidity and compulsive repetition. Stereotyped patterns of behavior occur in situations with like emotive stimuli. Such inflexibility is an indication that the semantic content of the symbol has lost its linguistic independence of situation. Finally, when we look at the system of distorted communication as a whole, the inherent discrepancy between the different levels of communication becomes conspicuous: the usual congruence between linguistic symbolism, actions, and attendant [gestural] expressions has collapsed. Neurotic symptoms provide only the most refractory and tangible evidence of such dissonance. Regardless of the level of communication on which the symptoms appear, whether in linguistic expression, on the level of gestural symbolism, or on the level of compulsive behavior, a content excommunicated from the public use of language asserts itself against the will of the speaker. This content brings to expression a meaning which is unintelligible according to the rules of public communication, one which, in this sense, has become private, and which remains inaccessible even to the speaker himself, who is nevertheless its "author." In the self, a communication block subsists between the language competent ego which participates in intersubjectively

established language games and that "foreign land within" (Freud) which manifests itself in the symbolism of private or primitive language.

Alfred Lorenzer, who has investigated the analytical conversation between doctor and patient from a point of view which sees psychoanalysis as an analysis of language,[10] thinks of the depth-hermeneutical deciphering of specifically unintelligible objectifications as an understanding of analogically related "scenes." Regarded hermeneutically, the goal of analytical interpretation is thus the elucidation of the unintelligible meaning of symptomatic expressions. In cases where neuroses are involved, such expressions are part of a deformed language game in which the patient becomes an "actor"—that is, he plays out an unintelligible scene, contravening accepted behavioral expectations in a conspicuously stereotypical way. The analyst attempts to make the meaning of the symptomatic scene intelligible by establishing its relationship to analogous scenes in the transference situation. Such scenes hold the key to the enciphered relationship between the symptomatic scene the adult patient plays outside the analysis and an original scene from early childhood; for in the transference situation the patient forces the doctor into the role of the conflict-invested primary reference person. The doctor, in the role of reflective supporting actor, can interpret the transference situation as a repetition of early childhood scenes and so compile a lexicon of the private meanings attached to the patient's symptomatic expressions. Scenic understanding, then, is based on the discovery that the patient conducts himself in his symptomatic scenes as he does in certain well-defined transference ones; its goal is the reconstruction of the original scene, authenticated by an act of self-reflective insight on the part of the patient.

Typically, as Lorenzer has shown in reference to the phobia of Freud's "Little Hans," the original scene is a situation in which the child is exposed to and attempts to ward off an intolerable conflict. The attempt to ward off the conflict is accompanied by a process of *desymbolization* and the formation of a symptom. The child excludes the experience of the conflict-laden object relation from public communication (thereby rendering it inaccessible to his own ego as well); he sunders the conflict-laden portion of the object representation and desymbolizes to some extent the meaning of the relevant reference person. The gap which is left in the semantic field is filled by the symptom, in that an apparently normal symbol takes the place of the sundered symbolic content. The symbol in question, however, has the conspicuousness of a symptom, for it has taken on a private meaning and can no longer be used in accordance with the rules of public language. Scenic understanding—which establishes the equivalencies of meaning among the elements of three different patterns (the everyday scene, the transference scene, and the original scene) and thus does away with the specific unintelligibility of the symptom—therefore aids in the process of *resymbolization*—that is, in the reintroduction into public communication of the sundered symbolic content. The latent meaning of the present-day situation becomes

understandable through reference to the unscrambled significance of the infantile original scene. Scenic understanding, therefore, makes it possible to "translate" the meaning of the pathologically rigid pattern of communication—a meaning which was previously inaccessible in public communication but nevertheless had a determining effect on behavior.

Scenic understanding is distinct from simple hermeneutical understanding by virtue of its explanatory power; it unlocks the meaning of specifically unintelligible expressions only insofar as it can also successfully reconstruct the original scene and thus bring to light the conditions responsible for the genesis of the difficulty itself. The What—the meaningful content of the systematically distorted expression—cannot be "understood" if the Why—the origin of the symptomatic scene in the conditions responsible for the systematic distortion itself—cannot be "explained" at the same time.

Understanding, of course, can assume an explanatory function in the strict sense only if its analysis of meaning does not rely solely upon the trained application of communicative competence but procedes on the basis of theoretical hypotheses as well. I can point to two indications that scenic understanding is based on theoretical presuppositions which are in no way the spontaneous outgrowth of the natural competence of a native speaker.

First, scenic understanding is linked to an experimental design which is inherently hermeneutical. Freud's basic principle of analysis ensures a communication between doctor and patient which, in its own way, fulfills experimental conditions: virtualization in psychoanalysis of the real life situation and free association on the part of the patient, together with goal-inhibited reaction and reflective participation on the part of the analyst make it possible to realize a transference situation which can serve as a basis for comparison in the process of translation. Second, the preconception which the analyst brings to the analysis is directed to a small selection of possible constructions—namely, to conflict-disturbed early childhood object relations. The linguistic material which emerges from conversations with the patient is classified according to a narrowly circumscribed context of possible meanings. This context consists of an overall interpretation of early childhood models of interaction, which is keyed to a phase-specific developmental history of the personality. Both factors suggest that scenic understanding cannot be thought of, like hermeneutics, as a theory-free application of communicative competence, itself the necessary precondition for all possible theories.

The theoretical hypotheses which are tacitly presupposed by depth-hermeneutical analysis of language may be seen as falling into three different groups: (1) the psychoanalyst has a preconceived notion of the structure of undistorted colloquial communication; (2) he traces the systematic distortion of communication back to the confusion of two distinct developmental-historical stages, prelinguistic and linguistic, in the organization of symbols; (3) he explains the

origin of the deformation with the help of a theory of deviational processes of socialization which draws upon the connection between models of early childhood interaction and the formation of personality structures. There is no need here to develop systematically the theoretical hypotheses themselves. I would, however, like to comment briefly on the groups I have mentioned.

1. The first set of theoretical hypotheses has to do with the structural conditions which must be met for colloquial communication to be considered "normal."

(a) In a nondeformed language game, expressions on all three levels of communication are congruent: linguistically symbolized expressions, expressions represented in actions, and those embodied in physical expressions do not contradict each other but supplement each other metacommunicatively. Intentional contradictions, which carry a message of their own, are normal in this regard. Further, in the normal form of colloquial communication a portion of the extra verbal meanings must be intentional—that is, capable of being verbalized. The portion itself is socio-culturally variable, but constant within a given language community.

(b) Normal colloquial communication conforms to intersubjectively valid rules: it is public. Communicated meanings are identical, in principle, for all members of the language community. Verbal expressions are constructed in conformity with the operative grammatical rule system and are context-specific in application; for extraverbal expressions, which are not grammatically regulated, there is also a lexicon which, within defined limits, is socio-culturally variable.

(c) In normal discourse, the speakers are conscious of the categorical distinction between subject and object. They differentiate between external and internal discourse and separate the private from the public world. In addition, differentiation between reality (*Sein*) and appearance (*Schein*) is further dependent on the speaker's ability to discriminate between the linguistic symbol, the meaning it carries (significatum), and the object to which the symbol refers (referent, denotatum). Only on such a basis is a situation-independent application (decontextualization) of linguistic symbols possible. The speaking subject comes to master the distinction between reality and appearance to the extent that language itself takes on for him a distinct reality, separate from the objects it denotes, the circumstances it represents, and from private experiences as well.

(d) In normal colloquial communication an intersubjectivity, which serves to guarantee identity is formed and preserved in the relationship between mutually recognizant individuals. While the analytical use of language allows one to identify matters of fact (and thus to categorize objects by means of the identification of distinctive qualities, the subsumption of individual members under classes, and the inclusion of large quantities), the reflexive use of language guarantees a relationship between the speaking subject and the language community which cannot be adequately described by means of the analytical operations just named. The intersubjectivity of the world in which the subjects live together by virtue of

colloquial communication alone is not a universal, to which individuals can be subordinated the same way members are to their classes. Rather, the relationship between I, Thou (another I), and We (I and other I's) is established only through an analytically paradoxical feat. The parties to a conversation identify themselves simultaneously with two irreconcilable roles; in so doing, they guarantee the identity not only of the I but that of the group as well. The One (I) asserts vis-à-vis the Other (Thou) his absolute nonidentity; at the same time, however, both also recognize their common identity, in that they mutually acknowledge each other as unique individuals. As a result, they are once again bound by a commonality (We), a group—which in turn asserts its individuality vis-à-vis other groups, so that the same relationship which exists between individuals establishes itself as well on the level of intersubjectively bound collectives.[11]

The specific element in linguistic intersubjectivity resides in its ability to serve as a basis for communication between individual members of the language community. In the reflexive use of language, our use of unavoidably universal categories to represent something inalienably individual is such that, to a certain extent, we metacommunicatively revoke (and at the same time confirm, with reservations) the direct messages involved. And we do so in order to bring to expression, indirectly, that which is nonidentical in the I—a nonidentity which is not absorbed by the universal definitions used to express it, yet can come to representation only through them.[12] The analytical use of language is embedded in its reflexive use; for the intersubjectivity of colloquial understanding cannot be sustained without a mutual self-representation on the part of the speaking subjects. To the extent that the speaker has command of those indirect messages on the metacommunicative level, he differentiates between essence and appearance. We can come to an understanding about facts directly; but the subjectivity which we encounter when we speak to one another merely "appears" in direct messages. The speaker's categorical sense of the indirect form of the message in which something inexpressibly individual is nevertheless brought to expression is merely ontologized in the concept of an essence which exists in its appearances.

(e) Finally, normal discourse is distinctive in that the categories of substance and causality, space and time have different meanings, according to whether they are applied to objects in the world or to the linguistically constituted world of the speaking subjects themselves. The interpretive schematism "substance" has a different meaning for the identity of objects which can be analytically and thus unequivocally categorized than it has for speaking and acting subjects, whose I-identity, as shown, altogether escapes analytically unequivocal operations. The causal interpretive schematism leads to the concept of "cause" when applied to empirical chains of events, and to the concept of "motive" when applied to a configuration of intentional actions. Similarly, space and time are also schematized differently when applied to physically measurable properties of objects and events than they are when applied to the intersubjective experience of configurations of

symbolically mediated interactions. In the first instance, the categories serve as a system of coordinates for controlled observation of the outcome of instrumental behavior, in the latter as the referential framework for the subjective experience of social space and historical time. The compass of intersubjective experience alters complementarily with that of the experience of objectivized objects and events.

2. The second set of hypotheses has to do with the interrelationship between two genetically successive stages in the organization of symbols.

(a) The earlier symbol organization, the content of which resists transposition into grammatically regulated communication, can be brought to light only by means of data gathered from the study of pathological speech and through the analysis of dream material. In such cases, one has to do with symbols which control behavior and not merely with signs, for the symbols have genuine significative function: they represent interactional experiences. In other respects, however, this paleosymbolic layer is without any of the properties of normal discourse.[13] Paleosymbols are not installed in a grammatical rule system. They are not ordered elements and do not appear in configurations which can be grammatically transformed. For that reason, the mode of operation of prelinguistic symbols has been compared with that of analog, as opposed to digital, computers. Freud himself notes the absence of logical relationships in his dream analyses. He points in particular to "representations through the opposite," which have preserved on the linguistic level the genetically earlier characteristic of a unification of logically incompatible—that is, antithetical—meanings.[14] Prelinguistic symbols are heavily laden with emotion and center in each case on definite scenes. There is no division between linguistic symbol and gestural expression. The bond to a particular context is so strong that the symbol cannot vary freely with actions.[15] Although paleosymbols constitute a prelinguistic groundwork for the intersubjectivity of corporate life and concerted action, they do not, strictly speaking, permit public communication. For the meanings they carry are low in stability and high in private content: they are not yet able to support an intersubjectively binding identity of meanings. The privatism of prelinguistic symbol organization, which plays a conspicuous role in all forms of pathological speech, is traceable to the fact that the distance between sender and addressee and the distinction between symbolic sign, semantic content, and referent, which are characteristic of colloquial communication, have not yet developed. The levels of reality represented by reality and appearance, by public and private worlds, cannot yet be clearly differentiated by means of paleosymbols (Adualism).

Finally, prelinguistic symbol organization does not permit an analytically satisfactory categorization of the experienced objective world. Among the communicative and cognitive disorders of psychotics,[16] one finds two extreme kinds of symptomatic deficiencies; in both cases, analytical operations having to do with class formation are disturbed. In the one instance, a fragmentational pattern is present which makes it impossible to collect scattered individual elements into classes on the basis of general criteria; in the other, an amorphous pattern which makes it impossible to analyze aggregates of superficially similar and vaguely related things. The ability to use symbols is not wholly lost. In both cases, however, the inability to construct hierarchies of classes and to identify the members of classes testifies to a breakdown in the analytical use of language. The second variant, to be sure, suggests that an archaic kind of class formation is possible with the help of prelinguistic symbols. In any event, we find in early stages of ontogenetic and phylogenetic development, as well as in instances of pathological speech, so-called primary classes, which are not formed abstractly on the basis of the identity of properties. Instead, the aggregates are made up of concrete objects—concrete in view of the fact that, irrespective of their identifiable properties, they are incorporated into a holistic, subjectively compelling motivational context. Animistic world-views are articulated in accordance with such primitive classes. Since holistic intentional contexts cannot be constructed in the absence of interactional experiences, there is some ground for the hypothesis that atavistic forms of intersubjectivity are in fact developed at the stage of prelinguistic symbol organization. Paleosymbols, on the other hand, are clearly developed in interactional contexts, prior to the time they are assimilated into a grammatical rule system and linked to operative intelligence.

(b) The symbol organization here described, which genetically precedes language, is a theoretical construction. We cannot observe it. Psychoanalytical deciphering of systematically distorted communication, however, presupposes such a construction, in that depth-hermeneutics grasps deviations from normal discourse either as compulsive regression to earlier stages of communication or else as a penetration of the earlier form of communication into language. Taking the analyst's experiences with neurotic patients as his starting point, Alfred Lorenzer, as we have noted, sees the significance of psychoanalysis in terms of its ability to reintegrate sundered symbolic content, as a private language which produces a constriction in public communication, into the common use of language. The work of analysis, which reverses the process of repression, aids in "resymbolization"; repression itself can thus be understood as "desymbolization." Repression, which operates as a defense mechanism and which comes to light in the patient's flightlike resistance to apt interpretations on the part of the analyst, is carried out in and through language; otherwise it would be impossible to reverse the defensive process hermeneutically, even via the analysis of language. The fugitive ego, which, when faced with a conflict, must submit to the demands of the outside world, conceals itself from itself, in that it purges representation of the undesirable impulse from the text of its everyday self-understanding. Through such censorship, the representation of the prohibited love-object is excommunicated from public use of language and banished, as it were, to the genetically earlier stage of paleosymbols.

The hypothesis that neurotic behavior is paleosymbolically controlled and only rationalized subsequently through a linguistic construction offers an explanation as well for the characteristic symptoms of this type of behavior—for pseudo-communicative value, stereotyping, and compulsiveness, for emotional cathexis, expressive content, and rigid bonding to concrete situations.

If repression, then, can be understood as desymbolization, a language analytical explanation is also to hand for the complementary defense mechanisms—namely, for projection and denial, which are directed not against the self but against the outside world. While in the former case the public use of language is garbled by symptoms which have formed to take the place of excommunicated language elements, in the latter case the distortion results directly from the uncontrolled penetration into language of paleosymbolic offshoots. Here the goal of language analysis is not a transformation of desymbolized content into linguistically articulated meaning, but a consciously effected excommunication of prelinguistic xenocysts. In both cases, the systematic distortion of colloquial communication can be traced to the encapsulation, like foreign bodies, of paleosymbolically linked semantic content in the linguistically regulated application of symbols. The task of language analysis is to break up the syndrome—that is, to isolate the two layers of language.

In processes which lead to the coining of new words and phrases, on the other hand, a genuine integration of the two layers takes place: in the creative use of language the potential meaning bound up in the paleosymbolic is publicly recovered and placed at the disposal of a grammatically regulated application of symbols.[17] Such a transference of semantic content from the prelinguistic to the linguistic state of aggregation widens the sphere of communicative behavior at the expense of behavior which is unconsciously motivated. Success in the creative use of language is marked by emancipation.

Wit is a different matter. The laughter with which we react, almost compulsively, to the humor of wit records the liberating experience of the passage from paleosymbolic to linguistic thinking; the unmasked equivocality of wit is comic in that, by this means, the raconteur lures us into regression to the stage of prelinguistic symbolism—for example, into confounding identity and similarity—and at the same time carries us past the faulty thinking of that regression. Our laughter is laughter of relief. In the reaction to wit, which allows us to repeat, in principle and tentatively, the precarious passage over the archaic boundary which separates prelinguistic from linguistic communication, we assure ourselves of the control we have acquired over the perils inherent in a surmounted stage of consciousness.

3. Unlike simple hermeneutical understanding, depth-hermeneutics, which clarifies the specific unintelligibility of systematically distorted communication, can no longer be grasped, strictly speaking, in terms of the model of translation. For the controlled "translation" of prelinguistic symbolism into language

eliminates obscurities which originate not within language but with language itself: the structure of colloquial communication, which forms the basis for every translation, is thus itself involved. Consequently, depth-hermeneutical understanding requires a systematic preconception which has to do with language as a whole, whereas hermeneutical understanding begins, in each case, from a preconception defined by the tradition which is formed and altered within linguistic communication. The theoretical hypotheses which have to do with (1) the two stages of symbol organization and (2) the processes of de- and resymbolization, penetration of paleosymbolic elements into language, and conscious excommunication of these xenocysts, as well as the linguistic integration of prelinguistic symbolic content—these theoretical hypotheses can be classified according to a structural model which Freud derived from fundamental experiences with the analysis of defense processes. The constructs "ego" and "id" interpret the analyst's experiences with *resistance* on the part of the patient.

Ego is the agency which carries out the tasks of reality testing and impulse censorship. Id is the name for that part of the self which is isolated from the ego and to which we gain access, through its manifestations, in connection with defense processes. The id manifests itself *indirectly* through the symptoms which fill the gaps left in the normal use of language by desymbolization, and *directly* through the delusory paleosymbolic elements imported into language by projection and denial. Now the clinical encounter with "resistance" which makes the constructs of ego and id necessary also shows that the activity of the defending agency proceeds for the most part unconsciously. Freud therefore institutes the category "superego": a defense system alien to the ego which is comprised of abandoned identification with the expectations of primary reference persons. All three categories, ego, id, and superego, are therefore linked to the specific meaning of a systematically distorted communication which the doctor and patient enter into with the object of setting in motion a dialogical process of enlightenment and of leading the patient to self-reflection. Metapsychology can be grounded only as metahermeneutics.[18]

The model of agencies relies implicitly on a model of deformations in colloquial intersubjectivity: the dimensions which the id and superego define for the structure of personality clearly correspond to those of structural deformations in the intersubjectivity of unconstrained communication. The structural model which Freud introduced as the categorical framework of metapsychology is therefore reducible to a theory of deviations in communicative competence.

Now metapsychology consists principally of hypotheses about the origination of personality structures. And that, too, is accounted for by the metahermeneutical role the psychoanalyst must play. The analyst's *understanding*, as we have seen, owes its explanatory power to the fact that a systematically inaccessible meaning can be elucidated only to the extent that the origin of the loss of meaning can be *explained*. The construction of the original scene makes both things

possible at once: it opens the way to an understanding of the meaning of the deformed language game and explains at the same time the origin of the deformation itself. Scenic understanding, therefore, presupposes metapsychology as a theory which explains the *origin* of the structures ego, id, and superego. On the sociological level, the counterpart of metapsychology is a theory which explains the acquisition of the basic traits of role behavior. Both theories, however, are part of a metahermeneutics which traces the psychological rise of personality structures and the acquisition of the basic traits of role behavior back to the development of communicative competence, and that means: to the socializing assimilation of forms which govern the intersubjectivity of colloquial intelligibility. We have thus arrived at an answer to the question which served as our point of departure: explanatory understanding, as a depth-hermeneutical deciphering of specifically inaccessible expressions, presupposes not only, as simple hermeneutical understanding does, the trained application of naturally acquired communicative competence, but a theory of communicative competence as well. Such a theory concerns itself with the forms of the intersubjectivity of language and the causes of their deformation. I do not maintain that, at present, a theory of communicative competence has been satisfactorily undertaken, much less explicitly developed. Freud's metapsychology would have to be freed of its scientistic misconception of itself before it could serve fruitfully as part of a metahermeneutics. I do maintain, however, that any depth-hermeneutical interpretation of systematically distorted communication, whether it takes place in the analytical exchange between doctor and patient or informally, must implicitly presuppose exacting theoretical hypotheses of the sort which can be developed and grounded only within the framework of a *theory of communicative competence.*

III

What follows from the foregoing so far as hermeneutics' claim to universality is concerned? Would it not be true of the theoretical language of a metahermeneutics —a question which must be asked in reference to every theory—that a given, nonreconstructed colloquial language remains its ultimate metalanguage? And would not the application of the universal interpretations derived from such a theory to a given material in colloquial language have as much need as before of ordinary hermeneutical understanding, which no generalized technique of scientific analysis can replace? It would no longer be necessary to answer either question without circumstance in terms of hermeneutics' claim to universality if the knowing subject, who to be sure must always draw upon his previously acquired linguistic competence, were able to assure himself of that competence expressly through a theoretical reconstruction. We have left this problem of a universal theory of natural languages out of consideration. Even without such a theory to hand, however, we can call to witness the competence which the analyst

(and the critic of ideology) must actually have at his command in deciphering specifically unintelligible expressions. Indeed, *the implicit knowledge of the determinants of systematically distorted communication,* which is presupposed by the depth-hermeneutical use of communicative competence, *is enough to call into question the ontological self-conception of hermeneutics* which Gadamer explicates, following Heidegger.

The context-dependency of understanding which hermeneutics brings to consciousness and which compels us in each case to begin from a preconception supported by tradition and to develop constantly, in every process of learning, a new preconception, Gadamer attributes ontologically to an insuperable primacy of the linguistic tradition.[19] Gadamer poses the question: "Is the phenomenon of understanding adequately defined if I say: understanding means avoiding misunderstanding? Does not, in truth, every misunderstanding presuppose the existence of something like a "standing agreement"?[20] On the affirmative answer to this question we agree; not, however, on the way in which that prior consensus is to be defined.

Gadamer, if I am correct, is of the opinion that the hermeneutical elucidation of unintelligible or misunderstood expression must always refer back to a prior consensus which has been reliably worked out in the dialogue of a convergent tradition. This tradition, however, is objective for us, in the sense that it cannot be confronted with a claim to the truth on principle. The inherently prejudiced nature of understanding renders it impossible—indeed, makes it seem pointless—to place in jeopardy the factually worked out consensus which underlies, as the case may be, our misconception or lack of comprehension. Hermeneutically, we are obliged to have reference to concrete preunderstandings which, ultimately, can be traced back to the process of socialization, to the mastery of and absorption into common contexts of tradition. None of the contexts involved is off-limits to criticism as a matter of principle, but none of them can be called into question abstractly. That would be possible only if we could look at a consensus produced through mutual understanding from the sidelines, as it were, and could subject it, behind the backs of the participants, to renewed demands for legitimation. But we can make demands of this sort to the face of the participants only by entering into a conversation with them. In so doing, we resubmit ourselves to the hermeneutical obligation of accepting for the time being—as a standing agreement—whatever consensus the resumed conversation may lead to as its resolution. The attempt to cast doubt, abstractly, on this agreement—which is, of course, contingent—as a false consciousness is pointless, since we cannot transcend the conversation which we are. From this, Gadamer infers the ontological precedence of linguistic tradition over criticism of all sorts: we can, it follows, bring criticism to bear only on given individual traditions, since we ourselves are part of the encompassing traditional context of a language.

Such considerations seem plausible at first. They are upset, however, by the

depth-hermeneutical insight that a consensus, apparently worked out on a "rational" basis, may equally well be the product of pseudocommunication. As Albrecht Wellmer has pointed out, this same antitraditional insight comes to general expression in the heritage of the Enlightenment. In all matters touching agreement, the Enlightenment demands that reason be established as the principle of unconstrained communication, as opposed to the experienced reality of a communication distorted by force: "The Enlightenment knew what hermeneutics forgets: that the 'conversation' which, according to Gadamer, we 'are' is also a nexus of force and for precisely that reason is not a conversation. . . . The claim to universality of the hermeneutical approach can be upheld only if one starts from the recognition that the context of tradition, as the locus of possible truth and real accord, is at the same time the locus of real falsehood and the persistent use of force."[21]

The standing agreement which Gadamer envisions as the consequence of every failure to agree could legitimately be equated with a real accord on the matter in question only if we were able to say for certain that every consensus worked out in the medium of linguistic tradition is arrived at unconstrainedly and without distortion. We know from depth-hermeneutics, however, that the dogmatism of the traditional context is the vehicle not only for the objectivity of language in general, but for the repressiveness of a power relationship which deforms the intersubjectivity of understanding as such and systematically distorts colloquial communication. For that reason, every consensus in which interpretation terminates stands under the suspicion of having been pseudocommunicatively compelled: the ancients called it delusion when misunderstanding and misunderstanding of one's self blithely perpetuated themselves in the guise of real accord. Clearly, insight into the prejudicial structure of understanding yields nothing when it comes to the pitfall of identifying the factually produced consensus with the true one. Instead, it leads to the ontologization of language and to the hypostatization of the traditional context. A critically self-aware hermeneutics, on the other hand, one which differentiates between insight and delusion, assimilates the metahermeneutical knowledge concerning the conditions which make systematically distorted communication possible. It links understanding to the principle of rational discourse, so that truth can be guaranteed only by *that* consensus which might be reached under the idealized conditions to be found in unrestrained and dominance-free communication, and which could, in the course of time, be affirmed to exist.

As K.-O. Apel has rightly emphasized, hermeneutical understanding is conducive to a critical confirmation of the truth only to the extent that it subordinates itself to a regulative principle which requires universal communicative agreement within an unlimited community of interpretation.[22] Only this principle, in other words, is able to ensure that the hermeneutical effort will not stop short before it has seen through deception (in the case of a forced consensus) and systematic

displacement (in the case of apparently accidental misunderstanding). If understanding of meaning is not to remain indifferent to the idea of truth a fortiori, we must envisage, along with the concept of a truth which measures itself against the idealized concurrence to be reached in unlimited and dominance-free communication, the structure of a corporate life in unconstrained communication. Truth is the inherent and proper constraint upon unconstrained universal acknowledgment; such acknowledgment, however, is inseparable from the notion of an ideal forum—and that means way of life—in which unconstrained universal agreement is possible. In this respect, critical understanding of meaning necessarily demands the formal anticipation of right living. As G. H. Mead has said: "Universal discourse is the formal ideal of communication. If communication can be carried through and made perfect, then there would exist the kind of democracy . . . in which each individual would carry just the response in himself that he knows he calls out in the community. That is what makes communication in the significant sense the organizing process in the community."[23] An idea of the truth which measures itself against true consensus implies an idea of the true life. We can also say: it includes the idea of a coming of age. Only the formal anticipation of the idealized conversation as a future way of life guarantees the ultimate, contrafactual standing agreement which unites us provisionally, and on the basis of which any factual agreement, if it be a false one, can be criticized as a false consciousness.

It is true that we are not in a position to call for that regulative principle of understanding, much less to ground it, until such time as we can demonstrate that the anticipation of eventual truth and right living is constitutive for every nonmonological linguistic agreement. To be sure, the fundamental experience of metahermeneutics makes us aware that critique—namely, a penetrating understanding which is not deflected by delusion—takes its bearings from the concept of ideal concurrence and in this respect is guided by the regulative principle of rational discourse. However, since we not only entertain that formal anticipation in every incisive understanding, but must do so in principle, we cannot appeal to the evidence of experience alone. In order to provide legitimate grounds for the validity of critical understanding, we must develop the implicit knowledge by which a depth-hermeneutical analysis of language is always guided into a theory which makes it possible to derive from the logic of colloquial language the principle of rational discourse as the necessary regulator of every actual discourse, be it ever so displaced.

Meanwhile, even apart from anticipation of a general theory of natural languages, the present considerations are sufficient to call into question two views, both of which follow, not indeed from hermeneutics itself, but from what seems to me a false ontological conception of hermeneutics.

1. Gadamer has used hermeneutical insight into the prejudicial structure of understanding to rehabilitate prejudice. He sees no antithesis between authority

and reason. The authority of tradition, he says, does not prevail blindly but through the reflective acknowledgment of those who, standing within the tradition, interpret it and continue its development through application. In his reply to my critique,[24] Gadamer once again makes his position clear:

> Granted, authority exercises force in countless forms. . . . But this view of the obedience rendered to authority can never explain why it should express itself in power *structures* and not in the disorder which characterizes the exercise of force alone. As I see it, then, there are compelling reasons for viewing acknowledgement as the determining factor in true authority relationships. . . . One need only study representative instances of the loss or decline of authority to see what authority is and whence it derives its life. Not from dogmatic force, but from dogmatic acknowledgement. What, however, is dogmatic acknowledgement, if not this: that one concedes to authority a superiority in knowledge and judgment [p. 285].

Dogmatic acknowledgment of any tradition—and that means the acceptance of its claim to the truth—can, of course, be equated with knowledge itself only if the tradition in question somehow guarantees freedom from constraint and from restriction in agreement about tradition itself. Gadamer's argument presupposes that legitimating acknowledgment and the agreement in which authority is grounded are brought about without force. Experience with systematically distorted communication militates against that presupposition. Moreover, force achieves permanence through precisely the objective illusion of freedom from force which characterizes a pseudocommunicative agreement. I call a force which is legitimated in that way, as Max Weber does, authority. Without the proviso, on principle, of universal and dominance-free agreement, therefore, it is impossible to differentiate in a fundamental way between dogmatic acknowledgment and true consensus. Reason, as the principle of rational discourse, is the rock on which existing authorities split, not the one on which they were founded.

2. If, however, the antithesis between authority and reason proclaimed by the Enlightenment is valid and cannot be rescinded hermeneutically, then the attempt to impose fundamental restrictions on the interpreter's claim to enlightenment becomes problematic as well. Gadamer has further used hermeneutical insight into the prejudicial structure of understanding to restrict the quest for enlightenment to the horizon of prevailing convictions. According to Gadamer, the superior knowledge of the interpreter finds its limit in the recognized and traditionally ingrained convictions of the socio-cultural life-world to which he himself belongs:

> What, it must be asked, is the relationship between the knowledge of the psychoanalyst and his professional position within the social reality, of which he is, after all, a member? That he inquires behind superficial explanations,

> breaks through obstacles to self-understanding, sees through the repressive effect of social taboos—all these things are part and parcel of the emancipatory reflection into which he leads his patients. But if he exercises the same kind of reflection in situations and in areas where his role as a doctor is not legitimately involved, where he is himself a participant in the social game, then he abandons his social role. The person who "sees through" his playing partners to something beyond the understandings involved in their relationship—that is, does not take the game they are playing seriously—is a spoilsport whom one avoids. The emancipatory power of reflection to which the psychoanalyst lays claim thus has its limit—a limit which is defined by the larger social consciousness in terms of which analyst and patient alike understand themselves, along with everyone else. For hermeneutical reflection teaches us that social community, with all its tensions and disruptions, leads us back time and again to a social understanding by virtue of which it continues to exist [p. 290f.].

Nevertheless, we have good reason to suspect that the background consen of established traditions and language games can be a consciousness forged compulsion, a result of pseudocommunication, not only in the pathologica isolated case of disturbed familial systems, but in entire social systems as w The freedom of movement of a hermeneutical understanding widened i critique, therefore, ought not be linked to the free play available within tradition and prevailing convictions. Because a depth-hermeneutics pledged to regulative principle of rational discourse must seek and can find the natural h torical traces of disturbed communication even in fundamental concurrences a acknowledged legitimations, it would be incompatible with its methodologi approach to privatize its claim to enlightenment and to restrict the critique ideologies to the role of a procedure institutionalized in the doctor-pati relationship. Enlightenment, which effects a radical understanding, is alw political. To be sure, critique, too, remains bound to the traditional context wh it reflects. When it comes to monological self-certainty, which critique mer arrogates to itself, Gadamer's hermeneutical objection is valid. There is no c roboration for depth-hermeneutical interpretation outside of the self-reflectio all parties involved—a self-reflection which is found in and carried out throu dialogue. In fact, the hypothetical status of all general interpretations gives r in each case to compelling a priori restrictions when it comes to the choice mode, according to which critical understanding's claim to enlightenment is to redeemed.[25]

Perhaps under the present circumstances there is a more pressing need to c attention to the limits of critique's false claim to universality than to those of claim to universality of hermeneutics. So far as it is a matter of clarifyin dispute about validity, however, the latter, too, stands in need of critical apprais

Notes

1. The word "natural" is used here in the same sense that it is used to distinguish "natural" from "artificial" languages.

2. H.-G. Gadamer, "Rhetorik, Hermeneutik, [und] Ideologiekritik," in *Kleine Schriften I* (Tübingen, 1967), pp. 113-30. [In this volume, pp. 174–92. Subsequent references to Gadamer's essay are to the translation in the present collection and are cited parenthetically in the text.]

3. See the author's *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (Frankfurt am Main, 1968), pp. 206ff. *[Knowledge and Human Interest,* trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston, 1971).]

4. Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, MA, 1965).

5. Gadamer demonstrates this point in the Second Part of *Truth and Method.*

6. See the author's *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften, Philosophische Rundschau,* Beiheft 5 (1967): Chapter III.

7. H.-G. Gadamer, "Die Universalität des hermeneutischen Problems," in *Kleine Schriften I,* p. 109. ["The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem," trans. David E. Linge, in *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* ed. Linge (Berkeley, 1976).]

8. See H. G. Furth's excellent study, *Piaget and Knowledge* (Englewood Cliffs, 1969).

9. This view is further supported by Lorenzen's proposed operative construction of logic. His scheme would explain why the elements of the calculus of statements can be introduced language-independently, in the sense that the natural language used to introduce them is called upon in an auxillary capacity only, for didactic purposes, but need not be presented systematically. See P[aul] Lorenzen, *Normative Logic and Ethics* (Mannheim, 1969). Also, K. Lorenz and J. Mittelstrass, "Die Hintergehbarkeit der Sprache," *Kantstudien* 58 (1967): 187-208.

10. A. Lorenzer, *Sprachzerstörung und Rekonstruktion: Vorarbeiten zu einer Metatheorie der Psychoanalyse* (Frankfurt, 1970).

11. This is reflected as well in our relationship to foreign languages. In principle, we can acquire a mastery of any foreign language because all natural languages are reducible to a universal generative rule system. And yet we learn a foreign language only to the extent that we recapitulate, virtually at least, the same process of socialization the native speaker goes through, and thereby, again virtually, become part of an individual language community: a natural language is something universal only as something concrete.

12. On the concept of the nonidentical, see T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt, 1966). [*Negative Dialectics,* trans. E. B. Ashton; (New York, 1973).]

13. See S[ilvano] Arieti, *The Intrapsychic Self* (New York, 1967), especially Chapters 7 and 16. Also H. Werner and B. Kaplan, *Symbol Formation* (New York, 1967), and Paul Watzlawick, J. H. Beavin, and D. D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication* (New York, 1967), especially Chapters 6 and 7.

14. Representations through the opposite, or words with antithetical meanings, of course, are not merely examples of agrammaticality; they are probably the record as well of primal situations involving behavioral and attitudinal ambivalence, an ambivalence which has become chronic with the dedifferentiation of the impulse system and the breakdown of class-specific responses, and which has been caught up and stabilized through prelinguistic symbolism. See A[rnold] Gehlen, *Urmensch und Spätkultur* (Bonn, 1956) and A. S. Diamond, *The History and Origin of Language* (London, 1959).

15. Lorenzer (in *Kritik des psychoanalytischen Symbolbegriffs* [Frankfurt, 1970], p. 87ff.) finds the same characteristics in the unconscious representations which govern neurotic kinds of behavior: confusion of experiential expression and symbol, close coordination with a particular kind of behavior, scenic content, context dependency. The unconscious schemata are part of concretely established interactions; they are "correlational stereotypes."

16. See Arieti, p. 286ff.; Werner and Kaplan, p. 253ff.; and L. C. Wynne, "Denkstörung und Familienbeziehung bei Schizophrenen," *Psyche,* May 1965, p. 82ff.

17. Arieti, p. 327ff.

18. See *Erkenntnis und Interesse,* p. 260ff.

19. On Gadamer's metacritique of my arguments against the ontological construction of hermeneutical consciousness in the Third Part of *Truth and Method (Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften,,* pp. 172–80), see, more recently, C[laus] v. Bormann, "Die Zweideutigkeit der hermeneutischen Erfahrung," *Philosophische Rundschau* 16 (1969): 92ff.

20. Gadamer, "Die Universalität des hermeneutischen Problems," *Kleine Schriften,* I, p. 104.

21. A[lbrecht] Wellmer, *Kritische Gesellschaftstheorie und Positivismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1969), p. 48f. [*Critical Theory of Society,* trans. John Cumming (New York, 1971).]

22. K.-O. Apel, "Szientismus oder transzendentale Hermeneutik?" in *Hermeneutik und Dialektik,* ed. Rüdiger Bubner et al (Tübingen, 1970), p. 105.

23. G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self, Society* (Chicago, 1934), p. 327.

24. *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften,* p. 174ff.

25. See the Introduction to the author's *Protestbewegung und Hochschulreform* (Frankfurt, 1969), p. 43n.6.