

Reading Building:
A Gadamerian Account of Architecture

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Declaration

I, Lucy Elvis certify that this thesis is all my own work and that I have not obtained a degree in this University, or elsewhere, on the basis of this work.

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Abstract

Thesis title: Reading Building: A Gadamerian Account of Architecture.

This thesis brings Gadamer's philosophy of art to bear on the experience of built space. I argue that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, as an approach that proposes understanding as situated and relational, is applicable to a range of architectural experiences. Further, I argue that his philosophical hermeneutics helps us to understand the particular kind of attentiveness that is manifested by a curious, historically effective consciousness engaging meaningfully with the built world.

I begin by critically examining the concept of the horizon in Gadamer's thought and its productivity for an account of the built world. Following this, I investigate the constituent components of the horizon of Gadamer's lifeworld: language, tradition and culture. I then appraise the themes of play, necessary decoration and the analogy between the interpretation of the built world and act of reading. I argue that Gadamer not only provides useful ways of thinking about the built world exposing fruitful tensions between the viewer and the built world as a site of interpretation.

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Abbreviations

Texts by Gadamer in English Translation

DD	<i>Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato</i>
EH	<i>The Enigma of Health</i>
EHP	<i>Education History Poetry</i>
GR	<i>The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings</i>
HHP	<i>Hermeneutics: Between History and Philosophy</i>
PH	<i>Philosophical Hermeneutics</i>
RAS	<i>Reason in the Age of Science</i>
RB	<i>On the Relevance of the Beautiful and other essays</i>
TM	<i>Truth and Method</i>

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Introduction

“An Increase in Being”¹

Today, when so much seems to conspire to reduce life and feeling to the most deprived and demeaning bottom line, it is more important than ever that we receive that extra dimension of dignity or delight and *the elevated sense of self that the art of building can provide* through the nature of the places where we live and work. What counts more than style is whether architecture improves our experience of the built world; whether it makes us wonder why we never noticed places in quite this way before.²

Architecture represents a particular interpretive complexity as indicated above. As an art form it at once abides with the progression of everyday life, and yet, possesses the ability to cause us to ‘pause in the midst of our purposeful doing.’³ Hans-Georg Gadamer describes the experience of architecture as an ‘increase of being.’⁴ This thesis concerns itself with the experience of architecture, and the ways in which the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer contribute to the task of elucidating the experience of architectural works. Hermeneutics concerns itself with ‘what it means to understand.’⁵ The etymological connection between

¹ Gadamer describes each ‘event of truth’ made possible by the work of art as ‘an increase in being’ as such is if the title of an interview Gadamer gave on the subject of urban architecture. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Architektur Als ‘Zuwachs’ an Sein. Hans-Georg Gadamer Im Gespräch Mit Catherine Hürzeler.,” in *Beyond Metropolis. Eine Auseinandersetzung Mit Der Verstädterten Landschaft*, ed. Raimund Blödt et al. (Zurich: Niggli Verlag, 2006), 246.

² Emphasis Added. Ada Louise Huxtable, *On Architecture: Collected Reflections on a Century of Change* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2010), 34.

³ ‘The Artwork in Word and Image’ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, trans. Richard E. Palmer, Topics in Historical Philosophy (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 221. (Hereafter abbreviated as: GR.)

⁴ Gadamer, “Architektur Als ‘Zuwachs’ an Sein.,” 246.

⁵ David Seamon, “Hermeneutics and Architecture: Buildings-in-Themselves and Interpretive Trustworthiness,” in *Place, Space and Hermeneutics*, ed. Bruce B. Janz, vol. 5, Contributions to Hermeneutics (Springer International Publishing, 2017), 347; Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969); Nicholas Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012). Linge describes hermeneutics as applicable in ‘all those situations in which we encounter meanings that are not immediately understandable but require interpretive effort.’ David E. Linge, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, by Hans-Georg Gadamer (London: University of California Press, 1977), xii. (Hereafter abbreviated as PH.) This thesis proceeds on the assumption that architecture through existing in close

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Hermeneutics as both a discipline and the nomenclature of the messenger of the gods indicates the complexity of the hermeneutical task.⁶ Hermes, the trickster god, in delivering the messages of the gods to the ears of the mortals, undertakes a task filled with the ‘tension between seeing a truth and communicating it.’⁷ The position of art in communicating said truth is foreshadowed by Plato’s claim in *Ion* that the poet obtains educational value as the ‘interpreter[s] of the Gods.’⁸ It is the comprehensibility of meaningful subject matters rendered possible in and through the ‘event of understanding’ brought about by art rather than the unfeeling instigation of ‘aesthetic pleasure’ that gives art its resonant power.⁹ For Gadamer, the ‘real task of hermeneutics’ is to ‘let what is far and alienated speak again.’¹⁰ In this regard, he focuses on the experience of art which, akin to the task of Hermes, both displays a truth that cannot be fully brought to communication since: ‘art possesses a kind of evidence which is both too strong and at the same time not strong enough.’¹¹

Architecture occupies a complex position in terms of its proximity to and at the same time alienation from philosophy. Although, as Purdy has noted, architectural metaphors are rife in philosophical thinking where ‘good structure’ is often related to sound thinking and elegant argumentation.¹²

proximity to human being, is an object that requires interpretation, and as such befits a hermeneutical analysis.

⁶ Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, “Language, Mind, and Artefact: An Outline of Hermeneutic Theory Since the Enlightenment,” in *The Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (London: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 1.

⁷ Nicholas Davey, “Hermeneutics and Art Theory,” in *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde, Blackwell Companions in Cultural Studies (London: Blackwell, 2002), 437.

⁸ Plato *Ion* 534a “Ion,” in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, trans. Paul Woodruff (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Co. Limited, 1997), 941–42.

⁹ ‘At any rate, it cannot be doubted that the great ages in the history of art were those in which people without any aesthetic consciousness and without our concept of “art” surrounded themselves with creations whose function in religious or secular life could be understood by everyone and which gave no one solely aesthetic pleasure.’ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Bloomsbury Revelations (1975; repr., London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 74. (Hereafter abbreviated as TM.)

¹⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Practical Philosophy as a Model of the Human Sciences,” trans. James Risser, *Research in Phenomenology* 9 (1979): 83.

¹¹ Gadamer, ‘Autobiographical Reflections’ *GR*, 8.

¹² Daniel L. Purdy, *On the Ruins of Babel* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), 2.

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Philosophers, for their own part, have emphasised the affinities between architecture and thought through their own engagement in architectural projects, such as Wittgenstein's hand in the creation of the *Palais Stonborough* for his sister.¹³ For Martin Heidegger, the construction of his retreat at *Todnauberg* would provide an essential backdrop for his later thinking.¹⁴ John Dewey would realise the importance of material conditions to support his educational project in the Laboratory School, taking a hand in the architectural planning for the space.¹⁵ Although architecture and philosophy metaphorically interpolate one another, architecture is a field that has received far less consideration by the philosophy of art.

The structural qualities that make architecture a serendipitous correspondent to models of thought, often leave architecture at the fringes of the philosophy of art.¹⁶ Unlike fine art works such as painting and sculpture, the work of architecture as a discrete ontological entity can be hard to locate. In some cases, the work of architecture maybe literally combined with the work of another previous architect, a practice we see far more regularly as retrofitting projects increase.¹⁷ Further, the divisions between high architecture and vernacular work is less explicitly pronounced than it is in the case of art and craft. As Wallenstein notes, architecture represents a specific challenge to philosophy due to the complex ways in which it is interwoven with day-to-day life.¹⁸ Unlike other forms of art which can be considered in isolation, the

¹³ Palais Stonborough (otherwise known as: The Wittgenstein House) Vienna, Austria, (Architect: Peter Engelmann, 1928)

¹⁴ For a thorough account of the history construction and use of the space see: Adam Sharr, *Heidegger's Hut* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006).

¹⁵ Arthur G. Wirth and Carl Bewig, "John Dewey on School Architecture," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 2, no. 4 (1968): 79–86, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3331646>.

¹⁶ Fischer notes that the explicit focus on the philosophy of architecture within the philosophy of art has been distinctly limited. Saul Fisher, "Philosophy of Architecture," September 9, 2015, <https://stanford.library.sydney.edu.au/entries/architecture/index.html#perspective>.

¹⁷ This rise in retrofitting projects can be attributed both to spatial squeeze in cities, and due to the need to reduce the carbon footprint of the building industry in response to the climate crisis. In Chapter Six, this thesis focusses explicitly on retrofitting to illustrate the ways in which hermeneutics is a timely interlocutor in philosophical conversations about architecture.

¹⁸ '...architecture is spread out- both visually and conceptually. This is why it is difficult to deal with architecture.....philosophers resist thinking about architecture. In numerous books on philosophy of art, one can find a short chapter that says the most atrocious

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work of architecture's utility and ubiquity mark it out as something uniquely challenging.¹⁹

For the viewer, architecture's proximity and familiarity is supported by metaphors that connect the building with the human body.²⁰ These draw on a tradition in architectural practice that begins with the Vitruvian man and is adapted in Le Corbusier's *Modulor*.²¹ Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics offers the scope to reflect on the relation between the viewer and artwork as responsive interlocutors in dialogue. In claiming with Aristotle that the human being is a 'thinking being' or rational animal, Gadamer claims that language, manifest as dialogue, 'is the real medium of human being.'²² Furthermore, the prominence of 'tradition' in Gadamer's marks out its efficacy for thinking the ways in which architecture 'articulates history' and orients the experiencer within a cultural milieu. Despite these immediate

things about architecture.' Sven-Olov Wallenstein and Miloš Kosec, "Without the Future There Is No Point Being Critical. An Interview with Sven-Olov Wallenstein," *Prazine*, no. 13 (2017): 8.

¹⁹ 'Architecture is a very special functional art; it confines space so we can dwell in it, creates the framework around our lives. In other words, the difference between sculpture and architecture is not that the former is concerned with more organic forms, the latter with more abstract. Even the most abstract piece of sculpture.....does not becomes architecture. It lacks a decisive factor: utility.' Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964), 10.

²⁰ As Mark Wigley notes, the tragedy of the World Trade Centre collapse reflected the not only a scale of human loss but: 'The sense that our buildings are our witnesses depends on a kind of kinship between body and building. Not only should buildings protect and last longer than bodies, they must themselves be a kind of body: a surrogate body, a super-body with a face, a façade that watches us.' Mark Wigley, "Insecurity by Design," in *Bewitched Bothered and Bewildered: Spatial Emotion in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, ed. Heike Munde and Adam Budak (Zurich: Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, 2003), 97. The notion of the built work as body will be explored in our investigation of Play, Festival and Symbol in Chapter Six with regard to the ways in which Gadamer's hermeneutics insists on an embodied practice of reading such spaces. In this regard it will provide an answer to feminist critiques of Gadamer's hermeneutics that insist he disregards the body entirely, while also exposing the non-gendered and general nature of the body as *metrion* that Gadamer presents. Critiques of Gadamer in respect of embodiment can be found in. Robin Schott, "Whose Home Is It Anyway? A Feminist Response to Gadamer's Hermeneutics," in *Gadamer and Hermeneutics (Continental Philosophy IV)*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman, Science Culture Literature (London: Routledge, 1991).

²¹ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. David Etchells (1927; repr., London: The Architectural Press, 1946).

²² Gadamer, 'The Scope of Hermeneutical Reflection' *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. David E. Linge (London: University of California Press, 1977), 68.

Aristotle *NE 1102b Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terrence H. Unwin, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Co. Limited, 2000), 17.

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affinities, however, Gadamer's thought has yet to be applied to the experience of architecture in a systematic fashion.

One challenge to giving an account of Gadamer's approach to architecture is the way in which it is interwoven into accounts of the work of art across a range of his writings, with the result that his thought is often taken up partially or is subject to misinterpretation.²³ Unlike Heidegger, whose architectural approach has found a readymade audience among architects and architectural theorists, Gadamer's definitive statements on architecture appear in an untranslated and now out of print interview from 1996.²⁴ In the interview, 'Architektur als "Zuwachs" an Sein' (Architecture as an increase in being) Gadamer, provides many examples that extend, qualify and elucidate his treatment of architecture in *Truth and Method*, and many of his other writings on art.²⁵ Despite the distinct utility of this exchange, a number of approaches to Gadamer's thought on architecture only make passing reference to its content.²⁶ This, however, also acts as a justification for a careful account of the experience of architecture in Gadamer's writing to be undertaken. In bringing Gadamer's various writings together thematically, this thesis acts as a resource for those interested in Gadamer's approach to architecture, and, in

²³ Fischer, for example, incorrectly claims that Gadamer 'suggests that our appreciation of them relies on access to intentions.' "Philosophy of Architecture > 1. Architecture In Ancient and Early Modern Thought (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)," accessed October 19, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/architecture/perspective.html>. Richards on the other hand, stresses Gadamer's reading of architecture as concerned with architecture's symbolic function, despite this being only one of the tripartite functions of art outlined in 'On the Relevance of the Beautiful.' Simon Richards, *Architect Knows Best: Environmental Determinism in Architecture Culture from 1956 to the Present* (London: Ashgate, 2012), 112.

²⁴ Gadamer, "Architektur Als 'Zuwachs' an Sein."

²⁵ These include the essay collection *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, various essays in the collection *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings* as well as explanations provided by Gadamer in his philosophical interviews. In particular, *A Century of Philosophy and Gadamer in Conversation. The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Robert Bernasconi (1977; repr., Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986); *GR; A Century of Philosophy: Hans-Georg Gadamer in Conversation with Riccardo Dottori*, trans. Rod Coltman (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006); *Gadamer in Conversation: Reflections and Commentary*, ed. Richard E. Palmer (London: Yale University Press, 2001).

²⁶ A singular aside within a footnote in Gens' account of Gadamer on architecture, for example. Jean-Claude Gens, "The Configuration of Space Through Architecture in the Thinking of Gadamer," in *Place, Space and Hermeneutics*, ed. Bruce Janz (Springer International Publishing, 2017), 157–68.

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engaging with works not yet translated into German, provides valuable insights to the anglophone reader.²⁷

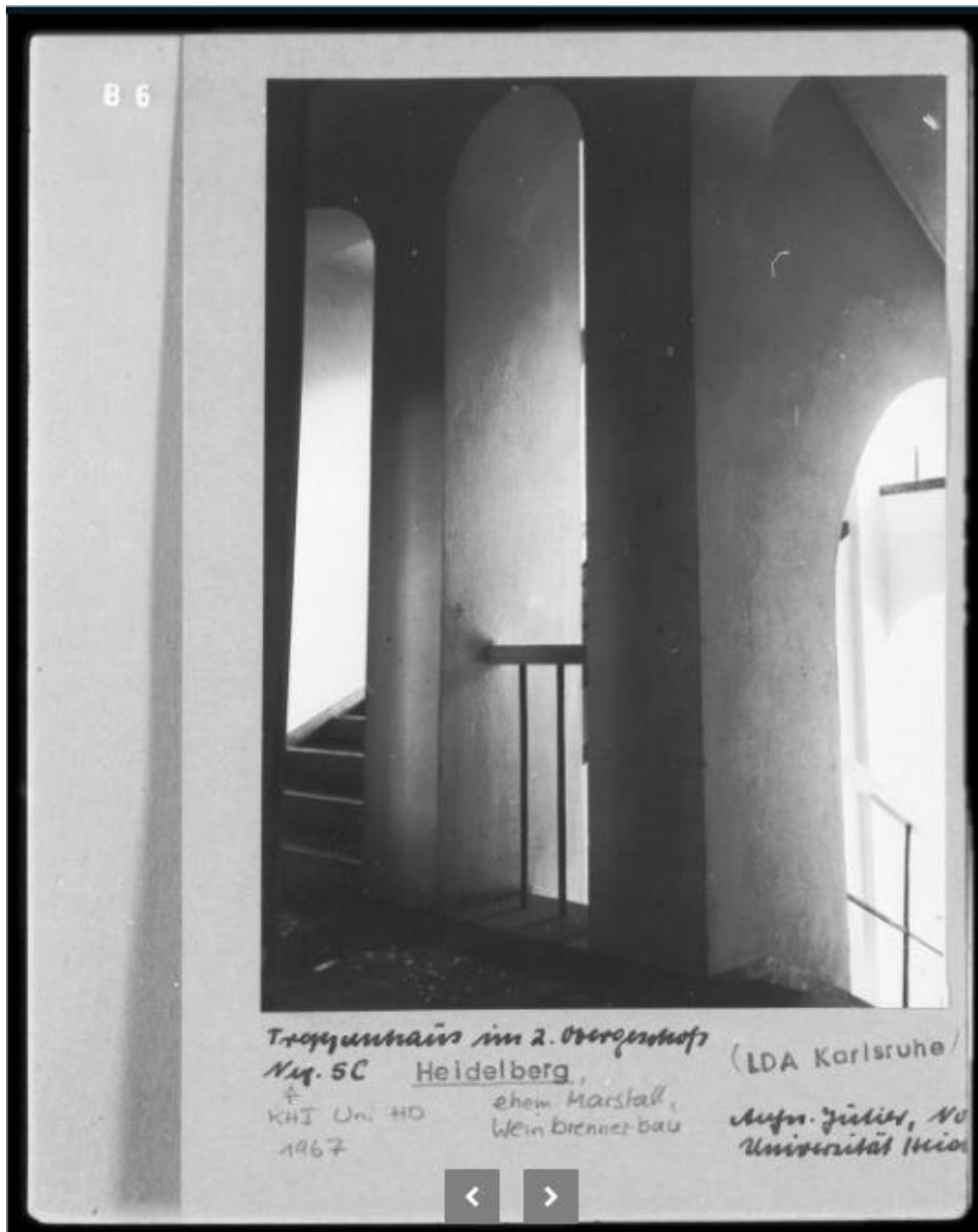


Figure 1 Weinbrenner Staircase Marburg City Archive
<https://www.bildindex.de/media/obj22016149/mi05659b06>

A Wonderful Staircase

²⁷ These texts are as follows: Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Über das Lesen von Bauten und Bildern," in *Gesammelte Werke, Band 8, Ästhetik und Poetik* (1993; repr., Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 331–38; Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Ende Der Kunst?," in *Das Erbe Europas* (Suhrkamp, 1990), 63–86; Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Heimat Und Sprache," in *Gesammelte Werke Band 8, Ästhetik Und Poetik*, vol. 8 (1992; repr., Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1993), 366–72.

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The somewhat unassuming staircase above was part of the old building for Heidelberg University designed by Friedrich Weinbrenner (1756-1826), ‘who raised the banner of classicism’ as the sun set on the *Sturm und Drang* style of the 1770s.²⁸ It is in this space that Hans-Georg Gadamer experienced what he would later describe as the power of architecture to induce us to ‘pause in the midst of our purposeful doing.’²⁹ Gadamer describes the enduring impact of this space that he encountered daily. Despite encountering it on a daily basis, Gadamer recounts the power of the space to cause him to pause during each ascension in an interview entitled ‘Architecture as an ‘Increase’ in Being.’ This thesis is concerned with exploring and populating an account of the ‘increase of being’ that Gadamer there claimed architecture is. In so doing, it contributes to knowledge through thematically providing an account of the role of architecture within Gadamer’s philosophy of art, with a focus on the experience of architecture. As such it hopes to contribute both to Gadamer studies and the philosophy of architecture.

Gadamer’s focus on the staircase tells us much about his approach to architecture. That he recovers a commonplace built element is telling.³⁰ Rather than select a symbolic or striking example from monumental architecture, think of the symbolism of justice in the sweeping stairs at the front of a courthouse, or the Lincoln memorial; Gadamer chooses a piece of architecture that is purely functional as the focus of his conversation. This is an indication both of the universality he sees as the scope of the hermeneutical task and works an indication of the ways his approach to architecture will refuse common bifurcations between architecture’s function and its role as a work of art. This is an indication of architecture’s central position within his philosophy of art as something that designates and creates spaces for interaction that have meaning. The few texts that concern Gadamer’s approach to architecture make reference to this instance within this

²⁸ Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey, 1673–1968* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 94.

²⁹ Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image- so True, so Full of Being!’ Gadamer, *GR*, 221.

³⁰ Gens, “The Configuration of Space Through Architecture in the Thinking of Gadamer.”

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philosophical interview, but overlook the rich implications of the remainder of that same text.³¹

Despite the scarcity of focus the theme of architecture in Gadamer's thinking has received, there are no less than twenty-six references to architecture, architects and buildings in Gadamer's *magnum opus Truth and Method* alone.³² Later essays where Gadamer addresses the unique character of the experience of the work of art provide further opportunities for analysis.

Further essay collections by Gadamer shed light on the themes we encounter in each chapter. In Chapter Five of this thesis, for example, Gadamer's account of the body in *The Enigma of Health* when brought into relation to the account of play in selected essays from *On The Relevance of the Beautiful, Truth and Method* and essays in *The Gadamer Reader*, helps to make explicit an account of interpreting buildings as an embodied act that is implicit in a range of his observations in the aforementioned text and in the anecdotes of his own interactions with architecture in *Über das Lesen von Bauern und Bildern* and *Ende der Kunst*.³³ The combination of texts not usually considered in studies that focus on Gadamer's approach to art further supports the claim to a unique contribution to knowledge made by this study.

In bringing interlocutors into view to critically engage with the key themes in this study, this thesis engages also with the accounts of the Gadamer-Derrida debate, and the essays surrounding the conflict with Habermas, edited by Silverman. Habermas and Derrida are interlocutors of importance in this thesis for three reasons. First, both the critical hermeneutical stance and Derrida's commitment to deconstruction present challenges to the Gadamerian position that a thesis which hopes to make a case forth

³¹ This may be due to the fact that 'Beyond Metropolis' is now out of print, and the broadcast version of the interview is relatively hard to find.

³² Gadamer, *TM*, 78–79, 117, 122–24, 135, 144, 155–59, 163, 167.

³³ Gadamer, "Über das Lesen von Bauten und Bildern"; Gadamer, "Ende Der Kunst?"; Gadamer, *GR*; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age*, trans. Jason Gaiger and Nicholas Walker (1993; repr., Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); Gadamer, *TM*; Gadamer, *RB*.

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consideration of Gadamer's philosophy as useful should consider. Second, in terms of understanding living with architecture, both critical hermeneutics and deconstruction have received more attention than Gadamer's thinking. Finally Gadamer's approach to both these interactions, the textual exchanges with Habermas following the publication of *Truth and Method* and the fraught and much-anticipated engagement with Derrida in 1981 illustrate his hermeneutical thinking as a form of *praxis* committed to the identification of common ground through openness to the other.

This thesis progresses the application of Gadamer's thought to the education of architects and the understanding of the practice of architecture undertaken by Snodgrass and Coyne and Paul Kidder³⁴ as well as fruitful conversations surrounding the application of Gadamer's thought to architecture at the University of Sydney in the early 1990s.³⁵ Like Pérez-Gómez, Snodgrass and Coyne present hermeneutics as a useful model for thinking about the design process; however their focus is narrowly on design education, where Pérez-Gómez uses hermeneutics as a model for thinking about the 'meta-discourse' that unfolds between architects, critics, and the architectural tradition more broadly.³⁶ Since that time, investigations into Gadamer's approach to architecture have rarely been addressed, save for a recent chapter by Gens in the *Springer Companion to Space, Place and Hermeneutics*.³⁷ However, Gens does not engage with the work of Snodgrass and Coyne and therefore misses an opportunity to place his overview of Gadamer's comments on architecture into dialogue with existing work on this theme. Where

³⁴ Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne, *Interpretation in Architecture: Design as Way of Thinking* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013); Paul Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects, Thinkers for Architects* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013); Paul Kidder, "Philosophical Hermeneutics and the Ethical Function of Architecture," *Contemporary Aesthetics (Journal)* 9, no. 1 (January 1, 2011), https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/liberalarts_contempaesthetics/vol9/iss1/7.

³⁵ Richard Coyne, "Inconspicuous Architecture," in *Gadamer Action and Reason Proceedings of a Two-Day Conference on the Application of the Hermeneutic Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer within the Human Sciences*, ed. Richard Coyne et al. (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1991), 1–12, <https://rcoyne99.files.wordpress.com/2012/12/gadameractionreason.pdf>.

³⁶ Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "Hermeneutics as Discourse in Design," *Design Issues* 15, no. 2 (1999): 73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1511843>.

³⁷ Gens, "The Configuration of Space Through Architecture in the Thinking of Gadamer."

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Snodgrass, Coyne and Kidder focus on what Gadamer's thinking has to say about the process of architectural creation, Gens focusses explicitly on Gadamer's references to architecture, indicating the centrality of Gadamer's treatment of architectural space and its connection to architectural theory. Lindsay Jones makes use of Gadamer's hermeneutics to develop a heuristic for the understanding of sacred architectures.³⁸ As such, this thesis responds to these contributions by considering the architectural viewer. That is, a shift in focus from those that plan and design architectural spaces to those that inhabit, and encounter and read these spaces as a part of their lifeworld.³⁹

This thesis builds on the approach to architecture derived from Gadamer's own writings in dialogue with the philosophical hermeneutics of education developed by Sean Gallagher.⁴⁰ In turning the focus of Gadamer's thought to the *experience* of architecture rather than its *practice*, this thesis represents a significant contribution to the philosophy of architecture and to the field of Gadamerian aesthetics more broadly.

Overview

The approach in this thesis is thematic, allowing for the account of architecture to emerge through the major themes in Gadamer's approach to the 'unfinished event' that constitutes our every interaction with a given work of art.⁴¹ Gadamer claims that the 'event of understanding' constitutes a

³⁸ Lindsay Jones, "The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: A Reassessment of the Similitude between Tula, Hidalgo and Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Part I," *History of Religions* 32, no. 3 (1993): 207–32.

³⁹ This of course, does not exclude the architect as a viewer or user of their own work, but rather represents an effort to consider philosophical hermeneutics as a means of understanding the encounter with architecture, rather than presenting it as a tool to shape the design of future spaces.

⁴⁰ Shaun Gallagher, *Hermeneutics and Education: Essays in Postmodern Theology* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992).

⁴¹ Insofar as each encounter with a work of art involves a claim to truth that can reveal an aspect of a fundamental subject matter, the conversation between artworks and their viewers is part of a virtuous circle of renewal. 'The experience of art should not be falsified by being turned into a possession of aesthetic culture, thus neutralizing its special claim. We will see that this involves a far-reaching hermeneutical consequence, for *all encounter with the language of art is an encounter with an unfinished event and is itself part of this event.*' *TM*, 90.

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‘fusion of horizons.’⁴² Therefore the first part of this thesis concerns itself with principle constituents of the horizons of meaning between which ‘the truth of art’ emerges. The second focusses on the ‘ontological foundations’ of the work of art, its being in play, festival and symbol, and the transformation of ‘the decorative’ into an ontological rather than descriptive category.⁴³

The first chapter examines the horizon of meaning from which ‘the event of understanding’ emerges. As such, our discussion opens with a discussion of the concept of the horizon itself. It focusses on the ways in which Gadamer’s thought develops a concept of the horizon that synthesises elements of Nietzsche and Husserl’s approaches to that same concept. We apply Gadamer’s understanding of the horizon to the contemporary concept of ‘skyline’ in order to think through the ways that knowledge is both limited and made possible by the built world that surrounds us. Gadamer’s embrace of the ‘bad infinite’ occasions an engagement with charges of essentialism made by Caputo, in order to stress the productive tensions between the finite and the infinite that animate understanding as a result of Gadamer’s anti-essentialism.⁴⁴

In the second chapter, we consider the account of the way ‘living language’ animates Gadamer’s thought.⁴⁵ Gadamer approaches language as a constantly unfolding horizon, and as such his thought resists nominalist claims about the relations between language and phenomena.⁴⁶ Gadamer’s account of language rests on the tension between *Heimat* (home) and *Fremde* (exile).

⁴² *TM*, 317.

⁴³ *TM*, 144.

⁴⁴ John D. Caputo, “Gadamer’s Closet Essentialism: A Derridean Critique,” in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 258–64; John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project*, Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988).

⁴⁵ *TM*, 587.

⁴⁶ ‘Our verbal experience of the world is prior to everything that is recognized and addressed as existing. *That language and world are related in a fundamental way does not mean, then, that world becomes the object of language.* Rather, the object of knowledge and statements is always already enclosed within the world horizon of language.’ *TM*, 466.

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Exploring his use of these concepts in the essay *Heimat und Sprache* a direct response to a Heidegger's essay *Sprache und Heimat* suggests a reconsideration of the usually pejorative sense in which Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is understood as 'an urbanisation of the Heideggerian province,' by highlighting the tension filled dialectic between *Heimat* and *Fremde* that constitutes the experience of linguistic being.⁴⁷ Where Heidegger provides a tangible example of 'authentic dwelling' in his retreat to and remaining in the provinces, Gadamer rather grounds the experience of 'home' in language itself.⁴⁸ Here, we encounter an initial answer to one of the questions of this thesis, namely, how should one approach the work of architecture? Through an Gadamer's exploration of the notion of *oikeon* (household) this chapter closes with the first of three engagements with the theme of friendship in this thesis. Here the understanding of friendship as a form of care for things appropriate to us, indicates the ways in which Gadamer's account of the built world serves to reject any bifurcation of vernacular architecture and architecture proper, as has dominated architectural theory since its neat paraphrasing by Pevsner.⁴⁹ Drawing on Plato's *Lysis*, Gadamer provides an account of friendship that holds open the tension between the strange and the familiar, mirrored in his account of *Heimat* (home) as unfolding as a movement between the familiar and the strange.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Jürgen Habermas, "Hans-Georg Gadamer: Urbanizing the Heideggerian Province," in *Philosophical Political Profiles*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence, Studies in Contemporary Social Thought (1979; repr., Boston Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1985), 189-.

⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, "Why Do I Stay in the Provinces?," in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, ed. T Sheehan (Chicago: Precedent, 1981), 27–28.

⁴⁹ Pevsner's division is as follows: 'A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture. Nearly everything that encloses space on a scale sufficient for a human being to move in is a building; the term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal.' However, such a strict division decides the quality of an architectural work based upon the intentions of its designer. Such a narrow view overlooks the many other deciding factors that may intervene in the act of viewing a work of architecture and the ich penumbra of concerns that the viewer themselves brings to the act of interpretation of a built work. Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (London: J. Murray, 1948), 23.

⁵⁰ 'Logos and Ergon in Plat's Lysis' Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (London: Yale University Press, 1983).

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From these intersecting accounts of horizon and language, our next two chapters engage with tradition and *Bildung* (culture/education), two structures through which ‘historically effective consciousness’ comes to understand and inhabit the world. Like Daniel Liebeskind, Gadamer presents architecture as an artform that ‘articulates history.’⁵¹ In considering tradition, we expose a potential weakness in Gadamer’s position in relation to architecture and power. Gadamer’s proposal that objects of tradition be treated on the same terms as an interlocutor, that is with an assumption of the truth of their claims, prompts a consideration of Habermas’ critique of *Truth and Method*.⁵² Here, through an account of the engagement between Gadamer and Habermas, we consider whether Gadamer’s account of tradition, which demands that the text of tradition is treated as a ‘thou’, leaves ‘historically effective consciousness’ vulnerable to the insidious claims of ideology, a theme that is clarified in our final chapter through a consideration of the work of architecture as ‘text.’ Here we reprise the theme of friendship as a possible dynamic through which to understand Gadamer’s claim that the text of tradition should be approached within an *Ich und Du* (I-Thou) relation characterised by participation, openness and receptivity.⁵³

Building on the account of tradition and the notion of the ‘traditionary text’ as a ‘thou,’ we next consider the account of *Bildung* (both culture and education) and the ways this connects to the experience of community afforded by the architectural.⁵⁴ Here, the account of participation begins to emerge more robustly as we recount Gadamer’s polemical approach to Kant on the subject of the same. Gadamer’s rejection of ‘aesthetic consciousness’ here, he asserts, allows for the shift of phenomena, like architecture ‘of

⁵¹ ‘To provide meaningful architecture is not to parody history, but to articulate it.’ Daniel Liebeskind cited in: Jean-Claude Dubost and Jean-François Gonthier, eds., *Architecture for the Future* (Paris: Terrail, 1996), 29.

⁵² Gadamer describes the ‘I-Thou’ relation as ‘a dialectic of reciprocity’ *TM*, 368. Gadamer extends the category of the ‘traditionary text’ from the *Iliad* to the campaigns of Alexander the Great. As such we can legitimately apply the category of ‘traditionary text’ to the work of architecture. 478.

⁵³ Hereafter, the English formulation ‘I/Thou’ will be used for brevity.

⁵⁴ In this thesis, architecture is considered as a ‘text’ of tradition, which Gadamer claims, must be approached with a consciousness of the ‘apparent immediacy’ with which we confront artworks and ‘texts’ alike. *TM*, 311.

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marginal importance' to 'move to the centre of "aesthetic" questioning.'⁵⁵ We map the rejection of authorial intent that progresses from Gadamer's rejection of 'aesthetic consciousness,' and, in so doing consider Hirsch's strident critique of Gadamer's location of meaning between work and viewer rather over the author's 'willed' meaning as the criterion of accurate interpretation. With the greater emphasis on the notion of participation, Gadamer's stress on application is introduced for greater development in Chapter Six.

The second section of the thesis moves from a description of the horizon of meaning to the descriptive tools Gadamer uses to clarify the operations of the work of architecture in aesthetic experience. It commences by focussing on Gadamer's description of the work of architecture as 'decorative in nature.'⁵⁶ In describing architecture thus, Gadamer re-orientates the use of the term 'decorative' from a concept that is both descriptive and evaluative of formal elements of a given building, to a category that describes the *being* of every architectural work. That is understanding architecture's decorative nature as a part of its being rather than an addition made to enhance a whole.⁵⁷ This transformation of this term from pejorative designation to ontological category serves to bring the 'marginal' concern of architecture to the 'centre' of aesthetic concerns.⁵⁸ As such, we devote Chapter Five to an account of the ontology of the decorative, highlighting the ways in which this allows Gadamer to move against the normative aesthetic hierarchies of Schopenhauer and Hegel, and to clarify the relationship between architecture and other artforms. This description of architecture is of fundamental importance as it performs an effective description of the ways in which works of architecture are able to both provide an experience of the beautiful and perform a function within the *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld).⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *TM*, 144.

⁵⁶ *TM*, 157.

⁵⁷ The decorative as 'ontological category' serves to describe the mediating function of works of architecture as 'as living witnesses of the past.' *TM*, 79.

⁵⁸ *TM*, 144.

⁵⁹ Lifeworld is a term Gadamer adopts after Husserl, as we will acknowledge in relation to the concept of Horizon in Chapter One. Gadamer endorses the concept of the 'lifeworld' as the 'antithesis of all objectivism,' a 'communal whole' that curbs the recourse to transcendental subjectivity or objective science. *TM*, 248.

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Our penultimate chapter considers the three central ontological categories Gadamer applies to artworks in both *Truth and Method* and *The Relevance of the Beautiful*.⁶⁰ By acknowledging the descriptions of architecture Gadamer provides in relation to ‘play’, ‘festival’, and ‘symbol’ in the aforementioned essay and ‘Über das lesen von Bauern und Bildern’ we explore the implicit demand that architectural experience be embodied and not purely visual.⁶¹ To understand the fundamentally participatory nature of these categories at work in architecture, we look first at his rejection of the Platonic notion of *mimesis* in favour of an Aristotelian reading that sees in all art a ‘presentation’ of fundamental subject matters that constitute an ‘increase in being.’ Maintaining our consideration of architectural experience between the work and the viewer, we apply Gadamer’s account of the lived body as a corporeal measure (*metrion*) in *The Enigma of Health* to consider the embodied experience of architecture as an art form in which we ‘find the art of getting it just right.’⁶²

In our final chapter we return to a focus on language through the consideration of Gadamer’s later claim that all interpretation of works of art are acts of reading. This allows for a reconsideration of the dismissal of the architecture-language analogy through a definition of language as more than a sign-system and other than writing. Gadamer’s account of ritual and festival here is illustrative of the ways in which the underappreciated patterns of living together that are shaped and supported by architectural space are of importance for our membership in a wider linguistic community. As such, the role of architecture, made possible by its nature as necessarily decorative, performs an essential role in orienting us towards ourselves and our communities.

Across the chapters an account of architecture that challenges common misconceptions of the built world as a passive backdrop for the activities of

⁶⁰ Gadamer, ‘On the Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 1–56.

⁶¹ Gadamer, “Über das Lesen von Bauten und Bildern.”

⁶² ‘On the Truth of the Word’ Gadamer, *GR*, 209.

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the lifeworld emerges. Gadamer stresses architecture's role within a living relation, characterised by constant movement in dialogue. Through the course of this thesis a twofold contribution opens up two interrelated areas of for further dialogical engagement. Firstly, a re-thinking of conventional approaches to the philosophy of architecture through an explicit focus on Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics challenges assumptions within this field. Secondly, in focussing on the interpretive challenge presented by the work of architecture new critiques of philosophical hermeneutics become apparent.

Conventions

Above I have outlined the focus of this thesis as explicitly towards the inhabitant, visitor or interpreter of architectural spaces. This presents a terminological challenge. Choosing the 'inhabitant' for example, carries the residue of a regionalism so often reprised in critiques of Heidegger's philosophy of architecture.⁶³ Referring to the 'viewer' risks a reductive focus on the interpretation of architecture as exclusively concerned with vision, the very point that Gadamer's critique of Kantian 'disinterest' works to refute.⁶⁴ The 'hermeneutic subject' here will be referred to predominantly as 'historically effective consciousness.' Gadamer variously uses '*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*' (consciousness aware of its own historicity) and *Dasein* in his writing. Whilst I acknowledge that the use of 'historically effective consciousness' is a shift away from the current conventional translation (historically effected consciousness), this choice has been made in order to avoid the possible implication of *passivity* on the part of the subject experiencing architecture that may result from referring to the effect of history in the past tense.⁶⁵ Hereafter, collections of essays will be

⁶³ This theme will be expanded upon in Chapter Two in relation to criticisms by Neil Leach in relation to Heidegger's account of poetic architecture. Neil Leach, "The Dark Side of the Domus," *The Journal of Architecture* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 1998): 31–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/136023698374297>; Neil Leach, "Forget Heidegger," in *Lost in Space*, ed. August Ioan, RELINK (Bucharest: New Europe College, 2003), 122–42.

⁶⁴ *TM*, 504.

⁶⁵ As Murphy notes, the shift to 'historically effected consciousness' occurs in the second edition of *Truth and Method* and that 'taken together' they perhaps convey best the translational meaning of *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*. Here, we adopt 'historically

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given as abbreviations according to the list of abbreviations available at the start of the thesis, translations from texts in German are the author's own, unless stated otherwise in a footnote. Other key terms, in respect of this thesis' potential contribution to the Philosophy of Architecture are given in English translation following the terms selected in the Weinsheimer translation of *Truth and Method*, with the exception of the term *Bildung*, whose dual character as both culture and education is relevant to the development within the chapter focussed on the same.⁶⁶

The examples listed in this thesis are of course by no means exhaustive and in many ways represent the horizon of its author. I have tried to choose a range of examples, with a focus on works that illuminate ways in which Gadamer's account of architecture can illuminate current issues in the built world, while ensuring that the examples provided are works that I have experienced. They are presented here as possible illustrations that clarify or problematise elements of Gadamer's account of architecture but are not exhaustive of it.

effective consciousness' in order to emphasise the responsive and participatory role of the 'hermeneutic subject' in the event of understanding. Sinead Murphy, *Effective History: On Critical Practice Under Historical Conditions* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 5.

⁶⁶ Chapter Four of this thesis.

Where necessary, explanatory footnotes are provided to justify the choice of translation.

1 Hermeneutics, Horizon and Skyline

1.1 Introduction

It is true that much of the impact of modern Manhattan, much of its “aura,” in [Walter] Benjamin's sense, whether viewed frontally or from the air, derives from its monumental outline, the invention of its skyline paralleling that of its site.¹

Skylines, like the horizon, are at once revealing and inhibiting. Merleau-Ponty, following Husserl, underscored the reciprocal relation between figure and ground at work in perception. That is, in the figure-ground structure of perception, the background field both places limits on our perceptual field as well as allowing for the nuanced depth of sensing to emerge.² In urban life, the skyline constitutes the backdrop to the hectic life of the city, under a reductive viewpoint the city as a whole risks being reduced to this visual symbol. On a smaller scale, the crossing of thresholds from outside to inside represents a rapid shift in horizons, from a broader world to a smaller enclosed one. To perceive a given building, the skyline against which it appears is a necessity and an imposition in the formation of its identity. Skylines fundamentally assist in creating what appears as an image of the city *tout court*. The ways in which skylines are refracted in representations, in merchandise, and as orienting devices in film and other visual media appear to underscore this capacity.³ When we view the skyline as a species of urban horizon, we project the remainder of the city. From the components of the familiar horizon, we can infer other sensory data, sounds, smell and atmospheres that constitute a given place.

The individual elements of the skyline, represent a central concerns for the particular polis that resides there while also acting as markers that classify the total vista as ‘metropolis’ ‘town’ ‘village’ or ‘suburb.’ Such elements may

¹ Hubert Damisch, *Skyline: The Narcissistic City* (London: Stanford University Press, 2001), 93.

² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (1962; repr., London: Routledge, 2002), 16.

³ Leslie Sklair, “Iconic Architecture and Capitalist Globalization,” *City 10*, no. 1 (April 1, 2006): 21–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810600594613>.

include a financial district metrically marked out through regular vertical division of skyscrapers, interrupted by the domes of civic buildings, the mark of investment in architecture through the curiously placeless work of the ‘starchitect.’ All of these structures tower over the historic buildings protected through public interest in heritage underscored by legislation.⁴ It is not only the limitations of individual perspective(s) that create and distorts the skyline itself. In London, for example, the unfolding of a new skyline in the early 2000s as a result of advocacy by the city's first mayor, Ken Livingstone, gave rise to the construction of twelve new skyscrapers, confirming the city's identity firmly as ‘global city.’⁵

Like skylines, horizons as ‘the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point’⁶ can be conflated with notions of permanence. Both in the sense that the skyline as an icon sufficiently represents the identity of a given urban realm, and that such vision holds the possibility of a form of objective vision. However, closer scrutiny of the skyline as a horizon, reveals much more. As we move and change our perspective, new elements are either disclosed to us or lost from view. The same occurs across historical viewpoints, revealing new valences of a the cityscape as text as communities of meaning approach them from wider distances and with different collective prejudices.⁷ Even in the case of attempts at ‘total planning’, so common in the high modernism of the early twentieth century, the needs of everyday life impose themselves on the

⁴ See the stipulations for various protected panoramas and linear views in order to constrain obtrusive upward development detailed here: Greater London Authority, “London View Management Framework” (London: Office of Lord Mayor, 2012), www.london.gov.uk.

⁵ Matthew Weaver, “Livingstone’s Towering Legacy,” *The Guardian*, February 19, 2008, sec. Politics, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2008/feb/18/london08.london1>. For an account of the term ‘global city’ as a means of conceptualising the conflicting market forces and wider concerns that shape spatial relations in urban landscapes that reflect their operations on a global stage, see: Saskia Sassen, “The Global City: Introducing a Concept Global Cities,” *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, no. 2 (2005 2004): 27–44.

⁶ *TM*, 313.

⁷ A deeper examination of distance and its effect in determining and enabling interpretation communities will be undertaken in a later chapter focussed on the issue of tradition.

skyline with a vengeance.⁸ Le Corbusier's 'wholly European' design for the city of Chandigarh, India stands as an indication of this. Less than twenty years after its completion, traders disrupted Le Corbusier's precise divisions of life and labour by operating 'informally from barrows or stalls' enacting the 'rich pageant of Indian life' in spite of their high European confines.⁹ In the US Jacob's 'ballet' of Hudson Street called the Promethean attempts of total urban planning into question.¹⁰

Gadamer's treatment of the horizon identifies similar ambitions on the part of philosopher's leveraging this concept. Like the interventions in Le Corbusier's cityscape that indicate the hubris of his attempt to create a fully determined system, Gadamer's account of the horizon's work to subvert philosophical claims to objective knowledge. Gadamer presents an account of understanding emerging through the interactions between to dynamically unfolding horizons, the finite horizon of the interpreting 'historically effective consciousness' and the infinite horizon of consistently unfolding human history. In Gadamer's account of the opposing horizons of finitude and infinity, a privileging of the latter as that which teaches the limitations of claims to determinate knowledge leave Gadamer open to the charge of essentialism. That is, in describing understanding as produced in the tension between the finite horizon of consciousness aware of its own historicity, and an infinite horizon, hasty readers may think that Gadamer is simply reprising metaphysical themes. However, in observing that Gadamer embraces Heidegger's anti-essentialism, and remaining cognisant of the fact that said infinite is a constantly unfolding horizon it will emerge that this is not the case.

⁸ Rossi describes the limitations of this form of design as creating a theatre in which individuals are allotted roles, with the possibility of a limited form of improvisation within a role circumscribed by the architect's encompassing designs. Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, trans. Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 24, 48.

⁹ Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 212–15.

¹⁰ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961; repr., London: Vintage, 1991).

Here, the concept of ‘skyline’ will be considered in the light of Gadamer’s approach to ‘horizon.’ The philosophical horizon which shapes Gadamer’s reformulation of the *horizont* will be considered as well as possible critiques of his position.¹¹ Further, as an opening to this thesis, the account of horizons here provides a horizon from which the other chapters in part one emerge. Just as the horizon, presented either corporeally or visually as we traverse new or familiar spaces provides an orienting point, the account of horizons presented in this chapter, while not exhaustive in intended to operate as a starting point chapters Two, Three and Four, each of which focuses on constitutive elements within Gadamer’s expansive horizon of understanding.

Gadamer’s horizon constitutes a reformulation of the Husserlian *Horizont* and Nietzsche’s *Weltanschauung* as a general law that ‘every living thing can become healthy, strong and fruitful only within a horizon.’¹² It is the grasping of this system of timely forgetting that gives rise to historicism and the nihilism of Nietzsche’s philosophical position. For Husserl, on the other hand, ‘horizon’ takes on a temporal rather than cultural identity. His investigation of ‘inner-time consciousness’ understood the horizons of various experiences as necessarily approaching, flowing into one another and sinking away. Horizon represents the field in which potential and actual elements of perceptual moments achieve cohesive identity as individual perceptions. Husserl writes: ‘I am conscious of a world endlessly spread out in space, endlessly becoming and having endlessly become in time.’¹³

The horizon and the promise of its fusion in moments of genuine understanding, the *horizontverschmelzung* ‘fusion of horizons,’ forms one of the most contentious claims in Gadamer’s thought and so deserves some consideration here.¹⁴ As such, this chapter will serve as the horizon within

¹¹ Hereafter the term *Horizont* will be translated as ‘horizon.’

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, trans. Peter Preuss (1874; repr., London: Hackett Publishing, 1980), 10.

¹³ Edmund Husserl, *The Essential Husserl: Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*, ed. Donn Welton (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), 60.

¹⁴ David Vessey, “Gadamer and the Fusion of Horizons,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17, no. 4 (October 1, 2009): 531–42,

which the proceeding three chapters regarding the experience of Language, Tradition and Culture will unfold. In common usage, the horizon indicates a point beyond which one cannot see, at this time, or from this vantage point. Gadamer draws on this meaning forged in living language to describe the role of horizon in his philosophical hermeneutics. As 'historically effective', consciousness must, for Gadamer, acknowledge the fallibility that necessarily attends our historicity. Grondin sees this contingency as infused with optimism. In the case of the 'historically effective consciousness', faced with a confusing or unyielding architectural space, there is a promise of future understanding implicit in the notion of horizons as constantly shifting factors. This means that we can not only develop understanding of the built world through the relentless pursuit of the new, but that we may also rediscover moments of beauty in the horizon that encloses us.¹⁵

This chapter explores the horizon that both makes possible the formation of new understanding, as well as articulating the impossibility of objective knowledge according to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. The concept of horizon thus contains a productive tension that refracts throughout Gadamer's account of the 'event of understanding.'¹⁶ Like language, tradition and culture, the horizon constitutes the world into which the hermeneutic subject is thrown.

To give an account of Gadamer's *Horizont* requires that we explore the 'horizon' from which his own thought emerges. This is achieved here through an account of Gadamer's 'horizon' as a reformulation of Husserl and Nietzsche as well as his embrace of and departure from Hegel's *Denkweg*. In the case of all three thinkers, a unifying critique of objectivism underscores

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09672550903164459>. Hereafter, in consideration of the anglophone reader 'fusion of horizons' will be the term used.

¹⁵ Indeed, we will observe as much in the anecdotal account that comprise Gadamer's various approaches to architecture across his corpus, which we will consider in subsequent chapters.

¹⁶ Gadamer writes: 'Someone who understands is always already drawn into an event through which meaning asserts itself.' *TM*, 506.

hermeneutics as a philosophy that breaks free from modernism's relentless progress, an 'overcoming of overcoming.'¹⁷

This discussion closes by considering critiques of Gadamer as a conservative thinker, even a 'closet essentialist', presenting a response to these that stresses the productive tension at the heart of his concept of 'horizon' and the aims that orient Gadamer's philosophical project as a whole. We will close this framing chapter by reprising the theme of horizon in dialogue with the concept of the 'skylines' at its close as a means of explicating further this preliminary account, before embarking on a discussion of its constative elements and their relation to understanding the built world.

1.2 Horizon and the Path of Hegel's Thought

The third figure necessary in this preliminary discussion is Hegel. In his attempt to 'interrogate anew' Hegel's path of thought, Gadamer seeks to redeem what is fruitful in his approach to the phenomenology of history, without slipping into the dual pitfalls of idealism and historicism. His relationship with Hegel, which he defines as a 'tension-filled proximity'¹⁸, is both one of endorsement and critical distance. Gadamer's rejection of Hegel's account of the negation of experience through a commitment to the 'overcoming' inherent in Hegel's dialectic is clarified by contrasting of Gadamer's understanding of horizon as 'lived' or undergone, and horizon as comprehended in self-reflection. Gadamer describes such difference in what he self-consciously admits is a rehabilitation of the Hegel's 'bad infinity.'

The concept of the statement, the dialectical accentuation to the point of contradiction, stands however, in extreme opposition to the nature of hermeneutic experience and the linguisticity of the human experience of the world in general.¹⁹

¹⁷ James Risser, *The Life of Understanding: A Contemporary Hermeneutics* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012), 18.

¹⁸ Gadamer, "The Heritage of Hegel," in *Reason in the Age of Science*, 53.

¹⁹ *TM*, 484.

In keeping with the titular implications of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer rejects Hegel's transformation of the Platonic dialectic into scientific method resulting in the 'omnipresence of the historically knowing spirit.'²⁰ Since horizons are lived, or undergone, in experience by a 'historically effective consciousness', it is characterised by infinite openness to new experiences, which can only be understood in the light of the infinite horizon of cumulative experience they occur against.²¹

Contra Hegel, Gadamer understands the infinite as an abiding boundary that, due to its constant unfolding as shifting horizon, one cannot 'get beyond.'²² Hegel's teleological account of the evolution of *Geist* (spirit) entails the perception of the infinite in pure conceptual knowledge.²³ Gadamer, by contrast, in stressing the singularity of the 'event of understanding' denies the possibility of the perfection of conceptual knowledge emerging in this way. Arguably, we see in Gadamer's critical appropriation of Hegel that he takes issue with his great predecessor as he does with Husserl and Nietzsche.

Of course, the focus here on the 'bad infinity' is not Gadamer's only engagement with Hegel, who appears as both a 'comrade-in-arms' and principal adversary in his writing.²⁴ As the 'latest and greatest follower' of the Greeks, Hegel like Gadamer expresses a critical approach to Kantian philosophy and a desire to regain the lost riches of the thought of the Greeks.²⁵ Understanding Gadamer's 'somewhat ironic'²⁶ embrace of the notion of the

²⁰ *TM*, 351.

²¹ As Ambrosio and others have noted, Gadamer and Hegel significantly part ways regarding the 'linguisticity' of experience, which we will address in our next chapter. Francis J. Ambrosio, "Gadamer: On Making Oneself at Home with Hegel," *The Owl of Minerva* 19, no. 1 (1987): 23–40, <https://doi.org/ow198719120>.

²² Gadamer, 'On the Philosophic Element in the Sciences and the Scientific Character of Philosophy' *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 14.

²³ It is this teleological progression towards the pure conceptual thinking of religion and philosophy that gives rise to Hegel's 'end of art' thesis, which Gadamer also rejects, but which cannot find full exploration here.

²⁴ Robert B. Pippin, "Gadamer's Hegel," in *Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Jeff Malpas, Ulrich Arnsward, and Jens Kertscher (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 226.

²⁵ Gadamer, "Reflections on My Philosophical Journey," in *The Philosophy of Hans Georg Gadamer*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn, trans. Richard E. Palmer (Illinois: Open Court, 1997), 15.

²⁶ Pippin, "Gadamer's Hegel," 230.

‘bad infinite’ has two effects here. It makes clear the position from which Caputo and others will leverage an accusation of ‘closet essentialism’ against Gadamer and serves to open up some distance between Gadamer and Heidegger.²⁷

Totality is never an object, but rather a world–horizon which encloses us and within which we live our lives.²⁸

Gadamer leverages the concept of ‘horizon’ as a means of rejecting the robust teleology that supports history and self-consciousness as comprehensible totalities in the Hegelian system. As Pippin diagnoses, the deepest divide between Hegel and Gadamer emerges concerning the facets of experience made available to the reflective consciousness. Gadamer describes idealism’s reflective consciousness as capable of a form of encyclopaedic ‘rising above’ as a ‘high-flown abstraction of thought.’²⁹ Self-understanding for ‘historically effective consciousness,’ in the other hand, is a fundamentally incomplete process.³⁰

To be sure, Hegel’s Philosophy of World History remained caught in the insoluble contradiction of an open progress of history and a conclusive apprehension of its meaning, and it could not be repeated if one were intent on taking historicity seriously.³¹

Hegel explicates this notion of the ‘bad infinite’ defined outside of itself, via the notion of a number series. An infinity of numbers proceeds on and on. Ceaselessly sequential, it is inconceivable as an entirety when consider from the point-of-view of non-augmented human vision.³² Both skyline and

²⁷ For example, see: Caputo, “Gadamer’s Closet Essentialism: A Derridean Critique.”

²⁸ *Hegel’s Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (London: Yale University Press, 1976), 104.

²⁹ As Taylor notes, for Gadamer: ‘A horizon with unchanging contours is an abstraction.’ “Gadamer and the Human Sciences,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 136.

³⁰ ‘In Hegel’s account, there is no such level unavailable to reflective life or the activity could not count as an activity belonging to us, and therein lies the deepest disagreement between Gadamer and Hegel.’ Pippin, “Gadamer’s Hegel,” 233.

³¹ Gadamer, ‘The Heritage of Hegel’ *RAS*, 40.

³² Of course, aerial photography, computer modelling and, on a basic level the use of models of *maquettes* may convince us that we can view the skyline, horizon or individual building *as a complete whole*. But when corporeally confronting any of these phenomena corporeally, the way in which they defy our individual viewpoint is apparent. They exist on

architectural work appear to replicate such inconceivability. For example, take the skyline that appears to recede about us to east and west, disappearing from view rather than reaching a tangible endpoint. The work of architecture cannot be conceived as a totality yet is subject to the processes of a constantly changing environment, and the gradual material fluctuations, and so, also reflects this. Hegel rejects such 'bad infinities' positing the circle rather than the ongoing series, as a better example of the 'in-finite,' that does not stray into the realm of incompleteness. The circle is infinite and self-renewing yet can be conceived as a complete whole.³³

Despite praising Hegel's revival of the ancient practice of Dialectic, Gadamer cannot accept his attempt to present this as a method, and as such rejects the positivism at the final destination of Hegel's *Denkweg*. In his final analysis, Gadamer finds in Hegel, a 'dubious compromise with the scientific thinking of modernity' through 'insistence on the modern, Cartesian principle of subjectivity'³⁴ which in turn limits the scope of the historical analysis and revival of Greek thought that Gadamer finds to be so promising. As a result of his faith in method, Hegel falls short in the same ways that Husserl and Nietzsche do in Gadamer's account. In allowing the philosopher an access to truth granted by the bracketing function of the *epoche* (Husserl) or the expansive adoption of numerate perspectives (Nietzsche) or indeed the adoption of the dialectic method (Hegel), all three of his predecessors, according to Gadamer, fail to appreciate that any intelligibility offered to a given *Sache* is attended closely by the unintelligibility of other aspects.

To emphasize this as I did in *Truth and Method* may sound like blind optimism in an age of faith in science and of the flattening

an extra-human scale, and therefore resist our capturing them in a single view without the help of technology.

³³ 'Each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a circle rounded and complete in itself. In each of these parts, however, the philosophical Idea is found in a particular specificity or medium. The single circle, because it is a real totality, bursts through the limits imposed by its special medium, and gives rise to a wider circle. The whole of philosophy in this way resembles a circle of circles. The Idea appears in each single circle, but, at the same time, the whole Idea is constituted by the system of these peculiar phases, and each is a necessary member of the organisation.' Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Logic of Hegel, Translated from the Encyclopædia of the Philosophical Sciences* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1874), 20.

³⁴ Gadamer, 'Hegel's "Inverted World"' *HD*, 45.

technological destruction of all that has flourished. In fact, behind this optimism stands a profound skepticism regarding the role of "intellectuals" and especially of philosophy in humanity's household of life.³⁵

Of course, the claim here that the return to the 'bad infinite' made by Gadamer, has been leveraged as a criticism of a kind of conservatism on his part. For some critics, this regressive move towards Hegel betrays what might be the very 'metaphysical conclusions' Gadamer claims hermeneutics avoids from the outset of his project in *Truth and Method*.³⁶ Gadamer appears aware that his thought represents something less radical than the 'radicalism of Heidegger's inquiry' that 'produced in the German universities an intoxicating effect that left all moderation behind.'³⁷ In the light of this admission of moderation we turn in the penultimate section of this chapter, to the accusations of a return to essentialism levelled at Gadamer and a possible answer to them that defends Gadamer from the charge of conservatism.

1.3 The Horizon of Gadamer's 'Horizon'

In exploring the concept of horizon, it is appropriate to ask from which philosophical horizons does Gadamer's concept of the same emerge. As Gadamer himself acknowledges³⁸, his theory of horizon is a development of both Husserl and Nietzsche³⁹. As what Feldman terms a 'metamodernist,' Gadamer eschews not only the radical criticism of tradition and history that he finds in Nietzsche, but also the purity of Husserl's methodologically scientific phenomenology.⁴⁰ Gadamer's expansive notion of 'horizon' is

³⁵ Gadamer, 'The Heritage of Hegel' *RAS*, 58.

³⁶ *TM*, xxxiii.

³⁷ Gadamer, 'The Phenomenological Movement' *PH*, 139.

³⁸ Gadamer states: 'no freely chosen relation toward one's own being can get behind the facticity of this being' *TM*, 264.

³⁹ *TM*, 313.

⁴⁰ 'Metamodernism' as a position is able to leverage critiques of post-modernity, not through overcoming, but as the reference to Plato's metaxy in the prefix, 'meta' suggests, relies on the oscillation between forces that characterises such thinking. In Gadamer's case the movement between a finite and infinite horizon that we discuss here indicates that he is thinker that can be described in such terms. Stephen M Feldman, "The Problem of Critique: Triangulating Habermas, Derrida, and Gadamer Within Metamodernism," *Contemporary Political Theory* 4, no. 3 (August 1, 2005): 296–320, <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cpt.9300117>.

informed and conditioned by each of these thinkers and indicates a point of departure from each of them that is essential in understanding Gadamer's intention to dismantle the province of philosophy. In the case of both Nietzsche and Husserl, it is the role of the philosopher and the possibility of their objective knowing that engenders Gadamer's modification of the concept of 'horizon' as he inherits it.

Where Husserl's horizon suffers from an excess of pursued clarity, Nietzsche's horizon is too limiting, according to Gadamer. Gadamer acknowledged the cultural element of 'horizon' in which 'historically effective consciousness' is always and already enmeshed after Nietzsche.⁴¹ Nietzsche asserts that living with a defined horizon is contingent on an ability to 'forget at the right time as well as to remember at the right time.'⁴² It is through radical nihilism that one can become freed from the cumulative sickness incurred through the neglect of life's own vitality, and recovery from this metaphysical malaise is granted through the multiple horizons of perspectivism. However, the account of horizons here for Gadamer is too limiting, and Nietzsche's solution is thus symptomatic of modern philosophy's drive toward overcoming that stresses the power of subjectivity to transcend its historical situation. Although Gadamer agrees that horizons to a certain extent constrain our view, he upholds the possibility of their fusion against Nietzsche's historicism which he considers 'a kind of Robinson Crusoe dream.'⁴³ This is because just as an individual within a particular horizon cannot exist without others, Gadamer believes that the 'closed' cultural horizons he perceives in Nietzsche's thought are a 'pure abstraction.'⁴⁴ This, in turn, means that there can be no such 'historicist insight' as Gadamer perceives in Nietzsche- a moment in which the

⁴¹ 'In a way that has long been insufficiently noticed, forgetting is closely related to keeping in mind and remembering; forgetting is not merely an absence and a lack but, as Nietzsche in particular pointed out, a condition of the life of mind.' *TM*, 15.

⁴² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche: Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Brezeal (1876; repr., Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 63.

⁴³ *TM*, 315.

⁴⁴ *TM*, 315.

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enlightened philosopher ‘sees’ all the machinations of cultural and traditional meanings as a complete monolith.

The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never absolutely bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon.⁴⁵

Instead, horizons remain in motion, and thus the project of understanding the horizon is and remains, necessarily incomplete. Thus, Gadamer retains an optimism regarding the capacity of ‘historically effective consciousness’ to learn from tradition, in particular, the classics and in so doing reawaken the ‘claim to truth’ that remains in such texts.⁴⁶

For Husserl, the encompassing horizon becomes a means of explicating the structures of unfolding experience. Thus, particular moments of perception find their unity and comprehensibility in their shared temporal horizon in Husserl’s phenomenology. So, although Gadamer refers to the concept of the *Lebenswelt* (Lifeworld) he rejects the Husserlian faith in philosophy as the enterprise that, through its methodological purity will achieve a clear-eyed understanding of all structures contained in each perceptual moment:

All this belongs to the world horizon, but there is need of special motives if the one who is caught up in such a life in the world is to transform himself and it to come to the point where he somehow makes this world itself his theme, where he conceives an enduring interest in it.⁴⁷

Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics denies such thorough insight. Indeed, in *The Science of the Lifeworld*⁴⁸ Gadamer presents *Lebenswelt* as the persistent challenge to Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, something

⁴⁵ *TM*, 315.

⁴⁶ Although, Gadamer significantly revises the notion of the classical as we will examine in our chapter on Culture.

⁴⁷ Edmund Husserl, “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man,” trans. Quentin Lauer (1935; repr., New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 166.

⁴⁸ Gadamer, ‘The Science of the Lifeworld’ *PH*, 182–97.

that undercuts the very possibility of phenomenology as a rigorous science.⁴⁹

He write thusly:

For science as such will never prevent us from doing anything that we are able to do. The future of humanity however demands that we do not simply do everything we can but that we require rational justification for what we should do. In this sense I agree with the moral impulse that lies as the basis of Husserl's idea of a new life-world praxis, but I would like to connect it with the old impulse of an authentic practical and political common sense.⁵⁰

Gadamer, therefore, finds in Husserl's concept of the 'Lifeworld' the tinder that will ignite the entire 'framework of Husserl's transcendental thinking.'⁵¹ This is because, according to Gadamer, Husserl remains committed to the complete determination made possible through a 'pure' phenomenological method. Gadamer's Heideggerian impulses become apparent in his upholding of moments of truth about the *Sache* as both an unveiling and a concealing. As opposed to what he perceives as Husserl's conception of language as a mere tool, Gadamer, with Heidegger, understands 'language' as the 'ground of being.'⁵² As such, although horizons remain shifting, particularly for the later Husserl, who proposes intersubjectivity as the ground of subjectivity itself, Gadamer rejects the complete clarity and distinctness, granted through careful phenomenological reflection. Gadamer places the lifeworld into the broader horizon of 'linguisticity.'⁵³ In so doing, he opens up a gulf between his thought and that of Husserl's, even if there are affinities between Husserl's determination of the world as a 'the sum total of possible experience and experiential knowledge,'⁵⁴ the perceptually given 'horizon of all horizons',

⁴⁹ 'In light of the unsuspendably specific character of the pre-given horizons of the life-world, how is phenomenology as a "rigorous science" possible at all?' Gadamer, 'The Science of the Lifeworld' *PH*, 193.

⁵⁰ Gadamer, 'The Science of the Lifeworld' *PH*, 197.

⁵¹ Gadamer, 'The Phenomenological Movement' *PH*, 196.

⁵² Gadamer's treatment of Husserl here perhaps takes too much of a polemical tone, given Husserl's rich account of language as an intersubjective communication that acts as a fundamental motivational and interpretive tool within a given cultural world.

⁵³ Gadamer refers to language as a 'world-horizon' that only has its true being 'in dialogue.' *TM*, 462.

⁵⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Daniel Dahlstrom (1913; repr., Hackett Publishing, 2014), 10.

and Gadamer's presentation of 'horizon' as 'something that moves with one and invites one to advance further.'⁵⁵

Since language itself is a further constantly evolving horizon, Gadamer rejects any notion of a 'purely scientific' phenomenology.⁵⁶ Any event of understanding, just like a viewpoint within a given horizon while revelatory, also entails that 'historically effective consciousness' finds other aspects of a given truth hidden from view.

Examining 'horizon' in Gadamer does as much to define his use of the term as it does to elucidate some of the broader contextual concerns that condition his philosophy. These will re-emerge in the following chapters regarding the homecoming he attempts to effect for the *Gesiteswissenschaften*. Gadamer offers the same critique to Nietzsche, Husserl (and to some extent, Heidegger.) In each of them, he identifies a tendency for philosophy to undercut its predecessors in a reflection of a broader tendency to privilege the new.

What does the end of metaphysics as a science mean? What does its ending in science mean? When science expands into a total technocracy and thus brings on the "cosmic night" of the "forgetfulness of being", the nihilism that Nietzsche proposed, then may one not gaze at the last fading light of the sun setting in the evening sky, instead of turning around to look for the first shimmer of its return?⁵⁷

The above reflects a deep commitment in Gadamer's work to engage with the history of philosophy dialogically as particularly evident in his embrace of Plato's dialogical approach as praxis and his reconsideration of the polemical tone he adopts *contra* Kant in *Truth and Method*.⁵⁸ For him, this entails

⁵⁵ *TM*, 245.

⁵⁶ Gadamer's rejection of such relates to the 'alienation' of the 'concept of life' when 'articulated in a conceptual schema.' As a result, he claims that Husserl, like Dilthey fails to appreciate the fundamental importance of *life* as a concept that defies systematic determination. *TM*, 251.

⁵⁷ *TM*, xxxiv.

⁵⁸ We will return to this in Chapter Four.

resisting traditional patricidal tendencies within the philosophical tradition through a moderation which necessarily ‘limits the position of the philosopher in the modern world.’⁵⁹ This is apparent in his treatment of both Nietzsche and Husserl on the notion of horizon, as well as his rehabilitation of Hegel’s ‘bad infinity’ which precludes the philosopher and philosophy *tout court* from any claim to objective knowledge. It is to this notion and tension between ‘infinite’ and lived finite horizons that we now turn.

1.4 Gadamer’s Horizon

Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.⁶⁰

As we see above, Gadamer stresses the reciprocal relations between the horizons of past present and future that, although posited in isolation remain fundamentally interrelated. Such tension finds partial resolution in the momentary and provisional union of the ‘fusion of horizons.’ The present is comprehensible, Gadamer argues, because of the rich heritage of *vorurteil* (prejudice) cemented through the unfolding of tradition and culture in which we always and already find ourselves.⁶¹ Therefore, to speak of the ‘I’ in isolation is as much of a misnomer as ‘private language’ or indeed, a private architecture. Since all understanding is ‘interpretation’, it unfolds through the dialogical structure of the logic of question and answer that Gadamer takes from Collingwood.⁶² As a result, the other to whom ‘historically effective consciousness’ is oriented in dialogue is always inferred when understanding

⁵⁹ *TM*, xxxv. It should be noted that the gendered term ‘patricidal’ here suggests simply the ancestry of German philosophy against which Gadamer appear to make this accusation. In particular the ways in which Heidegger and before him Nietzsche attempt a wholesale rejection of the tradition of philosophy.

⁶⁰ *TM*, 317.

⁶¹ Each of these issues will be tackled subsequent chapters. For the present discussion prejudices can be defined as: ‘a series of things [that are] taken for granted and lies fully beyond the explicit consciousness of anyone.’ Gadamer, ‘What is Practice? The Conditions for Social Reason’ *RAS*, 82.

⁶² *TM*, 378.

has taken place.⁶³ The possession of a horizon, therefore, is only ‘one phase in the process of understanding’ that achieves its denouement in the moment of ‘understanding, [wherein] a real fusing of horizons occurs—which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously superseded.’⁶⁴ Furthermore, the concept of horizon is a key explananda in Gadamer’s philosophy of art. A fusion of horizons takes the same form in events of understanding that occur between ‘historically effective consciousness’ and the other as other, and between ‘historically effective consciousness’ and the work of art. A fusion of horizons in this context is: ‘what mediates between the text and its interpreter’⁶⁵ the formation of agreement regarding *die Sache* that is ‘an achievement of language.’⁶⁶ This brief account of the encounter between horizons is of course not exhaustive. Instead, it takes its start from an on-going dialogue in respect of different elements that condition the horizon of meaning from which architectural experience emerge, which will be addressed in the following chapters.

In the tensions between a personal horizon that is always in flux and a more comprehensive, constantly unfolding infinite horizon, events, individuals and works of art (or more specifically architecture) emerge differently. For example, what is now called the First World War, was referred to as ‘The War to End all Wars’ during the inter-war period, only to be eclipsed by another, more cataclysmic conflict within a few short years.⁶⁷ Thus, one’s vantage point in the horizon of history influences the interpretation of a given historical event. In the same sense, as the hegemony of the Judeo-Christian worldview fades, the meaning of High-Gothic churches will take on different resonances. Such distance is not merely a loss of relevance, as we might fear

⁶³ Gadamer confers the status of the ‘Thou’ to all artworks, whose partnership in the dialogue he explicates in contradistinction to claims that attempt to ‘to understand the other person in advance.’ *TM*, 368.

⁶⁴ *TM*, 317.

⁶⁵ *TM*, 385. The strident critique(s) of the *horizonsverschmelzung* will be tackled in detail later, when the notion of understanding in the context of tradition is brought into focus Hirsch as principal interlocutor see: “Truth and Method in Interpretation,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 18, no. 3 (1965): 488–507.

⁶⁶ *TM*, 286.

⁶⁷ Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition, and Reason* (London: Wiley and Sons, 2013), 66.

for sacred spaces in a secular age; instead, Gadamer claims that distance allows other meanings to emerge. Gadamer is keen to emphasise that temporal distance should not be conflated to entail a decline of the artworks' claim to truth:

Temporal distance obviously means something other than the extinction of our interest in the object. It lets the true meaning of the object emerge fully. But the discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished: it is in fact an infinite process.⁶⁸

Gadamer's use of the term 'truth' should not cause us to leap to the assumption that his is a conservative hermeneutics. Rather, the discussion of horizons reminds us that the determinate discovery of any given 'truth' of exhaustive explanation of the 'truth' of a artwork is not possible. Rather, 'true meaning' here constitutes a shared understanding of an aspect of *die Sache* (the subject-matter) emergent in the liminal space between interpreter and text.⁶⁹ As such, this truth is possessed by neither party, thus for our analysis, it means that architectural experiences are entirely determined by neither the viewer nor the particular properties of the space experienced. In the 'fusion of horizons' both interlocutors (in our case the architectural work and the 'historically effective consciousness) emerge from a given encounter changed.⁷⁰ This is because, each new understanding 'reveals new dimensions of *die Sache* and issues in a new stage of the tradition of interpretation,' a project that contains its own necessary incompleteness.⁷¹

The account of horizons and their fusion implies communities of interpreters that are historical and cultural.⁷² Like the material skyline which embraces viewpoints other than my own, the horizon of 'historically effective

⁶⁸ *TM*, 309.

⁶⁹ 'Just as each interlocutor is trying to reach agreement on some subject with his partner, so also the interpreter is trying to understand what the text is saying.' *TM*, 386.

⁷⁰ Historically effective consciousness and architectural work are referred to here as interlocutors recalling the dialogic structure Gadamer adopts after Collingwood.

⁷¹ Georgia Warnke, "Solidarity and Tradition in Gadamer's Hermeneutics," *History and Theory* 51, no. 4 (December 1, 2012): 107, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2012.00644.x>.

⁷² 'In full awareness of our finitude we remain exposed to questions that go beyond us. They befall us.' Gadamer, 'The Heritage of Hegel' *RAS*, 58.

consciousness' is a reminder of the contingency of my self-knowledge on a community of other interpreters. It both sustains and occasions the formation of prejudices (the collective voice of tradition) and necessitates the formation of cultural practices (rites rituals and norms of representation.) Further, it will permit differentiation of hierarchies of interpretation.⁷³ Such collective implications become distinct through 'linguisticity' as the medium of attempting to articulate the 'world.'

Following Heidegger, Gadamer states that 'linguisticity' is a capacity unique to 'historically effective consciousness.' Like his teacher, Gadamer dismisses language as sign system since any approach to language as a 'mere tool' masks the *aporia* at the heart of our every genuine interaction with the world. ⁷⁴ Thus, Gadamer claims that the predetermination at the heart of scientific language precludes it from speaking language in its 'proper sense.'⁷⁵ Gadamer's account of 'linguisticity' contributes to his dismantling of a subject/object bifurcation and works to weaken the foothold of scientific rationality thereby. Language, like the consensus achieved through dialogue, is a possession of neither dialogue partner, nor can it properly be thought of as something *created* by man for an elucidation of the same.⁷⁶ Rather, language 'belongs to the situation itself'⁷⁷ and remains inherently unpredictable.

...one understands a language in living in it—a proposition that holds true not only for living languages but, as is well known, for dead languages as well. The hermeneutic problem is thus not a problem of the correct mastery of language but one of correctly coming to an understanding about what happens in the medium of language ... ⁷⁸

⁷³ How Gadamer attempts to differentiate interpretations and the relations between culture, and the cultured (*Bildung* and *gebilte*) are examined in a later chapter.

⁷⁴ *TM*, 434–35.

⁷⁵ Gadamer, 'On the Philosophical Element in the Sciences and the Scientific Character of Philosophy' *RAS*, 4.

⁷⁶ 'A word is not a sign that one selects, nor is it a sign that one makes or gives to another; it is not an existent thing that one picks up and gives an ideality of meaning in order to make another being visible through it. This is mistaken on both counts. Rather, the ideality of the meaning lies in the word itself. It is meaningful already.' *TM*, 434–35.

⁷⁷ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 203.

⁷⁸ *TM*, 403.

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Where science forecloses on the possibilities of disclosure in the questions it poses because of the rigid definition of the concepts and systemic nature of its thinking, it is unable to account for the ambiguities inherent in human interaction in and with the world.

Gadamer claims that *Dasein* is always and already immersed in the structures of linguisticity, making an analogy between the understandings that emerge between parents and children as possessing this fundamental structure.⁷⁹ Gadamer describes this process of opening onto the world in language as the unique capacity of 'historically effective consciousness' for 'Sprachlichkeit,' or, linguisticity.⁸⁰ It is this capacity that separates the human from the mere communication exhibited of non-human animals:

To have language involves a mode of being that is quite different from the way animals are confined to their habitat. By learning foreign languages men do not alter their relationship to the world, like an aquatic animal that becomes a land animal; rather, while preserving their own relationship to the world, they extend and enrich it by the world of the foreign language. Whoever has language "has" the world.⁸¹

It is based on the commitment of philosophy to the dialogue that Gadamer's critique of Heidegger emerges.⁸² In distinguishing language and 'linguisticity' as horizons, therefore, we might understand 'linguisticity'

⁷⁹ 'From the very first words we utter, we are entangled in the whole play of language' *Hermeneutics between History and Philosophy: The Selected Writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer Volume I*, trans. Pol Vandavelde and Arun Iyer, The Selected Writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 184.

⁸⁰ Although 'Sprachlichkeit' first appears in a sub titular formulation in third section of 'Truth and Method' it achieves moves to greater centrality in Gadamer's writing as his stress on 'living language' becomes more distinct. *GC*, 51.

⁸¹ *TM*, 469.

⁸² An account of this difference will be provided in greater detail in the following chapter. For now, it will suffice to note that Gadamer exemplifies this difference in two key regards. Firstly, in the claim that Heidegger underplays the significance of the 'other' and second in the dialogic character of Gadamer's engagement with his own thought through philosophical interviews, and the well-known examples of his engagements with Habermas and Derrida which we will tackle in Chapter Three and Chapter Seven. Malpas notes this commitment to consistent philosophical praxis across Gadamer's philosophy. "Hans-Georg Gadamer," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2018 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/gadamer/>.

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as that wide human horizon that encompasses all languages, verbal and non-verbal (those living and those passing into obscurity) and language as the mother-tongue in which *Dasein* first makes its way in the world.

For Gadamer, language discloses the world, and ‘linguisticity’ the being of the human being in language constitutes and facilitates the articulation of ‘historically effective consciousness.’ This realization is made possible through the language’s opening of the world stresses for each finite *historically effective consciousness* their position within a ‘certain time and place in history.’⁸³ It is through language, he states, that we may ‘construct the possibility of living together and the means of living together.’⁸⁴

When our historical consciousness transposes itself into historical horizons, this does not entail passing into alien worlds unconnected in any way with our own; instead, they together constitute the one great horizon that moves from within and that, beyond the frontiers of the present embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness.⁸⁵

The transposition between historical consciousness and historical horizons occurs through the same structure as the event of understanding between the work of art and the hermeneutic subject. The continuity of horizons above when considered in relation to art, that is the reintegration of the disruptive experience of the art work in to a continuous horizon of experience could easily be read as conservatism in Gadamer, but we should warn against this. It is this very critique which we will engage with next, suggesting a possible defence emergence through the concept of horizon itself.

1.5 The Charge of Conservatism

The account of horizons, here and in fact, the very retention of the term constitutes the basis of an accusation of conservatism against Gadamer from

⁸³ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 208.

⁸⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*, ed. Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson, trans. Lawrence Schmidt and Monika Reuss, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), 56.

⁸⁵ *TM*, 315.

proponents of a more radical hermeneutics. Such critique emerges from proponents of hermeneutically inspired deconstruction and the social on the grounds of what is perceived to be conservatism, traditionalism and the preservation of metaphysics of continuity within Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Here we will engage with one such voice, giving a brief account of their critique and two possible responses. The first of which underlines the validity of Gadamer's account of 'horizon' and the second confirms the ontological claims of philosophical hermeneutics with Davey and Risser.⁸⁶

Somewhat ironically, of course, Gadamer also receives critique from conservative hermeneutic scholars for what they perceive to be a surfeit of radicality in his approach to interpretation and authorial intent.⁸⁷ We focus here on the critiques from radical hermeneutists and will take up the critique of conservative hermeneutics in a subsequent chapter.

Caputo's critique builds on Margolis' claim that Gadamer is guilty of offering stability against relativism in a 'forever lurking' 'universal like tradition'⁸⁸ which is principally resourced by *Truth and Method* and proceeds as follows.⁸⁹ In rehabilitating tradition as a horizon, Gadamer betrays the radicality of Heidegger's project, by placing a monolithic, unified and unchanging horizon behind the operations of human finitude. 'Historically effective consciousness' has recourse to this horizon, and in so doing, accesses an 'indefinite plurality of moves which the unchanging truth can make.'⁹⁰ As such, writes Caputo, Gadamer represents a betrayal of the

⁸⁶ James Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other: Re-Reading Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997); Davey, *Unquiet Understanding*.

⁸⁷ For example, critiques from Betti and Hirsch in relation to the plurality of interpretations.

⁸⁸ Joseph Margolis, *Pragmatism without Foundations 2nd Ed: Reconciling Realism and Relativism* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 135.

⁸⁹ For accounts of Caputo's critique see: *Radical Hermeneutics*, 1988; "Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project," *Philosophy Today*, November 1, 1986, <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday198630416>; "Gadamer's Closet Essentialism: A Derridean Critique."

⁹⁰ Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 1988, 112.

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‘hermeneutic energy that erupted with *Being in Time*’ and brushes Gadamer's project off as an attempt to ‘block off radicalization.’⁹¹ In the final analysis, he finds that:

Gadamer's work represents a kind of modified Hegelianism, a metaphysics of infinity constantly monitored by Heidegger's analysis of the finitude of the understanding. It is a Hegelianism for the hermeneutic phenomenologist.⁹²

A few comments on the implications of Caputo's objections are necessary here since they make clear the ground from which he criticises Gadamer. The charge of conservatism here implies that Gadamer is moving against a consistently refined system. To make such a claim presupposes a teleology within philosophy's history, wherein more complete systems replace imperfect predecessors. Of course, there is much in Gadamer's philosophy to support a conservatism thus defined. It is at this point that Gadamer is considered in juxtaposition to notions of ‘progress’. Such accusations are variously resourced by his recourse to tradition as an essential constitutive element of understanding, the recovery of meaning that resonates in his account of the event of understanding and, above all his recourse to Plato.

Indeed, one might defend Gadamer on the basis of the understanding of horizons here. Caputo's critique in understanding Gadamer's interpretation of Heidegger indicates how horizons necessarily condition the emergence of possible interpretations. In reading Gadamer in the light of Heidegger's hermeneutic-phenomenological project, the claims of philosophical hermeneutics (as Gadamer himself admits) appear moderate. However, as Gadamer's exchanges with Betti and Hirsch on the validity of interpretations and authorial intent respectively indicate, there are other ‘horizons of meaning in which Gadamer's work stands as a radical riposte.’⁹³

⁹¹ Caputo, “Radical Hermeneutics,” November 1, 1986, 272.

⁹² Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 1988, 113.

⁹³ Indeed, Betti directly accuses Gadamer of adopting a ‘biased view’ in relation to Schleiermacher in his appraisal of *Truth and Method*. Arguing that retention of objectivity is essential to maintaining the integrity of interpretations. See Emilio Betti, “Hermeneutics as the General Methodology of the Geisteswissenschaften,” in *The Hermeneutic Tradition From Ast to Ricoeur*, ed. Gayle L. Omiston, trans. Josef Bleicher, SUNY Series, Intersections Philosophy and Critical Theory (1972; repr., London: SUNY Press, 1990), 159–97.

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A more robust response in defence of Gadamer's account of the necessity of a horizon of inherited meanings can be made concerning the nature of hermeneutics itself. The notion of philosophical 'progress' which underpins Caputo's account of hermeneutics as a driving forward of radicalism and is bound to see Gadamer's contribution as a misstep. Gadamer's philosophy concerns 'the experience of art' as well as attempting 'an adequate self-interpretation of modern thought in general' which he states 'has more in it than the concept of method recognises.'⁹⁴

Gadamer's treatment of Nietzsche, Husserl and Hegel indicate this project of thinking the nature of modern thought. In the case of all three great philosophers, the parting of ways between Gadamer and his predecessors indicates a rejection of 'overcoming.' That is, a replacement of one objective system with another as 'a methodological extension of modern tendencies.' Indeed, Risser after Heidegger, describes hermeneutics as 'overcoming of the very idea of overcoming' through an analogy of hermeneutics as a form of convalescing.⁹⁵ This model is useful. The convalescent recovers their health in a way that cannot recover from illness and retrieve the 'healthy body' as it previously was. Even on the level of physiognomy, the body's systems integrate the illness itself as antibodies, and 'historically effective consciousness' is unable to recover in the sense of a total eradication of loss. Convalescing means here carrying the impact of something with you even when you have recovered. Gadamer's claim to the universality of hermeneutics, the decision to 'absorb aesthetics into hermeneutics' begs the question of whether Gadamer himself does not attempt such a move.⁹⁶

Gadamer so understood appears close to Heidegger, in pursuing a 'hermeneutics of facticity' whereby the recovery that happens in historicity poses a distinct challenge to the notions of *progress* as 'permanent advance'

⁹⁴ *TM*, 173 n.38.

⁹⁵ Risser, *The Life of Understanding*, 18, 26.

⁹⁶ *GC*, 76.

that characterise thinking in modernity.⁹⁷ Indeed, it was such fidelity to 'scientific purity' in Husserl's phenomenological thought that caused Gadamer to part ways with his phenomenological predecessor. Likewise, the operation of 'horizon in Nietzsche is rejected by Gadamer for two reasons. The first being the 'closed whole' that individual worldviews constitute, the second being the resolution of nihilism into perspectivism; an overcoming undertaken by the *Übermensch* through his capacity for an encompassing 'perspectival knowing.' Thirdly, we observed that Gadamer's progress along Hegel's *Denkweg* is fundamentally limited by the latter's commitment to the emergence of objective perception of the infinite made possible by the teleological progress of *Geist*.

It is just this notion that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics opposes. While it may be true that he does so in a way less radical than Heidegger, in that he allows some space for the new speaking of the truth of a way of living from and with the past, this does not occur as a neo-Platonic direct recovery of a static, unworldly and unhistorical realm of pure ideas, as to infer as much from his horizon neglects the constant movement within both the horizons of the finite and infinite. Within this system, neither the finite, nor the infinite horizon can be grasped objectively. Therefore, Gadamer is not concerned with a direct transmission or recovery, of static history; rather, the preserving that he discusses serves to challenge the notion of a narrative of distinct progress while at the same time opening us up to the new. Risser writes that 'hermeneutics operates on a plane beyond a logic of development'⁹⁸ leading Vattimo to claim that philosophical hermeneutics is properly post-modern in the ways in which it both breaks with teleological accounts of history and rejects objective knowing.⁹⁹

Indeed, without progress towards an encompassing view of horizon, nor knowledge of a static 'canon' of truths, Davey stresses the anti-essentialist

⁹⁷ Risser, *The Life of Understanding*, 17.

⁹⁸ Risser, 19.

⁹⁹ Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, trans. Rob R. Snyder (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

thesis that adds urgency to the possibility for 'historically effective consciousness' to learn from its history. 'Precisely because human beings have no behavior[sic] determining essence, the conservation of experience and its lessons is vital. Human beings have nothing to maintain their effective being other than acquired experience.'¹⁰⁰ In this sense, our only resource for collective- or self-knowledge of the world is the 'horizon' of history. The process of our engagement is energised by the tension between frail finitude and an infinity of possible interpretations underlying the moment of 'fusion' afforded through a tarrying with, and openness to, the world-as-text. Such a reading is particularly persuasive as it explains why 'historically effective consciousness' is driven forward into the acquisition of new understanding. Furthermore, if 'historically effective consciousness' finds itself between two *consistently unfolding* and therefore changing horizons, Caputo's characterisation of Gadamer's thought as Hegelian, and therefore promising a resolution appears to make a straw man out of Gadamer's openness to the voices of the history of philosophy.

1.6 Skyline as a Gadamerian Horizon

Having defended some critiques of Gadamer, we return to the orienting example with which we opened this first chapter. A juxtaposition of the 'Skyline' as captured in an image and the lived horizon of the urban can serve as a model for understanding the richness of Gadamer's theory of the horizon.¹⁰¹ As reproductions, the images of skylines act as an analogue to the impossibility of our getting beyond our lived horizon. The views they present are impossible for human perception to capture in its mere corporeal reality and serve as an analogue for Gadamer's critique of the objectivity of the sciences. In reality, we are as dwarfed by the imposing grandeur of the skyline as we are by the tide of tradition's infinite and shifting horizon as it pulls us along.

¹⁰⁰ Davey, *Unquiet Understanding*, 52.

¹⁰¹ Kidder uses Gadamer's account of horizons as a middle to think the divergent but yet coalescing interests of stakeholders, investors, creatives and inhabitants that inform the process of architectural production. Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects*, 88.

However, this individual perspective is not one of unmitigated loss. As Jane Jacobs' polemic against totalising urban planning that was so rife in mid-twentieth century New York attests, subjectively limited horizon, is filled with possibility. Her account of her small street charts the unfolding performance of everyday life, highlighting the impossibility of its full comprehension, even for a resident who participates daily in its unfolding.

In real life, to be sure, something is always going on, the ballet is never at a halt, but the general effect is peaceful and the general tenor even leisurely. People who know well such animated city streets will know how it is.¹⁰²

The 'intricate ballet' of Hudson Street as performance is something in which Jacobs participates and yet something onto which she possesses a unique view.¹⁰³ The processes expressed there are, however, not utterly subjective. Horizons as 'physical and cultural' both as a limitation and as an opening to everything that transcends it.¹⁰⁴ They tell us something about the prevailing of human life against our Promethean urge to plan, and in this way are connected to the prevailing of Indian life against the 'international style' imposed by Le Corbusier.

In a more subtle sense, horizon contributes to the identity of a situation, while at the same time serving as a key to exploring its inexhaustible richness.¹⁰⁵

As Jacobs' account confirms, although her viewpoint on Hudson Street and the gentle fluctuations of life there is in some sense unique, it is contingent on a community of experiencers, performers and knowers to ensure its communicability. Skylines defy our isolation in the world by reconfirming our situation in the world with others in the same way that Gadamer claims

¹⁰² Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 55.

¹⁰³ Jacobs, 50.

¹⁰⁴ Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects*, 39.

¹⁰⁵ Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 362.

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that all speaking is a ‘speaking for’ someone and speaking together with someone.

Skylines too may offer a way of thinking the relations between finite and infinite horizons in Gadamer. Especially the London skyline, which, in the abiding presence of Westminster and St. Pauls, speaks of a tradition which, although declining, nonetheless prevails. The Manhattan skyline, with which we opened our discussion, too has become a highly marketable impression of the city. These impressions from afar serve to inform the *vorurteil* we hold regarding what we might find there.

The formation of such judgements, however, is contingent not only on the wide refractions of visual media, advertisements or literature. Instead, some of these expectations will depend on our knowledge of the built horizons we inhabit and have inhabited in supporting the legibility or otherwise of the new vistas we encounter. The lived experience of a skyline resources the fore-judgements that make the indelible past that stands shrouded in the city skyline legible.

The skyline thus has a contradictory character. Its representation in visual media speaks of permanence, the identity of a given place. Gadamer’s treatment of horizons reminds us that this is not the case. It reminds us that in our lived experience of the city this is not the case. We observe this in the rapid march of development that shifts the ‘identity’ they present in myriad ways. This serves to remind us that, like Gadamer’s notion of horizon, changes in the built world can be seismic (the sudden destruction of iconic elements once prominent) subtle (the steady march of gentrification) or almost imperceptible (the increasing shift from open, civic spaces to private ownership.)¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, our understanding of these is contingent on our

¹⁰⁶ Mark Townsend, “Will Self Joins London ‘Mass Trespass’ over Privatisation of Public Space,” *The Guardian*, February 13, 2016, sec. UK news, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/feb/13/will-self-mass-trespass-london-protest>.

belonging to a horizon which allows for the understanding of the new, in the light of what has and does surround us.¹⁰⁷

In as much as any view of a skyline means that another site must slip from our view, the skyline as it stands before us represents an irrevocable barrier that we cannot get behind. Although topology may be inferred in the undulations of various buildings silhouetted against the sky, any *detectable Genius Loci* (spirit of the place) of the city's original founding site remains necessarily obscured from view.¹⁰⁸

Likewise, because of the reciprocity between individual structures within the skyline itself, even buildings of historical import, must jostle among a plural concert of visual claims. The simultaneity of interlocutors presented here represents the notion of time presented to the hermeneutic subject. In our encounter with the world-as-text claims to truth from the voices of tradition rarely appear chronologically. In our later chapters we will see that Gadamer describes the 'special task' of architecture in terms of a double-function that both disrupts experience, and yet performs a functional task.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter offered some preliminary observations on the concepts of 'horizon' in Gadamer, expressing the nature of hermeneutics as a philosophy of 'overcoming' before showing that the very claim to overcoming is itself called into question by Gadamer, following Heidegger. Horizon creates the possibilities for 'historically effective consciousness' self-knowledge and with it the interpretation that constitutes each event of understanding. Despite all that horizon endows to 'historically effective consciousness,' it also acts as a limit we cannot 'get behind.' Preceding and exceeding our experience of

¹⁰⁷ Gadamer himself presents an example of such seismic change in the built horizon when he reflects on the new 'emergence' of an old church in his hometown when returning there after the war. We will return to this example in Chapter four. Gadamer, "Ende Der Kunst?"

¹⁰⁸ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1979; repr., London: Academy Editions, 1980).

the world, horizon's support the 'radically undogmatic' character of Gadamer's hermeneutic subject.¹⁰⁹

In reorienting the concept of horizon against philosophies of 'overcoming', Gadamer takes up the phenomenological heritage of Husserl in order to show how historicity perceives itself in its operations in the world. Focussing on lived experience and 'living language' prompts Gadamer's rejection of the objective clarity and distinctness of Husserlian phenomenology as a rigorous science. With Nietzsche, Gadamer accepts the constraining features of the horizon but rejects what he perceives as an account in Nietzsche of 'horizon' as a 'closed whole.' This is because horizons are not something that are simply imposed upon us, the conception of which opens the door nihilism, rather, like effective history, they are something that we also 'process[es] that we are and enact.'¹¹⁰

We are ourselves encompassed by the whole, which we are and which is in us; but not encompassed in such a manner that the whole would be present for us as the whole. We encounter it rather as the totality and the vastness, wherein everything is, only through adhering to what has been allotted us, i.e., the *nómos*, whatever it may be.¹¹¹

The relationship between City and Skyline, and viewer and skyline, illustrates the relationship between 'historically effective consciousness' and the multi-faceted horizon into which and by which we are always and already constituted. Having a horizon is fundamental to our orientation in the world and the formation of our identity. Within the skyline, our orientation and viewpoint are both hindered and rendered possible. Just as we cannot take in the skyline from a single viewpoint, Gadamer rejects the notion of certitude, either won through a purity of method directed towards the unfolding of consciousness and its constituting capacities, like the craning of our necks to see further forces us to look away from fine-grained elements in the horizon itself. Like the continually shifting horizon that is constituted by the city

¹⁰⁹ *TM*, 364.

¹¹⁰ Jerome Veith, *Gadamer and the Transmission of History* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2015), 26.

¹¹¹ Gadamer, 'Under the Shadow of Nihilism' *EPH*, 91.

skyline, Gadamer, unlike Heidegger, presents us with an account of the infinite that continually unfolds and changes. This should be read however as confirming the anti-essentialism of Heidegger and Nietzsche, through the assertion that tradition and culture are all that we have as resources for self-formation, the necessity for hermeneutical tarrying emerges in sharper focus.

Although the account of horizon underlined the fundamental reliance on truth emergent from tradition inherent in Gadamer's hermeneutics, understanding this recovery of the past as part of an infinite horizon in constant flux was the initial position from which a defence of the charge of 'conservatism' was presented. This defence began in the light of his departure from the three critical interlocutors on the issue of 'horizon,' Hegel, Nietzsche and Husserl. It claimed, contra Caputo, that criticisms predicated on Gadamer's philosophy as a form of 'regression' from the dismantling 'progress' found in Heidegger's thought provides both an inadvertent affirmation of the operations of horizon as conditioning interpretation and a misunderstanding of the hermeneutics against 'overcoming' that Gadamer continues to develop after Heidegger, albeit in a self-consciously less radical fashion.

Comments in this chapter have been preparatory, in advance of a more in-depth investigation of both explicitly discussed and implicit elements at work in the horizon of meaning that makes the interpretive and applicative moment of understanding possible for Gadamer. In the following chapter we take up one such element, the 'linguisticity' that constitutes the 'concretion of historically effected consciousness' as a means of exploring the notion of home in Gadamer, and in so doing explore how is 'linguistic' horizon follows yet departs from Heidegger. ¹¹²

¹¹² *TM*, 407.

2 Homecoming and Exile in Gadamer's Hermeneutics

2.1 Introduction

'The house of everyman is to him as his castle and fortresse, as well as his defence against injury and violence, as for his repose.'¹
-Sir Edward Coke

'The desire to go home that is a desire to be whole, to know where you are, to be the point of intersection of all the lines drawn through all the stars, to be the constellation-maker and the center of the world, that center called love. To awaken from sleep, to rest from awakening, to tame the animal, to let the soul go wild, to shelter in darkness and blaze with light, to cease to speak and be perfectly understood.'²
-Rebecca Solnit

The physical structure of the house is the site of our inaugural experience with the built world and thus becomes the structure through which we first understand the concept of 'home.'³ Preference for (or, indeed, aversion from) specific structures is a mark of the profound influence of the dwelling spaces in which one first learns to live with others. Memory's reification of these first spaces makes the possibility of another's burgeoning world constellating about it, in the same way, inconceivable.⁴ Bachelard's concept of topophilia expresses Home's intimacy.⁵ However, such intimacy also has a dark side, expressed in critical theories wherein 'the home' is an oppressive site of conformity. These practices of home, like the stifling tedium captured in Diane Arbus' images of American suburban life, treat the notion of home as

¹ Charles Greenstreet Addison, *Wrongs and Their Remedies: A Treatise on the Law of Torts* (New York: Banks and Bros., 1876), 784.

² Rebecca Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics* (London: University of California Press, 2007), 167.

³ The home is the site in which infants both acquire language and begin to navigate domestic spaces. As Bachelard writes: 'If the house is the first universe for its young children, the first cosmos, how does its space shape all subsequent knowledge of other space, of any larger cosmos? Is that house "a group of organic habits" or even something deeper, the shelter of the imagination itself?' *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1994), viii.

⁴ Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, Series in Continental Thought (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012).

⁵ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*.

a site of defeat, a contributory factor in our failure to flourish (see figure 2.)⁶ This chapter views the notion of the home as the site of our first interactions with the built world but asks whether the sense of foreboding associated with 'home' as the site of the uncanny is reductive. An overly determined notion of the concept of home would presuppose that it can only ever be a site of either domestic boredom (as in the Arbus image here) that must be deconstructed. Gadamer provides a relational account of *Heimat* (home) and *Fremde* (the unfamiliar or strange) that circumvents the determination of 'home' in this sense while acknowledging its foundational role in our understanding of what it means to dwell.⁷ As Vesley writes:

Because we always live somewhere, the situations most familiar to us are those related to our place of dwelling.⁸

As a thesis that explores architecture from the perspective of 'historically effective consciousness' and its engagement with the built world, a consideration of the concept of 'home' is not only relevant but necessary because of the central role the home has in defining the ontological existential character of that consciousness.⁹

⁶ This image from the photo essay 'Two American Families' provides us with a visual interpretation of domesticity as a situation filled with a certain foreboding accompanied with a certain malaise. This image is offered here as an illustration of a certain stance toward domesticity, the notion that the arbitrary belonging of home life is attended by what Arbus herself described as 'creepiness.' Richard B. Woodward, "ART; Diane Arbus's Family Values," *The New York Times*, October 5, 2003, sec. Arts, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/05/arts/art-diane-arbus-s-family-values.html>.

⁷ Hereafter, the terms Home and Exile will be predominantly used for *Heimat* and *Fremde*, respectively in this chapter in order to make clear the connection between this pair of concepts and the conversation in relation to the philosophy of architecture. Further, the use of the term Exile retains the sense of movement and aliveness that animates the Gadamerian account of architecture that unfolds across this thesis.

⁸ Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, 376.

⁹ 'The condition of homelessness, and the desire for homecoming, for founding and inhabiting a home, define, in part, the human condition.' Thomas Barrie, "A Home in the World: The Ontological Significance of Home," in *Architecture, Culture, Spirituality*, ed. Thomas Barrie, Julio Bermudez, and Phillip James Tabb (London: Ashgate, 2015), 93–107.



Figure 2 Diane Arbus 'A Family on Their Lawn one Sunday in Westchester, New York' (1968) Gelatin Silver Print. (Image: <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/67961/a-family-on-their-lawn-one-sunday-in-westchester-new-york>)

Gadamer's own relation to the home proved an inspiration to the integrity of materials in the Herzog and de Meuron retrofit for Tate Modern.¹⁰ Jacques Herzog recounts how the discussion with Gadamer of the quality of the wooden floor of his own childhood home kept an enduring value, that the architects describe as a 'floor as such.'¹¹ How can we understand this reflection as more than simple nostalgia for the familiar? Psychoanalytic approaches would encourage a suspicion of the nostalgia regarding the home as a distorting trick of the subconscious.¹² Gadamer, for his part, however, refuses a resolution of the notion of home in psychology. Rather, he looks toward language as a consistent tension between the familiar and the strange, *Heimat* and *Fremde*. This fruitful tension between the familiar and the strange is clarified further in Gadamer's account of friendship. Gadamer recovers the notion of friendship as neither a case of a relation brokered on the grounds of 'sameness,' nor as something that can be understood as a case of the attraction of opposites.¹³

¹⁰ Tate Modern, London UK (Architects: Herzog and de Meuron, 2000.)

¹¹ Herzog, Jacques, "Thinking of Gadamer's Floor," in *Anything. Symposium Proceedings*, ed. Davidson, Cynthia C. (The MIT Press, 2001), 114–19.

¹² Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 7.

¹³ Gadamer, 'Logos and Ergon in Plato's *Lysis*' *DD*, 1–20.

Gadamer develops his account of language as the home of being after Heidegger. As we noted in our introduction, Heidegger's account of architecture has received far more attention from both theorist and practitioners. This may be due to several intersecting factors; not only does he make succinct statements about architecture through his public addresses *Building Dwelling Thinking*, *The Origin of the Work of Art* and *Art and Space*, but also because, unlike the lesser-known instance of home-relation stated above, Heidegger openly endorsed his own rural escape, Todtnauberg, as the place (*topos*) he described as his 'work-world.'¹⁴ It is reported that his commitment to the importance of this environment progressed to the extent that that he declined the chair of philosophy in Berlin to protect the particular rhythm or habit of thinking he had cultivated there and associated with there.¹⁵ Personal matters gave the question of dwelling further personal urgency for Heidegger when occupying forces requisitioned his house in Freiburg through a programme begun in 1945 to house occupying troops.¹⁶

Heidegger's later thinking shapes and informs Gadamer's philosophy, but Gadamer's philosophical project cannot be reduced to it. The Habermasian claim that Gadamer's work constitutes nothing more than an 'urbanisation of the Heideggerian province'¹⁷ has a pejorative connotation that is perhaps unjustified. This claim, made by Habermas in an address of the same name, honouring Gadamer on the occasion of his receipt of the Hegel-Preis in 1979, encourages readings of Gadamer 'through a Heideggerian lens.'¹⁸ In his address, Habermas describes Gadamer as having bridged the 'gorge' that Heidegger 'dug about himself.'¹⁹ This claim encourages hasty readers of Gadamer's 'linguistification' of Heidegger's *Heimat* to perceive it as nothing

¹⁴ Heidegger, "Why Do I Stay in the Provinces?"

¹⁵ Sharr, *Heidegger's Hut*, 64.

¹⁶ James Miller, "Heidegger's Guilt," *Salmagundi*, no. 109/110 (1996): 180.

¹⁷ Habermas, "Hans-Georg Gadamer: Urbanizing the Heideggerian Province."

¹⁸ Stefano Marino, *Aesthetics, Metaphysics, Language: Essays on Heidegger and Gadamer* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 63.

¹⁹ Habermas, "Hans-Georg Gadamer: Urbanizing the Heideggerian Province," 190.

more than humanising of a more radical predecessor.²⁰ Our account here will show that while Gadamer may bridge a gap in thinking, it is between contemporary philosophy and the Greek notions of home (*Oikos*) and friendship, both of which are illuminated by his account of language.²¹ Gadamer's bridge-building serves to bring the architectural viewer toward a more complex and arguably more onerous relationship to home. In a modern culture that seeks objectivity and definition by transforming language into fragments of information, Gadamer presents an account of finding a home in language that defines itself in a disruptive tension that prevents both the rejection of home as repressive and its embrace as a site of unmitigated comfort.²²

The difference in approach here emerges first through an examination of Heidegger's account of 'authentic dwelling' that has had a deep impact on architectural practice, and an exploration of critiques, that emerge from the architectural academe, of what is perceived as a dangerous rhetoric lurking in Heidegger's account. We then connect this to accounts of the 'first home' that often shape architectural practices through an appeal to essentialism, allowing architects to claim total autonomy within their designs.

Gadamer's account of 'home' as an 'unthinkable' gift of language that exists in a constant and irresolvable tension between the familiar *Heimat* and the *Fremde*, will be understood in greater depth through his account of friendship, which, in drawing on Plato and Aristotle, will gain increasing importance in the following chapters, particularly in relation to the traditional text, in Chapter Three, and the poetic word, in Chapter Seven.

By the close of this chapter, home as a resolution will appear lost to 'historically effective consciousness' for whom a 'first or last word' remains

²⁰ Di Cesare acknowledges that Gadamer himself contributes to such reading by not making his relation to Heidegger, nor to the history of metaphysics transparent.

²¹ Here, we will focus on the account of dwelling in language provided by Gadamer, reprising the theme of dwelling in Chapter Six in relation to the notion of 'Tarrying' with the work of art/architecture.

²² Gadamer, "Heimat Und Sprache."

inconceivable.²³ However, this will allow us to begin to develop an account of architecture as something resembling the friend that is proximal yet revelatory. We begin with a brief account of language as a common ground between Heidegger and Gadamer; of language, as the horizon co-terminus with the world from which truth emerges.

2.2 Language as the Horizon of Home

For both Gadamer and Heidegger, language and world are coterminous. Gadamer progresses Heidegger's statement that 'language is the house of being.'²⁴ Gadamer expresses the linguistic character of all experience as 'linguisticity' claiming that 'being, that can be understood, is language.'²⁵ Our comments here are brief, as we will return to language and the notion of *Heimat* in the body of this chapter.

Language is the 'central issue in philosophical hermeneutics.'²⁶ Gadamer recurses to Aristotle's understanding of the human as *zoon logon echon*,²⁷ following Heidegger's translation of *logos* as 'language' 'to acknowledge the shared, especially linguistic, background that shapes persons such as to make the dialogue possible in the first place.'²⁸ This means that for both Gadamer and Heidegger, language, as that in which truth emerges, resists any nominalist analyses that would reduce language to a system of signifier and signified. Gadamer's account of language, following Heidegger, must be understood as a lived historical horizon. In this sense, language forms a horizon within which 'historically effective consciousness' always and already finds itself. This means that there can be no discernible origin of

²³ Gadamer, 'Letter to Dallmayr' in, *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 95.

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, Perennial Classics (London: HarperCollins, 2001), 129.

²⁵ *TM*, 490.

²⁶ James Risser, "Poetic Dwelling in Gadamer's Hermeneutics," *Philosophy Today* 38, no. 4 (November 1, 1994): 369, <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday19943843>.

²⁷ 'For, as we assert, nature does nothing in vain; and man alone among the animals has speech [logos].' Aristotle Politics 1253a7ff Aristotle, *Aristotle's "Politics": Second Edition*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

²⁸ David Vessey, "Gadamer on Friendship and Intersubjectivity," *Philosophy Today* 49, no. 5 (2005): 61–67.

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language, no recoverable or perceptible 'first word.'²⁹ For Gadamer, 'linguisticity' underpins the dialogical character of all understanding as the basic structure of experience. Therefore, all acts of understanding happen because of and through our life in language, both as dialogue and as the unspoken agreements of ritual that attest to linguistic being.

Language may be codified and be more or less fixed in dictionaries, grammars, and literature—yet its unique vitality, its obsolescence and self-renewal, its coarsening, and its refinement into the high genre of literary art, all this lives only through the living exchange of people talking with one another. Language exists only in conversation.³⁰

Gadamer adopts Heidegger's 'hermeneutics of facticity' which entails that 'historically effective consciousness' is 'thrown' into a world that is historically and linguistically constituted.³¹ Growing up in a language is thus growing up in the world. For both thinkers, the mother-tongue represents the first site of understanding: it is the means by which *Dasein*, or 'historically effective consciousness' gains a world.³²

Language is therefore always the respective language, into which peoples and tribes are born, in which they grow up and live.³³

In his essay *Sprache und Heimat*, Heidegger underlines the 'rootedness' of dialect expressed in *Building Dwelling Thinking* describing it as 'always and already' the 'mother of language.'³⁴ In Heidegger's writing on architecture therefore, dialect emerges as a key factor in the preservation of the

²⁹ Gadamer, 'Letter to Dallmayr' in, *Dialogue and Deconstruction*, 95.

³⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Incapacity for Conversation," trans. David Vessey and Chris Blauwkamp, *Continental Philosophy Review* 39, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 351–52, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-006-9041-2>.

³¹ *TM*, 262.

³² Although of course, we should note that Gadamer's use of the term consciousness is something that, Heidegger could not accept in Gadamer's thought and contribute to the conception that Gadamer represents an 'urbanization of the latter's thought. Gadamer, *GC*, 46.

³³ 'Sprache ist indes noch immer die jeweilige Sprache, in die Völkerschaften und Stämme geschickhaft hineingeboren werden, worin sie aufwachsen und wohnen.' Martin Heidegger, "Sprache und Heimat," in *Gesamtausgabe (1910-1976) Aus Der Erfahrung Des Denkens*, vol. Band 13 (1960; repr., Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), 155–80.

³⁴ Heidegger, 155.

'unspoiled' riches of dwelling is reflected in his account, preserving what occurs through the work of Hebel in *Der Sommerabend*.^{35,36} Here Hebel describes the activities of the sun throughout the day, and the manifold objects affected by its daily rhythm.³⁷ Heidegger presents the poem as one that affords the reader a glimpse of the fourfold, within a homeland that contains a particular security. This poem presents everyday life transformed through the words of Hebel. Hebel's use of dialect here appeals to Heidegger for its immediacy to poetic saying, indeed Heidegger goes so far as to claim that dialect 'poeticises itself.'³⁸ Heidegger's sentiments about the centrality of homeland are expressed here in his address on the centenary of Messkirch. Against the ways in which, in modern life in particular, we risk sleepwalking through blank *Alletäglichkeit* (everydayness) the homeland, according to Heidegger possesses the possibility of teaching us how to return home.

How can we set ourselves on guard against the penetration of this alienation? Only in as much as we awaken tirelessly the generous, healing and guarding powers of homeland, do we stir of the springs of feeling at home again and prepare the right course for its flow and influence.³⁹

Heidegger's assertion that 'what we once called homeland or hometown will fall apart and disintegrate' reveals the connections between *Die Muttersprache* and the rustic activities that shape life and dwelling in the

³⁵ A distinction can be drawn between language and 'dialect' in Heidegger's writing. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger describes language as a 'streetcar which everyone rides in.' Language as a whole can be reduced to semantic technical analysis, an analysis which, Heidegger claims serves to distance the speaker from phenomena themselves. Dialect by contrast, can indicate *ein Weg* (a way) back to a more authentic world relation 'because it gives us the most localised sphere of existence.' Robert Mugerauer, *Heidegger and Homecoming: The Leitmotif in the Later Writings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 427; Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publisher, 1999), 51.

³⁶ Heidegger entitles a 1956 speech 'Hebel, Friend of the House.' This speech and the focus on Hebel in Heidegger's work indicate Heidegger's perception of affinity with Hebel whom he deemed a poet of things.

³⁷ As Mugerauer notes, Heidegger's aim in directing his listeners toward Hebel's poetry is not to encourage them to listen for the content of the poem but rather to 'try to experience something of what is brought forth.' Since, 'dialect is primarily a spoken mode of local saying and thus speaks only as it does.' *Heidegger and Homecoming*, 435.

³⁸ Heidegger, "Sprache und Heimat," 28.

³⁹ Martin Heidegger, "Homeland," trans. Thomas Franklin O'Meara, *Listening* 6, no. 3 (1971): 234.

provinces.⁴⁰ The dialect shaped by a living community intimately related to the landscape in which dwell contains the potential to express a 'letting dwell' of the fourfold.⁴¹ Heidegger promotes these as exhibiting an authentic world-relation that causes him to endorse the vernacular architecture he finds there.⁴²

Gadamer's concern is also with 'living language' but, through the 'linguistification' of Heidegger's thinking, this recovery is concerned with language as dialogue.⁴³ This is exhibited in his approach to the recovery of meaning. As we will see in later discussions of play, for example, Gadamer frequently has recourse to the common usage of terms, along with historical analysis to reorient their meaning, a practice that reflects his commitment to true conversation as lived.⁴⁴

The true conversation is a lived with-one-another, in which the one and the other unite themselves.⁴⁵

This living together will emerge in Gadamer's treatment of friendship later in this chapter and emerges in the implied embodiment we will discuss in Chapter Four. First, we will briefly examine Heidegger's approach to dwelling.

2.3 Home and Authenticity

Although architects widely embrace Heidegger's thought, some architectural theorists treat the dominance of phenomenological thinking in architectural

⁴⁰ Heidegger, 235.

⁴¹ 'The fourfold names the "gathering" of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities that comes to constitute the thing for Heidegger.' Andrew J. Mitchell, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 3.

⁴² We will explore Heidegger's account of dwelling in more detail in the next section.

⁴³ *TM*, 588.

⁴⁴ In discussing play, Gadamer refers to the 'play of the waves' 108. Further, in his treatment of prejudice, Gadamer recourse to historical analysis to 'rehabilitate' the pejorative effects of enlightenment thinking. 289.

⁴⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Towards a Phenomenology of Ritual and Language," in *Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, ed. Lawrence Kennedy Schmidt (London: Lexington Books, 2001), 45.

practice with some suspicion.⁴⁶ We will first recount Heidegger's account of home and the common refutations that often emerge through the narrow view of Heidegger's thought afforded by his public addresses *Building Dwelling Thinking*, *Man and Space* and *Poetically Man Dwells* and the ready comparisons to National Socialism that seem to reside there.⁴⁷ The particular stress on the mother tongue and a privileging of dialect as a smaller and thus more poetic language world, risks implications shared by National Socialist *Blut und Boden* policies. The affinities between Heidegger's critique of anthropocentric humanism and eco-centric Nazi policies appear to support these assertions.⁴⁸ By proffering the rural as an example of 'authentic' dwelling, Heidegger's approach to architecture may be used to support essentialist accounts of architecture. Thus, we will look to the ways in which architectural theory accounts for the origins of architecture that appear to support the essentialism supposedly evidenced by Heidegger here, before moving towards Gadamer's account of home to offer a more charitable view of Heidegger when his thinking is used to resource an account of language as the home of human being and the house of being.⁴⁹

Heidegger foreshadows his discussion of authentic dwelling in *Building Dwelling Thinking* in *Being and Time*, where the Cartesian chamber of the radically doubting subject is turned against itself from the unshakeability of the *cogito sum* to the uncertain certainty of the *sum moribundus*.⁵⁰ No longer the referent for a scepticism that can retrieve the irrefutable truth discovered in the life of the mind, the room becomes a *verfallene* (ruinous) scene where

⁴⁶ Martin Woessner, "Ethics, Architecture and Heidegger," *City* 7, no. 1 (April 1, 2003): 23–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810302226>.

⁴⁷ As Sharr notes, the oppositional stance against modernity that Heidegger adopts in these addresses may be even more radical than his thought as a whole allows due to the fact that, as public addresses the thinker may have wanted to make his complex thinking digestible for a non-philosophical audience. Adam Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects* (London: Routledge, 2007), 22.

⁴⁸ Greg Garrard, "Heidegger Nazism Ecocriticism," *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 17, no. 2 (March 1, 2010): 251–52, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isq029>.

⁴⁹ Of course, Gadamer's account of home is not simply a recounting of the Heideggerian position, but we will raise those differences during our discussion of the same and its relation to 'linguisticity.'

⁵⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (1953; repr., Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), 256.

the meaning of Being as 'thrownness' or 'thrown projection' asserts itself as anxiety.⁵¹ The need for a new language to express the 'meaning of being' is revealed in the *Bodenlosigkeit* where *Dasein* is robbed of 'authentic world relation' by the 'thin wall' of obfuscation constructed by the averageness of 'the they.' A sense of homelessness characterises modern being because the meaning and truth of being itself 'remains unthought.'⁵² Heidegger leverages homelessness, therefore, to create 'a critical and normative force' within his account of dwelling that recovers autochthony.⁵³ This critique is 'directed at technological modernity and what Heidegger clearly regards as its destructive character.'⁵⁴

When Heidegger reprises the theme of homelessness in *Building Dwelling Thinking*, 'authentic dwelling' is expressed through the 'letting be' of *das Geviert* (the 'fourfold.'). *Heimatlos* mortals must learn how to dwell in the face of the obscuring forces of technology; recovering the earth, opening onto the sky, accepting our nature as finite beings and, awaiting the 'divinities.'

Mortals dwell in that they await the divinities as divinities. In hope they hold up to the divinities what is un hoped for. They wait for intimations of their coming and do not make signs of their absence. They do not make their gods for themselves and do not worship idols. In the depth of misfortune they wait for the weal that has been withdrawn.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *The Existentialist Reader: An Anthology of Key Texts*, ed. Paul S. McDonald (1947; repr., New York: Routledge, 2000), 254.

⁵² Heidegger, 253.

⁵³ The 'recovery of Autochthony' references the ways in which Heidegger's account privileges the poetic nature of the dialect, and as such lays the groundwork for a privileging of indigenous relations to place as a possessing a form of inherent authority. In the following section of this chapter we will draw a relation between this approach to dwelling and essentialist account of architecture link to apocryphal accounts of the 'first home.' In relation to the project of this thesis, that is, applying the tools of philosophical hermeneutics to the interpretation of architecture, Heidegger's account in the essays we have indicated above suggests a relation to indigenous place making practices as vital to the interpretation and evaluation of architectural spaces.

⁵⁴ Jeff Malpas, "Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger and the Question of Place.," *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter* 25, no. 1 (2014): 16.

⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, Perennial Classics (London: HarperCollins, 2001), 141–60.

In *Building Dwelling Thinking*, cited above, Heidegger gives an account of the waiting required of those living in attentive equanimity with the fourfold. Heidegger presents the Black Forest Cabin as an example of authentic dwelling with 'the fourfold.'⁵⁶ He writes:

'Let us think for a while of a farmhouse in the Black Forest....Here the self-sufficiency of the power to let earth and sky, divinities and mortals enter into simple oneness with things ordered the house.'⁵⁷

The discovery of the home seems touched with a nostalgia that would preserve the simplicity of pre-enlightenment living, a promotion of regionalism, rootedness and the intimacy of dialect appears in distinct tension with the rootless mobility of modern life.⁵⁸ Heidegger's exemplification of authentic building divides products of modernity from those of the pre-enlightenment, good *technê* from the all-consuming mechanisation and machination (*Machenschaft*) of modern technology. For example, the assertion that 'rural counties and small towns' are more 'competent' in the safeguarding of 'homeland' than industrial cities;⁵⁹ alternatively, the lauding of Heidelberg bridge and the rustic cabin against the rejection of the hydroelectric dam in what Bernstein describes as a bifurcation of 'the authentic one [building] and the everyday technical.'⁶⁰

Although Heidegger 'resolutely romanticised the rural and the low-tech before, during and after Nazism,' it is these indications of an idealisation of a form of life mirrored in the rhetoric of National Socialism that Leach objects

⁵⁶ Heidegger's house in the Black Forest village of Todtnauberg, remains a simple structure commissioned by the Heidegger's to be a simple chalet that embodies its own ambivalent stance toward visitors, welcome and unwelcome through the requirement to access the chalet by traversing the arduous *rundweg* a mountain pathway that led to the property. The site itself is immortalised in poem by Paul Celan, written following a visit to Heidegger at Todtnauberg in 1967. The nature of the cabin, a site intertwined with problematic element of Heidegger's thinking has produced literature too extensive for inclusion in a thesis explicitly focussed on the thinking of Gadamer, however.

⁵⁷ Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry Language Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 145–61.

⁵⁸ Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

⁵⁹ Heidegger, "Homeland," 234.

⁶⁰ Susan Bernstein, *Housing Problems: Writing and Architecture in Goethe, Walpole, Freud, and Heidegger* (California: Stanford University Press, 2008), 140.

to. Taken at face-value, comments like the following have prompted polemical responses from the architectural academe.⁶¹

And the spiritual world of a Volk is not its cultural superstructure, just as little as it is its arsenal of useful knowledge and values; rather, it is the power that comes from preserving at the most profound level the forces that are rooted in the soil and blood of a Volk, the power to arouse most inwardly and to shake most extensively the Volk's existence.⁶²

As Harries notes, the language of 'rootedness' here appears overly determining in a manner at odds with the mobility of modern living and becomes more problematic when translated into Norberg-Schulz's 'valorisation of place'⁶³ which is his account of the *Genius Loci*. Seemingly, his 'strong place,' one that conveys its topology through built forms, engenders just as robust a definition of indigenous peoples.⁶⁴ For example, Norberg Schulz makes the claim that the character of Nordic peoples is conditioned by their exposure to harsher winter weather.⁶⁵ Leach further claims that the rootedness of dwelling contains worrisome overtones of the very rhetoric that fuels anti-Semitism. For our contemporary moment, the notion that human identity is contingent on an identity with place so understood would seem to exclude the non-indigenous from the possibility of authentic world-relation is inconsistent with the ways in which places are shaped and created and promises to create a dangerous hierarchy that excludes those in exile from homecoming.⁶⁶ As Leach outlines:

The 'wanderer' does not fit within a concept of situatedness or rootedness to the soil, and therefore does not fit within the philosophy of the Heimat.⁶⁷

⁶¹ One such response can be found in the following address by: Leach, "Forget Heidegger."

⁶² Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, 2.

⁶³ Malpas, "Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger and the Question of Place.," 19.

⁶⁴ Malpas however, cites the distinction that should be maintained between Heidegger's account of home and its appropriation into Norberg Schulz's project "Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger and the Question of Place."

⁶⁵ Norberg-Schulz goes so far as to claim 'human identity presupposes the identity of place' Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, 22.

⁶⁶ Harries notes the incompatibility between Heideggerian dwelling and metropolitan life. Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 154.

⁶⁷ Leach, "The Dark Side of the Domus."

The mysticism of an 'authentic home' recalls the claims of architects and architectural theorists that support essential ideas about building. These often relate to the first home, but can become justifications for the unchecked hand of the architect. If it is the architect alone that has insight into the nature of 'authentic dwelling,' then the inhabitants themselves remain at the mercy of an architect who possesses an omnipotent insight which manifests as total environmental determination. We will explore two such examples here before engaging more deeply with Gadamer's account of *Heimat* and its relation to friendship.

2.4 The First Home

Modern life appears haunted by a failure to be 'at home' in, or with the world.⁶⁸ Discussions of the homely are attended closely by its other, the uncanny. This betrays a psychoanalytical supposition that home cannot be a benevolent place or site of truth, and at worst can become a site of suffocation and domination, and therefore must be subject to scrutiny. Readings of the uncanny in architecture stress the irredeemable loss of the home in modernity, a place where authenticity can no longer be found. As we will see in our following Chapter, Gadamer is sceptical of any attempt to apply psychoanalytic terms such as *das unheimliche* 'the uncanny,' derived from Freud, to lived experience, since to do so forecloses on any emergence of truth through an assumption of authority over the object under observation. Operating within the diagnostic paradigm of psychoanalysis, Gadamer argues perpetuates a dialogical situation in which the openness between parties cannot exist.⁶⁹ With architectural practice, a commitment to recovering architecture's 'authentic essence' leads to a mythologization of original dwelling. Applied to architecture, therefore, the architect is invited thus to diagnose the way back to authentic living and offered an unlimited authority to create structures that would achieve such relations.

⁶⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

⁶⁹ Gadamer describes such dialogues in *Truth and Method* as follows: 'This is not a true conversation- that is, we are not seeking agreement on some subject-because the specific contents of the conversation are only a means to get to know the horizon of the other person.' *TM*, 314.

Nostalgia is a word first coined by Johannes Hofer in 1688 to describe *Heimweh*, a malaise seen in Swiss troops who experienced nausea, anorexia and persistent thoughts of home.⁷⁰ The combination of *nostos* and *algos*



Figure 3 Frontispiece of Marc-Antoine Laugier: *Essai sur l'Architecture* 2nd ed. 1755 by Charles Eisen (1720-1778) Image: <http://galatea.univ-tlse2.fr/pictura/UtpicturaServeur/GenerateurNotice.php?numnotice=A5361>

marries the notions of home with pain or suffering; through the grueling task of homecoming, or the impossibility of such. In common contemporary usage, however, nostalgia has lost its medical association, emphasising instead a feeling of comfortable longing or yearning that is found in the 'homely'.⁷¹ How we understand what this longing is directed toward is intertwined with the mythologies of the first architecture.⁷² Architects and architectural theorist frequently invoke an adherence to 'essential' architecture as an orienting force in their practice.

This calling back to an origin point reflects a nostalgia not only for architecture's lost integrity but its position among the other arts.⁷³

⁷⁰ Juhani Pallasmaa, "Existential Homelessness-Placelessness and Nostalgia in the Age of Mobility," in *The Ethics of Mobilities- Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, ed. Tore Sager and Sigurd Bergman (London: Routledge, 2008), 145.

⁷¹ Boym notes that nostalgia is both a spatial and temporal phenomena, that can both unite us through the universality of a sense of longing and yet promote divisions through the powerful leveraging of imagined homelands that fuel conflicts between communities. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (London: Basic Books, 2001), 3.

⁷² Krystine Irene Batcho, "Nostalgia: The Bittersweet History of a Psychological Concept," *History of Psychology* 16, no. 3 (2013): 165–76, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032427>.

⁷³ Gadamer in fact reminds us that architecture endures as a reminder of much that we have forgotten about art, particularly as a result of the 'cult of genius' developed during

The imagined origins of architecture attempt to establish 'essential' features of a building that should re-echo in every architectural work.⁷⁴ We engage with two such examples here as reference points to how Heidegger's account of dwelling also indicates such a tendency. Laugier's 'primitive hut' theory is one such example. In his 1755 *Essay on Architecture*, Laugier recounts man's dismissal of the cave, full of 'unhealthful air' in favour of an 'abode which covers but not buries him.'⁷⁵ From this primitive hut, he derives the principles of architecture itself, particularly the columns, entablature and pediment pictured in the frontispiece to the *Essay* (see figure 3.) Laugier's a-historical notion of the 'primitive hut' re-echoes with the story of mankind's fall from paradise, the need to create an ideal shelter following the expulsion of Adam and Eve from their perfect world.

Rykwert's ur-architecture extends the process of naming through which Adam makes the animals of the earth his own. Adam's house in paradise constitutes 'a volume which he could interpret in terms of his own body and which yet was an exposition of the paradisaic plan and thus established him at its center.'⁷⁶ In contradistinction to Breugel's 'Tower of Babel,' where humans appear in ant-like proportion to a towering edifice that reaches

Romanticism. He reminds us: 'In an era when public consciousness is dominated by the idea that art is based on experience (Erlebnis), it is necessary to recall that creation out of a free inspiration—without a commission, a given theme, and a given occasion—was formerly the exception rather than the rule in artistic work, whereas today we feel that an architect is someone *sui generis* because, unlike the poet, painter, or composer, he is not independent of commission and occasion.' *TM*, 80.

For a history of the relations between architecture and the other art forms see: Joseph Rykwert, *The Judicious Eye: Architecture Against the Other Arts* (London: Reaktion, 2008).

⁷⁴ Essentialist approaches to architecture are informed by both essential account of the 'human' as in Vitruvian man, or Le Corbusier's *modulor*, as well as accounts of 'art' that stress formal structure over their reception. For our thesis such an account is problematic in the ways in which the work itself and its formal properties are privileged over the relations between the work itself and its interpreter. See: Tim Gough, "Reception Theory of Architecture: Its Pre-History and Afterlife," *Architectural Theory Review* 18, no. 3 (December 1, 2013): 281, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2013.889645>.

⁷⁵ Marc-Antoine Laugier, *An Essay on Architecture: In Which Its True Principles Are Explained, and Invariable Rules Proposed, for Directing the Judgement and Forming the Taste of the Gentleman and the Architect, with Regard to the Different Kinds of Buildings, the Embellishment of Cities* (London: T. Osborne and Shipton, 1755), 10.

⁷⁶ Joseph Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 190.

towards the divine, Rykwert's imagined origin sees paradise grasped on a human scale. As Harries notes however, Adam's act of naming was not sufficient for him to find peace in paradise.⁷⁷ It is only through God's creation of another, Eve, that allows him to make a home in the garden. The making of 'home' is re-framed by Harries as inextricable from community formation. Vitruvius and Semper's accounts of architectural origins are founded in this sense of communion. In each case, 'gathering around a flame' predated the erecting of any structure such as the tent or 'primitive hut.' '[...]I[i]t was the discovery of fire that originally gave rise to the coming together of men, to the deliberative assembly, and to social intercourse,'⁷⁸ Vitruvius writes. Semper, likewise, claims the hearth as the 'germ of all social intercourse.'⁷⁹ From such sharing of resources, communities of primitive peoples constructed dwellings to protect the hearth, learning from one another to develop the first shelters.

Essential theories of architecture as the complete articulation of a cosmos work to justify architectural approaches to the built home as *Gesamtkunstwerk*. One such example is Hoffman's grand 'Palais Stoclet' wherein the architect's touch is felt in everything from structure to furnishings (see figures 4 and 5.)⁸⁰ Now a UNESCO world heritage site, doubly insulated from the shifting effects of moving horizons first through a refusal of intervention by the dweller and second against the passage of time through the preservation intended in its 'heritage' designation.⁸¹ In offering absolute power to the architect who: '[...] not only sees more or less clearly the nature

⁷⁷ 'The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast in the field; but for the man there was no found a helper fit for him.' (Genesis 2:20)

⁷⁸ Vitruvius cited in: Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 137.

⁷⁹ Semper cited in: Harries, 137.

⁸⁰ This work is provided here as an example of an architectural *Gesamtkunstwerk* in order to indicate the extent to which the hand of the architect in such works permeates the design.

⁸¹ UNESCO, "Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding of Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites: UNESCO," accessed July 25, 2019, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13067&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

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of the materials but [...] qualifies it all as a whole' the domestic *Gesamtkunstwerk* denies the homemaking undertaken by those that dwell.⁸²



Figure 4 Palais Stoclet Josef Hoffmann, Brussels Belgium 1905-1911 image:
<https://arthistoryunstuffed.com/the-wiener-werksatte-1903-1932-part-two/>

⁸² Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Essential Frank Lloyd Wright: Critical Writings on Architecture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 356.



Figure 5 View of Stoclet Palace from Avenue de Teveuren, Brussels, Belgium (1905/1911 Architect: Josef Hoffmann) Wikimedia Commons Image: Jean Paul Gradmont CC BY 2.5, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37280800>

As Loo's fable *The Poor Little Rich Man* indicates, the *Gesamtkunstwerk's* attempt at the total articulation of the world, becomes an act of limiting hubris, denying its position within a changing horizon and refusing to yield to the homemaking that is a part of dwelling.⁸³ The appeal to the essential echoes in Heidegger's account of the 'homelessness' of modern man from the essence of the metaphysical history of Being⁸⁴ and leaves his account of 'home' subject to objections of ontological essentialism.⁸⁵

Gadamer's account of the home stands in contradistinction to any retreat to an 'essential' home by making home synonymous with a linguistic horizon. Just as we saw in the previous chapter, this means that any notion of an 'origin' is imperceptible. Rather, Gadamer's account of home can be

⁸³ Adolf Loos, "The Poor Little Rich Man," in *Adolf Loos 1870-1933. Architect, Cultural Critic, Dandy.*, ed. August Sarnitz and Peter Gössel (1900; repr., London: Taschen, 2003), 18–19.

⁸⁴ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism."

⁸⁵ Indeed, this is further conflated by Leach, a critic of Heidegger's influence on architectural theory as tied to closely to the misattribution of a comment from the translator's introduction to the essay to Heidegger himself. See: Leach, "The Dark Side of the Domus."

described as a tension between the strange and the familiar, with the result that 'more than the house of Being, language is for Gadamer that human dwelling that is often a cramped shell.'⁸⁶

2.5 Home and Exile

The Greeks had a very fine word for that which brings our understanding to a standstill. They called it the *atopon*. This word actually means "the placeless," that which cannot be fitted into the categories of expectation in our understanding and which therefore causes us to be suspicious of it. The famous Platonic doctrine that philosophizing begins with wonder has this suspicion in mind, this experience of not being able to go any further with the pre-schematized expectations of our orientation to the world, which therefore beckons to thinking.⁸⁷

Gadamer describes the being at a 'loss for words' as 'placelessness,' that is, a temporary loss of *heimat*, or, a temporary being in exile, an encounter with *das fremde*. Such disorientation emerges as a result here of the process of thinking, of negotiating the world. In the description above, Gadamer's understanding of language as a consistently unfolding horizon is implicit. Where Heidegger warns of the death of the mother-tongue, Gadamer insists on its endurance despite the flood of language reduced purely to information wrought by the influence of technology. This is because the oscillation between *Heimat* and *Fremde*, home and exile, is an element of living in language within a Gadamerian account.

I return to a key point, namely becoming aware of the enormous importance of the mother tongue. As we can see, this is really something in which are hidden unsurpassable capacities that one should not under-estimate. The mother tongue will retain its place in the future world with complete security.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Donatella Di Cesare, "Hermeneutics and Deconstruction," in *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Jeff Malpas and Hans-Helmuth Gander (London: Routledge, 2014), 595.

⁸⁷ Gadamer "Language and Understanding," in *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, ed. and trans. Richard E. Palmer, Topics in Historical Philosophy (1970; repr., Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 93.

⁸⁸ Gadamer "Education Is Self-Education," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 35, no. 4 (November 1, 2001): 532, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.00243>.

Gadamer's definition of *Heimat*, home shifts away from Heidegger's topological concerns in what Hammermeister terms a 'linguistification' of Heidegger's account of *Heimat*.⁸⁹ For Gadamer, the departure and return to and from home is a part of living in and through language, 'the task of our lives.'⁹⁰ This is because it is 'i[I]n words we are at home.'⁹¹ In claiming that home occurs through language, Gadamer does not provide a neat example akin to the 'authentic' character that Heidegger provides in the example of the rustic hut in 'Building Dwelling Thinking.' In stressing language as an unfolding horizon, Gadamer emphasises the inter-subjective character of the world. Thus, any 'home' in language results from our communal living. It is for this reason that Gadamer concurs with Wittgenstein that 'there can be no private language.'⁹²

Heidegger's architectural metaphor that 'language is the house of being' suggests the permanence of the *Heimat* he appeared to want to recover in the preceding section, one that was pre-metaphysical and defined in sharp relief to the inauthenticity of the modern technological world.⁹³ Gadamer rejects the possibility of a distinct origin point, a defined 'house of being' such as the one Heidegger perceives in the authenticity of dialect. Instead, Gadamer emphasises 'living language,' an organic entity embedded in tradition. This emphasis on living language entails a rejection of Heidegger's isolation of the problematic 'language of metaphysics.' Gadamer writes:

There is no language of metaphysics. There is always only one's own language, where concepts shaped within the metaphysical tradition live on in a variety of transformations and a manifold of layers.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Kai Hammermeister, "Heimat in Heidegger and Gadamer," *Philosophy and Literature* 24, no. 2 (October 1, 2000): 312–26, <https://doi.org/10.1353/phl.2000.0036>.

⁹⁰ Gadamer, "Heimat Und Sprache."

⁹¹ Gadamer, "Language and Understanding," 107.

⁹² 'Wittgenstein hat mit Recht gesagt, eine Privatsprache kann es nicht geben. Sprache ist Gespräch.' Gadamer, "Heimat Und Sprache."

⁹³ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism."

⁹⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hermeneutics and Logocentrism," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Richard E. Palmer and Diane P. Michelfelder, trans. Richard Palmer and Diane Michelfelder, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (New York: SUNY Press, 1989), 121. See also: 'Can a language . . .

Gadamer rejects a bifurcation between metaphysical language and poetic language. The result of this is a continuation of the hope he expresses for the continued performative expression of truth from the outset of *Truth and Method*. Concerning our understanding of home, this confounds the strict divide between authentic (pre-enlightenment) dwelling and inauthentic modern life.⁹⁵ Since we cannot speak of a linguistic community owning a language, which speaks through them, nor can *die Muttersprache* completely own the members of a linguistic community, as Di Cesare notes.⁹⁶ Gadamer underlines this notion in understanding language, after Celan, as a *Sprachgitter* – a grid that not only initially grants a world to the child socialised in language, but that also makes intimate communication possible.⁹⁷ Despite the allegiance to the mother-tongue as that which bestows us this world, it is the having of language that logically grants ‘historically effective consciousness’ access to other linguistic horizons.⁹⁸

Like Heidegger, Gadamer stresses the importance of *die Muttersprache* as the horizon within which the world first comes into view and comes to meet us. After Schelling he describes the mother-tongue as *das Unvordenkliches* (un-pre-conceivable) site where ‘[T]hinking occurs primarily.’⁹⁹ The mother-tongue’s function of bringing the world into view prevents the understanding of *Heimat* and *Fremde* as a pair of simple oppositions.¹⁰⁰ As Gadamer’s

ever be called a language of metaphysical thinking, just because metaphysics was thought, or what would be more, anticipated in it? Is not language always the language of homeland and the process of becoming-at-home in the world?’ *Heidegger's Ways*, trans. John W. Stanley, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 78.

⁹⁵ Tsutomu Ben Yagi, “»Exiled in the Mother Tongue« – Gadamer’s Contribution to the Question of Heimat and Fremde,” in *Orte Des Denkens –Places of Thinking*, ed. Murat Ates, James Garrison, and Franz Martin Wimmer, *Welten Der Philosophie* (Freiburg / München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2016), 267.

⁹⁶ Donatella Di Cesare, *Utopia of Understanding: Between Babel and Auschwitz*, trans. Niall Keane (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), 103.

⁹⁷ Gadamer, “Heimat Und Sprache.”

⁹⁸ Nicholas Davey, “A World of Hope and Optimism despite Present Difficulties’: Gadamer’s Critique of Perspectivism,” *Man and World* 23, no. 3 (July 1, 1990): 282, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01248474>.

⁹⁹ Lawrence Kennedy Schmidt, ed., *Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer’s Hermeneutics* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2000), 41.

¹⁰⁰ Ben Yagi, “»Exiled in the Mother Tongue« – Gadamer’s Contribution to the Question of Heimat and Fremde,” 269.

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account of the placeless suggests a stepping into the unfamiliar and returning home is an epistemically necessary process. It is through the oscillation between *Heimat* and *Fremde* that our foothold in the world develops. Instead, the mother-tongue is the ground which makes new linguistic understandings possible.

If, by entering foreign language-worlds, we overcome the prejudices and limitations of our previous experience of the world, this does not mean that we leave and negate our own world. Like travelers we return home with new experiences.¹⁰¹

Gadamer states that our sense of home belongs in our mother-tongue, for the polyglot as much for the single language speaker. The *Heimat* in language is essential to the forming and maintaining of identity.¹⁰² As with all childhood memories, the exact effect of language which discloses the world to us as we attain it, the effects of the mother tongue eludes full articulation either for ourselves or should we try to elucidate it for another. Developing the notion of the *Unvordenkliches* from Schelling, Gadamer describes the home in the mother-tongue and the world it discloses as something that cannot be conveyed entirely for another.¹⁰³ Language embraces all human beings, making self-knowledge possible. Such self-knowledge occurs through the development and change of language that Gadamer describes as movement between *Heimat* and *Fremde*, home and exile. Just as we cannot speak of a linguistic community owning a language, which speaks through them, neither can *die Muttersprache*, the mother tongue, completely own the members of a linguistic community, as Di Cesare notes,¹⁰⁴

It is in this experience of language—in our growing up in the midst of this interior conversation with ourselves, which is always

¹⁰¹ TM, 464.

¹⁰² 'Die Muttersprache behält für jeden etwas von unvordenklicher Heimatlichkeit, und das gilt auch noch für den Vielsprachigen, selbst wenn er, in flüchtigen Begegnungen mit den eigenen Landsleuten, die eigene Muttersprache wieder hört und spricht.'

'The mothertongue contains for everyone something of an unimaginable homeliness, and this also goes for the multilinguist/polyglot, even if he does, in fleeting encounters with his fellows, hear and speak his particular mothertongue.' Gadamer, "Heimat Und Sprache," 366. See also "All Education Is Self-Education," trans. Pádraig Hogan and John Cleary, *The Journal of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain* 34, no. 4 (2001): 532.

¹⁰³ Gadamer, "Heimat Und Sprache," 367.

¹⁰⁴ Di Cesare, *Utopia of Understanding*, 103.

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simultaneously the anticipation of conversation with others and the introduction of others into the conversation with ourselves—that the world begins to open up and achieve order in all the domains of experience.¹⁰⁵

As Di Cesare argues, Gadamer's philosophy is not 'anti-metaphysical,' even though it is resistant to philosophies that strive for historical objectivity, engendering strict bifurcations between subject and object.¹⁰⁶ This affects the approach to the home made in Gadamer and Heidegger, since Heidegger's focus on artworks is on those that are 'anti-metaphysical' or contain pre-metaphysical impulses, that is those works of art that can recover the abyssal ground of being that has been forgotten by metaphysics, the authentic/inauthentic divide that appears starkly in his rejection of modern buildings. Instead, according to Gadamer, the built world is replete with spaces for meaningful engagement:

We can only believe that if we forget all our sports centers, motorways, public libraries, and technical schools, which are frequently more lavishly furnished than the fine old grammar schools, which I myself miss, where chalk dust was almost part of our education. Finally, this is also to forget the mass media and the widespread influence that they have on the whole society. We should recognize that all these things can be used in a rational way.¹⁰⁷

Where in Heidegger language is the 'gift of being' that allows art uniquely to disclose truth, heroically bringing *Dasein* to the thinking of itself, Gadamer makes the work of art a paradigmatic examples of a moment of understanding achievable in interpersonal dialogue.¹⁰⁸ Language is in and of itself poetic; this is 'natural language' for Gadamer. And, as such the artwork is a paradigm of an account of understanding that happens in our interactions with one another in the quotidian, not the heroic gesture that saves us from it or

¹⁰⁵ *TM*, 569.

¹⁰⁶ Donatella Di Cesare, *Gadamer: A Philosophical Portrait*, trans. Niall Keane (London: Indiana University Press, 2013), 178.

¹⁰⁷ Gadamer 'The Relevance of the Beautiful' *RB*, 51.

¹⁰⁸ Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 181.

separates us from it. Gadamer rejects what he sees as 'mythological' or even 'monological' tendencies in Heidegger's later work, although he does characterise his philosophical project as made possible through Heidegger's philosophy. Marino characterises Gadamer's commitment to language in conversation as an opposing notion of home in Gadamer and Heidegger's thought. Thus he argues that, for Heidegger, language is the home of the truth of being, where for Gadamer, it appears as a house of human being.¹⁰⁹ In this sense, we can think of language as dialogical, rather than governed by the structures of the hermeneutic circle. Gadamer illustrates how his own thought, though 'set on a path' by Heidegger's later thinking, is unthinkable without his influence diverges from his teacher, particularly in his treatment of Plato.

Gadamer follows Plato in recovering dialogue as the structure of participative hermeneutic experience of the world and of others in the world. In taking the Platonic dialogue as the paradigm for a dialogical world-relation that allows for the 'increase of being'¹¹⁰ granted by our linguistic nature, Gadamer effects what Veith terms an 'ethical turn' in philosophical hermeneutics.¹¹¹ This remaining with the other in language can be clarified through Gadamer's approach to friendship in his analysis of Plato's *Lysis*, where the notion of the 'household' explains the attentive reciprocity between friends that Gadamer reads in the aporia of Socrates' exchange with his young Athenian interlocutors. We begin an account of Gadamer's approach to friendship here, which we will reprise in relation to the text of tradition in our following chapter. Through friendship, and a careful interpretation of Plato's short dialogue on the same, Gadamer expresses the relations of 'neither/nor' that are also found in his account of the productive tension between home and exile.

2.6 Friendship and the Household

¹⁰⁹ Marino, *Aesthetics, Metaphysics, Language*, 60.

¹¹⁰ *TM*, 141; "Architektur Als 'Zuwachs' an Sein."

¹¹¹ Veith, *Gadamer and the Transmission of History*, 9.

Gadamer's account of friendship draws on both Plato and Aristotle and takes a fundamental role in his thinking.¹¹² Gadamer claims that the concept of friendship should be 'expanded as much as the concept of communicative understanding.'¹¹³ The friend he writes: 'signifies an accession of being, self-feeling and the richness of life.'¹¹⁴ Gadamer's account of friendship echoes Aristotle's 'true friendship' outlined in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, highlighting the essential role of the friend in the development of self-knowledge.¹¹⁵ In *The Idea of the Good in Platonic and Aristotelian Philosophy*, the recollection of the friend serves as a key example for the explication of Gadamer's definition of *anamnesis* toward a 'revelation about something already known' rather than simply 'being reminded of something forgotten.'¹¹⁶ He will ultimately claim that 'The common condition of all 'friendship' is more than that: the true bond that—in various degrees—signifies a "life together."¹¹⁷ The account of friendship Gadamer provides is intimately related to the discussion here of home, since Gadamer describes friendship as a 'being at home.'¹¹⁸ If friendship restores us to home, then our life without the friend can be conceptualised as a form of exile.¹¹⁹ As we will see, it becomes crucial for our discussion of architecture, because of Gadamer's assertion that 'historically effective consciousness' should treat the 'traditional text' as a 'thou.' In Chapter Three, we will follow Warnke in her assertion that the best way to understand this claim is through Gadamer's account of friendship.¹²⁰

¹¹² Gadamer, 'Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics' Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer (London: Yale University Press, 2011), 132.

¹¹³ Gadamer, "Practical Philosophy as a Model of the Human Sciences," *RAS*, 84.

¹¹⁴ Gadamer, 'Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics' Gadamer, *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, 137.

¹¹⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII

¹¹⁶ Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. P Christopher Smith (London: Yale University Press, 1986), 58.

¹¹⁷ Gadamer, 'Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics' *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, 134.

¹¹⁸ Gadamer, cited in Warnke "Solidarity and Tradition in Gadamer's Hermeneutics," 8.

¹¹⁹ Indeed, Socrates proffers a possible definition of friendship as a relation of belonging to one another at the close of the dialogue. Lysis 222a Plato, "Lysis," in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, trans. Stanley Lombardo (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Co. Limited, 1997), 706.

¹²⁰ Georgia Warnke, "Experiencing Tradition versus Belonging to It: Gadamer's Dilemma," *The Review of Metaphysics* 68, no. 2 (May 1, 2014): 347–69.

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Gadamer derives his account of friendship from both Plato and Aristotle, with distinct attention to the *Lysis*, the *Republic* and Aristotle's three treatises on Ethics. We will examine his account of friendship through his interpretation of the *Lysis*, as it also contains some insights for Gadamer's understanding of dialogue as a *praxis* rather than a method. The account of friendship recounted in the *Lysis* ends in a recovery of the Greek term *oikieon* (household).¹²¹ His opposition between *oikieon* and *atopon* (placelessness) describes the 'productive tension' at the heart of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, to which we pointed in the previous chapter, in relation to the finite and the infinite, and will encounter in relation to the search for language that underpins the state of 'being lost for words' in our final chapter.¹²²

We have claimed that Gadamer's account of home consists in the productive tension between home/the familiar and exile/the strange. This is clear in the account of friendship he derives from the *Lysis*. Gadamer's attention to this dialogue further evinces his intent to refine a clearer understanding of Platonic dialogue itself. Where other interpreters dismiss the *Lysis* as a failure, since Plato does not resolve the opposition, Gadamer sees this unresolved opposition as the dialogue's key aspect.¹²³ This is because, understanding friendship as connected to self-knowledge, Gadamer sees in friendship the possibility of an 'increase in being' and being more alive that is the unending task of understanding.

In any case, it belongs to the deepest consciousness of a human being that he needs to know about himself, that he is no god. Reminding us of this was the point of the Delphic oracle's imperative. When Aristotle appeals to it here, he intends it merely in the practical sense

¹²¹ Gadamer, 'Logos and Ergon in Plato's *Lysis*' *DD*.

¹²² This connection between the notion of home, friendship and solidarity, may indeed be easily missed in a discussion of architecture given that Gadamer's account of architecture begins in 'Truth and Method' yet the theme of solidarity emerges in a shift 'toward praxis' that occurs after the publication of his *magnum opus* according to Bernstein. Richard J. Bernstein, "From Hermeneutics to Praxis," *The Review of Metaphysics* 35, no. 4 (1982): 823–45.

¹²³ See Guthrie's appraisal that: 'There are many opinions about this dialogue, and I must confess to my own, which is simply that it is not a success. Even Plato can nod.' He attributes this to a 'failure in method and presentation.' W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume 4, Plato: The Man and His Dialogues: Earlier Period* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 143.

that someone who follows this admonition will be open to intercourse with others and to the "good." ... From this cognizance of one's own limitations, however, immediately follows that the other, the friend, signifies an accession of being, self-feeling, and the richness of life.¹²⁴

In the *Lysis*, Socrates moves the dialogue toward a definition of friendship as a 'neither/nor,' that, 'he who feels friendship for someone sees in the other something which he himself is not...but...that which he is not, is more like something he has not yet achieved in himself.'¹²⁵ This begins by exposing the 'naïve' assumption of his dialogue partner, *Lysis*, that friendship could consist purely on the 'sameness of friends.'¹²⁶ Having disputed this on the grounds that 'good men have no need of one another (for even when alone they are sufficient for themselves)'¹²⁷ From here, Socrates explores the common assumption that 'opposites attract' as outlined by Hesiod. However, this exposes itself in the inconsistent notion that 'the greatest opposition which can be thought of is the one between friends and enemy' who of necessity become friends under the hasty assumption that friendship is nothing more than the attraction of opposites.¹²⁸

Crucially for our discussion, Gadamer upholds the *aporia* of the Socratic dialogue by rejecting the notion that 'the life together that friends have either begins or ends in identification.'¹²⁹ Because of the difference between oneself and a friend, a difference necessarily upheld in the 'tension-laden relationship of need and fulfilment' that Gadamer describes; friendship enables deeper self-knowledge by facilitating 'reciprocal co-perception.'¹³⁰ Such life together consists in the home, the *oikeion*. In *Education, Poetry History*, Gadamer stresses the collective nature of 'keeping house.'

¹²⁴ 'Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics' *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, 137.

¹²⁵ Gadamer, 'Logos and Ergon in Plato's *Lysis*' *DD*, 13.

¹²⁶ Gadamer, 'Logos and Ergon in Plato's *Lysis*' *DD*

¹²⁷ Plato, *Lysis* 215b

¹²⁸ Plato, *Lysis* 216b

¹²⁹ Warnke, "Solidarity and Tradition in Gadamer's Hermeneutics," 9.

¹³⁰ Gadamer, 'Logos and Ergon in Plato's *Lysis*' *DD*, 18. And, Gadamer, 'Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics' *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, 139.

The Greek word *oikos* meant the domestic house and in this connection we also speak of the 'household.' One learns to keep house with the means, energy and time that are available. The Greek word, however, means something more than this. For it includes not only the ability to manage by one's self, but also the ability to manage along with other people.¹³¹

Such 'managing along' requires an openness to the other in hermeneutic dialogue and the principle of trust he perceives as evinced in the regular course of life.¹³² In this concept of home and household, Gadamer indicates not, an 'urbanisation of the Heideggerian province' in a home that constitutes a cosy resolution, but a need that 'does not cease when it is met, and that in which the need finds fulfilment does not cease to be dear to me.'¹³³ Gadamer describes the 'double aspect' of the conceptual field' of the household in these terms. Although the Greek *hoi oikeioi* translates as *das Angehörige* 'everything which pertains to the household', yet this term, he reminds us, 'contains overtones of *das Zugehörige*' which connotes mutual belonging; 'that which answers to me and to which I answer.'¹³⁴ In this, Gadamer stresses listening, the *hören*, that is inherent in all co-belonging. The primacy of listening here, rather than observation or description, stresses the fact that these processes are 'always under way' in both Heidegger and Gadamer.¹³⁵ For our emerging account of architecture, attentiveness to one's surroundings constitutes a careful listening to the subtle operations of the built world.

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics uncovers a tension similar to that found between home and exile in the discussion of both tradition and *Bildung*. While one may be 'at home' in their traditions, these are 'are not merely limitations on what either tradition can understand of itself or the other'¹³⁶

¹³¹ Gadamer, 'Bodily Experience and the Limits of Objectification' *EH*, 79.

¹³² 'Social life depends on our acceptance of everyday speech as trustworthy. We cannot order a taxi without this trust. Thus understanding is the average case, not misunderstanding. And Derrida, for example, when he takes a different view, really is speaking about literature. In literature there is a struggle to bring something to expression beyond what is already accepted.' Gadamer, 'Are the Poets Falling Silent?' *EPH*, 72.

¹³³ Gadamer, 'Logos and Ergon in Plato's Lysis' *DD*, 19.

¹³⁴ Gadamer, 'Logos and Ergon in Plato's Lysis' *DD*, 19.

¹³⁵ P. Christopher Smith, Translators footnote n7, *DD*, 19.

¹³⁶ Warnke, "Solidarity and Tradition in Gadamer's Hermeneutics," 16.

but, as horizons, they offer unique orientations that can reveal latent presuppositions when engaged in contrast to other horizons or ways of being, as we will see in Chapter Three.

Because this other, this counterpart, is not one's own mirror image but rather the *friend*, all powers come into play of increasing trust and devotion to the 'better self' that the other is for oneself, and that is something more than a good resolution and inward stirrings of conscience.¹³⁷

The collective 'being together' indicated in the account of friendship above, the need of the other for the self-knowledge that presupposes both a listening to and an upholding of a tension between the familiar and the strange, is present in Gadamer's account of the 'home in language' in which 'historically effective consciousness' always and already finds themselves.¹³⁸ Gadamer claims that this is a more fundamental concept for his philosophical hermeneutics than it is in Heidegger's thinking.

Mit-sein, for Heidegger, was a concession that he had to make, but one that he never really got behind. Indeed, even as he was developing the idea, he wasn't really talking about the other at all. *Mit-sein* is, as it were, an assertion about *Dasein*, which must naturally take *Mit-sein* for granted. I must say that conscience—having a conscience—not, that wasn't terribly convincing. 'Care' is always concernfulness [*ein Besorgtsein*] about one's own being, and *Mit-sein* is, in truth, a very weak idea of the other, more a letting the other be than an authentic "being-interested-in-him."¹³⁹

In our next chapter, we will explore the relation between the traditional text and 'historically effective consciousness' in the symmetrical 'I-Thou' structure that Gadamer endorses. Here we will find the understanding of friendship further implied as the best way to understand the exemplary text of tradition, what is familiar to us, but meets a desire for the good that may rise to the challenge of understanding differently.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Gadamer, 'Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics' *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, 139.

¹³⁸ Gadamer, "Heimat Und Sprache."

¹³⁹ Gadamer, *ACP*, 23.

¹⁴⁰ As Harries describes in his experience of visiting a rococo church 'with that difference that I knew even then that the world opened up by this church was one from which I was

2.7 Conclusion

And one can never communicate to someone what home [*Heimat*] is for you. A possession? Something lost? Seeing something once again? Memory and return to what one recollected? All of these are unanticipatabilities that come together in human life.¹⁴¹

Gadamer's notion of the home is a place of tension. Not the tension of an attendant anxiety, but the productive tension brought about through our nature as linguistic beings. This characteristic of our existential ontological constitution means that we are always caught not only in a horizon of tradition and culture, but also that our experience of these is linguistically mediated. Language itself is a horizon that consistently unfolds in the same manner as the horizon of infinity we described with Gadamer in the previous chapter. As such, there can be no first and last word, and each response gives way to a further question.

Gadamer's account of friendship indicated the importance of the life with others in language for the project of self-knowledge. Such self-knowledge, however, is not the same as the knowledge of the self, promised by an isolated Cartesian ego, but rather, the development of knowledge won and re-won through dialogue with another.

Gadamer's account of home serves to weaken the normativity attached to the notion of essential architecture sustained by postulated 'first homes' and the 'normative force' that remains in Heidegger's account of home. Any normativity in Gadamer's account is directed not toward the 'home' nor the mode of dwelling but the dwellers themselves and emerges from his description of dialogue and language. In his 'linguistification' of Heidegger, Gadamer's attention is turned toward the onto-ethical relations between those united in dialogue that allow the power awaiting in language to emerge. As

excluded, that much as I loved it, this was not my world. But it seemed to beckon me to a better world.' Karsten Harries, "Ut Architectura Philosophia? Questioning the Relationship of Architecture and Philosophy," *Architecture Philosophy* 3, no. 2 (November 15, 2018): 207, <https://ojs.library.okstate.edu/osu/index.php/jispa/article/view/7790>.

¹⁴¹ Gadamer, 'Hermeneutics and the Ontological Difference' *GR*, 364.

we will find across the remaining chapters in this section, the implications of understanding architectural experience as unfolding within a horizon turns our gaze toward the relations and tensions between the familiar and the strange : acknowledging the description of such entails a shift in the modes of engagements between 'historically effective consciousness' and world.

Gadamer's 'measure of the ancient teaching on friendship' is instructive for how we understand the concept of home. Connecting friendship to both *logos* (language) and *ergon* (product) indicates the richness of his analysis of the Platonic dialogue in indicating friendship as what is produced from desire that creates a need that does not cease in being met.¹⁴²

What might this mean for our understanding of home? Like the 'gathering together' of those things most appropriate to us, Gadamer's account of home stresses the reciprocal relations between the notion of exile and homecoming. His account resists therefore the presentation of the *unheimlichkeit* (homelessness) of being as a distinctly modern problem since, the movement between *Heimat*, home and *Fremde*, exile are constituent elements of the linguisticity that marks out the existence of 'historically effective consciousness.' In citing the notion of friendship, the close relation that confirms the self in its situation as other, we might understand the subtle ways in which the built world calls us into dialogue. Friendships are characterised by familiarity, forged in time spent together. This opens a space for the suggestion that architecture, the spaces of familiarity which surround us, might contain the possibility of an 'increase in being.' However, like friendship, such relations require cultivation. Gadamer's own anecdotes regarding architecture, show an attention to the built world, despite its familiarity. For example, his attempts to retain the Weinbrenner building at Heidelberg University for the sake of the breath-taking beauty of its staircase. The location of beauty in the work of architecture stands in the same structure of tension between the beautiful and the functional. As we will read in the

¹⁴² Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity, Subject and Person," trans. David Vesey and Peter Adamson, *Continental Philosophy Review* 33, no. 3 (2000): 282.

opening of the second half of this thesis, such tension manifests itself as the ontological functioning of the decorative which Gadamer describes as the 'double function' of architecture.

It is unsurprising then that Gadamer, despite his description of understanding as situated, is of little prominence when it comes to thinking about place.¹⁴³ In robbing 'place' of its determining quality, Gadamer moves from an account of 'essential homecoming' against which inevitably flawed attempts at its attainment become filled with uncanny anxiety, to rather an acknowledgement that this indeterminacy is a part of the process that is dwelling in language. Since language unfolds as horizon, organic and changing, we cannot, for Gadamer, posit a defined 'authentic' practice of home defined by regionality or rusticity as Heidegger does. 'Hermeneutics, too, is constantly at the threshold, crossing through strangeness, in strangeness, with a view to the home.'¹⁴⁴

Like Calvino's fictional Marco Polo, Gadamer's 'home' is inscribed in all descriptions of other places, even as it eludes proper articulation.¹⁴⁵ In associating home with defined place (Todtnauberg) or type of place (the rural province) Heidegger's thought leaves itself open to critiques of bucolic regionalism, an agenda of place that arguably overlaps with strands of National Socialism. Gadamer, on the other hand, uncouples the home from any tangible setting, and thus renders home *die Sache*, that emerges in a less distinct sense of propriety, forged in conversation, underwritten by an attentiveness and responsiveness to the other.

In the end, then, for Gadamer to be 'fully at home' with the sense of completion expressed by Solnit in the opening of our chapter, is unattainable

¹⁴³ There is just one reference to Gadamer in Casey's prominent study. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (London: University of California Press, 1997). n.11 p417

¹⁴⁴ Risser, *The Life of Understanding*, 31.

¹⁴⁵ "Venice ' the Kahn said.

Marco smiled 'what do you believe I have been talking to you about?' 'Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice.' 'Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once, if I speak of it.' Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver (1974; repr., London: Random House, 2010), 78.

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with the permanence she expresses. Home and the homely in her sense infer certitude, that I know where I am, and thus foreclosing on any redefinition. Gadamer's *Heimat* defies such definition. Likewise, in expressing the 'living language' as the site of 'home,' Gadamer equally rejects the notion of ownership so often implicit in notions of home, either ownership of the language over 'historically effective consciousness' or of those rooted in a given place over its definitive understanding. In the final analysis, the achievement of 'home', made and completed, as we will find in our discussion of becoming 'cultured', possesses a misguided, positivistic finality. If we follow Gadamer's assertion that experience (*Erfahrung*) as travelling (*fahren*) is attained through 'linguisticity', then we must accept that an essential 'home' can only be a form of distorting Chimera. Thus, the question for our living in the world is to depart in openness and to accept the indeterminacy of the return.

3 The Work of Architecture and Tradition as a ‘Thou’

3.1 Introduction

‘The most powerful people have always inspired the architects; the architect has always been influenced by power. In a building, pride, victory over gravity, the will to power should make themselves visible; architecture is a kind of power-eloquence in forms, at times persuading, even flattering, at times simply commanding.’¹
-Nietzsche

At first glance, the connection between architecture, tradition and power appears self-evident. Architecture is a resource-demanding art form, always publicly executed and often, publicly funded. Architectural icons, created by the overarching power of the church, punctuate the architectural history of European cityscapes prior visionary architects’ encompassing planning projects or the pervading private interests in the post-modern city.² For example, Notre Dame, St Paul’s Cathedral and Westminster Abbey or the Basilica of St Peter remain iconic features of their respective cityscapes.³ The processes that support the creation of new iconic buildings appear to maintain intimate ties to power and authority. New buildings are the process of competitions between firms, where price, personal connections and politics often appear to take precedence over the quality of designs.⁴ Under such a reading, the movement from one architectural style to another is little more than the material record of shifts in power or governance structures. Built structures can indeed celebrate achievements power. Consider the triumphal

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Duncan Large (1888; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 49.

² For example, the pervasive city planning in Hausmann’s Paris. For an account of Hausmann’s effect in the evolving city-plan of Paris see: M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 38–40, 240–42.

³ Göran Therborn, *Cities of Power: The Urban, The National, The Popular, The Global* (London: Verso Books, 2017), 35. Lex Bosman, *The Power of Tradition: Spolia in the Architecture of St. Peter’s in the Vatican* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2004).

⁴ Leatherbarrow, Rykwert and Coyne note this as a difference separating architecture from other art forms. Rykwert, *The Judicious Eye*; David Leatherbarrow, *Architecture Oriented Otherwise*, ed. Thompson (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008); Richard Coyne, “Hermeneutics Architecture and Design,” in *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Jeff Malpas and Hans-Helmuth Gander (London: Routledge, 2015), 561–72.

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arch, for instance.⁵ Its enduring materials, adornments and subjugating structure that forces the viewer to pass beneath it, suggests domination. However, it would seem dissatisfying to suggest that works of architecture only express a narrative of the dominant forces in the polis. Such a reading presupposes works of art as little more than the expressions the intent of their commissioners.⁶ Gadamer’s account of *überlieferung* (tradition) creates the ground for a different way of thinking about interactions between ‘historically effective consciousness’ and architecture as a text of tradition and as a question of participation.⁷ Such participation presupposes openness to tradition on the part of the hermeneutic subject which Gadamer describes through relations to history. For Habermas, who leads the charge in critiquing what he takes to be a romanticized notion of tradition and its authority in Gadamer’s hermeneutics, any encounter with tradition conceals power relations which need to be pre-empted by a rigorous method that he does not find in Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics.

Tradition creates the horizon of anticipations about the world which conditions our being and doing. Diligent interactions with tradition require an openness to what is being ‘handed forward’ by tradition, and awareness of effective history fosters a greater attentiveness to the structures of that effective history allowing for the differentiation of fore-judgements as authoritative or counterproductive.⁸ In this chapter, we consider the work of architecture as a traditional text that acts as a ‘speechless’ interlocutor for the ‘historically effective consciousness.’ Works of architecture mark the

⁵ For instance, the *Arc de Triomphe*, Paris, France (Architects: Jean Chalgrin / Louis-Étienne Héricart de Thury 1836)

⁶ Indeed Gadamer reminds us: ‘it is necessary to recall that creation out of a free inspiration—without a commission, a given theme, and a given occasion—was formerly the exception rather than the rule in artistic work, whereas today we feel that an architect is someone *sui generis* because, unlike the poet, painter, or composer, he is not independent of commission and occasion.’ *TM*, 80.

⁷ Hereafter, ‘tradition’ will be the term used in this chapter in the interests of keeping the content here accessible to readers from the philosophy of architecture who are less familiar with Gadamer’s German lexicon.

‘Prejudice’ *Vorurteil*, will be retained in the English, Prejudice to retain a sense of the pejorative connotations of the term which Gadamer reorients his account against.

⁸ The German term for tradition *Überlieferung* conveys this handing forward more accurately, as Risser and Davey have noted. Risser, *The Life of Understanding*.

corporeal manifestation of tradition in so far as they 'mediate past to the present.'⁹

For Gadamer, 'human understanding that takes place is always an understanding through *language* within a *tradition*.'¹⁰ Thus, to restore tradition to its 'proper' role within understanding, he must correct damaging presuppositions that have been inherited from the enlightenment and historicism.¹¹ Uncoupling tradition from its association with dogma yields an account of tradition as a matter of participation by 'historically effective consciousness' which can enhance our thinking about architecture, within limits. To achieve this, Gadamer rehabilitates the tripartite terms of prejudice, authority and tradition, showing how these three elements of reason make understanding possible through a historical analysis that disrupts both the Enlightenment narrative that opposes reason and authority and claims that tradition is a monolithic force of 'nature' that emerge in historicism.

In order for tradition to operate as an interlocutor and not a monolithic imposition, Gadamer undertakes a 'rehabilitation' of both prejudice and authority, which become the means for describing how legitimate traditions endure.¹² This chapter raises questions about whether philosophical hermeneutics can resolve the tension between belonging to and experiencing tradition through an excess of authority afforded to the text.

Gadamer's treatment of tradition is the fulcrum around which the debate between Habermas and Gadamer unfolded following the publication of *Truth and Method*. Habermas questions whether Gadamer places too much faith in the power of reflection and does not consider the inequalities, dominance and subversion that may happen 'behind the back' of language.¹³

⁹ *TM*, 79.

¹⁰ Theodore Kisiel, "The Happening of Tradition: The Hermeneutics of Gadamer and Heidegger," *Man and World* 2, no. 3 (August 1, 1969): 359, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01252571>.

¹¹ *TM*, 280, 288.

¹² *TM*, 289.

¹³ Jürgen Habermas, "A Review of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*," in *The Hermeneutic Tradition from Ast to Ricoeur*, ed. Gayle M Ormiston and Alan D Schrift, trans. Fred R.

'Historically effective consciousness' at once belongs to and experiences tradition. It is 'tradition' that both permits us to recognise the new, and, in providing the horizon from which these judgements are made, allows us to reject those anticipations or fore-judgements when a text 'pulls us up short.'¹⁴ Gadamer's account of experience constitutes a process of negation, where the normal flow of experience creates understanding. Gadamer claims that this entails a treatment of the 'text' of tradition as a 'Thou.' Here we see the relevance of Gadamer's account of friendship once more. Like the friends whose mutual need results in deeper self-knowledge, neither the object under interpretation, nor the interpreter can remain unchanged when they meet in dialogue.

The following chapter first addresses Gadamer's account of history, which works against any robustly linear teleology of events, with recourse to the operations of the horizon. In other words, if we are always exceeded by our horizon as exceeding and preceding us infinitely constructing a robustly teleological account of history is not possible. In undercutting historical intentionalism, Gadamer instead presents an account of history wherein interpretations, interpreters and the objects of interpretation are inextricably historical. As a result, the meaning of historical events can never be fully determined. The necessary incompleteness of self, history and text generates the demand that 'historically effective consciousness' interact with the texts of history as a dialogue partner. Gadamer clarifies this relation in terms of three forms of I/Thou relation, wherein openness to the 'Other as Other' is the epistemically and ethically proper means of engaging the text of tradition. We will first explore the implication of Gadamer's account of tradition as a horizon.

3.2 The Transmission of Tradition

Dallmayr and Thomas McCarthy, *SUNY Series, Intersections Philosophy and Critical Theory* (1970; repr., Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 240.

¹⁴ *TM*, 280.

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.... we are always standing in tradition in the interpretation of (historical) tradition where a multitude of voices echo, waiting to be heard. In giving voice to these voices, the life of language, in which tradition comes to express itself, "mediates" past and present.¹⁵

Tradition is a part of the horizon into which each human being is 'thrown.' Like language it is a horizon that precedes us. As such, our experience of tradition as a tension between belonging to history, carrying forward its norms and traditions, and experiencing tradition, wherein 'prejudices' or, fore-judgements expose their own inconsistency. As a result, we emerge not into a world that we gradually come to know independently, but one in which processes of culture, tradition and language are always already at work. Gadamer's claim that the hermeneutic subject is 'a flickering in the closed-circuits of historical life' shows our reading and engagement with history emerges from a rich penumbra of inherited meanings and interpretations of which we are a part.¹⁶ Our involvement in this horizon of meaning, infolding as a dialogue, serves to stress Gadamer's emphasis on the applicative character of hermeneutic understanding.

This means that, instead of being timeless and unchangeable entities, objects are, first and foremost, revealed to the subject as objects only through history and tradition. As a consequence, it is not just the understanding that is historically mediated because of the subject's situatedness in history. The objects themselves are mediated by history and tradition.¹⁷

As a horizon that is constantly unfolding, Gadamer presents an account of history that has a Hegelian inflexion because events appear to unfold as a unified narrative. However, history cannot be read as incremental progress, but, like the 'bad infinity' he celebrates, this unfolding narrative is not directed toward an ultimate goal.¹⁸ Since history lacks an ultimate *telos*, successive readings of tradition are not a question of reduced relevance brought on by temporal distance. For architectural history, this works against

¹⁵ Risser, *The Life of Understanding*, 18.

¹⁶ *TM*, 289.

¹⁷ Pol Vandeveldel 'Translator's Preface' *HHP*, xiii.

¹⁸ We discussed Gadamer's embrace of the 'bad infinity' in our first chapter.

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readings that understand each new revolution of style and practice as superior to those that have gone before.

Whether or not something is successful not only determines the meaning of a single event and accounts for the fact that it produces a lasting effect or passes unnoticed; success or failure causes a whole series of actions and events to be meaningful or meaningless. The ontological structure of history itself, then, is teleological, although without a telos.¹⁹

Tradition interprets itself as continuous, a part of the same varied horizon. This continuity of tradition has positive effects on the understanding of radical change and for abiding practices. 'Without a degree of continuity within tradition, any radical emergence would lack critical bearing upon the received'²⁰ Gadamer's anti-essentialist and anti-teleological stance means that the knowledge received because of our being in the world and confirmed by experience form our only resources for self-formation. In this sense agreement means not acquiescence but those fleeting moments of concordance when the world gains meaning through the confirmation of prejudices. It is the prejudice confirmed in experience that obtains authority. Second, because our fore-judgements (prejudices) are a product of the meaning community into which we are thrown, their confirmation is essential in our sense of belonging.

This means there can be no thoroughgoing interpretation of the individual historical event or of history as a whole. As a result, the historian lacks the authority to make objective claims regarding the meaning of events or the intentions of historical agents.²¹ Gadamer's response to Collingwood makes this plain. He critiques Collingwood's assertion that understanding the actions of a historical actor is a case of transposing oneself into their historical situation to understand the question to which their given action was a

¹⁹ *TM*, 208.

²⁰ Nicholas Davey, *Unfinished Worlds: Hermeneutics, Aesthetics and Gadamer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 60.

²¹ 'In relying on its critical method, historical objectivism conceals the fact that historical consciousness itself is situated in the web of historical effects.' *TM*, 311.

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response.²² For Gadamer, history makes up a continuity of enduring questions that reassert themselves despite the vicissitudes of experience, wherein fore-judgements. The reciprocity between the old and the new means that even epochal shifts contain echoes of the 'old.'

Even where life changes violently, as in ages of revolution, far more of the old is preserved in the supposed transformation of everything than anyone knows, and it combines with the new to create new value.²³

Instead, Gadamer claims, the enduring, or eminent text of tradition is one that 'we understand in a differently, if we understand at all.'²⁴ Each interpretation of tradition constitutes the creation of a new context of meaning between the concerns of the present and the claims of the past. Gadamer calls his hermeneutic subject a *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*, (consciousness aware of its historicity.)²⁵ In this sense, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics exhibits its descriptive and normative power or force. It describes the necessary structures of the 'event of understanding' and in fostering an awareness of these, promotes a deeper engagement with those same structures. Davey describes this as 'aesthetic attentiveness as a form of practice.'²⁶ It is the event of understanding as 'historically effected' that ensures we do not remain imprisoned within our historical horizon.

Bernstein describes Gadamer's process of engagement with tradition as possessing a 'three-fold temporal structure.'²⁷ Prejudices make up a fundamental element of the world into which 'historically effective

²² Collingwood applies such an analysis to Nelson's actions in the battle of Trafalgar. Robin George Collingwood, *The Principles of History: And Other Writings in Philosophy of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 228.

²³ *TM*, 293.

²⁴ *TM*, 307.

²⁵ Although the common translation of such is 'historically effected consciousness' we have used 'historically effective consciousness' in order to stress the participatory role of the hermeneutic subject in the production of interpretation and meaning. As stated in our introduction.

²⁶ Davey, *Unfinished Worlds*, 3, 91.

²⁷ Brice R. Wachterhauser, *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy* (New York: SUNY Press, 1986), 90.

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consciousness' is 'thrown.'²⁸ Since said prejudices have their foundations within a tradition we can account for our belonging to tradition and they are constitutive of what we are in any given present moment.²⁹ Awareness of the unique nature of this 'handing forward' or *Überlieferung* constitutes hermeneutic awareness, and it requires interaction between 'historically effective consciousness' and the received text of tradition. Tradition then is essential in bringing about '[T]he continuity of meaning characteristic both of an artwork and of a hermeneutic subject' and highlights the dependence on 'community of spectators' to bring such moments into relation with others, past and present.'³⁰ This transmission is inflected with the expropriation of the 'fusion of horizons' wherein the horizon of tradition may pose exemplary questions for us, but the such questions, and the texts themselves remain emancipated from 'historically effective consciousness' as a dialogue partner.

The horizon of tradition renders the understanding of the new possible. Any 'new' cultural form or practice can appear as such because it is evaluated in terms of what has come before, what has become familiar, become 'old.'³¹ As such, the interpretation of historical moments, and texts, is always inflected by the 'vantage point from which they are perceived.'³²

The individual work of architecture expresses this historicity in its unique physicality and 'mediates' the past to the present.³³ Architecture stands exposed to the unrelenting passing of time in a way unlike the other arts, which take place mostly within the protective enclosure of architectural space. In their submission to the ravages of time, the body of buildings undergo a kind of graceful ageing. Stone is worn away by rain and harsh weather conditions, users inscribe themselves sometimes even physically into the given space. In the surrounding areas new buildings spring up in the face

²⁸ *TM*, 262.

²⁹ Bernstein, "From Hermeneutics to Praxis," 827.

³⁰ Davey, *Unfinished Worlds*, 72.

³¹ Michael Pickering, "History as Horizon: Gadamer, Tradition and Critique," *Rethinking History* 3, no. 2 (1999): 182, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529908596342>.

³² Warnke, *Gadamer*, 19.

³³ *TM*, 79.

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of which the existing structure seems stylistically out of step, they engage in practices for which the old building is ill equipped.³⁴ Although such a reading might be excessively anthropomorphic, it illustrates the applicability of Gadamer's concept of autonomous time to the aesthetic encounter of architecture. We can extend his observation of our intuitive recognition of aging to our relationship with the built environment.³⁵ Although we may not 'know' the date in terms of regulated time of a certain building, we can recognize it as aged and worn distinguishing between architecture in its youth and in decline.

New architectural practices, the background of tradition to assert their difference. 'Without a degree of continuity within tradition, any radical emergence would lack critical bearing upon the received.'³⁶ For example, without a history of conventions regarding the shape and format of 'homes' in the West, Peter Eisenmann's challenging project, House VI³⁷ would have no such conventions to resist, making the space formally unreadable.³⁸ The continuity represented by architecture is co-opted by other art forms. The work of Alex Chinneck for example, plays with the expectations of the built world as a continuous horizon by subverting expectations (see figures 6 and 7.) However, the surprise induced by his 'Under The Weather but not Over the Moon' of 'From the Knees of my Nose to the Belly of my Toes' is only possible against a horizon of expectations created by the existing built world and perhaps serves as a sign of the reciprocity between continuity and discontinuity that Gadamer describes in the development of tradition.³⁹

³⁴ Sallis refers to this distinct element of the passing of time in stone spaces as 'elemental time.' *Stone* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 26.

³⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, trans. Nicholas Walker (1977; repr., Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 42.

³⁶ Davey, *Unfinished Worlds*, 60.

³⁷ House VI, Cornwall USA (Architect: Pete Eisenman, 1975)

³⁸ Gadamer highlights this reciprocity in *The Relevance of the Beautiful* '...although modern art is opposed to traditional art, it is also true that it is nourished by it.' "The Relevance of the Beautiful," 9.

³⁹ Alex Chinneck 'Under the Weather but not Over the Moon' London, UK (2013)

temporary installation for Merge Festival

Alex Chinneck 'From the Knees of my Nose to the Belly of my Toes' Margate, UK (2013)

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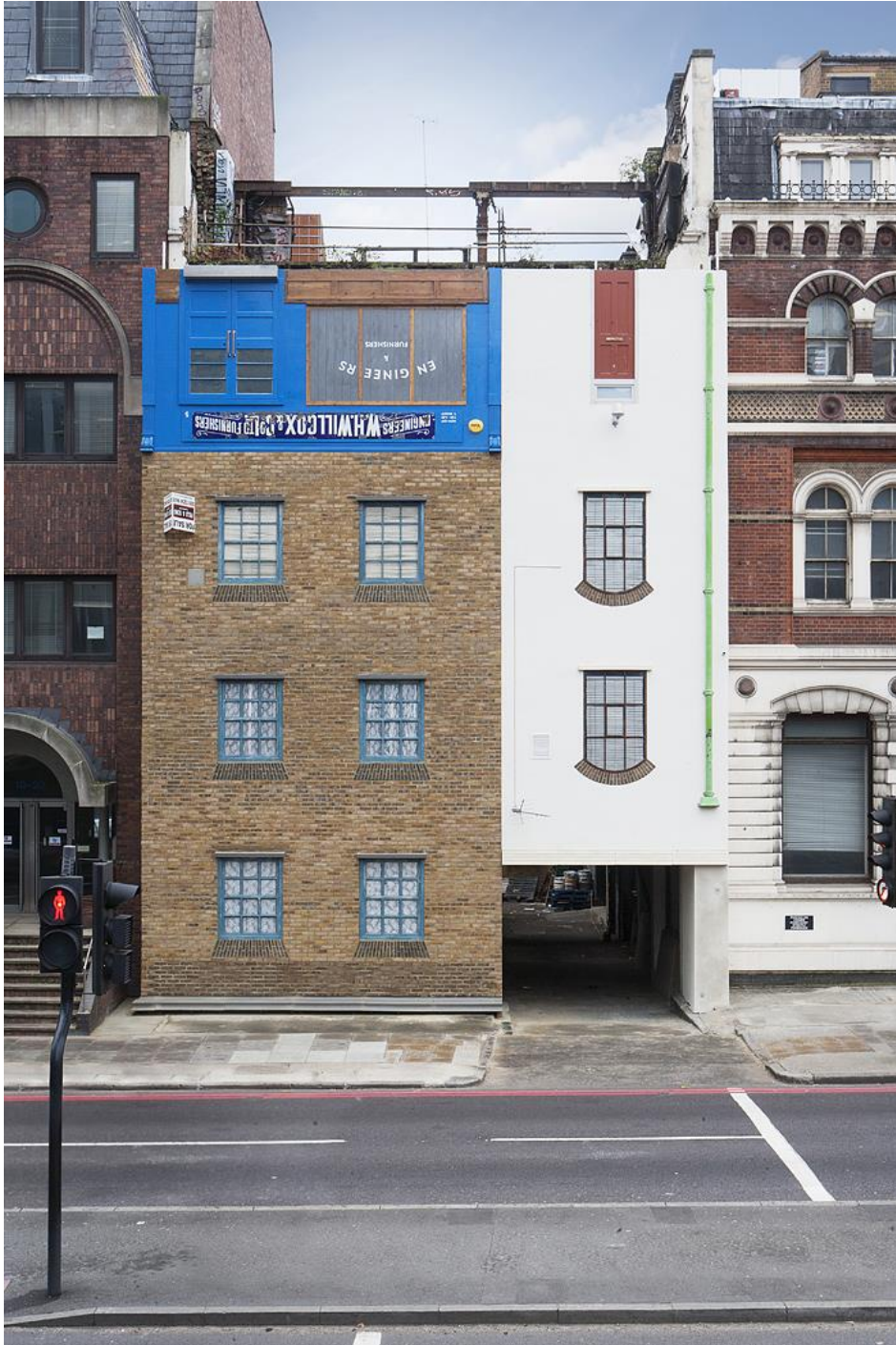


Figure 6 Alex Chinneck 'Under The Weather but Not Over the Moon' London UK 2013, for Merge Festival. (image credit: By Alex Chinneck - Alex Chinneck, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39241950>)



*Figure 7 'From the Knees of my Nose to the Belly of my Toes' Alex Chinneck, London UK 2013
(image credit: By Alex Chinneck - Alex Chinneck, CC BY-SA 4.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39241951>)*

As sustained by tradition, the world has meaning for us through the inherited norms and values of our traditional horizon. However, in experience, tradition also finds itself challenged and open to change. There is a tension between the belonging to history that gives us the world, and the experience of

tradition that effects its change and development.⁴⁰ This has two effects on the text of tradition. First, the text appears differently to interpreters in different epochs due to the attitudes, norms and customs prevalent in that historical moment. Just as we are born into a world and a language, that world is replete with customs, practices and norms that result from collective life. Second, it entails that each interpretation may inaugurate a new phase in the interpretive life of the text.

To understand how this dynamic operation of history is possible, Gadamer recognises a need to 'rehabilitate' tradition and the associated concepts of prejudice and authority against the assumptions that attend them in enlightenment subjectivism and the reification of tradition brought about by historicism. Therefore, there is no position 'outside' the horizon of tradition, according to Gadamer. This being the case, the meaning of tradition is indeterminate, since each interpretation as a product of tradition reflects its own historicity. Rather every interpretation of tradition is 'a dialogue that encompasses both our own self-understanding and our understanding of the matter at issue.'⁴¹ Interpreting tradition is the process by which prejudices become both operative and apparent. We will next consider this account of the rehabilitation of 'prejudice' and the critique of enlightenment rationalism that this entails.

3.3 Prejudice and Authority Rehabilitated

Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, make up the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases embedded in our openness to the world.⁴²

Just as Gadamer's account of history rejected objectivism, so too must his account of prejudice and authority work against the unshakeable certainty

⁴⁰ Warnke, "Experiencing Tradition versus Belonging to It."

⁴¹ Malpas, "Hans-Georg Gadamer."

⁴² Gadamer, 'The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem' *GR*, 82.

aimed at by enlightenment philosophy. Gadamer historically interrogates the 'colloquially meaningful' status of prejudice in *Truth and Method*.⁴³ His exposition critiques the rationalist drive to render subjectivity free from the hold of dogmatism as symptomatic of the enlightenment emphasis on objective, founding statements.⁴⁴ According to Gadamer, the enlightenment prioritisation of rational objectivity, which discredited prejudice, amounted to 'a mutually exclusive antithesis between authority and reason.'⁴⁵ Kant defined 'enlightenment' as a 'freedom from immaturity.' He defined this immaturity as 'the inability to make use of one's own understanding without the guidance of another.' The emancipatory claims create the motto '*sapere aude!*' an injunction that the modern subject must have the courage to think for themselves, free from the controls of religious dogma.⁴⁶ Kant, claims that prejudices are only 'the leading strings of the thoughtless masses'⁴⁷ an imposition from which the free subject must liberate themselves through the judicious use of rationality. Kant's account of the Enlightenment establishes a close tie between reason and freedom wherein the safeguarding and effective use of such freedom are the actions of a mature and reasonable subject.

Gadamer claims on the contrary, that it is the differentiation of, rather than the liberation from prejudices that marks the maturation of 'historically effective consciousness.' He devotes a whole chapter in *Truth and Method* to the 'rehabilitation' of prejudice and authority. Such rehabilitation, achieved through careful historical analysis, forms the first phase in the reinstatement of tradition and authority as constitutive of understanding. His sub-titular claim shows his re-thinking of prejudices against the modern position sketched above; 'Prejudices as Conditions of Understanding.'⁴⁸ For Gadamer,

⁴³ István M. Fehér, "Prejudice and Pre-Understanding," in *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Chris Lawn and Niall Keane (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 282.

⁴⁴ Fehér, 283.

⁴⁵ *TM*, 289.

⁴⁶ Immanuel Kant, "Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?," in *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, ed. and trans. James Schmidt (1784; repr., London: University of California Press, 1996), 58.

⁴⁷ Kant, 59.

⁴⁸ *TM*, 289.

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prejudices are 'the very conditions that make understanding possible at all.'⁴⁹ Against the Enlightenment attempt to render the 'subject' an unfettered *tabula rasa*, Gadamer claims 'no one is a blank sheet of paper.'⁵⁰ 'Historically effective consciousness' is so termed because it is always and already enmeshed in the language, practices and traditions that make up its world. Historicity is the ground from which an individual can act in and on the world.

Gadamer's account of the operation of prejudices echoes Heidegger's ontological account of the hermeneutic circle in *Being and Time*. Here, Heidegger outlines fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception as the fore-structures that makes understanding possible, and indicate the ways in which Dasein, as a product of its 'thrownness.'⁵¹ Thus, Heidegger claims, 'interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us.'⁵² With Heidegger, Gadamer appeals to the hermeneutic circle, in making fore-judgement (*Vorurteil*) the prerequisite of all understanding. This shift repositions the hermeneutic circle from its conventional use as a tool for testing the salience of given interpretations through comparison of parts and whole, to a description of what occurs in interpreting. Gadamer claims that Heidegger's description 'will be obvious for every interpreter who knows what he is about.'⁵³

In thinking with Heidegger, Gadamer makes clear all that is discarded in the Enlightenment recourse to rationality. In the case of architecture, these constitute norms of behaviour and customs attached to certain spaces.⁵⁴ This matrix of norms and practices are granted to 'historically effective consciousness' is a matter of their membership within a tradition.

⁴⁹ A detailed account of the Heideggerian origins of Gadamer's concept of 'prejudice can be found in: Fehér, "Prejudice and Pre-Understanding," 280.

⁵⁰ Gadamer, *GC*, 43.

⁵¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 241.

⁵² Heidegger, 141.

⁵³ *TM*, 279.

⁵⁴ *TM*, 79.

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The close association between prejudice and dogma fostered in enlightenment thinking constitutes a conflation of fore-judgement and false judgement. Gadamer draws on jurisprudence to bolster his position in this regard.⁵⁵ In this applicative case, the negative consequence of the fore-judgement issued rests 'precisely on its positive validity.'⁵⁶ Gadamer accuses the Enlightenment of introducing inconsistency into the definition of 'prejudice' through doctrinal adherence to Cartesian doubt, which appraises knowledge on the grounds of methodological rather than concrete validity.⁵⁷ Since fore-judgments are essential to secure understanding, Gadamer claims that 'the prejudice against prejudice can indeed be shown to be itself a prejudice.'⁵⁸ Gadamer therefore claims that the differentiation of prejudices is the 'real task for hermeneutics.' Thus, the hermeneutic interpreter must 'exclude everything that could hinder us from understanding it in terms of the subject matter. It is the tyranny of hidden prejudices that makes us deaf to what speaks to us in tradition.'⁵⁹ It is for this reason that Gadamer describes the relations between interpreter and tradition through the dynamic of the 'I and Thou.' The interpreter must 'disempower, where possible prejudices that do not prove to be 'positive' in the knowledge that 'it is also possible for prejudgements to play a positive role in understanding.'⁶⁰

Positivism's 'prejudice against prejudice' conceals the value of tradition for the event of understanding preventing the self-understanding made possible by the recognition of prejudice. Since prejudices belong not only to tradition but also to our present context, they are a vital resource for self-understanding. Shedding light on this situation, is a fundamentally unfinished task.⁶¹ However, we should read the juxtaposition between the Enlightenment

⁵⁵ 'In German legal terminology a "prejudice" is a provisional legal verdict before the final verdict is reached.' *TM*, 283.

⁵⁶ *TM*, 283.

⁵⁷ *TM*, 283–84.

⁵⁸ Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 208.

⁵⁹ *TM*, 282.

⁶⁰ Gadamer, *GC*, 43.

⁶¹ In this sense, we can, of course, draw a similarity with the unfinished tasks of returning home. Due to the ordering structure of the hermeneutic circle, the return home cannot come to complete fruition as knowledge is consistently and constantly put 'at risk' by the hermeneutic subject.

subject and the hermeneutic subject as a critical advocacy of preservation. The rehabilitation of prejudice as epistemically valuable does not engender acceptance of everything handed forward by tradition. Rather, Gadamer's account creates a heightened awareness of what we risk when entering into a genuine dialogue with tradition as an 'other.' Whether work of art or another 'historically effective consciousness,' the awareness of prejudice fosters awareness for the hermeneutic subject of the scope for change in each event of understanding. In the built world, in entering a historic space, if aware of the incommensurability of historical horizons, the experiencing subject cannot transpose themselves comfortably from one horizon to the other, no matter their depth of knowledge of the alien horizon, or its rights and customs. Instead, in entering into dialogue with a given work of art, they must risk the foreknowledge made available to them because of their historicity, that is their unique context, and accept that, following this dialogical exchange many of their fore-judgements may be found wanting.

Gadamer claims that 'the rehabilitation of prejudice presents us with a tradition which allows us to combat our rootlessness.'⁶² This is because, as much as we may think of prejudices as subjective, a product of *my* individual vantage points within matrixial horizons of meaning; Gadamer's discussion of prejudice implies other communities of interpreters. In rooting the production of meaning in our historical situation, other communities of interpreters are inferred as the source of the prejudices we receive. The 'subjective' elements of a horizon of meaning are inescapably enmeshed with the collective concerns.

Prejudices, form a continually changing and collective body of fore-judgements that are recognised as valid or thwarted in the reflective moment of *Verstehen*. As opposed to our colloquial conceptions, prejudice is not a static body of attitudes but 'undergoes constant revision as new experiences and stances inform our views.'⁶³ Due to this reflective emergence, prejudices

⁶² Mary Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us?: A Meditation on Gadamer," *Philosophy and Literature* 15, no. 1 (1991): 63, <https://doi.org/10.1353/phl.1991.0056>.

⁶³ Veith, *Gadamer and the Transmission of History*, 21.

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are an unknowable totality for the 'historically effective consciousness' that interprets from within the expansive tide of tradition. It is only *through* experience that individual prejudices are able to be challenged and thus, modified. Therefore, rather than the 'leading strings of the thoughtless masses' prejudices become those threads from which the rich tapestry of a personal narrative.⁶⁴ Interpretation as the continuous differentiation between those that possess authority and those that must be jettisoned.

Like prejudice, authority inherits deficit notions via the Enlightenment project.⁶⁵ Authority, in Gadamer's account, is both the hallmark of a valid or productive prejudice and the critical counterbalance to the possibility of tradition becoming oppressive or monolithic. Gadamer shares with Arendt dismay at the loss of authority that is a product of modernity. Like Arendt, Gadamer distinguishes power and authority through an opposition of authority and imposition. '[w]here force is used, authority has failed' Arendt writes.⁶⁶ As with prejudice, Gadamer corrects the conflation of power and authority in the enlightenment treatment of the same which reduces to a source of (negative) prejudices.⁶⁷

Gadamer states, 't[T]he Enlightenment's distinction between faith in authority and using one's own reason is, in itself, legitimate.'⁶⁸ This support for the use of reason as a 'virtue of reasonableness' is exemplified in his critique of the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment.⁶⁹ To reinstate myth and tradition, the Romantics effect a 'reversal' of the myth/reason opposition, and, according to Gadamer, this has three consequences. First, this reifies the 'old because it is old' unseating the methodological purity of reason for the

⁶⁴ Veith, 22.

⁶⁵ *TM*, 284.

⁶⁶ Hannah Arendt, "What Is Authority?," in *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (London: The Viking Press, 1961), 93.

⁶⁷ *TM*, 283.

⁶⁸ *TM*, 291.

⁶⁹ Gadamer, 'The Ethics of Value and Practical Philosophy' in *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, 115.

mythological perfection of primaevial knowledge.⁷⁰ Gadamer describes the shift thusly:

Belief in the perfectibility of reason suddenly changes into the perfection of the "mythical" consciousness and finds itself reflected in a paradisiacal primal state before the fall of thought.⁷¹

Secondly, the role of the poet becomes not a matter of unveiling truth, but the creation of 'aesthetic effect' where poetry becomes the touchstone for the 'imagination and vitality' of the reader.⁷² As a result, the experience of the work of art becomes uncoupled from the practice of life annexed in the machination of imagination. Third, this results in the development of 'historical science' where the past's superiority is so acknowledged that it becomes an object of study for the horizon of the present, a matter of critical engagement.⁷³

Gadamer's account of authority rejects both the enlightenment and romantic positions to insist that authority is a matter of knowledge.⁷⁴ The 'truly experienced person' Gadamer claims is 'radically undogmatic.'⁷⁵ *Erfahrung* experience as undergone or ventured into, as a risking and thwarting of prejudices, operates as a constant reminder of the fundamental incompleteness of self-knowledge and understanding of the world. In recognition of these limits, Gadamer claims the acknowledgement of the revisability of understanding creates necessary trust in the inheritance of tradition. Prejudices accrue validity in their application and thus gain authority through experience. Therefore, genuine authority 'must be earned if one is to lay claim to it.'⁷⁶ The decision to award authority to someone is 'an act of reason itself.'⁷⁷

⁷⁰ *TM*, 286.

⁷¹ *TM*, 286.

⁷² *TM*, 287.

⁷³ *TM*, 287.

⁷⁴ *TM*, 291.

⁷⁵ *TM*, 364.

⁷⁶ *TM*, 291.

⁷⁷ *TM*, 291.

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Gadamer provides the authority of the expert as an example. Here, we grant authority 'not just in favor of a person but a content,' creating an assumption that what they say 'can, in principle, be discovered to be true.'⁷⁸ For example, when attending a lecture, we do not interrogate the curriculum vitae of each professor before we trust the account they present. Instead, their perlocutionary privilege rests on the trust built in the hierarchy within which they operate. Without such trust we would not move beyond their account toward interpretations of our own. Gadamer summarises as follows:

And just as we believe the news reported by a correspondent because he was present or is better informed, so too are we fundamentally open to the possibility that the writer of a transmitted text is better informed than we are, with our prior opinion.⁷⁹

Gadamer's account reverses the enlightenment attempt to 'denigrate authority,' reducing to 'blind obedience.'⁸⁰ Gadamer's account of authority works to unpick this conflation without falling into a blind fidelity to inherited knowledge. Gadamer acknowledges the distorting effects of illegitimate authority while maintaining the 'nameless authority' of the norms values and practices inherited by through our being historical.⁸¹

If the prestige of authority displaces one's own judgment, then authority is in fact a source of prejudices. But this does not preclude its being a source of truth, and that is what the Enlightenment failed to see when it denigrated all authority.⁸²

Gadamer's account of authority given that it rejects both 'the doctrinal authority of the pope' and the conservative 'appeal to tradition' replaces it rather with a notion of authority underpinned by, rather than in opposition to the operations of reason.⁸³ Having rejected the blind faith in tradition that makes up romanticism's response to the Enlightenment, Gadamer yet praises their effort to reinstate it against Enlightenment 'extremism.' The negotiation

⁷⁸ *TM*, 292.

⁷⁹ *TM*, 305.

⁸⁰ *TM*, 291.

⁸¹ *TM*, 281.

⁸² *TM*, 291.

⁸³ *TM*, 290.

of this complex web of prejudices wherein 'historically effective consciousness' creates demands on how the hermeneutic subject receives the objects of tradition. Gadamer makes the attentiveness demanded of 'historically effective consciousness' clear through a tripartite classification of dialogical relations.

3.4 Experience between the I and the Thou

Gadamer follows Martin Buber in describing the interaction between historically effective consciousness and the 'text' of tradition as dialogical relations between the 'I and Thou.'⁸⁴ We relate to tradition therefore as '[...]a genuine partner in dialogue, and we belong to it, as does the I with a Thou.'⁸⁵ The work of architecture as an object of tradition cannot answer back with the dynamism of interpersonal communication. Nonetheless, Gadamer describes the relations between interpreter and text as a dialogue between peers.⁸⁶ Relations between the object of tradition that speaks to us as a dialogue partner, therefore, make up a 'moral phenomenon' since it requires an acknowledgement of the 'Thou' as simultaneously the 'Other of an Other' that prevents their use as pure means.⁸⁷ While a given 'historically effective consciousness' may understand itself in a relationship of I to Thou with a dialogue partner, they at the same time are Thou to myriad other dialogue partners uniquely within the horizon of history.

⁸⁴ In adopting this terminology, Gadamer intends a shift away from the 'unnoticed ontological prejudice' that attends any talk of subjectivity. While aware even of the attendant prejudices of the notion of the 'Not-I' that he inherits from Fichte. Gadamer, "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity, Subject and Person," 281.

⁸⁵ *TM*, 366.

⁸⁶ In an echoing of the continuity of history, in 'The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem' Gadamer stresses that the ground of every misunderstanding is understanding itself underwritten by common experience:

'We say, for instance, that understanding and misunderstanding take place between I and thou. But the formulation "I and thou" already betrays an enormous alienation. There is nothing like an "I and thou" at all—there is neither the I nor the thou as isolated, substantial realities. I may say "thou" and I may refer to myself over against a thou, but a common understanding [Verständigung] always precedes these situations. We all know that to say "thou" to someone presupposes a deep common accord [*tiefes Einverständnis*].' Gadamer, 'The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem' *GR*, 81.

⁸⁷ *TM*, 358.

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Gadamer clarifies the character of the 'I/Thou' relation through a rejection of positivistic and empathetic approaches to outline the conditions of engagement for the hermeneutic subject as an undogmatic individual. In the first two of these three interrelations, the self-transcendence made possible in the truth-seeking dialogue through an unwillingness to consider the 'other' in their otherness either by instrumentalising them for the development of self-knowledge or through the position of 'another I.'⁸⁸

The first, impaired form of dialogical relation keeps a positivistic inflexion, wherein the Thou is merely a subject for examination. Recalling Kant's categorical imperative, Gadamer dismisses this form of self-reflexive I-Thou relation, as instrumentalising the other.⁸⁹ In this form of dialogue, the other is engaged with solely to reveal information about 'human being' in general. Gadamer describes this as 'kind of experience of the Thou that tries to discover typical behaviour in one's fellowmen and can make predictions about others on the basis of experience.'⁹⁰ This has two effects. First, it renders the Thou interchangeable with all others, failing to appreciate both their individuality and their fundamentally ungraspable character as an 'other' or their operation as an I in myriad other 'I/Thou' dialogical relations. In this first form of impaired relations, the Thou is reduced to 'an object to be explained.'⁹¹ The result of such dialogue is a demotion of the Thou to the status of an 'it' an object of scientific knowledge.⁹² When compared to relations between 'historically effective consciousness' and the texts of tradition such dialogues mirror historical objectivism, where events and texts into the means for extrapolating information about epochs as closed wholes. Not only does this approach expose itself as epistemically inappropriate, according to Gadamer it is also ethically inapt.⁹³

⁸⁸ *TM*, 269.

⁸⁹ And indeed contains echoes of the imperfect examples of friendship explored between Socrates and his interlocutors in the *Lysis*. (See previous chapter.)

⁹⁰ *TM*, 366.

⁹¹ Warnke, "Experiencing Tradition versus Belonging to It," 352.

⁹² Monica Vilhauer, *Gadamer's Ethics of Play: Hermeneutics and the Other* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2010), 77.

⁹³ Warnke, "Experiencing Tradition versus Belonging to It," 354.

Honneth describes this relation of the I-Thou as a reduction of the Thou to 'mere means' Axel Honneth, "On the Destructive Power of the Third: Gadamer and Heidegger's Doctrine

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The second relation, which Vilhauer describes as a 'psychological approach' purports to know the Thou 'inside out.'⁹⁴ In this sense, it can be compared to Gadamer's rejection of Collingwood's emphasis on grasping agential intentions in interpreting historical events. Such interpretations emphasise empathetic relations between the I and the other and contain overtones of 'stepping into their shoes.'⁹⁵ For Gadamer, such an assumption is fundamentally impaired. In the case of history this manifests as claims by the historian of the ability to step completely into the alien horizon of the historical text. The assumption of knowledge of the Thou also prevents the epistemic risks required by 'genuine dialogue.' That is, in presupposing complete knowledge of the 'Thou' the 'I' thereby precludes any meaningful challenge to their own self-knowledge. In both models of dialogue, the 'I' resists the 'Thou's' challenge to their self-knowledge by failing to recognise the 'dialectic of reciprocity' at work in each event of understanding.⁹⁶

The third form of interaction between the I and the 'Thou' exhibits an openness underpinned by a Socratic fallibility fostered by the hermeneutic attitude. The dialogue between the I and the Thou requires that the Thou is neither an object of disinterested observation nor one entirely determined by the suppositions of the I. These suggest an 'ethical condition' to all our interactions with the texts of tradition wherein the 'I' is required to maintain a fundamental openness to the claims of the text.⁹⁷ In these interactions, the I fundamentally assumes the truth of what the Thou has to say. This assumption of truth strengthens the claims of the text of tradition as an interlocutor, the radical assumption of validity that belongs to this relation as a fundamental starting point to Gadamer's hermeneutical project:

of Intersubjectivity," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 29, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453703029001830>.

⁹⁴ Vilhauer, *Gadamer's Ethics of Play*, 76.

⁹⁵ We will return to this issue in the following chapter concerning Gadamer's rejection of the *mens auctoris* as a criterion of correct interpretation contra Hirsch.

⁹⁶ *TM*, 368.

⁹⁷ Vilhauer, *Gadamer's Ethics of Play*, 76.

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To allow the Other to be valid against oneself – and from there to let all my hermeneutic works slowly develop – is not only to recognize in principle the limitation of one's own framework, but is also to allow one to go beyond one's own possibilities, precisely in a dialogical, communicative, hermeneutic process.⁹⁸

Granting validity to the 'Thou' is consistent with his model of understanding as unfolding within a horizon that always exceeds the knowledge of 'historically effective consciousness.' Within the logic or dialogic structure of question and answer, therefore, there is a priority of listening required of both partners in interpersonal dialogues.⁹⁹ As the most 'epistemically appropriate' form of relation to the other and to the past, this third relation allows not only for the thwarting or confirming of prejudices but also for the uncovering of tacit assumptions or fore-judgements of which the I may have had no prior awareness.¹⁰⁰ Rather than a limitation on the I, this represents freedom from the burden of one form of objectifying and ahistorical rationality, and thus the possibility of learning from the inherited texts of tradition and custom. In this sense, the account here echoes the notion of friendship we explored in the preceding chapter to understand Gadamer's account of home.

A person who reflects himself out of the mutuality of such a relation changes this relationship and destroys its moral bond. A person who reflects himself out of a living relationship to tradition destroys the true meaning of this tradition in exactly the same way.¹⁰¹

Gadamer's move from interpersonal dialogue to the relation of 'historically effective consciousness' to history underlines the quixotic nature of any attempt to interrogate the historical text in its entirety. Understood as a dialogue defined by its openness, objectivity must remain an impossibility. Not only because of the epistemic limitations perpetuated by the constant

⁹⁸ Gadamer, "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity, Subject and Person," 284.

⁹⁹ Recall the importance of *hören* (listening) in the case of those things 'appropriate' to us in the notion of *das Angehörige* in the discussion of home in Chapter One.

¹⁰⁰ *TM*, 319.

¹⁰¹ *TM*, 369.

movement of horizons and the consistent evolution of language, but also due to the ethical demands of respect for the validity of the other. This account of I-Thou relations serves to distinguish Gadamer's account of interactions with tradition against the reductive methodological claims of historical practices that strive 'for objective knowledge through the denial of any effective-historical influence.'¹⁰²

The value of our relation to tradition, therefore, mirrors the account of friendship outlined in Chapter 2. Just as we value the friend for their difference to us, rather than for their being 'another like me' and provide an essential counterpart in our projects of self-knowledge.¹⁰³ The co-determination of meaning between tradition and its interpreters can be understood as akin to the 'reciprocal co-perception' found between friends¹⁰⁴

However, this account of openness to tradition is not without its tensions. Habermas claims that Gadamer overlooks how power and control impact dialogues between 'historically effective consciousness' and tradition, thereby increasing inequalities and injustice. We will examine Habermas' critique on the grounds of ideology, before returning to the model of friendship as a possible defence of the Gadamerian position, as a model that keeps open the tension between affinity and difference in the case of architecture as a traditionary text.¹⁰⁵

3.5 Architecture Tradition and Friendship

Gadamer's account thus far has refuted the rejection of traditional knowledge as dogma within the Enlightenment and the reification of history as an object of study as an excessive reaction on the part of Historicism. He has offered the solution of understanding the text of tradition through the dynamics of the 'I and Thou' relation in order to strengthen the claim of the text as interlocutor sufficiently. However, it is unclear how this assumption of the text's authority

¹⁰² Honneth, "On the Destructive Power of the Third," 11.

¹⁰³ Warnke, "Experiencing Tradition versus Belonging to It," 366–68.

¹⁰⁴ Gadamer, 'Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the role of Friendship in Greek Ethics,' *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, 139.

¹⁰⁵ Warnke, "Experiencing Tradition versus Belonging to It," 368.

integrates with the possibility of exposing prejudices through disruptive experiences. We will explore one possible solution before considering briefly the critique from Habermas, which arguably make the problem of architecture and authority more distinct.

Warnke provides a possible resolution of the tension between belonging to and experiencing history by understanding the work of tradition as another self. In Chapter two we focussed our account of friendship in the *Lysis*, here we will consider Aristotle, whose account of friendship makes an equal contribution to Gadamer's understanding of it. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle provides an account of the friend as a 'second self' who is related to the friend as she is to herself.¹⁰⁶ As with the analysis of the friend as essential in the project of self-knowledge we explored in the second chapter, in the case of the text of tradition, as proximal in their relation to 'historically effective consciousness' the traditional text is sufficiently removed from us as to provide a new perspective on our being and doing. This serves to animate the experience of understanding won through relations with the work of architecture by modelling it on a lived relationship, one in which characters change and develop, together.¹⁰⁷ This seems at first glance to correspond well to exemplary works of architecture that we reside with and can affect an 'increase in [our] being.' A friend can concernfully 'keep watch in our place and think for us.'¹⁰⁸ Gadamer claims the friend 'shares our views and intentions' and therefore, operates in our best interests. The analogy with the friend and their close attendance, and 'being together with us' perhaps provides an explanation for the grief at the near-destruction of Notre Dame cathedral in 2019. We can perhaps understand the rapid stream of donations to restore the building through the model of friendship briefly sketched above. Like the friend who is irreplaceable, the insights offered by the experience of Notre Dame's exemplary Gothic edifice offer a claim to truth that cannot be gained elsewhere.

¹⁰⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.4-8

¹⁰⁷ This changing a developing relation will be recalled in Gadamer's account of occasionality in a later chapter.

¹⁰⁸ Gadamer, *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, 140.

However, in the rehabilitation of authority above, Gadamer asserts that the legitimate authority figure is given and does not take authority. Further, he emphasises the Socratic *docta ignorantia* that treats the text of tradition as an 'other' and assumes the truth of their claims.

While this may be true for eminent works of architecture, the offering of authority to the text of tradition and the assumption of the truth of its claims seem to run counter to the understanding of experience as disruptive that is required for the calling into question of prejudices. Particularly in the case of architecture, whose pervading influence we noted in the introduction, we might well question whether Gadamer offers the 'text' of tradition too much authority. Artworks, particularly works of architecture, occupy a unique vantage point within the horizon of history. While the model of friendship might explicate the correct comportment towards some traditional texts, the critique from ideology, to which we next turn, arguably introduces the contention that tradition could present itself as a 'false friend.'

As Gadamer notes, Habermas' critique of ideology, based on the psychoanalytic model is predicated on a technique that aims toward 'reinsertion of the disturbed individual into an already existing communicatively connected society.'¹⁰⁹ Further, the event of understanding granted in dialogue with tradition is always fragmentary. Following Heidegger, Gadamer claims that the emergence of truth is always partial since human life and culture manifest as 'a relentless tension between illumination and concealment.'¹¹⁰ The emergence or attention to one prejudice is contingent on 'myriad others' for the production of meaning.¹¹¹ For example, attending to the ideological elements of Tatlin's Monument to the Third International, conceals the energy and interplay of the steel forms that progress up the structure.¹¹² Understanding architecture as nothing more than

¹⁰⁹ Gadamer, 'What is Practice? The Conditions of Social Reason' *RAS*, 79.

¹¹⁰ Gadamer, 'Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy' *RAS*, 104.

¹¹¹ Warnke, *Gadamer*, 123.

¹¹² Monument to the Third International, (never built) Designer: Vladimir Tatlin, 1920

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a sinister parapraxis threatens to undercut its claim to its status as art. Gadamer would further respond that, in suggesting the adoption of norms and values of psychoanalysis, critical hermeneutics make the paradoxical demand that we approach objects from within our horizon by adopting a position outside of it, which is antithetical to the account of effective history we have explored above.

This raises a concern when it comes to interpreting architecture, which we acknowledged at the beginning of our chapter is intertwined intimately with both political and economic forces. In accepting the truth claims of the work of architecture as a text of tradition, is 'historically effective consciousness' robbed of the possibility of critically engaging with the power structures at work in such designs? Habermas' highlighting of ideology strikes at the heart of the issue in Gadamer's account of traditions as something to which we belong and yet must be able to critique.

3.6 The Problem of Ideology

The dialogic relations described above prescribe anticipation of truth when approaching the object of tradition. It is this strengthening of the position of the speechless interlocutor that both acknowledges the frailty of finite knowledge and creates a situation in which the text might challenge our less productive fore-judgements. In occupying such a position, Gadamer rejects both the subjectivist faith in rationality and the conservative reification of tradition and myth. Each event of understanding constitutes a 'consensus' with the object of interpretation co-determined by the vantage point of a historical horizon and the ontological valence of the text it brings into view.

However, Habermas and Apel critique Gadamer's embrace of tradition citing the dynamics of power and coercion that need to be unpicked in our interactions with tradition itself. Habermas reinstates the enlightenment suspicion of dogma. Habermas therefore approvingly cites Albrecht Wellmer:

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The Enlightenment knew what hermeneutics forgets- that the dialogue which, according to Gadamer, we "are" is also a context of power and precisely for this reason no dialogue.....The universal claim of the hermeneutic approach [can only] be sustained if one assumes that the context of the tradition as the locus of possible truth and factual agreement is, at the same time, the locus of factual untruth and continuing force.¹¹³

We might leverage Gadamer's account of prejudices here as a riposte to Habermas. Prejudices differentiated through experience become jettisoned by 'historically effective consciousness' once exposed as 'unproductive.'¹¹⁴ More than this, Gadamer claims that the contradiction of fore-judgements achieved through effective history is constitutive of being. Gadamer's counterclaim to Habermas that the appropriation of tradition is a process of critical reflection.

However much it is in the nature of tradition to exist only through being appropriated, it still is part of the nature of man to be able to break with tradition, to criticize and dissolve it, and is not what takes place in remaking the real into an instrument of human purpose something far more basic in our relationship to being? ¹¹⁵

Gadamer finds a second issue with Habermas' concern that dialogical relations conceal the violent force of ideology. Gadamer rejects the limit Habermas places on the sphere of hermeneutic reflection to expressed communication. As we will see in our final chapter, where Gadamer's account of reading is applied to 'speechless art' as 'text' Gadamer's account of language is less narrowly circumscribed. Where language, for Habermas, concerns only what is explicitly expressed, *Sprachlichkeit* and therefore hermeneutic reflection embraces both explicitly expressed and implicitly communicated content. In the application of the social sciences with which Habermas is concerned, a hermeneutic of gender rights, for example, would encompass both explicitly expressed views regarding women's 'needs and interests' to expose their matrixial relations to distributions of power and

¹¹³ Habermas cited Warnke, *Gadamer*, 112.

¹¹⁴ However, it is unclear whether the broad category of 'unproductivity' accurately describes the 'false-friend that the ideological belief becomes.

¹¹⁵ *TM*, xxxiv.

tangentially related issues of family and society.¹¹⁶ However, the validity of such a response to Habermas relies on an analogy between ideology and prejudice that prompts Habermas' recourse to psychoanalysis. Ideologies self-concealing systems of control are potentially more problematic than conventional historical analysis. This leads Habermas to insist on a reference system with which to appraise the deep-running distortions wrought by ideology.

The claim which hermeneutics legitimately makes good against the practically influential absolutism of a general methodology of the empirical sciences brings no dispensation from the business of methodology in general.¹¹⁷

Like Apel, Habermas makes recourse to psychoanalysis, positing an 'ideal speech situation' in which language is uncoupled from its role as a medium of domination and social power; 'that serve[s] to legitimate relations of organized force'¹¹⁸ Habermas reminds us '[T]he career of sophistry reminds us that it [language] can be used for mind-fogging agitation as well as for enlightening people.'¹¹⁹

For Gadamer living traditions are those that consistently engage dialogically with themselves, interrogating and dispensing with those prejudices that are 'unproductive.' As such, their vitality presupposes an open criticality that underpins the authentic authority of those suppositions that remain sustained. Slavish repetitions of rites and customs without reflection then are indications of imposed practices that contravene the account of authority he develops after Aristotle. The loss of authority of fore-judgments makes up the epochal shifts that are the ebb and flow of tradition. Habermas advocates for a 'critically enlightened hermeneutics' that possesses 'awareness of the conditions for the possibility of systematically distorted communication' in place of Gadamer's moderate approach, which he presents as insufficiently

¹¹⁶ Warnke, *Gadamer*, 112–13.

¹¹⁷ Habermas, "A Review of Gadamer's Truth and Method," 235.

¹¹⁸ Habermas, 239.

¹¹⁹ Jürgen Habermas, "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality," ed. Gayle M Ormiston and Alan D Schrift, trans. Josef Bleicher, SUNY Series, Intersections Philosophy and Critical Theory (1971; repr., Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 248.

critical of tradition. Habermas benchmarks any reached consensus reached in dialogue against 'idealised conditions' of communication free from domination.¹²⁰ In that Habermas believes in appraising dialogues through verisimilitude with a posited situation, his critique of Gadamer is also a defence of the Enlightenment stance against dogmatism. He writes: 'a consensus achieved by seemingly "reasonable" means may well be the result of pseudo-communication.'¹²¹ Gadamer's response to these critiques is to reassert the account of authority outlined above, that rejects outright any slavish adherence to imposed authority as an inability to leverage one's knowledge and freedom.¹²² Habermas' proposed solution to what he perceives as a deficiency in Gadamer's hermeneutic may be guilty of just such a deficiency in reflection. Inherent in Gadamer's account of the dialogue with tradition is the requirement that the appraisal of what is received occurs within my horizon, through the use of the prejudices received because of my historical being. To subordinate these to the artificial authority of a posited authority in the form of an 'ideal speech situation' is a repetition of the same epistemic deficiency Gadamer identified in the Enlightenment faith in method inherited from Descartes. Faith in method as a redemptive tool works, in the end, to undermine the meaning and import of historical horizons in the formation of understanding.

It also means that an unlimited understanding would cut away at – indeed, abolish (*aufheben*) – the very meaning of understanding, just as a perspective that sees everything would abolish the very meaning of perspective.¹²³

In defence of Gadamer we can claim that it is the very closeness of the bond he brokers between interpreter and tradition that allows the reversal of consciousness needed to realise the distance that may have emerged between them in experience.

3.7 Conclusion

¹²⁰ Habermas, 267.

¹²¹ Habermas, 266.

¹²² Warnke, *Gadamer*, 135.

¹²³ Gadamer, "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity, Subject and Person," 281.

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Hermeneutic philosophy understands itself not as an absolute position but as a way of experience. It insists that there is no higher principle than holding oneself open in conversation.¹²⁴

In our approach to the work of architecture as a traditional text, Gadamer's hermeneutic promotes an openness which presupposes the truth claim of the work. This entails entering into attentive (but not uncritical) dialogue with the built world that supposes its relevance for us from our historical vantage point. The address of the traditional to 'historically effective consciousness' therefore entails the inexhaustibility of experiences. Since interpreting tradition is also a part of the development of self-knowledge, more attentive engagement with architectures as a traditional text, according to Gadamer promises more profound knowledge of ourselves.

Thus it becomes clear that in every understanding there remains something unexplained, and that one therefore must ask about what motivates every understanding.¹²⁵

The hermeneutically experienced person is the one that learns to 'always experience anew'¹²⁶ by recognising the role of fore-judgements in each moment of judgement. In interactions with tradition, this requires an open attentiveness to tradition that allows the built environment to speak to us, and once a part of the historical horizon of being, to speak to us again.

Gadamer claims that the only epistemically and ethically appropriate relation to the text of tradition is the I/Thou relation, wherein 'historically effective consciousness' assumes the truth of the texts claims. We followed Warnke in understanding this relation through Gadamer's Aristotelian account of friendship. However, this exposed his account to two objections. The first, that the integration of the claim of the text through an assumption of its authority appeared inconsistent with the tension in Gadamer's account of experience as a disruption that can call fore-judgments into question.¹²⁷ In

¹²⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Apprenticeships*, trans. Robert R. Sullivan (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 189.

¹²⁵ Gadamer, "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity, Subject and Person," 281.

¹²⁶ Gadamer, "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity, Subject and Person," 285.

¹²⁷ Warnke, "Experiencing Tradition versus Belonging to It," 368.

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comparison to the account of horizons and of language where tensions between *Heimat* and *Fremde* and finitude and infinity were kept open, it appears that philosophical hermeneutics betrays its own effective history in advocating too strongly for the authority of tradition.

In Habermas' identification of power and ideology we found a criticism of Gadamer that warrants consideration, particularly in the case of architecture. It appears that while his account of the traditional text might allow for the recovery of the profound experience of architectural texts of the past, and the extent to which the recognition of the new and novel rests on a rich horizon of already established meaning, in placing 'historically effective consciousness' in the position of radical non-dogmatism against the claims of the text of tradition, Gadamer places perhaps too much faith in the power of dialogical reason to expose prejudices through hermeneutical reflection. As itself a product of effective history, hermeneutics in the case of architecture, would require some reformulation in order to accommodate problematic texts that promote ideologies.

While it may be that the model of 'friendship' can help us to recover the kinds of architectural examples Gadamer provides, i.e. the unassuming Weinbrenner staircase of Heidelberg university, or the once inconspicuous church in Breslau, or indeed the general atmosphere of the university of Athens, it seems unclear how Gadamer can reconcile the subtlety of the friend that reveals themselves to us in familiarity with the experience of art as rupture or interruption.¹²⁸

It may be however, that the very interruption offered by the artwork acts as the disruptive counterbalance to ideology, if and only if, we view art as something impervious to political control. Certainly the account of *Bildung* we will encounter in our next chapter, and its association with moral judgements seems to suggest, much as Gadamer insists on the connection

¹²⁸ Gadamer provides these anecdotal examples of the power of architecture across his corpus. The staircase in question he describes as so beautiful he would pause while climbing it.

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between artworks and their lifeworld, their ability to orient us to enduring matters of importance supersedes their ties to political function.

4 *Bildung* and *Bildungsprozess*

4.1 Introduction

We participate in the essential expressions of human experience that have been developed in our artistic, religious and historical tradition-and not only ours but in all cultures; this possible participation is the true criterion for the wealth or poverty of what we produce in our humanities and social sciences.¹

Bildung possesses a fundamental role in Gadamer's hermeneutics. Gadamer follows Hegel in his definition of *Bildung* (culture) as an element of spirit. Gadamer argues that 'Keeping in mind, forgetting, and recalling belong to the historical constitution of man and are themselves part of his history and his *Bildung*.'² As physical artefacts, works of architecture serve as a powerful reminder of the historical context from which a certain understanding of the subject cannot extricate itself. As a universal sense, *Bildung* promises an overcoming of the modern subject through the development of an aesthetic 'common sense' or *sensus communis*.³ The participation in a consistent *Bildungsprozess* becomes the mark of the 'cultivated consciousness.'⁴ This chapter recounts why architectural experience is important according to Gadamer through his account of *Bildung* and the 'onto-ethical' relations between the 'cultured' and 'culture.' In this sense, Gadamer builds on his claim in relation to 'tradition' that it is a critical engagement that maintains the life of tradition. He makes a parallel claim regarding the objects of culture.

Architecture that arises out of the concerns of a community provides a distinctly physical reminder of the human being's historical situatedness. This chapter builds on our exploration of the dialogue between 'historically effective consciousness' tradition as a 'Thou.' In both drawing in 'historically

¹ Gadamer, *GC*, 40–41.

² *TM*, 15.

³ Although as Marino notes, this very notion is developed in part through Kant's notion of the '*sensus communis*' despite taking a polemical tone against Kantian aesthetic consciousness. Marino, *Aesthetics, Metaphysics, Language*.

⁴ *TM*, 13.

effective consciousness' but then redirecting it 'to the greater whole of the life context which it accompanies' architecture prompts the return from exile to a newly understood self and community that lies at the core of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.⁵ Architecture and the engagement with built spaces are an interstitial experience that connects 'historically effective consciousness' to a community and the event of understanding that occurs through art to life in the quotidian.

Gadamer's account of *Bildung* (cultivation) is central to the broader aims of his philosophy. That is, the recovery and rehabilitation of the role of the *Geisteswissenschaften*⁶ in an epoch made inhospitable to their unique knowledge claims through the twin threats of the objectivism promoted by a scientific approach and the distraction from 'genuine dialogue' effected by technology.⁷ In linguistic horizons, as we saw in chapter two, the surging tide of language as information closes down the medial space between home and exile that makes up the disclosive space of language. In the approach to history, also a partner in dialogue, the objectivising view that perceives history as a monolith risks either dismissing the subtle yet inexhaustible authority of tradition (Enlightenment thinking) or, reifying the space of myth to the detriment of its critical engagement by 'historically effective consciousness' (Romantic historicism.) Traditional horizons, though shared, are unique to each 'historically effective consciousness' shaped through the interactions of each 'I' with a vast array of different texts, both traditional texts and individuals, in conversation. Dalibor Vesely claims that architecture works to interpret cultural communities. 'What the book is to literature, architecture is to culture' he writes.⁸ Per Kidder, the choice to become an architect, for many practitioners, is a commitment to a vocation, one oriented toward the creation of spaces that are relevant and impactful for life that

⁵ *TM*, 157.

⁶ The *Geisteswissenschaften* literally the 'human sciences' are commonly translated as the humanities. In this discussion Gadamer is guided by Dilthey's designation of the humanities as concerned with 'the expressions of the human mind.' Wilhelm Dilthey, *Dilthey Selected Writings*, trans. H. P. Rickman (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 175.

⁷ Gadamer develops this argument in; "The Incapacity for Conversation."

⁸ Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, 8.

attracts students of architecture to that field.⁹ Gadamer's reformulation of *Bildung* thus extends the notion of vocation commonly invoked in creating art toward our engagement with the objects of culture.

Bildung means both 'culture' and 'education,' and Gadamer's account unifies the experience of culture with the project of self-knowledge.¹⁰ His account presents an 'education to art by art' achieved through open dialogical experience with the objects or givens of culture that perform an instructive and transformative role in the knowledge 'historically effective consciousness' possesses both of itself and the world. He looks to everyday usage to introduce *Bildung* in *Truth and Method*. Gadamer notes its etymological root as *Bild* (image or form) stressing the notion of formation in his account of the structure of *Bildung*. Gadamer outlines the permutations of *Bild* (Image/Form) as *Vorbild*, (model); *Abbild*, (copy); *Bild*, (picture); and *Einbildungskraft*, (imagination.)¹¹ These terms fare poorly in English translation, losing the familial connections between these terms. This exploration speaks to Gadamer's commitment to the power of ordinary language to show fruitful paths for thinking about the ontological operations of fundamental elements of being.¹² Likewise, he leverages these connections to criticise the divorce between 'real-life' and art through the associative dominance of concepts such as 'illusion' 'appearance' and 'dream' which attach themselves to descriptions of the experience of art in descriptions provided by nominalism.¹³

Gadamer's presentation of *Bildung* shares much of the approach to 'tradition' that we explored in the previous chapter. As with his account of tradition, Gadamer rejects the epistemic assumptions that underpin Romantic

⁹ Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects*, 6.

¹⁰ Since the translation of *Bildung* into English gives rise to two contrasting terms relevant for our discussion here, the German term will be retained throughout for its productive duality.

¹¹ *TM*, 10.

¹² Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G Marshall, "Translators Preface," in *Truth and Method*, by Hans Georg Gadamer, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G Marshall, Continuum Impacts (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, Limited, 2004), xii.

¹³ *TM*, 76.

approaches even as he praises their scope for understanding the importance of culture. Cultural products for Gadamer, in their truth-disclosing capacity, are ‘the most important explananda in human life.’¹⁴ The account in this chapter follows Gadamer’s development of the concept of *Bildung* as a process, that much like the vocation of the architect endows ‘historically effective consciousness’ to a lifelong studentship of attentiveness to the richness of each event of understanding.¹⁵ *Bildung*, therefore, possesses a profound importance in the account of architectural experience derived from philosophical hermeneutics developed by this thesis.

The character of *Bildung* as relational; that is, occurring between the interpreter and interpreted, communal, as in underpinned by a collective common sense. Gadamer’s approach to *Bildung*, places a culture and those that are always only becoming cultivated into an onto-ethical relation. The account here begins by understanding the reframing of *Bildung* against more conservative interpretations of culture as a monolithic ‘body of knowledge’ and as the concern of an elite group. The directed and participatory nature of our engagements with art leads to a discussion of Gadamer’s rejection of positivistic aesthetic consciousness, wherein Gadamer takes Kant as his principal interlocutor. Progressing the account of the ‘other as other’ in dialogue, we explore how Gadamer’s approach to art makes up a rejection of the notion of aesthetic experience as a matter for subjectivity in favour of *Bildung* as a collective enterprise. Gadamer describes the experience of art as ‘in-between,’ recalling his account of the operation of language as opening a space between exile and homecoming in Chapter 2 and displaces the artist as the locus of certitude in the enterprise of interpretation, which garners much ire from Hirsch. Rather than artistic intention, Gadamer proposes collective acknowledgement as the source of authority and certainty in our encounter with cultural objects. The *sensus communis* acknowledges such authority that, contra Kant’s propaedeutic account, is a form of knowing developed by and through *praxis*. At its close, this chapter will identify architecture as a point

¹⁴ Taylor, “Gadamer and the Human Sciences,” 129.

¹⁵ Davey describes Gadamer’s aesthetics as an advocacy for ‘attentiveness.’ Davey, *Unfinished Worlds*, 91.

of the integration between the revelatory experience made possible by the event of understanding through art, and the life-world of 'historically effective consciousness' through reference to Gadamer's encounters with architecture and the analysis of a contemporary example, namely the Birmingham City Library.¹⁶

4.2 *From Bildung to Bildungsprozess*

Gadamer's account of *Bildung* rejects both the notion that 'becoming cultured' is an inexhaustible process neither describable as the acquisition of knowledge about a fixed canon of knowledge nor as the preserve of a bourgeois elite. Instead, it is a question of a consistent engagement wherein 'an education by art becomes an education to art.'¹⁷ Gadamer's account of *Bildung*, mirrors the rehabilitation of prejudice, authority and tradition we saw in the previous chapter. In this sense Gadamer's approach to *Bildung* entails a reframing that countermands the claims of scientific objectivism and excessive determination of method. *Bildung*, like tradition, is a matter of participation for Gadamer. Through his reformulation of *phronesis*, Gadamer uncouples *Bildung* from its understanding as a product of a formalised *Ausbildung* (training). Just as traditions become ossified through a dearth of critical engagement, culture also demands the participation of 'historically effective consciousness.' *Bildung* is a self-renewing *praxis* that brings 'historically effective consciousness' to a deeper-knowledge of itself and, its community.¹⁸ 'Cultivation cultivates itself,' Gadamer states.¹⁹ In so doing he illustrates a faith in the power of the claim of artworks, as the products of culture to draw interlocutors into elevating and enervating dialogues that become broader through their consistent practice. Through *Bildung*, we encounter the 'artwork in a world' and the 'world in the artwork,' according

¹⁶ Birmingham City Library, Birmingham, UK, (Architect: Francis Houben, Macanoo 2013)

¹⁷ *TM*, 75.

¹⁸ 'Starting from these first observations we must proceed so that we never forget that we educate ourselves, that humanity educates itself, and that the so-called educator participates in this process only in such modest roles, for example, as teacher and as mother.' Gadamer, "Education Is Self-Education," 530.

¹⁹ Gadamer, 'Education is Self-Education' 531.

to Gadamer.²⁰ As a result, in our approach to art, is it wrongheaded to think about this as a question of ‘building’ knowledge, as it is just this set of presuppositions that ‘historically effective consciousness’ will call into question in its engagement with the artwork.

But then, with respect to art: how much knowledge can one really cope with? One still has to be able to make the work one's own. So there are no rules, other than one: only as much knowledge is useful as one is capable of forgetting, that's the measure. As Plato said at the very end of the *Phaedrus*: give me as much gold as a reasonable man can carry. One should not let oneself be deformed by knowledge. That's a crazy way to proceed.²¹

Gadamer further rejects the notion that culture is a matter for the social elite: ‘It is a profound mistake to think that our art is simply that of the ruling class.’²² *Bildung* is a social matter, a part of our existential-ontological being, and therefore has no relation to the notion of social hierarchies, but for the ways they unhelpfully obscure the pursuit of becoming *gebildet* (cultured.)²³ Instead, Gadamer replaces *Bildung* as a monolith with a consistent and self-renewing *Bildungsprozess*. Echoing his Socratic tendencies, those that become *gebildet* achieve an ever-increasing awareness of the frail finitude of their knowledge against the plenitude of interpretations glimpsed in our engagements with art.

... there is no end to the discoveries that one can make about another individual or another culture, no end to the experiences of hermeneutical recognition that one could have. But the process is

²⁰ *TM*, 87.

²¹ Gadamer, ‘Writing and the Living Voice’ *EPH*, 71.

²² Gadamer, “The Relevance of the Beautiful,” 51.

Indeed, he continues here to identify the ‘genuine experience of community’ in Attic drama, Gregorian chants and the Threepenny Opera since ‘they too have a capacity to establish communication in a way that reaches people of every class and educational background.’ Gadamer, ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ 51.

²³ As Gallagher explains, we cannot choose our cultural horizon: ‘As with human rationality, I am not rational because I decide to act in a rational way; rather, I can only act in a rational way because I am involved in a rationality that goes beyond me and which I cannot choose even though it is the foundation of my choosing’ *Hermeneutics and Education*, 45.

limited, de facto, by the limits on our time and abilities, by the finite scope and span of our lifetimes.²⁴

Since the claim to truth issued by objects of culture is only 'unconcealed' in dialogue with 'historically effective consciousness' there is a socio-ethical component to Gadamer's account of *Bildung*. The existence of *Bildung* presupposes the *gebildete*, who bring the subject matters unconcealed by art into view. In so far as culture makes up the horizon into which 'historically effective consciousness' is 'thrown' it is formative. Through attentive hermeneutical engagement, it becomes transformative of the self-understanding of 'historically effective consciousness' and its community.

We are always dominated by customs. In every culture a series of things is taken for granted and lies fully beyond the explicit consciousness of anyone, and even in the greatest dissolution of traditional forms, mores and customs the degree to which things held in common still determine everyone is only more concealed.²⁵

The operations of *Bildung* are akin to those of tradition; given that its existence presupposes a community of interpreters. As with traditions, the health of a 'culture' is contingent on engagements with the products thereof. Without the successive engagements of interpreters, *Bildung* risks becoming atrophied. As a formative horizon, the experience of *Bildung* resists objective grasping, existing rather, as an 'ever completing but never completed' process.²⁶ *Bildung* is neither a question of methodological knowledge nor canonical preservation. Its scope is the transformation of the horizons of both the interpreter and the object under interpretation. 'The exchange of ideas which takes place in this learning process is not a simple bartering of ready-made commodities. It involves transformations of perspectives, the opening

²⁴ Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects*, 43.

²⁵ Gadamer, 'What is Practice? The Conditions of Social Reason' *RAS*, 82.

Gadamer claims that such concealment serves to erode a more collective common ground: 'Our public life appears to me to be defective insofar as there is too much emphasis on the different and disputed, on that which is contested or in doubt. What we truly have in common and what unites us remains, so to speak, without a voice' *EPH*, 192.

²⁶ Davey, *Unquiet Understanding*, 58.

of horizons, the expansions of meaningful worlds.’²⁷ *Bildung* is a question of consistent, open-ended engagement. The experience of art acts as a paradigm of this process. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer marks this out *contra* Kant’s ‘aesthetic consciousness.’²⁸ A brief discussion of Gadamer’s critique of Kant will show how Gadamer transforms *Bildung* into a *praxis* necessarily and intimately connected to a lived context.

4.3 Distance but not Disinterest

As the products of culture and history, our engagements with artworks are a matter of active participation.²⁹ To reintegrate these with a life-world, Gadamer must liberate the experience of art from the pervasive subjectivism of Enlightenment thinking. To this end, he devotes a significant section within *Truth and Method* to the rejection of ‘aesthetic consciousness.’ In order to clarify the role of *Bildung* in self-formation and achieve the ‘onto-ethical relation’ between a culture and its participants, Gadamer undertakes a correction of the inheritance of subjectivism to bring the engagement with art out of the private realm of ‘aesthetic consciousness’ and reunite it with the project of knowing more broadly.³⁰ Gadamer’s objection to ‘aesthetic consciousness’ is important for our discussion of architecture as a preparatory account to the ontology of the decorative in our next chapter.³¹ In rejecting what he sees as the privation of art within subjective consciousness, and the erosion of art’s connection to life Gadamer creates the scope for marginal arts such as architecture to occupy a more significant role as carriers of meaning and in relation to the other arts. Gadamer’s critique of ‘aesthetic consciousness’ identifies three key problems inherited from the positivist understanding of such. Here we will focus on these to understand what

²⁷ Gallagher describes the foundational function of *Bildung* as follows: ‘As with human rationality, I am not rational because I decide to act in a rational way; rather, I can only act in a rational way because I am involved in a rationality that goes beyond me and which I cannot choose even though it is the foundation of my choosing.’ *Hermeneutics and Education*, 139.

²⁸ *TM*, 137.

²⁹ *TM*, 87.

³⁰ Davey, *Unquiet Understanding*, 72.

³¹ Furthermore, Gadamer’s rejection of the ‘disinterested’ character of aesthetic consciousness lays the groundwork for the account of play we will encounter in Chapter Six.

Gadamer intends with his concept of *Bildung* and what this means for the experience of architecture. The first is the separation of aesthetics taste as a form of knowing, the second is the concept of genius and its effect of separating the artists from the life-world and the third is what Gadamer terms ‘aesthetic differentiation.’

Gadamer takes an ‘unexpectedly polemical tone’ contra Kant, making *him* culpable for the subjectivism of aesthetics.³² Gadamer objects to Kant’s assertion that judgments of beauty are a question of the ‘free play’ of subjective imagination as disinterested. Crucial for our account of the experience of architecture is Gadamer’s reintegration of the judgement of taste as related to moral knowing, as a highest form of truth rather than an annexed sub-species of knowing. This allows for ‘aesthetic experience contribute to education in ways which no account of art's merely formal qualities can fully explain.’³³ Against what he sees as the privation of positivism Gadamer hopes ‘to demonstrate that art can convey truth and therefore form public opinion.’³⁴ His critique in *Truth and Method* takes aim at Kant because, in grounding judgement in the cognitive faculties of the individual subject, Kant, according to Gadamer, ‘denies taste any *significance as knowledge*.’³⁵

Gjesdal understands the difference between Gadamer and Kant in relation to the form of judgement at play in taste. Since Kant’s judgement of taste is reflective rather than determinative, it becomes divorced from the moral force that Gadamer wants to lend to the experience of art as a form elevation made possible through the revelation of truth. As a result, in Gadamer’s account taste becomes the ‘supreme consummation’ of practical knowledge, rather than a matter of cognitive privation.³⁶ The shift away from Kant allows

³² Kristin Gjesdal, “Reading Kant Hermeneutically: Gadamer and the Critique of Judgment,” *Kant Studien* 98, no. 3 (2007): 353, <https://doi.org/10.1515/KANT.2007.020>.

³³ Devereaux, “Can Art Save Us?,” 67.

³⁴ Gadamer, ‘Writing and the Living Voice’ *EPH*, 63.

³⁵ *TM*, 40.

³⁶ Gjesdal, “Reading Kant Hermeneutically,” 356.

Gadamer to achieve his aim of a humanist reintegration of taste and moral knowledge. Gadamer critiques Kant thus:

Taste is a faculty of judgment, and hence reflective, but what it reflects about is only that state of mind—the vitalization of the cognitive powers that results as much from natural as from artistic beauty.³⁷

To reverse this process, Gadamer critiques Kant's differentiation between natural beauty and the beauty created by art. He writes 'natural beauty does not "say" anything in the sense that works of art, created by and for human beings, say something to us.'³⁸ In uniting natural beauty and moral knowing art 'emerges badly from the contrast with natural beauty.'³⁹ Gadamer argues that it is the stability of art's claims, its revelation of *die Sache* that renders it different from natural beauty which possesses an 'inability to express something specific.'⁴⁰ As we will see later in this chapter, the paradigm case of this is the eminent text, which calls back its reader repeatedly because of the depth of the statement it can make. In grounding his account in natural beauty, Kant leaves all the 'plastic arts' excluded from the designation of 'free beauty' since purposiveness will always contaminate their communication to the cognizing subject.⁴¹ Despite sharing the view with Kant that beauty is not something that belongs to or inheres in objects in and of themselves, Gadamer rejects the Kantian recourse to the *Einbildungskraft* or subjective imagination to describe the perception of beauty. The perception of beauty is 'disinterested' for Kant as it is not engaged with the actuality of the object itself.

Through reflection, aesthetic consciousness has passed beyond any determining and determinate taste, and itself represents a total lack of determinacy. It no longer admits that the work of art and its world belong to each other, but on the contrary, aesthetic consciousness is

³⁷ *TM*, 49.

³⁸ Gadamer, 'Aesthetics and Hermeneutics' *GR*, 126.

³⁹ *TM*, 48.

⁴⁰ *TM*, 47.

⁴¹ 'the beauty of a human being [...], or the beauty of a horse or a building (such as a church, palace, armory, or summer-house) does presuppose the concept of the purpose that determines what the thing is [meant] to be' Kant Critique of Judgement 5:230

the experiencing (erlebende) center from which everything considered art is measured.⁴²

Gadamer's position contra what he calls a 'positivist methodological fiction,' becomes clear through a comparison of Kant's treatment of architecture with his own. For Kant, it is architecture's materiality that prevents it becoming an object of 'free play' for the imagination, and thus limits its potential for 'aesthetic experience.'⁴³ Gadamer, presents the artwork's 'extra-aesthetic' elements as evidence of its close relations to the life-world, proving fundamental to its experience.⁴⁴ With architecture, an art form so connected to the lived quotidian, this is crucial. It allows for works to achieve the disclosure of truth (for, in Gadamer's lexicon aesthetic experience is no longer the correct term of reference) asserting their relevance through the very *situated* and inimitable quality of the hermeneutic event of understanding.

Kant's 'subjectivising' approach has the result that the object need not possess a reality. Considered independently by the cognizing subject, the same aesthetic pleasure arises from the imagined work of art as the real presence of it.⁴⁵ As we will see in our chapter on play, Gadamer rejects this position. As a product in and of the world, the work of art keeps an intimate connection to life; thus, Gadamer rejects the annexing of works within the museum. What is important in Kant's aesthetics remains the cognitive correlate of the work itself, whereas for Gadamer, the loss of the work of art results in the irreparable damage of our understanding of subject matters. Where Kant stresses the cognitive content of the work of art, underwritten as

⁴² *TM*, 77.

⁴³ Indeed, in normative aesthetic theories, architecture often receives short shrift due to its immobility and context relations. However, Gadamer's point is that the dismissal of architecture on these grounds only stands because of the separation between 'art' and 'life' made concrete through Kantian 'aesthetic differentiation.'

⁴⁴ These 'extra-aesthetic elements' function experiential elements in the *event of understanding* and as a background against which the event of truth asserts itself. Gadamer provides the example of a staircase striking a viewer amidst the unfolding of a religious service, an instance that gains its poignancy in its ability to disrupt the usual flow of events, but not to the degree that they become discontinuous. Gadamer, 'The Artwork in Word and Image' *GR*, 221.

⁴⁵ *TM*, 81.

a production of genius, Gadamer stresses the ‘hermeneutic autonomy’ of the work itself, its unique ability to lay claim to its reader.⁴⁶

For Gadamer to maintain that the work of art is an ‘event of truth’, the refutation of aesthetic consciousness as an act of sensuous, subjective perception is paramount. In this regard he works to diffuse what he sees an illegitimate ‘aesthetic differentiation’ between the aesthetic object and other objects in the world. Gadamer’s insistence on the work of art as an interlocutor illustrates the depth of relations he perceives as possible in the relation between ‘historically effective consciousness’ and artworks.

Kelly describes Gadamer's objection to aesthetic consciousness a problem with how ‘the work is abstracted from the world in which it has meaning and now belongs only to the world of aesthetic consciousness: the work is autonomous but meaningless.’⁴⁷ Gadamer’s accounts of his interactions with art, and architecture, in particular, are personal and context-sensitive. These instances illustrate the unique role of the architectural in reuniting moments of beauty with the stream of lived experience for Gadamer. Since artworks for Kant arise from the ‘originality’ and ‘natural gifts’ of the artist as a genius that stimulate an undetermined free play of concepts in the viewer's mind architecture languishes at the bottom of his aesthetic hierarchy because of the requirement for ‘the appropriateness of its use for a voluntary end’ curtails the aesthetic potential of architecture through the requirement for functionality.⁴⁸

Gadamer makes a comparison between the mode of aesthetic consciousness and the mode of being of the picture, that which ‘frame it like a picture and

⁴⁶ Nicholas Davey, “Gadamer’s Aesthetics,” June 13, 2007, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gadamer-aesthetics/#SubsAestSubj>.

⁴⁷ Michael Kelly, “A Critique of Gadamer’s Aesthetics,” in *Gadamer’s Repercussions: Reconsidering Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. Bruce Krajewski (London: University of California Press, 2004), 111.

⁴⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (1790; repr., Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 200. For a more detailed account of Kant's hierarchy of the arts and, in particular, the treatment of architecture, see Paul Guyer, “Kant and the Philosophy of Architecture,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 69 (WINTER 2011): 7–19.

hang it up.’⁴⁹ Gadamer sees the museum as the physical analogue of the alienation that occurs through ‘aesthetic consciousness.’ Just as subjectivism alienates the aesthetic from other forms of judgement, the museum annexes artworks and the products of a culture within, ‘universal libraries’ that allow for the objects of a pre-determined ‘good taste’ to reside together.⁵⁰ Even the work of architecture is not immune to such effects. Gadamer describes the problematic nature of mechanical reproduction as operating similarly to the museum’s drive to amass collections, which divorces the work of architecture from its lived context.

Even art forms such as architecture that seem opposed to it are drawn into the simultaneity of aesthetic experience, either through the modern techniques of reproduction, which turn buildings into pictures, or through modern tourism, which turns travelling into browsing through picture books.⁵¹

Gadamer’s opposition to Kant works to reunite artworks, ‘historically effective consciousness’ and artists within the horizon of history. Gadamer’s repositioning of the artists serves to reconnect them to the interests of their lived context. He justifies this with recourse to the history of art, offering the architect as a fundamental reminder of art’s historical connection to commissions as the occasion for creation, regardless of the art-form.⁵² This historical observation works to countermand the transformation of Baumgarten’s ‘man among men’ into the archetypal bohemian. Gadamer argues that this acquisition of the ‘social features of an outsider’ erodes the connection between art and morality, alienating aesthetic experience in subjective imagination.⁵³ Gadamer’s reformulation of *phronesis* calls both artist and viewer to develop their engagement with the world as hermeneutic

⁴⁹ *TM*, 136.

⁵⁰ However, we should note that Gadamer still detects a distinctly ‘all-embracing festive quiet’ at the museum of Athens. Rather than a contradiction, this can be understood as a description of architecture’s ‘two-fold mediation’ that we will focus on in the following chapter.

Likewise, in educational theory, Hirsch’s collection of a selection of canonical texts within a ‘dictionary’ of cultural literacy runs counter to Gadamer’s account here. Gadamer, “The Relevance of the Beautiful,” 40.

⁵¹ *TM*, 79.

⁵² *TM*, 80.

⁵³ *TM*, 80.

praxis. The doctrine of ‘aesthetic consciousness’ annexes the artist from their lived context with the effect that, the contemporary observer sees the work as something miraculous.⁵⁴ This elevation of the work of genius to the status of the miraculous has the effect that it is ‘now said not that poets tell lies, but that they are incapable of saying anything true.’⁵⁵

It is Gadamer’s move *contra* aesthetic consciousness that allows for architecture to become ‘less problematical’ and thus return to the centre of “aesthetic questioning.”⁵⁶ It further creates the space for art’s claim to truth as *anamnesis* and the rehabilitation of the role of the artist over against the detachment of genius. These moves against the annexing of aesthetic judgement within the free-play of the imagination, *contra* the practice of collecting works within the museum and in the face of the annexing of ‘genius’ illustrated the importance of *Bildung* as a question of self-formation, and in our account, a sign of why the experience of architecture matters. Namely, not simply for the edification of refined, or more pleasurable taste, but for a deeper knowledge about essential human matters.

4.4 Intentionalism Reframed

Given the situated and relational operations of *Bildung*, the notions that an artwork’s meaning is a miraculous work of a genius or that it is knowable through a reconstruction of artistic intent is no longer tenable. Gadamer undertakes an emancipatory usurping of the author through his rejection of the *mens auctoris* as the source of authority in interpretation. This displacement allows artists themselves to find unexpected meanings within works of their creation and greater self-knowledge thereby. A rejection of the *mens auctoris* sets Gadamer’s hermeneutics at a distance from Schleiermacher and prompts objections from contemporary conservative

⁵⁴ The hermeneutic subject, instead, identifies the experience of art as wonderful, not for its miraculous status removed from reality, but for its capacity to reveal more about the real world. ‘to the observer the work seems to be a miracle, something inconceivable for anyone to make, is reflected as a miraculousness of creation by inspired genius.’ *TM*, 85.

⁵⁵ *TM*, 286.

⁵⁶ *TM*, 144.

hermeneutics prominently voiced by Hirsch. When applied to *Bildung*, such objections manifest themselves as a recourse to classicism in fixed curricula that aims to educate and thus elevate its pupils in a manner not dissimilar to the social mobility described by Von Humboldt.⁵⁷ In that the products of culture renew themselves by setting *Sache*, inexhaustible subject matters that concern being, into question, *Bildung* is a necessarily incomplete process for Gadamer. This partial disclosure is the ‘meaning’ expressed paradigmatically by art. This notion of ‘shared meaning’ sets a crucial difference between Gadamer and Hirsch. The placing of meaning and its emergence in between work and interpreter not only sets Gadamer’s work off against Hirsch’s but also places his approach at a distance from Reception Theory.⁵⁸

Hirsch describes verbal meaning as ‘whatever someone has willed to convey by a particular sequence of linguistic signs and which can be conveyed by means of those linguistic signs.’⁵⁹ Hirsch is sceptical of the power of language to produce meaning that Gadamer expresses. From a definition of meaning that Hirsch models upon verbal communication, he populates a theory of validity for the literary text. In conversation, the communicator deems their communicative attempt to be a success when their conversation partner receives their ‘willed meaning.’ With the literary text, this includes both conscious and unconscious meanings ‘willed’ by the author, placing an expansive notion of authorial intent as the source of accurate interpretation in Hirsch's hermeneutics. Gadamer reverses this process, moving from the experience of the work of art to the between-structure of interpersonal dialogues. What Hirsch perceives as an inner-contradiction presents itself as a productive tension in Gadamer’s account.

If the language of a text is not speech but rather language speaking its own meaning, then whatever that language says to us is its meaning. It means whatever we take it to mean. Reduced to its intelligible

⁵⁷ For example, the notion that a fixed canon of ‘things every American should know’ created by Hirsch Eric Donald Hirsch, Joseph F. Kett, and James S. Trefil, *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, III (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002).

⁵⁸ Gough, “Reception Theory of Architecture.”

⁵⁹ Eric D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (Chelsea, Michigan: Yale University Press, 1967), 31.

significance the doctrine of the autonomy of a written text is the doctrine of the indeterminacy of textual meaning.⁶⁰

Hirsch claims the inexhaustible meanings Gadamer attributes to the text fall into relativism. Gadamer's reformulation of *Bildung* as *praxis*, as a matter of self-disciplined and habituated openness, countermands the notion that meaning is a matter purely for the reader. Gadamer illustrates a faith in human reason as reasonableness that reflects optimism regarding human culture despite the insidious effects of technology and mass culture. Hirsch dismisses what he perceives to be 'Alice in Wonderland' reasoning on Gadamer's part and staunchly defends the notion of determinate meaning.⁶¹ The singular meaning that Hirsch identifies as the authors willing serves as a benchmark for the accuracy of each interpretation.

Even with the expansive notion of intent Hirsch provides (both conscious and subconscious meaning) it is unclear *whose* intent interpreters would have recourse to when considering the work of architecture. For example, an architect's willing may infuse the blueprints for a given architectural work. However, a cacophony of voices assert themselves in the building's final construction: artisans, designers, clients and critics making the identification of intentional meaning ever-more complex. With vernacular architectures, that make up most of our interactions with the built world, there is no discernible 'author' of whom we might speak.

Gadamer's account of *Bildung* as an instance of self-education displaces the artist as the source of interpretation verification. Gadamer's rejection of Hirsch relates directly to the forms of dialogue Gadamer rejects, as we saw in the previous chapter. As we cannot merely inhabit the intent of another, nor wander about in their historical horizon, the recreation of the artist's intentions is impossible, and therefore cannot be used to measure the accuracy of interpretation. Further, Gadamer claims that every moment of understanding is, in fact, one of interpretation, a consensus between text and interpreter on

⁶⁰ Hirsch, "Truth and Method in Interpretation," 494.

⁶¹ Hirsch, 495.

a given *Sache* which is not identical merely with comprehending the content of the work. Two key features that prevent interpretation from straying into the relativistic for Gadamer are consistent or concordant assertions of the ‘classical’ or eminent text and the accountability of ‘common sense.’

4.5 Eminent Texts and the *Sensus Communis*

Gadamer’s retention of the notion of the ‘classical’ and the accountability of the *sensus communis* countermand Hirsch’s accusation that Gadamer’s proposal that interpretations and understandings are always ‘different’ rather than better descends into meaningless relativism. Gadamer’s begins a discussion of the classical in *Truth and Method* as an example of the ‘truth’ of art and reprises the same in the ‘Afterword’ to his magnum opus as a response to his critics. Gadamer’s assertion of the classical as a paradigm is at the same time a critique of ‘classicism.’⁶² As a result, Gadamer’s definition of the classical identifies neither defined epoch nor a circumscribed style but an ontological category. The acknowledgement that an artwork is ‘a classic’ is an acknowledgement of its exemplary operation. The classical work marks itself out through its ‘fundamentally unlimited’ power to speak to ‘historically effective consciousness.’⁶³ ‘The “classical” is something raised above the vicissitudes of changing times and changing tastes.’⁶⁴ Gadamer resists the reduction of ‘the classical’ to a merely descriptive category, something he attributes to Hegel.⁶⁵ Marked out by a ‘timelessness’ that nonetheless attains status as a historical category, the classical work acts as an exemplar for the enduring claim of the work of art.⁶⁶ Gadamer’s account of the self-certainty with which we recognise the classic shows that the depth of our ‘sensitive-spiritual existence is an aesthetic resonance chamber that resonates with the voices that are constantly reaching us, preceding all explicit aesthetic judgment.’⁶⁷

⁶² François Renaud, “Classical Otherness: Critical Reflections on the Place of Philology in Gadamer’s Hermeneutics,” *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 56, no. 3/4 (2000): 361–88.

⁶³ *TM*, 301.

⁶⁴ *TM*, 299.

⁶⁵ *TM*, 298.

⁶⁶ *TM*, 301.

⁶⁷ Gadamer, ‘The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem’ *GR*, 82.

Gadamer describes the unique temporality of ‘the classical’ as a ‘notable mode of being historical’ that preserves itself through proving itself.⁶⁸ Typical of the resolution prevalent in his hermeneutics, the classical has a unique effect of reunifying ‘historically effective consciousness’ with the infinite horizon of history through its unique way of reposing a question of resonance. Gadamer writes that while the classical work often marks the high-point of an epoch, this does not provide the grounds to consign it to a merely historical category. Through the inexhaustibility that makes itself plain in the experience with the classical work, ‘historically effective consciousness’ connects to an ‘ultimate community’ of other interpreters, past and future implied in its experience.⁶⁹ ‘Cultural consciousness manifests an ultimate community and sharing with the world from which a classical work speaks.’⁷⁰

Gadamer’s account of the classical as an ontological-historical category entails an admission that contemporary works may attain the status of ‘the classical’ though the authority conferred by successive recognition. However, despite his admission that contemporary works of art may well become classics in the eyes of a later epoch, Gadamer’s refusal of the mass media creates an interesting case for architecture. As much as technology intervenes in the potential of language on a collective human scale, it also forecloses on the ‘humanity’ of children in their overexposure to it, Gadamer writes.⁷¹ Gadamer describes the experience of the classical as follows:

...the kind of truth we encounter in the experience of the beautiful does unambiguously make a claim to more than merely subjective validity. Otherwise it would have no binding truth for us. When I find something beautiful I think that it “is” beautiful. Or, to adapt a Kantian expression, I “demand everyone’s agreement.”⁷²

⁶⁸ *TM*, 301.

⁶⁹ Again, recalling our discussion of the mourning the untimely destruction of great works of architecture, the grief induced by their loss is not only invoked by the loss of an experience of weight and resonance their present cultural community, but by the destruction of an infinity receding horizon of future interpreters with whom a vital connection is lost.

⁷⁰ *TM*, 301.

⁷¹ Gadamer, “Education Is Self-Education,” 531. Also Gadamer, “The Incapacity for Conversation.”

⁷² Gadamer, “The Relevance of the Beautiful,” 18.

The demand for agreement here does not mean that each interpreter performs an interpretation that precisely mirrors that of another: this would be impossible given the account of horizons and effective history in our preceding chapters. Rather, the experience of the classical results from successive interpreters recognising the ‘classic’ work as an exemplar or as something that raises a subject matter exemplarily. Each interpreter recognises this authority, as we described in the previous chapter. The experience with the classical is an inexhaustible touchstone for interpretation, revealing the infinite complexity of the subject matter it communicates. The eminent text achieves its status through its exemplary operations by way of successive interpretive communities. The echo of repeated experience marks the interactions between an individual ‘historically effective consciousness’ and the work itself.⁷³ The process of *Bildung*, thus, is an essential component in creating a sense of belonging to the world and to a wider *oikumene*. Or as Gadamer has it ‘The hermeneutic comportment brought about by *Bildung* includes the realisation that one’s identity – one’s having-been and one’s projective possibility – is connected to the horizons and historical effect of others.’⁷⁴

Gadamer defines the *sensus communis* as ‘the sense that founds community’.⁷⁵ In choosing to begin *Truth and Method* with an account of the *sensus communis*, Gadamer underlines the significance this will have in countermanding the progress of modern scientific method that has eroded the possibilities of the *Geisteswissenschaften* to lay claim to truth. Gadamer provides a rich and detailed account of the development of *sensus communis* from its genesis in Stoicism through to the ‘intellectualising’ drive of the German Enlightenment. A recounting of this historiography, which recalls the analysis of prejudice and authority undertaken in the preceding chapter, will not be attempted here. He claims the retention of the ‘*sensus communis*

⁷³ Gadamer makes a similar claim regarding play, which obtains authority through repetition. *TM*, 108.

⁷⁴ Veith, *Gadamer and the Transmission of History*, 158.

⁷⁵ *TM*, 19.

is an element of social and moral being.’⁷⁶ Having noted this, we will instead focus on Gadamer's account of this concept as a form of judgement, which shares commonalities with his account of authority as a form of holistic judgement. Gadamer discusses instances of common sense as judgements between ‘proper and improper’, questioning its reduction to cognitive faculties or the application of universal principles.⁷⁷ The *sensus communis* here is intimately connected to taste as a ‘mode of knowing.’⁷⁸ Gadamer describes common sense as a form of tacit knowledge unobtainable through adherence to a strict method. He describes it instead as a question of the understanding of the relations between part (own judgement) and whole (the normative quality of one's membership to a community) that are operative at the moment of its deployment. In situating common sense in its application, Gadamer reconnects taste, (as prudent judgement) with moral knowledge and the recognition of the beautiful.⁷⁹ ‘Both taste and judgment evaluate the object in relation to a whole in order to see whether it fits in with everything else—that is, whether it is “fitting.” One must have a “sense” for it—it cannot be demonstrated.’⁸⁰

Gadamer critiques, therefore, a tendency he perceives in Kant to divorce the object of aesthetic perception from the judgement of it as tasteful by describing the instance of taste's endorsement as a matter of the free play of the cognitive capacities of the cognizing subject, and the posited agreement of a community that effects an abstraction away from the vagaries of situated subjectivity. Gadamer denies that Kant's *Critique of Judgement* makes up a cohesive ‘philosophy of art’ because it applies the structure elaborated within it to the decorative, the natural and the work of art, despite its reliance on the concept of genius.⁸¹

⁷⁶ *TM*, 30.

⁷⁷ Gadamer describes this as a misstep because: ‘A swindler who correctly calculates human weakness and always makes the right move in his deceptions nevertheless does not possess “sound judgment” in the highest sense of the term. Thus the universality (*Allgemeinheit*) that is ascribed to the faculty of judgment is by no means as common (*gemein*) as Kant thinks.’ *TM*, 30.

⁷⁸ *TM*, 33.

⁷⁹ *TM*, 35.

⁸⁰ *TM*, 35.

⁸¹ *TM*, 41.

4.6 Architecture and Integration

The necessity of integration between the transformative experience of *Bildung* and lived experience (*Erfahrung*) is of a piece with Gadamer's critique of the opposition between objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism and subjectivism are problematic for Gadamer in that he perceives them leading to one of two alternatives: either the elevation of 'the interpretation of the aesthetic-artistic dimension... as a sphere of higher spirituality and truth' or the relegation of art to 'groundlessness, irrelevance and superfluity.' Gadamer's reunion of *Bildung* and ethos rejects this unhelpful dichotomy since neither approach can do justice to the experience of the event of art.⁸² Gadamer's approach to the work of architecture as a reflection of culture shows the 'decorative function' we will examine in more detail in the following chapter.⁸³

[A] building continues to stand in the flood of life that surrounds it and there are always people who not only admire it, but integrate it into their lives. Something that was marginalized becomes drawn into the city and a new accent is set through which the old becomes new.⁸⁴

Approaches to education informed by Gadamer promote an engagement with both the new and the traditional.⁸⁵ When applied to Architecture, which, although a public art form, requiring travel for the encounter with what is other, this might give rise to a hasty conclusion that Gadamer's insistence on the event-like encounter with the new reinforces the very anti-elitism which we proposed he rejected in the early part of this chapter? A look to the

⁸² Stefano Marino, *Gadamer and the Limits of the Modern Techno-Scientific Civilization* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 98.

⁸³ 'Above all, however, the encounter with art belongs within the process of integration that is involved in all human life that stands within traditions.' Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics," in *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, ed. Richard E. Palmer, trans. David E. Linge, Topics in Historical Philosophy (1964; repr., Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 125.

⁸⁴ Gadamer, "Ende Der Kunst?," 81.

⁸⁵ In his account of *Bildungsprozess* Davey makes a similar claim: 'Insofar as the Bildungsprozess is both unpredictable and uncertain in its outcome, philosophical hermeneutics expresses a positive willingness to embrace the opportunities for understanding that are inherent in the ordinary and everyday uncertainties of our ontological condition.' *Unquiet Understanding*, 61.

hermeneut's own life suggests that the commonplace building, and iconic edifices, make up opportunities for hermeneutic experience for the well-attuned consciousness. When teaching at the University of Heidelberg, Gadamer campaigned to save a staircase so beautiful that it induced him to pause each time he ascended it.⁸⁶ Further evidence of the rediscovery of the close-at-hand appears in Gadamer's recounted experience of returning to Breslau after the war:

When I walked out of the undestroyed main train station, my gaze almost immediately fell upon a gigantic church, which I had never seen before in my whole life. In reality, all sorts of monstrosities from the late nineteenth century had crumbled since I had left, and the church appeared to be new.⁸⁷

This anecdote illustrates the relational quality of *Bildung* which is under examination here. The transformation of an edifice through the changing cityscape highlights how the lived environment of artworks can provoke or diminish their propensity to draw us into dialogue. It is hermeneutic *praxis* that leaves one open to the rediscovery of what is so familiar. Therefore, while it may be tempting to understand Gadamer's account of *Bildung* as an injunction to engage with the work of other cultures, the self-renewing nature of *Bildung* and the recognition of the infinite possibilities of dialogue can equally support an attentive openness to what surrounds us daily. Gadamer appears to understand architecture as uniquely placed among all the arts to affect this reintegration, emphasising this function through the account of the decorative that we will see in the next chapter.

The relocation of the Shakespeare memorial room to, within the newly constructed complex of Birmingham central library effects the same renewal of spatial energy with which Gadamer closes his Breslau anecdote. Now housed in the top floor of the post-modern library, the wood-lined room was a part of the original Birmingham central library constructed in 1882. Its

⁸⁶ Gens provides a brief description of the staircase here: "The Configuration of Space Through Architecture in the Thinking of Gadamer," 163.

⁸⁷ Gadamer, "Ende Der Kunst?," 81.

presence acts as a physical reminder of the city's history. Like the church amid the ruins of post-war Breslau, its preservation in the city centre permits an indexing of history through an engagement with physical space. It also acts as a referent of the city's history of a public ethos connected to knowledge access. The decision to place the room in this structure, and not, in line with a preservationist urge, to move the reading room to the museum complex at Avoncroft, represents a choice that reflects the ethos that informed its original construction, that is, a commitment to the public access to knowledge.



Figure 8 The Shakespeare Memorial Room, Birmingham City Library (image: By Bs0u10e01 - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39742937>)

Set between the 1930's Baskerville House, and the 1971 Birmingham Repertory Theatre, the structure is already placed in dialogue with the city's developmental history played out as vastly clashing styles. Lead architect Francine Houben aimed to beckon people in, reasserting the city centre as the site of knowledge.⁸⁸ Houben's analogy between library and cathedral is reflected in the library's organisation in layers, arranged around a central columnar void that runs through the structure. In a move that would please Gadamer, it is the Shakespeare reading room, rather than the extensive

⁸⁸ Houben is cited in the Guardian stating: 'the cathedrals of nowadays... the most public space in the knowledge economy' Rowan Moore, "Library of Birmingham – Review," *The Observer*, August 31, 2013, sec. Art and design, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/sep/01/birmingham-library-review-rowan-moore>.

scientific sections that sits at the summit of the structure esteemed from without by a gold encasing.

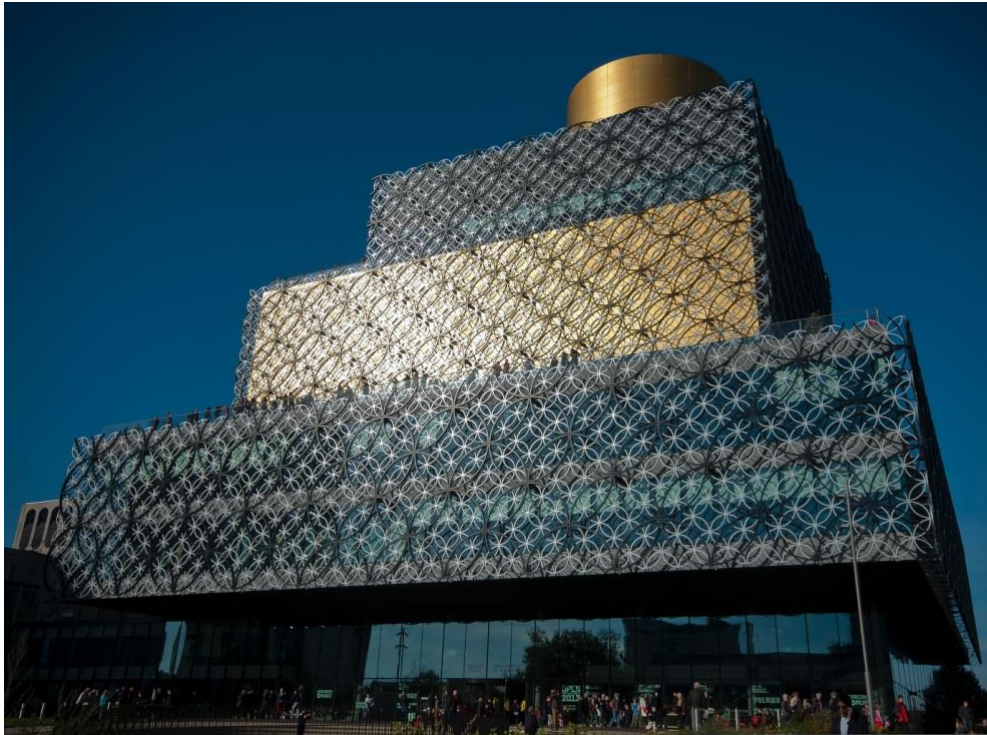


Figure 9 Birmingham City Library, Birmingham UK, 2013 (Architects: Mecanoo) (Image credit: By BsOu10e01 - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=29302020>)

The essence of the beautiful is to have a certain standing in the public eye. This in turn implies a whole form of life that embraces all those artistic forms with which we embellish our environment, including decoration and architecture. If art shares anything with the festival, then it must transcend the limitations of any cultural definition of art, as well as the limitations associated with its privileged cultural status.⁸⁹

The spatial energy in Gadamer's account of architecture is reflexive. It widens the remit of the work toward the 'fabric of life' out of which it arises, and extends the engagement of 'historically effective consciousness' out from it individual interactions and towards more comprehensive interactions between the individual and the widening cultural community of which they are a member. 'Sacred architecture functions as one of the most comprehensive forms in which a culture articulates itself through its built environment.'⁹⁰ Speaking of the artist, Gadamer writes:

⁸⁹ Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," 50.

⁹⁰ Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects*, 54.

Nevertheless, he does create a community, and in principle, this truly universal community (*oikumene*) extends to the whole world. In fact, all artistic creation challenges each of us to listen to the language in which the work of art speaks and to make it our own.⁹¹

Uniquely, the experience of architecture is a collaborative affair. By this, I mean that the reading of buildings is a shared activity. There is an uncanny sensation to experiencing an architectural space as a single, isolated viewer. For example, wandering through the Birmingham City Library unaccompanied would be a strange, and almost undesirable experience. Not only because such an expanse of space would dwarf an individual, but because public buildings demand collective use. The collectivity of architecture illustrates Gadamer's account of an *oikumene* created by the work of the artist with greater immediacy than other art forms. For instance, as the frustration of collective reading in educative setting attests, a novel might be bought to its full realisation by an isolated reader and the varying pace of other readers proves a distraction in one's attempt to enter the world of the text, already inhabited as it is by a world of new characters. As a further example, I found the experience of the Rothko works on display at the Tate Modern⁹² diminished by the swell of crowds also clamouring to see the collected Seagram murals in retrospective.⁹³ In the case of architecture, the presence of others (or their absence) qualitatively impacts the experience of a space. Popular culture exploits this, highly turning what might ordinarily be spaces for convivial social exchange into deserted caverns of foreboding⁹⁴

⁹¹ Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," 39.

⁹² Tate, "Rothko: Press Related to Past Exhibition," Tate, 2008, <https://www.tate.org.uk/press/press-releases/rothko>.

⁹³ As we will see in the following chapter, Gadamer states that, through its function as play, the work draws the viewer as player into a relation with itself that possesses a unique measure, which may account for this distancing effect.

⁹⁴ As Goldberger notes: 'Even a cathedral—which architectural pilgrims are most likely to visit at quiet times and which may confer extraordinary gifts of intimacy on the solitary visitor—rises to yet another level of meaning when we experience it filled with worshippers.' *Why Architecture Matters* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 16.

Architecture is more than a history of the practical needs of a cultural community, ‘need is just so many bananas,’ Louis Kahn reminds us.⁹⁵ Rather, as a response to collective desires, the hermeneutic experience of architecture makes us aware of such desire and its insatiable depth as individual need, and collective urge. In its site-specificity, architecture, like art, creates a need in a unique way, places something at issue. A hermeneutic of architectural experience that considers or better converses with the work of architecture as interlocutor highlights the irreplaceability of architectural works on grounds other than practical needs or unique formal qualities. As Warnke notes, our understanding of essential concepts like love is weaker without Shakespeare's Sonnets, but these are not sufficient for an exhaustive account of what it is to love.⁹⁶

4.7 Conclusion

In the preceding account, *Bildung* as an integrated process; that is, relational and intimately connected to human life. As a result, Gadamer marks this out against the subjectivism of ‘aesthetic consciousness’ and thus reconnects art, artists and artwork within one experiential horizon. Where the experience of effective history is illustrative of its operations, Gadamer's account of culture indicates its character as a process through its acquisition, as Veith notes.⁹⁷ *Bildung* constitutes a consistent cultivation connecting ‘historically effective consciousness’ to a community of interpreters and to a world already replete with meaning. As custodians of these rich sources of meaning, interpreters exist in onto-ethical relation to their cultural horizon. Such engagement, then, is never a case of self-interest because it involves the recognition that the built world, both familiar and unfamiliar, has something to say to us and wants to say something to us.

....in the experience of art we must learn to dwell upon the work in a specific way. When we dwell upon the work, there is no tedium

⁹⁵ Wendy Lesser, *You Say to Brick: The Life of Louis Kahn* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), 180.

⁹⁶ Warnke, *Gadamer*.

⁹⁷ Veith, *Gadamer and the Transmission of History*, 160.

involved, for the longer we allow ourselves, the more it displays its manifold riches to us. The essence of our temporal experience of art is learning how to tarry in this way. And perhaps it is the only way that is granted to us finite beings to relate to what we call eternity.⁹⁸

Gadamer's account of *Bildung* shares the reciprocal, productive tensions suggested in each of the preceding chapters. The finite horizon of 'historically effective consciousness' creates *dynamis* in his account of the hermeneutic circle in the sense that, in continuing the rejection of essentialism that is illustrative of his phenomenological roots, Gadamer allows for the self-renewing function of his philosophical system on both an individual and collective level. The infinite horizon which envelops the projected horizon of each 'historically effective consciousness' creates the possibility of understanding's emergence, and the differentiation of prejudices thereby. As Warnke notes, the process of deepening understanding that constitutes *bildung* is one of broadening horizons. She writes: '[T]he "cultured" individual is one who can place his or her life and concerns within a larger perspective or, to use Gadamer's term, "horizon."' ⁹⁹

As we saw above, Gadamer repeats the homology between the structure of individual engagements with tradition and epochs of history with themselves. Just as tradition's critical engagement with themselves maintained their rude health, *Bildung* also demands the considered engagements of those caught in its expansive horizon. As individuals and whole cultural communities gain the differentiated understanding he indicated through the habituated *praxis* of hermeneutical openness to the products of their own traditions and that of alien horizons, so too does their ability to acquire these broader viewpoints develop. Looking to architectural history, we might argue, with Gadamer, that the reactions against modernism's drive toward 'international style' provide 'grist to his mill.' Architectural movements based on scientific universalism, that appeared to intend a liberation from the parochial historical horizons of their situation, can be analysed as actively foreclosing on the opportunity for genuine interactions between cultures that maintain their difference through

⁹⁸ Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," 45.

⁹⁹ Warnke, "Solidarity and Tradition in Gadamer's Hermeneutics," 173.

the nuanced notion of consensus we provided as a counter to Habermas in our preceding chapter.

While experience is something ‘no one can be spared’ the depth and richness of that experience can become atrophied by hubristic claims to connoisseurship or a refusal to risk certain presuppositions.¹⁰⁰ The reorientation of *Bildung* towards ethics guards against this process. If *Bildung* is ‘an education to art by art,’ architecture suggests itself as a force that might play an emancipating role. If deeper engagement with a cultural world might lead to a richer understanding of self and community, then architecture, as a form of art pervasive in its accessibility, appears a ready means for the hermeneutic subject to educate themselves thereby. Gadamer transposes the ‘positive ethical motif’ he identifies in Vico in to his philosophical hermeneutics to re-establish the connection between artist and community, and between ‘historically effective consciousness’ and a broader community of interpreters.¹⁰¹ Gadamer’s account of *sensus communis* and its artistic corollary *das Klassische* make his approach to architecture a possible corollary to Harries’ explication of the *Ethical Function of Architecture*, in that it describes the ethics of attentive and responsive engagement that must bring such cohesive architectural projects into being.¹⁰² As Warnke astutely notes, *Bildung* here constitutes not a methodology, but a way of approaching art attentively, which like the relations between ‘historically effective consciousness’ and prejudice are perfected only in their consistent application.

If tact, taste and judgement cannot be codified as methods, if the concept of *Bildung* itself provides no clear principles or criteria for selection and discrimination, all remain part of a practical knowledge concerned not simply with recognising “truths” but knowing how to

¹⁰⁰ Veith, *Gadamer and the Transmission of History*, 156.

¹⁰¹ *TM*, 20.

¹⁰² Like Tradition, cultural horizons require the interpretive acts of ‘historically effective consciousness’ in order to prevent their ossification. This requires a consistent open engagement between the objects of culture and their interpreters.

live, what to incorporate into one's life and self-understanding and what to reject.¹⁰³

Gadamer's recourse to *phronesis* or 'practical reason,' is an organic step following the consideration of a philosophy of art reunited with the concerns of 'morality' after separation which Gadamer perceives in his critique of Kant's aesthetics. In introducing the notion of practical reason as fostered in the responsive engagement with the objects of culture, Gadamer's account treads a careful line between relativism on the one hand and ethnocentrism on the other. However, the consideration of *Bildung* as a form of education raises the same problems as Aristotle's accounts of habituation achieved through the exemplar of the *phronimos*.¹⁰⁴ If the artwork obtains the same pedagogical position as the wise man of Aristotelian virtue theory they remain always at risk of pre-emptive silencing by an insensitive 'historically effective consciousness' who fails to take their claims or questions seriously.¹⁰⁵

A similar tension reveals itself concerning the practical application of *Bildung*, as we saw in our account of tradition in the preceding chapter. 'Historically effective consciousness' is levelled with the responsibility of critical engagement with tradition through experiences of and with the same tradition is made possible by the very fact of effective history. The process of becoming *gebildete* operates similarly. Through engagements with the products of culture, 'historically effective consciousness' perfects its ability to listen attentively to the ways that artworks call subject matters into question. However, as works of architecture are increasingly bemoaned for their homogeneity, we might ask whether this process of recognising truth becomes nothing more than a regression to the mean? In answer to this question, Gadamer, for whom the hermeneutic circle is virtuous, not vicious, would undoubtedly answer in the negative. Not only because of the hope which he reiterates several times is necessary, but also with recourse to the

¹⁰³ Warnke, "Solidarity and Tradition in Gadamer's Hermeneutics," 160.

¹⁰⁴ Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics, 1152a

¹⁰⁵ The first of the three dialogue types recalled in our previous chapter.

example of the classical. The ontological structure of the classical as a source of inexhaustible ontological valences prevents such backsliding. While the classical exists in any art form, then so too does the possibility of an experience of a paradigmatic dialogue experience. Furthermore, the onto-ethical relations between *Bildung* and *gebildete*, firmly places responsibility for the health of a cultural milieu with those that live in and with it.

On a final analysis, Gadamer's account of *Bildung* is reflective of the descriptive and normative character of his hermeneutics. A sensitivity to the effects of *Bildung* and a concomitant commitment to *Bildungsprozess* mirror what Houben indicates in her library design as an 'interlocking a vision of the future with a thinking of the future, but connected to the memories of the city.' *Bildung's* fidelity to the past as a knowledge-source is attenuated by an awareness that such knowledge is held lightly, open to the riches latent in each encounter with the world.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Amy Frearson, "'Libraries Are the Most Important Public Buildings' - Francine Houben," August 29, 2013, <https://www.dezeen.com/2013/08/29/libraries-are-the-most-important-public-buildings-francine-houben/>.

5 Decoration and Occasion as Ontological Categories

5.1 Introduction

At last, the Marquis challenged her to come to his little house, a *petit maison*.....She did not realise that no other place in Paris or all of Europe was as charming or as artfully conceived for love.¹

In Jean-François de Bastide's tale *La Petit Maison*, the heavily ornamented property of the Marquis De Trémicouer tragically seduces the initially resistant Méliete through its schema of ornamentation. Thought to be a collaboration between architectural scholar Blondel and de Bastide, this novella presents architecture as a means of seduction through an interpolation of erotic description and pastoral scenes.² An ornament so rich it serves to eclipse the function of the space as a dwelling, reducing it to pure representation, devoid of function. Here, ornament overtakes the work itself. This understanding of ornament as a seditious force is radicalised in modernity, where Sullivan's 'form follows function' doctrine is uncritically adopted as a means of justifying minimalist approaches.³

In Gadamer's account, the occasional and the decorative regain their ontological foundation.⁴ This means that, against conventional notions of the decorative as a superfluous addition to the work of architecture, it is a part of its being, and indeed, an element of the being of all works of art.⁵ In this chapter we undertake a systematic account of the decorative, the occasional and the related concept of style in Gadamer's philosophy of art, focussing on the application of these concepts to examples provided by Gadamer himself

¹ Jean-François de Bastide, *The Little House: An Architectural Seduction*, trans. Rodolphe El-Khoury (1879; repr., New Jersey: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996).

² Juhani Pallasmaa, "Eroticism of Space," *Oz* 30 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.4148/2378-5853.1451>.

³ A closer look at Sullivan's claim however, implies a far more nuanced definition. Although an extended account of Sullivan's approach cannot find accommodation here, his claims regarding propriety re-echo in the reading of Loos and Gadamer on decoration that we will engage with in this chapter.

For an account of Sullivan's

⁴ *TM*, 144.

⁵ Gens, "The Configuration of Space Through Architecture in the Thinking of Gadamer," 158.

and to contemporary works of architecture. Furthermore, Gadamer's relation of the concept of style to decoration allows for a widening of the discussion of decoration and decorum to include the relation between 'historically effective consciousness' and the work of architecture.⁶

As Riisberg and Munch note, a consideration of ornament and decoration is timely since in design theory the notion of 'appropriate' ornamentation as applied to products, buildings and objects has increasingly been discussed as a means of increasing their life span.⁷ The notion of re-using spaces through retro-fitting is something we will consider in relation to two examples in the following chapter in relation to Gadamer's account of 'play,' 'festival' and 'symbol.' Although Gadamer himself does not discuss the scope for fitting ornamentation as a means decelerating consumption, the connection philosophical hermeneutics re-establishes between the work and a 'whole of life' makes Gadamer an interlocutor in this emerging discussion.⁸ In addition, the notion of re-using spaces through retro-fitting is something we will consider in relation to two examples in the following chapter in relation to Gadamer's account of 'play,' 'festival' and 'symbol.'

In the first part of this thesis, we considered elements of the 'horizon' within which the event of understanding takes place. Over the following three chapters that make up the second part of this study, we consider specific terms Gadamer applies to the experience of art and the work of architecture in particular. Thus, we begin with a consideration of the 'occasional' and the 'decorative' as ontological categories. This short section within *Truth and Method* is the place within Gadamer's magnum opus where the experience

⁶ Although Gadamer explicitly cites the decorative as a function of architectural works, as 'their perspective' this concept has received little attention in writing on Gadamer and architecture. There is little reference to this in Snodgrass and Coyne, and neither ornament nor the decorative receive an entry in the Gadamer dictionary.

⁷ Vibeke Riisberg and Anders V. Munch, "Decoration and Durability: Ornaments and Their 'Appropriateness' from Fashion and Design to Architecture," *Text*, June 1, 2014, <https://doi.org/info:doi/10.14434/artifact.v3i3.3918>.

⁸ Although issues of sustainability have not found space in this thesis, it is certainly an area where Gadamer's approach to art and his acknowledgement of the environment might be brought into fruitful interaction in future research. Gadamer cites the 'far-reaching effects of technology.' And calls for a greater appreciation of the negative impacts of the same.

architecture is most explicitly addressed. In the following two chapters, we will explore the concepts of ‘play’, ‘festival’ and ‘symbol,’ and finally the extension of textuality to include all art forms.

With the rejection of ‘aesthetic consciousness’ that we explored in the previous chapter, Gadamer moves the question of the architectural to the centre of aesthetic concerns. This entails a reorientation of the notion of decoration against connotations of superfluity into an ontological category.⁹ Here, we will examine Gadamer’s claim that architecture’s perspective ‘is that of decoration’ and the consequences of upholding this claim for the position of architecture comparative to its conventional position at the bottom of aesthetic hierarchies.¹⁰

Central to Gadamer’s reading of architecture is a re-conceptualisation of ornament and decoration as a necessary element of the ontology of art, exemplified by the work of architecture. In great works of architecture, it is the countenance of the whole building, including the scheme of decoration that bears forth its meaning to the contemporary viewer. Decoration itself is more than embellishment; it keeps a sense of propriety that resonates through the whole work. As with the notion of tradition and *Bildung*, Gadamer’s reorientation of the decorative as an ontological-category calls conventional understandings of the role of ornamentation into question. This serves to move decoration, ornament and the related concept of style to a more central role in the understanding of experiences between ‘historically effective consciousness’ and the work of art.

Ornament enjoys mixed fortunes within architectural theory, variously divorced from the architectural work, overlooked or marred by calls for its eradication. Contrary to such pejorative implications, Gadamer presents a rehabilitation of ornament, a reversal of the fortunes of architecture within the hierarchy of the arts, and moves towards a reunion of *ethos* and *poiesis*.

⁹ *TM*, 144.

¹⁰ *TM*, 157.

He achieves this through a reunification of the artist with society, of the architect with other artists and of decoration with representation itself. In stressing the role of art as a means of public consecration of a particular purpose or event Gadamer states:

If one considers these special forms as possessing exemplary significance, one sees certain forms of art become central which, from the point of view of Erlebnis art, are peripheral: namely those whose own content points beyond them to the of a context determined by them and for them. The greatest and most distinguished of these forms is architecture.¹¹

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer makes the claim that architecture performs a ‘twofold mediation’ and defines this capacity as unique to architecture within the pantheon of the arts¹². Like the other arts, architecture reveals itself as play, festival and symbol, which we discuss in the following chapter, however, the decorative is, for Gadamer exemplarily executed by architecture. Such a claim deserves careful consideration as means of expressing the unique quality of architectural experiences and to differentiate between visual art and architecture, which frequently interpolate one another.¹³

Before exploring this claim for architecture, made in *Truth and Method* and restated in various other texts, an exploration of the conventional narrative around ornamentation and decoration in architecture is apt. The Vitruvian connection between decoration and decorum underpins claims that decoration in architecture should befit its functional, typological and epochal situation. In this chapter the decorative as an ontological category will stand in contrast to these notions of decoration as a frivolous fancy or an individual element isolable via a stratification that isolates the decorative schema from the built whole. I will pose necessary decoration here as a crucial contribution to understanding architecture’s capacity to quietly characterise experience for

¹¹ *TM*, 155.

¹² *TM*, 157.

¹³ Hal Foster, *The Art-Architecture Complex* (London: Verso, 2011), 216.

those living in and amongst them. This will point to Gadamer's rejection of the Pevsnerian line in a way that leaves open the prospect of widening his approach to architecture to understand the city as a whole (an entity beset by the same accusations of decline and crisis as architecture itself.)¹⁴

In applying the concept of ornamentation to adornments such as jewellery, Gadamer provides the key for thinking his account of the decorative function of architecture, its 'occasionality' and the relation to 'historically effective consciousness.' This is essential in understanding the form of relation required between the hermeneutic subject and built space. This will frame the discussion in our next chapter of how 'play' unfolds between 'historically effective consciousness' and the work of architecture.

As the focus of this chapter is a close and systematic reading, we tackle each of the concepts in this section consecutively, beginning with the concept of the 'occasional.'¹⁵ Following this we progress to a discussion of decoration and the related concepts of ornament and style. We will consider examples Gadamer himself provides to evidence the experience of architecture and suggest contemporary works that are illustrative of his hermeneutic of decoration and ornament.

5.2 Occasionality

Gadamer's account of the occasional is of a piece with his riposte to 'aesthetic consciousness,' which we examined in relation to his account of *Bidung* and a means of overcoming the distancing effects of historicism, which forgets the work of art's identity as such through an excessive concern with historical details.¹⁶ Gadamer describes 'occasionality' as something that 'belongs to the work's own claim and is not something forced on it by its interpreter.'¹⁷ By this, he refers to all works determined by the 'context for which they are intended' of which architecture constitutes a prime example.¹⁸ This claim

¹⁴ Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*.

¹⁵ *TM*, 144.

¹⁶ Di Cesare, *Gadamer*, 58.

¹⁷ *TM*, 144.

¹⁸ *TM*, 144.

seems self-evident in architecture; where collective needs prompt the commissioning of hospitals, courthouses, galleries and municipal buildings. It is because of this explicit functionality that Gadamer draws a sharp distinction between these works and the works considered by the immanent sensation focused subjectivising force that is *Erlebniskunst*. Because of their contextual ties, works of architecture present exemplary resistance to the tendency of aesthetic consciousness to consider the perception of art as a matter of the operations of an isolated consciousness. Gadamer illustrates such difference through a contrast between the work and the model as a ‘disappearing schema.’¹⁹ In the portrait's case, Gadamer argues, its ‘occasionality’ as portraiture is plain ‘even if we do not know the person portrayed.’²⁰ ‘It remains as yet indeterminate; each successive articulation embodies but does not exhaust this enduring ideal.’²¹ With architecture, Gadamer implies that occasionality is expressed in the sense of a ‘tension’ between spatial relations that implicate the building’s context of creation.

With respect to the element of occasionality, these phenomena represent particular cases of a general relationship that obtains for the being of the work of art: namely that it experiences a continued determination of its meaning from the “occasion” of its coming-to-presentation (*Zur-Darstellung-Kommen*).²²

Gadamer describes this in the sense of a particular ‘tension’ between the elements of the building in the Cathedral of St Gallen. Where the building’s ‘answer’ ‘mediated through architectural history’ is experienced in the ‘tension between nave and aisle.’²³

Gadamer cites the performative works of art, music and theatre, to illustrate how performance ‘takes place,’ wherein the score is reduced to a ‘set of directions’ meaning that these art forms can exploit art’s ‘occasionality’ most

¹⁹ *TM*, 145.

²⁰ *TM*, 146.

²¹ Carroll Guen, “Gadamer, Objectivity, and the Ontology of Belonging,” *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review / Revue Canadienne de Philosophie* 28, no. 4 (ed 1989): 593, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0012217300012531>.

²² *TM*, 147.

²³ Gadamer, “Über das Lesen von Bauten und Bildern.”

explicitly. Yet, Gadamer states that this claim holds too for the ‘plastic arts.’ To this end, he stresses that ‘[t]he viewer today not only sees things in a different way, he sees different things.’²⁴ This means that, as with the connection to a ‘whole of life,’ Gadamer stressed in the critical rejection of aesthetic consciousness and the concomitant ‘nomadic’ existence of the ‘artist as genius,’ the separation between the work and its effects can no longer hold. Therefore, we cannot think of works existing ‘for themselves’ and simply presenting different effects because our temporal distance from them differs or we return to them perhaps with greater contextual knowledge.

The occasionality of the work of art, its difference as an event encountered uniquely in each interaction with ‘historically effective consciousness’ means for Gadamer that, ‘[a] work of art always has something sacred about it.’²⁵ In the sense that the work of art evidences deeper knowledge about the world, and its destruction possesses a sense of sacrilege. Gadamer thus writes ‘[t]o destroy works of art is to violate a world protected by its holiness.’²⁶ Gadamer uses religious concepts here to stress the inimitable nature of the experience of art. Thus its destruction can be seen as an act of ‘sacrilege’ that destroys an opportunity for a deeper kind of knowing. He describes the experience of art as akin to transcendence.²⁷

Gadamer stresses this in the case of the work of architecture by maintaining a strict separation between the work and its meaning and the human action of consecrating or instituting it. With architecture, it is not the ‘grand opening’ of a space, or the consecration of a church for example, that secures its

²⁴ *TM*, 148.

²⁵ *TM*, 150.

²⁶ *TM*, 151.

²⁷ ‘And in art I see things which are very similar to transcendence. It's what we feel as the promise of a *heile Welt*, a blessed world.’ “Without Poets There Is No Philosophy,” *Radical Philosophy*, February 1995, 69 edition, 35.

This contains echoes of Louis Kahn’s reflection on the experience of the roman baths at Caracalla: ‘— the ceiling swells a hundred fifty feet high. It was a marvelous realization on the part of the Romans to build such a space. It goes beyond function...we know that we can bathe just as well under an eight-foot ceiling as we can under a hundred-fifty foot ceiling, but I believe there’s something about a hundred-fifty foot ceiling that makes a man a different kind of man.’ Robert McCarter, *Louis I. Kahn* (London: Phaidon, 2005), 223.

function as that particular type of building, but rather a quality that resides within the work itself. Function here belongs ‘to the work’s own content’ rather than the ‘public act of consecration or unveiling that assigns its purpose.’ By this, Gadamer appears to infer that the singular ceremonial action of opening a building or space undertaken by an ‘authority’ is not sufficient to secure its meaning. To do so would undermine his account of meaning as emergent in ‘die Mitte’ (the mid-point) between work and interpreter. Nonetheless, he maintains that the ‘reader’ of the work as text is essential in bringing forth the meaning of the work itself. In this sense Gadamer appears to claim that each interpretation constitutes an inauguration of the works meanings, but fails to provide clear criteria of where this meaning is located. In ‘The Artwork in Word and Image’ he will describe this, somewhat obscurely as the ‘vague statement’ that the building makes.²⁸ This may be explained through a differentiation between the works function as bringing *die Sache* to light and the its function as building type in the lifeworld, but this would seem to run counter to Gadamer’s claims above in respect of occasionality. Further the notion of a work making a ‘vague statement’ and the experience of art as an interruption seem contradictory. In our following chapter, we will consider examples of retrofitting works of architecture that support this notion of occasionality as opposed to the reductive view of architecture restricted to essential building types.²⁹

If one considers these special forms as possessing exemplary significance, one sees that certain forms of art become central which, from the point of view of *Erlebnis* art, are peripheral: namely all those whose content points beyond them to the whole of a context determined by them and for them. The greatest and most distinguished of these is *architecture*.³⁰

It is in the shaping of context that the work of architecture possesses a fundamental role in Gadamer’s philosophy of art. It shows a profound rejection of a form of relation to works of art that Gadamer resists for their

²⁸ Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image’ *GR*, 396.

²⁹ *TM*, 155.

³⁰ *TM*, 155.

subjectivising tendencies and, in so doing, highlights how more ‘self-sufficient’ art forms also depend on a lived context for their continued existence. Architecture underwrites the ‘occasionality’ of other art forms through its ‘element of mediation’ ‘without which the work of art has no real “presence.”’³¹ This account of occasionality mirrors the co-determination between interpreter and text implied in our account of tradition and the ontological obligations within Gadamer’s account of *Bildung*. It serves to reiterate Gadamer’s demand that ‘historically effective consciousness’ ‘participate immediately’ in order to ‘share in life’ in the way made possible by the work of art.³² Here, decoration will become part of the animating function of architecture as opposed to a passive or superimposed element added to the built structure.

It is these situational shifts, the demand to see each interaction with the work of art as a new event that justifies Gadamer’s recourse to *phronesis*. Since each application of hermeneutic understanding is a unique instance, it is precisely through this *prudentia* that understanding is deepened. It further serves to underline Gadamer’s rejection of methodological approaches to interpreting art that undermine this event-like encounter character. Gadamer considers the ontological foundation as performing an essential role in dismantling a ‘one-sided relationship’ between the artwork and the interpreter.³³ On the model of aesthetic consciousness, the artwork, existing *an sich* remained a constant source of the same experience, and therefore successive interpretations retained constancy, and related to the work as a ‘closed whole’ could be hierarchically ordered.

For the architectural viewer, Gadamer’s account of the work of art as occasional serves to emphasise that the ‘dominant term in philosophical hermeneutics is *participation*.’³⁴ The work of architecture, or indeed any other work of art, cannot obtain its proper existence without the attention and

³¹ *TM*, 156.

³² *TM*, 215.

³³ *TM*, 141.

³⁴ Davey, *Unfinished Worlds*, 103.

attentiveness of ‘historically effective consciousness.’ This demands an active receptivity and participation on the part of the ‘historically effective consciousness’ in order to attend to the ‘truth-claim’ of the work of architecture. In the following chapter the embodied character of this interaction with the work will be explored in more detail. In relation to the experience of the work of architecture, this receptive curiosity opens a space for genuine dialogue between work and viewer without the excessive demand that the viewer become an ‘expert’ on the entire history of the work itself.³⁵ Given the double-mediation of the work of architecture as decorative, this would seem to place an extra demand on the attentive viewer to recover the unique meaning of the work against the claim of the other artworks existent in a given space or the other activities undertaken there.³⁶ The occasionality of art and its close tie to context foreshadow Gadamer’s claims regarding architecture’s role in creating the contexts in which other art works have their being. It is in this sense that he describes the decorative ‘perspective’ of architecture.³⁷

Gadamer stresses the tension between the individual built element and the whole to which it is connected. The Weinbrenner staircase is an instance of a built element that held the capacity to prompt a pause in the philosopher’s traversing of the space in his daily interaction with it. This further infers a the necessity of movement within Gadamer’s account of the encounter with architecture. The viewer must both negotiate the space of the work of architecture in order to explore its possibilities, but likewise individual elements may act to arrest ‘historically effective consciousness’ or disturb the ebb and flow of events.³⁸

³⁵ Indeed, Gadamer describes the expert as ‘too far away’ from the work itself. Gadamer, “Architektur Als ‘Zuwachs’ an Sein.,” 248.

³⁶ Our discussion here is an extension of a brief discussion of architecture and decoration previously published in the following: Lucy Elvis, “Hermeneutics Architecture and Belonging,” *Philosophy @Lisbon* Special Issue Philosophy and Architecture, no. 5 (2016): 78.

³⁷ *TM*, 144.

³⁸ The ways in which the need for embodied exploration of the work of architecture is implied in Gadamer’s account is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

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For example, in the midst of a cultic purpose being carried out in a room of a church, an aesthetically significant staircase can play an enhancing role in the fulfilment of one's life.³⁹



Figure 10 Pergamon Altar, Fritz Wolff, 1901, Berlin Germany Pergamon-Altar By © Raimond Spekking / CC BY-SA 4.0 (via Wikimedia Commons), CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12179>

In his interview on architecture, Gadamer problematises the Pergamon Altar as ‘something difficult to accept,’ since for Gadamer it constitutes a work of architecture transformed into a museum artefact.⁴⁰ Riven from the whole of which it was once a part, this fragment posed a unique challenge to Gadamer. Gadamer refocuses the part-whole relationship away from the traditional hermeneutic focus of salience in the interpretation of an individual text toward a whole, building on the account of occasionality discussed above.⁴¹ Thus, the project of understanding a text is fundamentally incomplete.

³⁹ “The Artwork in Word and Image- So True, so Full of Being!,” in *The Gadamer Reader, A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, ed. and trans. Richard E. Palmer, Topics in Historical Philosophy (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 221.

⁴⁰ Gadamer, “Architektur Als ‘Zuwachs’ an Sein.,” 246.

⁴¹ Davey, *Unfinished Worlds*, 103.

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A creative process randomly and arbitrarily broken off cannot imply anything obligatory. From this it follows that it must be left to the recipient to make something of the work. ⁴²

As we will see in Chapter Six, the understanding of the part-whole structure at play in the work of architecture demands an embodied exploration of the work itself. The necessity of participation to understand the part-whole relationship at work supports Gadamer's emphasis on *Erfahrung* over *Erlebnis*, a form of participative venturing-knowledge as opposed to knowing ascertained by the immanent sensations of acts of apprehending consciousness. In reintroducing this term *contra* Dilthey, Gadamer intends to stress the fact that 'experience as a whole is not something anyone can be spared.'⁴³ Referencing *Aeschylus* Gadamer stresses the way in which understanding can only be acquired through experience as lived. Gadamer critiques *Erlebnis* as something equated with subjective possession as something one has. Rather he proposes experience as something undergone, in order to stress the open-ended and infinitely revisable outcomes of experience itself. Architecture plays a supporting role in bringing about the occasionality of other forms of art. It is for this reason that Gadamer describes the 'perspective' of the work of architecture as 'decoration.' We will now move our discussion to Gadamer account of the decorative and its relation to architectural theory.

5.3 Decoration

Like the concept of tradition and culture, Gadamer's project in *Truth and Method* 'recuperates' the decorative.⁴⁴ Gadamer's account of decoration reunites architecture with its 'whole of life' by rendering the concept a question of both visual and spatial relations.⁴⁵ Gens and Kidder stress the way in which Gadamer reunites the notion of decoration and decorum.⁴⁶ Harries too notes that this task of creating a building 'fitting' to the environment is a

⁴² *TM*, 86.

⁴³ *TM*, 364.

⁴⁴ *TM*, 137.

⁴⁵ *TM*, 157.

⁴⁶ Gens, "The Configuration of Space Through Architecture in the Thinking of Gadamer," 158; Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects*, 29.

prevalent theme in early architectural theory. However, this is only half of the effect of Gadamer's account of the occasional and the decorative. Here too, 'historically effective consciousness' is implied in his account of personal ornamentation as a means of how one 'presents oneself' to the work. This supports Davey's account of the attentiveness required by Gadamer's philosophy of art. We can see this in Gadamer's expansion of the notion of style away from its privation in personal or subjective taste, arising from its association with fashion, and can recognise the close ties between judgments of taste and moral knowing brokered in his account of *Bildung*.

To distinguish Gadamer's account of the decorative's ontological foundation, we will first look briefly at two competing assumptions regarding the nature of decoration. First, the view that decoration is somehow separate from the building 'proper' and, second, that decoration can be defined by its superfluity. The first position is taken up in relation to the architectural in Ingarden's Husserlian account of the work of architecture. Here a process of stratification renders the 'aesthetic' component of the work itself a part of a different 'ontic stratum' than the material structure of the work as a whole.

For whoever is not a member of such a community and has no understanding of the meaning (and the force) of the pertinent acts there is simply no 'church' or 'flag'; for him it is a matter merely of a heap of stones or a piece of cloth. Consequently certain things can appear to him to be incomprehensible or useless, but he can neither honour them nor hate them, and out of hatred destroy them.⁴⁷

On such a view, the viewer appreciates the aesthetic meaning of a work as a separable element of the built whole. This entails a separation between the 'group of atoms' that make up the work's material presence and its aesthetic qualities. Gadamer's account of occasionality and decoration challenge this position. Instead, in his philosophical hermeneutics the inseparability of the object from its context means that 'themselves lay claim to their place' and,

⁴⁷ Roman Ingarden, *Ontology of the Work of Art: The Musical Work, the Picture, the Architectural Work, the Film*, trans. Raymond Meyer (1962; repr., Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1989), 260.

even where the object is wrested from its context and housed in a museum ‘the trace of their original purpose cannot be effaced. It is part of their being because their being is presentation.’⁴⁸

Decoration, in Gadamer’s account, is a part of the being of architecture rather than something perceived or overlooked by a spectator as is suggested in Ingarden’s account of ‘stratification.’⁴⁹ In reconnecting the decorative with a lived context, Gadamer *recovers a connection* between architecture and a ‘fitting’ contextual relation that starts with Vitruvius. In the Vitruvian account, *decorum* is determined by three contextual considerations: convention (*statione*), the dedication of a space; usage (*consuetudine*), appropriate relations between the elements of a building; and nature (*natura*), the interrelations between site and structure.⁵⁰ Alberti would later claim that an ornament was ‘auxiliary light and complement to beauty ... something attached or additional’ and also a means of marking out architectural hierarchies.⁵¹ For example, within the city the addition of ornament worked as a means of elevating particular works to a ‘fitting’ status within its environment:

sacred works [should be] as ornate as possible: sacred works must be furnished for the gods, secular ones only for man. The latter, being the less dignified, should concede to the former, yet still be ennobled with their own details of ornament.⁵²

Akin to the Vitruvian notion of *natura*, Gadamer notes the need for a building to exist in harmony with its surroundings, stating that, ‘[a] building is not a

⁴⁸ *TM*, 155.

⁴⁹ Amie Thomasson, “Roman Ingarden,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2019 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2019), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/ingarden/>.

⁵⁰ Marcus Pollio Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (London: Oxford University Press, 1914).

For a historical overview of *decorum* in architectural theory see: Peter Kohane and Michael Hill, “The Eclipse of a Commonplace Idea: Decorum in Architectural Theory,” *Arq: Architectural Research Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (March 2001): 63–77, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135501001105>.

⁵¹ Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Neil Leach, Joseph Rykwert, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 156.

⁵² Alberti, 244.

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work of art if it stands just anywhere, as a blot on the landscape.’⁵³ For example, Gadamer critiqued the Ruhr University campus for the way in which the potential for building a beautiful campus was over taken by a desire to build the ‘biggest university in the world.’⁵⁴ Indeed, he notes how his vocal critique of the project made him unpopular.

I propose that Kahn’s Yale Centre for British Art precisely reflects the form of the decorative relation Gadamer describes in his account of the decorative.



Figure 11 Yale Centre for British Art, Exterior, New Haven Connecticut (Architect: Louis Kahn, 1974) By Sage Ross - Own work, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1252452>

⁵³ *TM*, 156.

⁵⁴ Gadamer, “Architektur Als ‘Zuwachs’ an Sein.,” 247.



Figure 12 Yale Centre for British Art, Interior, New Haven, Connecticut (Architect: Louis Kahn, 1974)
Image: CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11269825>

Kahn's interior for the Yale Centre for British Art seems to exemplify Gadamer's account of the fitting relations between built form and occasionality. This building was Kahn's first major commission and marked the beginning of a number of modern architectural commissions by the Yale University.⁵⁵ Using sky-lit spaces provides natural light for viewing the classic works of Turner and Hogarth that are housed in the collection. It allows the works their claims to a space of operation, but is not a 'passive background.'⁵⁶ The muted cladding of the exterior allows the building to exist harmoniously with its surroundings. Kahn continues this motif into the interior where warm wooden cladding breaks up the soft grey of poured concrete.⁵⁷ In the ways in which Kahn's decorative schema is consistent both with the function of the space, and constitutes a deft use of materials which catch the eye and yet do not detract from the works on display we can offer this as an example of what Gadamer intends by a fitting use of ornament.

⁵⁵ Lloyd L. DesBrisay, "Yale University Art Gallery: Louis I. Kahn," *Journal of Architectural Conservation* 13, no. 2 (January 1, 2007): 69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556207.2007.10784996>.

⁵⁶ Gadamer 'The Artwork in Word and Image- So True, so full of being!' *GR*, 196.

⁵⁷ Louis I. Kahn, "Order and Form," *Perspecta* 3 (1955): 47-63, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1566835>.

In making the decorative into a form of ontological relation, Gadamer allows for its description in more than visual terms. This has the result that Gadamer is able to describe the decorative function of the work of architecture in terms of the way that it ‘gives shape to space.’⁵⁸ As a result, Gadamer subverts the usual aesthetic hierarchies that leave architecture languishing at the bottom precisely due to its spatial and material nature.

Architecture confronts the constant task of accomplishing what artworks that are already free in their own function as sculpture, poem, or music are able to do because of the power of their form, namely, to draw people to the work and to have an effect on the quality of their way of living.⁵⁹

Gadamer articulates the position of the work of architecture as one of tension between its role as designating space for the other arts and the challenge its permanence places on its claim upon interlocutors. In normative aesthetic hierarchies, architecture is often presented as an art-form that lacks self-sufficiency. In Hegel’s aesthetics, for example, it is the additions of sculptural elements to the work that allow sculpture to overtake it. For Hegel, architecture is incapable of the communication of *Geist*.⁶⁰

Even poetry and music, which have the freest mobility and can be read or performed anywhere, are not suited to any space whatever, but to one which is appropriate: a theatre, a concert hall, or church.⁶¹

In establishing a reciprocal relationship between the work of architecture and other art-forms as expressed in its decorative nature, Gadamer stresses how architecture supports the performance and production of other forms of art.

5.4 Ornament

Ornament is a related concept to the decorative perspective that Gadamer describes architecture possessing. Like the decorative, we assume

⁵⁸ *TM*, 196.

⁵⁹ 'The Artwork in Word and Image- So True, so Full of Being!', *GR*, 222.

⁶⁰ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. Thomas Malcolm Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁶¹ *TM*, 157.

ornamentation in architecture to be a trivial addition to the façade of a building. A discussion of ornament seems perhaps out-of-step in our contemporary understanding of built environments. Although common opinion deems Loo's short essay *Ornament and Crime* a polemic against all forms of embellishment within architectural and industrial design, his argument relates rather to the ethos of his epoch and the need for a stylistic development other than historical reproduction manifest as a fetishization of classicism.⁶² Thus, although Loos' polemical rejection of decoration in *Ornament and Crime* has become synonymous with the heralding of an age of architectural asceticism, characterised by utopian city planning that would emphasise a machine aesthetic to improve its society through a foregrounding of functionality; for Loos, ornamentation had become irrelevant to modernity, its practices a sign of degeneration, excessive nostalgia and primitive practices. This was in part due to the use of ornament to stress individuality in primitive societies where community was a stronger binding force.⁶³

Harries argues that Loos is too often read as an absolute rejection of the practice of ornamentation in design. He claims rather that Loos was simply calling for a design of propriety and had more in common with respecting traditional approaches of architectural theory rather than effecting a complete break with them. Such an appraisal appears to be supported by the subtle use of classically inflected ornament in Loos' *Knize Gentleman's Outfitters* in Vienna.⁶⁴ In progressing this idea, where Gadamer appears to use ornament and decoration as interchangeable terms, Harries effects a strict division between the two.⁶⁵ Gadamer in contrast states that 'all ornamentation' is a

⁶² In this regard I argue against Gens who claims Loos as an opponent to Gadamer on this point. Although subsequent reading of Loos assume him to be concerned simply with a barren modernist aesthetic, his writing on closer examination, advocates for the operation of architecture as a practice relative to its own epoch, and it is for this reason that he dismisses overly historicist tendencies. In this regard he supports Gadamer's rejection of a 'slavish' adherence to tradition. *TM*, 369.

For Gens account of Gadamer and the decorative see: "The Configuration of Space Through Architecture in the Thinking of Gadamer," 157.

⁶³ Farshid Moussavi and Michael Kubo, *The Function of Ornament* (New York: Actar, 2006), 617.

⁶⁴ *Knize Gentleman's Outfitters*, Vienna, Austria (Architect: Adolf Loos 1930-31)

⁶⁵ As Kidder notes, Gadamer is surprisingly absent from Harries vast survey of architecture and ethos. Kidder, "Philosophical Hermeneutics and the Ethical Function of Architecture."

part of the 'self-presentation of its wearer' and thus it is unclear whether Gadamer would support Harries' distinction as a normative schema.⁶⁶ Harries writes:

I shall call decoration that articulates a communal ethos ornament and decoration that we experience primarily as an aesthetic addition to a building decoration. So understood, decoration is the aesthetic analogue to ornament.⁶⁷

With Harries, I claim that a better understanding of Loos is his attention to epochal propriety in architecture.⁶⁸ In this sense he shares common ground with Gadamer. In citing a rejection of the German ornamental tradition, Loos claims strongly that a building needs to remain attuned to the ethos of its given epoch with which, he felt nostalgic decorative styles were out of step. Loos calls for a rejection of neo-classical ornamentation as a retrograde move in the face of a civilisation that now requires a cleaner form of architectural design. This does not mean that Loos' rejects the decorative *function* of architecture as Gadamer presents it. Rather, his emphasis on the connection between architecture and ethos, and stressing a need to eschew the frivolity of excessive ornamentation in favour of a cleaner, more honest design, fitting to the needs of a more cerebrally advanced culture echoes the weak teleology at play in Gadamer's conception of *Bildung*.

The stragglers slow down the cultural evolution of the nations and of mankind; not only through ornament produced by criminals but also a crime is committed through the fact that ornament inflicts serious injury on people's health, on the national budget and hence on cultural evolution.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ *TM*, 159.

⁶⁷ Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 48.

⁶⁸ Leatherbarrow notes that Loos' approach to architecture can be read as a means of integrating tradition and modernity. "Interpretation and Abstraction in the Architecture of Adolf Loos," *Journal of Architectural Education* 40, no. 4 (July 1, 1987): 9, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10464883.1987.11102655>.

⁶⁹ Adolf Loos and Adolf Opel, *Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays* (1908; repr., London: Ariadne Press, 1998).

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Loos' fierce attack on ornament reveals a sincere concern for the progression of his own society. In citing the impoverishment of the worker through the tyranny of ornament, that raises the value of commonplace items driving individuals, and this society into debt, Loos' cites a need to progress beyond a fetishisation of the decorative and a realisation of the detrimental effect of this on wider society. In effect his criticism of ornamentation serves to illustrate Gadamer's return to an ancient conception of reciprocity between representational art forms. Gadamer's shift towards an understanding of *kosmopoesis*, the harmonious relationship between parts and wholes, as Vesely identifies, serves to reposition the arts, and in particular architecture into relation with the ethos of the society in which it finds itself.⁷⁰ This reunion of *ethos* and *poesis* achieved through Gadamer's excavation of the rift between decoration and representation following the enlightenment.

We have only to remember that in their original meaning, the ornamental and the decorative were the beautiful as such. It is necessary to recover this ancient insight. Ornament or decoration is determined by its relation to what it decorates, by what carries it. ⁷¹

Within the idealism of modernist aesthetics and their utopian aims, although often read as excessive environmental determinism a need for the widespread improvement of society through architecture is clear. Siegfried Gideon in his *Space, Time and Architecture* brings the development of modernity into dialogue with the wider history of architecture to argue for its place among a distinct set of ideals.⁷²

Although Gadamer moves discussions of decoration out of a strictly normative terrain, his description suggests an Aristotelian mean in relation to the use of ornament. He frequently describes the ways in which the work of architecture must exist in a tension of asserting itself as a work of art that yet 'has a place in the midst of the activities of life.'⁷³ This might be a helpful

⁷⁰ Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, 367.

⁷¹ *TM*, 158.

⁷² Siegfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).

⁷³ 'The Artwork in Word and Image- so True so full of Being!' *GR*, 221.

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tool not as a means of appraising the calibre of a work, but of understanding when something becomes a work of architecture per se and when it remains a work of art. Particularly when architecture and art practices increasingly interpolate each other, this is a positive use of Gadamer's thought to understand when something maintains the 'perspective of the decorative' and when it 'asserts itself' as an artwork, without a recourse to formalist claims, or methodological reductivism.⁷⁴



Figure 13 A House for Essex, (2015 Architects: FAT Architects with Grayson Perry) UK, commissioned by Living Architecture. Image: https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/A_House_for_Essex

⁷⁴ *TM*, 144.



Figure 14 Interior view A House for Essex (2015) Architect: FAT Architects with Grayson Perry for Living Architecture. Image Credit: A House for Essex- Interior at night, Jack Hobhouse <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/see-inside-grayson-perrys-amazingly-eccentric-essex-home-299243>

For example, Grayson's Perry's collaboration with FAT architect's *A House for Essex* appears to tread this line.⁷⁵ A clear reference to the picturesque, the

⁷⁵ *A House For Essex*, Manningtree, UK, (Architects: Grayson Perry and FAT Architects, 2015)

It appears that on Gadamer's view, in turning architecture into a work of art, the project by Alain de Botton and a range of architects runs contrary to architecture's ontological function in Gadamer's account. If the experience of architecture should be had in context, fostering engagement with architecture in the artificial environment of a temporary stay, defies the role of the work to operate 'decoratively.'

Living Architecture, "Living Architecture - Homepage," accessed August 1, 2019, <https://www.living-architecture.co.uk/the-houses/a-house-for-essex/overview/>.

This project is an extension of the account of architecture developed by De Botton in Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness* (London: Penguin UK, 2007).

structure stands nestled in the countryside like a folly. The exuberance of the interior decoration that recounts the fictional life of a fictional Essex woman seems to adhere to the excess of decoration that Gadamer describes in ‘The Artwork in Word and Image.’⁷⁶

What is decorative really should not come forth in the way artworks do, but should have its place as part of the background. When such a background presses forward too much, for example in a very colorfully figured wallpaper, seemingly like the feverish dreams of my childhood, such a decoration loses its true purpose.⁷⁷

I do not suggest that the decorative schema here reduces the value of the work itself, rather that the presence of the overwhelming decorative schema means pushes this borderline case from the realm of the architectural into that of the visual arts. Putting Gadamer’s thinking on architecture to work in this way may be a means to navigate the interpolation between architecture and visual art. The focus of this thesis is works of architecture and the ‘historically effective consciousness’ that experiences them. Gadamer implies the role of the hermeneutic subject in relation to ornament and decoration through a reorientation of the concept of style which we examine next.

5.5 Style

Gadamer uses the concept of style with a duality that helps to clarify the relation between the decorative and the hermeneutic subject. On the one hand, he uses the term variously to describe gestural expression, the relations between historical epochs and forms of thinking. On the other, the ‘history of styles’ he claims, is ‘shaken up’ by hermeneutical reflection.⁷⁸ Styles are expressive, Gadamer indicates: ‘modes of speaking and writing are appropriate to particular purposes and contents, and their special demands.’⁷⁹

⁷⁶ William Hall, “‘It Is like Being inside a Migraine’ – the First Visitor to Grayson Perry’s House for Essex Reveals All,” *The Guardian*, July 5, 2015, sec. Art and design, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/shortcuts/2015/jul/05/first-visitor-grayson-perrys-house-for-essex>.

⁷⁷ ‘The Artwork in Word and Image’ *GR*, 221. Gadamer makes a similar point here: ‘There is nothing worse than an obtrusive wallpaper that draws attention to its individual motifs as pictorial representations in their own right as the feverish dreams of childhood can confirm.’ ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 20.

⁷⁸ ‘The Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection’ *PH*, 38–39.

⁷⁹ *TM*, 515.

and yet, according to Aquilina, ‘in relation to Gadamer’s ontology of the work, they seem insufficient or secondary in a consideration of the truth of the work.’⁸⁰ In the case of architecture, he identifies the ways in which different epoch ‘cite’ one another. In this case style would seem to be indexed to historical epochs.⁸¹ However, the classical attains its status as such precisely because it is ‘more than a historical style.’⁸²

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer includes the notion of style within the realm of decoration explicitly.⁸³ In appendix one to the main text, Gadamer clarifies the notion of style as the artist ‘fashioning a language for himself.’⁸⁴ More than simply a historical category however, the notion of style expresses itself as successful if it achieves consistency with the ‘lived context’ to which it is related. Herein lies a tension between the ‘dynamics of singularisation’ that belong to all discussions of style, wherein an artist breaks free from ‘mere imitation’ to forge their own unique world-relation, and the need for that work to speak to and for another.⁸⁵

For our discussion the expansive definition of style that he provides will have repercussion for understanding the relations between ‘historically effective consciousness’ and the work of architecture. As with decoration and ornament, Gadamer lifts the notion of style from its conventional position as a peripheral concern to a position of greater prominence in terms of describing the relations between hermeneutic subjects. Gadamer expresses style in terms of relation to the world, thinking and gesture.⁸⁶ Therefore, it is not only works of architecture that express style in the form of their ornamental schema, the hermeneutic interpreter as participator must develop a style of world relation that is attentive to the work of art.

⁸⁰ Mario Aquilina, “Gadamer and Style as Wor(l)d-Making,” in *The Event of Style in Literature*, ed. Mario Aquilina (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 55, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137426925_3.

⁸¹ ‘The Work of Art in Word and Image’ *GR*, 396.

⁸² *TM*, 298.

⁸³ *TM*, 518.

⁸⁴ *TM*, 516.

⁸⁵ Aquilina, “Gadamer and Style as Wor(l)d-Making,” 55.

⁸⁶ *TM*, 518.

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One maintains one's own 'style' - i.e., one relates the demands of fashion to a whole that one's own taste keeps in view and accepts only what harmonizes with this whole and fits together as it does.⁸⁷

Style uncovers the tension between the subjectivity of interpretation, my individual position within a horizon of meaning that is my own, and the normative force of the *decorum* expected by the work itself. As a 'unity of expression' Gadamer highlights the normative force of the designation of actions, persons and objects as 'having style.'⁸⁸

Just as the ornament of the building belongs to its self-presentation, personal adornments are more than merely personal. They are part of the self-presentation of the wearer. Di Cesare summarises this as follows: 'the ornament that brings to expression the *Being* of its wearer and allows it to be in the first place.'⁸⁹

It is unclear however whether it is the context or the individual that prevails in the development and adoption of a 'fitting' style of world-relation. The continuity between the decorative, decorum and style that is 'necessarily presupposed' appears to stand in tension with the artwork's unique occasionality. This mirrors the tensions between belonging to and experiencing tradition that we explored in Chapter Three.

5.6 Conclusion

Here we have undertaken a systematic account of Gadamer's rehabilitation of the decorative and its effects for thinking architectural experience. We saw that this claim was an extension of Gadamer's challenge to 'aesthetic consciousness' in that it stressed the ways in which art 'demands a place and creates from itself an open place.'⁹⁰ Gadamer's stress on the occasionality of art emphasised the reciprocity between the work and 'historically effective consciousness.'

⁸⁷ *TM*, 35.

⁸⁸ *TM*, 518.

⁸⁹ Di Cesare, *Gadamer*, 59.

⁹⁰ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 170.

Implied throughout this account is a notion of the participation-alluring ‘movement’ of the building over claims of architecture’s timelessness.⁹¹ ‘[B]ourne along’ by the ‘stream of history’ rather than impervious to it, the experience of architecture thus demands ever anew ‘integration’ into the lives of those that encounter it.⁹² In this regard we emphasised the extension of the notion of ornament from the work of architecture to ‘historically effective consciousness’ citing Gadamer’s inclusion of small design objects such as jewellery as a part of the ‘self-presentation’ of wearer. This led to a discussion of the notion of style which, when read with the understanding of *Bildung* within chapter four might be productively understood as an injunction to develop a ‘style’ of engagement with the world through an immediate engagement with it. Like the decorative function of architecture that frames the space of the work of art, this chapter serves as a frame for the account of play, festival and symbol as embodied experiential categories in the case of the work of architecture.

Gadamer’s account of the decorative as an ontological category is effective in describing the operation of the work of architecture without the need for an artificial separation of elements from the whole. It further provides a means of describing the operations of architectural spaces without reducing them to their function or formal relations.

Leatherbarrow effectively describes this as a ‘passive activism’ on the part of the elements of a building:

This is to say, architectural elements are passively active. Seemingly at rest, they are secretly at work. The key is this: in their labor, architectural elements fuse themselves into the latencies of the ambient environment, adopting their capacity for change or movement. Obviously, this fusion is fictional; but in the events that define the setting, it is entirely believable.⁹³

⁹¹ Gens, “The Configuration of Space Through Architecture in the Thinking of Gadamer,” 160.

⁹² *TM*, 156; Gadamer, “Ende Der Kunst?,” 81.

⁹³ Leatherbarrow, *Architecture Oriented Otherwise*, 37–38.

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Such a description appears as though it might well apply to the operations of the Weinbrenner staircase for which Gadamer went to ‘war’ with his colleagues on the redevelopment board at the university of Heidelberg.⁹⁴

Gadamer’s account of the decorative serves to liberate it from a subset of prejudices which understand the decorative as an often-illegitimate superimposition onto an already complete structure. This plays itself out most explicitly in the doctrine of the ‘Duck and the decorated shed’ developed by Venturi and Scott Brown, which exploits such stratified approaches to architecture.⁹⁵

The account of the decorative, moved from the periphery to the centre of Gadamer’s account brings with it the experience of architecture. In allowing the decorative its aesthetic function, Gadamer expresses the tension at the heart of the experience of architecture and provides an explanation as to how he can claim both that ‘the work of architecture is never a utopia’ but also that it is ‘never only a work of art.’⁹⁶ In this sense the tension between the decorative and functionality is held in play, so that the work of architecture is required to resist becoming a tourist attraction or ‘work of art.’

As with Gadamer’s account of tradition, there is a tension between change and continuity in the case of the decorative. This is particularly the case in relation to the extension of style beyond a designation of historical epochs. On the one hand, the notion of developing a ‘style’ of relation to the built world echoes the dynamic I/Thou relations expressed in the account of tradition and clarifies the ways in which ‘historically effective consciousness’ presents themselves to the work of art as a participant-recipient interlocutor rather than a passive spectator. On the other, the normative force returned to the notion of style suggests a lack of interpretive freedom. In our next chapter

⁹⁴ Gadamer, “Architektur Als ‘Zuwachs’ an Sein.,” 246.

⁹⁵ Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, *Learning from Las Vegas Rev Ed* (Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press Group Limited, 1977).

⁹⁶ Gadamer, “Ende Der Kunst?,” 80; *TM*, 156.

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we will deepen this exploration through a consideration of the ways the body is inferred in the account of the work of art as 'play', 'festival' and 'symbol.'

6 Architecture as Play, Festival and Symbol¹

6.1 Introduction

In the first part of our investigation, our focus was on a more general account of the horizons between which the event of understanding takes place. For Gadamer, it is the work of art that operates as a paradigm of the ‘peculiar fusion of memory and expectation into a whole’ that constitutes *Erfahren*.² In attending to the experience of art, ‘historically effective consciousness’ experiences a redemptive loss of self, that tempers the hubristic tendencies of the positivistic modern world. In our previous chapter, we considered Gadamer’s account of the occasional and the decorative, ontological features of all artworks that pertained particularly to architecture, in Gadamer’s account. We progress this understanding of the situated experience of building here through an examination of play, festival, and symbol. The immersion and immediacy of the ‘back and forth’ motion of play suggests the sense of ‘aliveness’ implied in the accounts of productive tension between the finite and infinite, continuity and change (tradition) and assertion and recession (decoration) that we have explored in this thesis. These tensions animate and shape understanding in Gadamer’s hermeneutics, and are brought into focus uniquely through the focus on architecture adopted by this thesis. Here, we make explicit the embodiment implied in Gadamer’s account of experiencing works of architecture and point to two areas of possible future research.

Having considered constituent elements of the horizon from which artworks emerge and in which interpretive communities find sustenance, we now examine Gadamer’s description of the experience of art. This chapter focuses

¹ The terms for *Spiel*, *Symbol und Fest* are retained in the common English translation ‘play, festival and symbol’ as used in the Weinsheimer translation of *Truth and Method* and the Bernasconi translation of Gadamer’s essay of the same name.

² *TM*, 225.

Where the distinction between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahren* is to be emphasised, the German terms have been retained. Where ‘experience’ is used, readers should assume that this conveys a thinking with Gadamer, where experience is intended as *Erfahren*.

on the ‘event’ of understanding that occurs between the work of art and ‘historically effective consciousness.’ This claim stresses the irreducibility of the experience of art to either the operations of subjective consciousness or the communication of determinate conceptual content. In this sense, the experience of the work of art challenges subjective isolation and reveals the community that we are.⁴ In this way, it echoes Kantian ideas of a community formed in meditative space created in and through experiences made possible through the interaction with art, but, as ‘event’ serves to stress an ontology of lived or present community rather than a promise of a future ‘community to come’ or the orientation of community toward abstract ideal.⁵

Having examined how the horizon into which ‘historically effective consciousness’ is ‘thrown’ serves to adumbrate the experience of art, we now turn to Gadamer’s descriptions of the experience of art, beginning with the key notions expressed in *Truth and Method*, and more fully articulated in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*.⁶ Gadamer progresses his ontology of art based on a reorientation of Aristotle’s concept of *mimesis* understood as imitation that increases knowledge of the real in bringing implicit elements of the object in representation to light and making it recognizable. This move *contra* Plato allows for the description of the work of art as ‘playful,’ ‘festive’ and ‘symbolic.’ We will consider each of these here.

Gadamer's account of ‘play’, capitalises on the many uses of play in everyday speech, and progresses an account of the ‘event of understanding’ as something that emerges between ‘historically effective consciousness’ and artwork. This account carefully counters Cartesian claims about human consciousness in relating human play to play in nature. Gadamer prompts a rethinking of Schelling’s and Goethe’s assertion that architecture functions

³ *TM*, 320.

⁴ In this sense Gadamer follows Heidegger’s claims that the artwork founds historical community. See: Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, Perennial Classics (London: HarperCollins, 2001), 15–86.

⁵ Charlton Payne and Lucas Thorpe, eds., *Kant and the Concept of Community*, vol. 9, NAKS Studies in Philosophy (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 6.

⁶ Gadamer, “The Relevance of the Beautiful.”

like ‘frozen music’ in so far as the participatory notion of play demands our bodily engagement.⁷ Occasionality is here emphasised in Gadamer’s claim that ‘...the movement of play requires a “playing along with.”’⁸

As a symbol, art shows its own ‘superabundance’ while pointing beyond itself to an inexhaustible depth of meaning⁹. In re-connecting the notion of the symbol with the ancient Greek *symbolon*, Gadamer extricates it from the semiotic inference that symbols are interchangeable and exhausted by their reference for an understanding of art’s symbolic function. Gadamer’s example of the *tessera hospitalis* as an example of the symbolic at work provides a way of thinking through the ways in which building and viewer ‘receive one another.’¹⁰

The festive nature of art emphasises this hospitality further through its stress on the collective character of this experience, an event whose temporality is *sui generis* against the ‘the usual experience of temporal succession.’¹¹ Gadamer describes each iteration of any festival as existing in an entirely new way despite the repetition that appears to be inherent in the celebration of religious rites as paradigms of the festive.¹² In this way, the work of art has its nature as a festival in the event of understanding inaugurated in each dialogue with ‘historically effective consciousness.’

The operation of artworks as play, festival and symbol requires that we first examine Gadamer’s reorientation of *mimesis* contra Plato, as this is a part of

⁷ Robinson, following Pallasmaa has also noted this requirement for the bodily navigation of a distinct work of architecture’s spatial arrangements, but without reference to Gadamer’s hermeneutics. Jenefer Robinson, “On Being Moved by Architecture,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70, no. 4 (2012): 337–53.

⁸ ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 23.

⁹ Robert Bernasconi, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, by Hans-Georg Gadamer, ed. Robert Bernasconi, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), xiii.

¹⁰ Richard Coyne, “Introducing Hermeneutics to an Architectural Audience,” *Reflections on Technology, Media & Culture* (blog), May 9, 2015, <https://richardcoyne.com/2015/05/09/introducing-hermeneutics-to-an-architectural-audience/>.

¹¹ *TM*, 126.

¹² *TM*, 126.

the justification of art as an ‘increase of being’ that he provides. Following this, we will examine Gadamer’s account of embodiment as focussed on the lived body over against the body as an object for knowledge, and then explore how this account infers that the body is a site of interpretation and mediation in Gadamer’s account of play, festival and symbol.¹³

6.2 Mimesis

Gadamer’s account of the ontological structure of the experiences of art centrally claims that the dialogical engagements with artworks effect an ‘increase in being’ for ‘historically effective consciousness.’ Gadamer reformulates the notion of ‘mimesis’ contra Plato to underscore the intimate connection between art and the real, and art’s capacity to bring about an extension of our horizon of meaning. The Platonic resolution of the ‘old quarrel’ between poetry and philosophy, results in the expulsion of the poets from Plato’s notional utopia, their mimicry rendering them ‘third from the king and the truth.’¹⁴ For Plato, the poet is untrustworthy because objects of their presentation are only ‘copies of copies,’ imitations of the craftsman’s recreations from the ‘world of forms.’ Gadamer reverses this account, presenting the mode of being of art as a confluence of representation (symbol) and presentation (play.)¹⁵ He claims that the work of art is far from a pale imitation. Instead, the work of art brings about an ‘increase in being’ by revealing new valences of crucial subject matters. In recognising what confronts us, the moment of understanding, for Gadamer, is a moment of *anamnesis*. The ‘unconcealment’ that occurs through art unveils new understandings of objects and states of affairs already familiar to us, in a manner that prompts our recognition both of the authority of the work and the matter’s pertinence. In that the work of art present such matters to ‘historically effective consciousness’, it ‘releases its subject matter from its contingency.’¹⁶ The *anamnesis* that occurs in the experience of art thus leaves

¹³ Kearney describes this project as ‘Carnal Hermeneutics’ “The Wager of Carnal Hermeneutics,” in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, ed. Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 15–56.

¹⁴ See *Republic* 595a-597e

¹⁵ *TM*, 151.

¹⁶ Warnke, *Gadamer*, 58.

us lighter, having presented a matter to us through the ordering structures of play, festival and symbol, in a way deepens our knowledge of self and world. Gadamer describes this relation thusly: ‘After going through the museum, we do not leave it with exactly the same feeling about life as when we went in. If we have really had a genuine experience of art, then the world has become both brighter and less burdensome.’¹⁷ The search for precise correspondence between an artwork and an object in the world is, for Gadamer, misguided. In *Contexts of Interpretation*, MacIntyre provides a useful explication of Gadamer’s claim that the work of art functions as presentation as opposed to mimetic representation through the example of *The Nightwatch*.¹⁸ Those crestfallen at Rembrandt’s representation, conceive the portrait as something that functions in place of a photographic representation, the very error Gadamer warns against when it comes to the work of architecture because of its reductive effects.¹⁹

Rather than proposing a Platonic world of forms, however, Gadamer emphasises the particularity of the artwork’s claim to truth. In opposition to truths secured by mathematical or scientific theorems, wherein legitimacy resides in their replicability, beauty in both the artwork, as a self-authenticating process, claims truth by underscoring its individuality in a fashion that confirms its unique identity rather than acting as a ‘meal to my taste.’²⁰

Gadamer’s account of *mimesis* allows him to renew the sense of *paideia* in play- through the claim that the experience of art is a kind of knowledge, in the sense that they bring about disclosures of the world.²¹ By emphasising the reversal of inference between picture and pictured- stressing that we see and understand the original differently in the light of its representation rather than

¹⁷ Gadamer, ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 26.

¹⁸ Gadamer states the same for anyone who simply acknowledges the sitter of a Titian portrait. Such a person ‘has not really seen anything of the picture at all.’ ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 27.

¹⁹ *TM*, 79.

²⁰ Gadamer, ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 18.

²¹ Warnke, *Gadamer*, 59.

appraising the accuracy of the representation in terms of its likeness to the represented object, Gadamer claims that experiencing the truth of things ‘lifted up’ into an artistic representation allows us to learn to see them anew. As Warnke notes, the connection of art’s disclosive capacity to the notion of *anamnesis* permits us to see things afresh in the sense of a recollection, or recognition that this way or seeing raised to truth in the experience of art is something we should already have recognised.²² For example, we see something ‘we knew or should have known’ about the notion of forgiveness in Rembrandt’s *Prodigal Son*.²³

...however unexpected our encounter with beauty may be, it gives us an assurance that the truth does not lie far off and inaccessible to us, but can be encountered in the disorder of reality with all its imperfections, evils, errors, extremes, and fateful confusions.²⁴

The ability for art to strike us unexpectedly occurs in part because of its role as playful. In playful interactions, players become ‘subject[s] of the play’ and must accede to the ‘transformation into structure’ that emerges in the artwork’s experience. ‘Rather, what we experience in a work of art and what invites our attention is how true it is—i.e., to what extent one knows and recognises something and oneself.’²⁵

6.3 The Lived Body

The account of embodiment in Gadamer’s philosophy of art, is far from explicit, as Vessey notes²⁶. Its exclusion may be because this issue receives extensive treatment in *The Enigma of Health* rather than the later texts on art or in *Truth and Method*. However, as we saw in the discussion of style in the previous chapter, self-presentation of ‘historically effective consciousness’ towards the work is necessary for the emergence of *die Sache* between the

²² Davey, *Unquiet Understanding*, 84.

²³ Rembrandt *The Prodigal Son*, (1663-1669) Oil on canvas (Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.)

²⁴ Gadamer, ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 15.

²⁵ *TM*, 118.

²⁶ David Vessey, “Gadamer and the Body Across Dialogical Contexts,” *Philosophy Today* 44, no. Supplement (2000): 70, <https://doi.org/philtoday200044Supplement8>.

work and its viewer. In *Bodily Experience and Objectification*, Gadamer stresses the inseparability of the lived body (*Leib*) from life (*Leben*) to stress the limitations of modern medicine's commitment to scientific objectivity in the approach to the body.²⁷ In his account, Gadamer brings 'hermeneutic awareness' to the experience of illness. Focussing on the lived body, *Leib*, over the 'corporeal body or 'object body', *Körper*, highlights the role of embodiment in Gadamer's account of architecture in each of these key themes in his philosophy of art.

As reduced to and 'readily susceptible to objectification and processes of measurement' the body as *Körper* becomes an object of calculation, examination and study.²⁸ Gadamer stresses that the privacy of embodied experience is something that resists the reductive measurements of the clinic. While Gadamer acknowledges the leap in the quality of life made possible in the revolutions of modern medicine, he, following the work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, delineates the contrasts between the body as an object of study and the *lived* body as centre of orientation, understanding and interest. Like the horizon, the body as the source of life's lived immediacy is something that we cannot abstract ourselves from as it is the very source of our experiences in and of the world. Against a more strict phenomenological account, there can be no Cartesian 'calling into question' the perceptions of the lived body through the distancing effects of rationality. This recalls Gadamer's rejection of objectivity that we discussed in Chapter One.

Gadamer describes 'health' as 'a condition of being involved, of being-in-the-world, of being together with one's fellow human beings, of active and rewarding engagement in one's everyday tasks'²⁹ To emphasise the primacy of the condition of health, Gadamer cites the German phrase that expresses the feeling of being unwell *Es fehlt mir etwas*.³⁰ He makes recourse to Plato's

²⁷ Kevin Aho, "A Hermeneutics of the Body and Place in Health and Illness," in *Space, Place and Hermeneutics*, Contributions to Hermeneutics 5 (Springer International Publishing, 2017), 116.

²⁸ Gadamer, 'Bodily Experience and the Limits of Objectification' *EH*, 71.

²⁹ Gadamer, 'On the Enigmatic Character of Health' *EH*, 113.

³⁰ Gadamer, 'Bodily Experience and the Limits of Objectification' *EH*, 73.

union of the soul, body and city in the *Republic* to evidence the *harmonia* implicated in his claim that the condition of being healthy is ontologically prior. In this we should recognise the account of a rupture in experience that Gadamer describes in the challenging of prejudices inherent in the progression of both individual understanding and history at large.³¹ Gadamer cites the Heraclitean fragment thusly, ‘The concealed harmony is mightier than the revealed’ to illustrate how the body reveals itself precisely in moments of disharmony.³²

It is in his account of the body that Gadamer stresses the unity to which rupturing experiences require integration as a ‘swinging back into equilibrium.’³³ Such return is contingent on the body’s sense of rhythm, manifest in ‘sleeping and walking’ and ‘illness and recovery’ which, like the experience of art, refuse objective understanding or determinate description. Here again Gadamer makes use of the Greek *oikos* for its indication not only of how ‘one learns to keep house’ but also ‘the ability to manage along with other people.’³⁴

Despite the productive distance between interpreter and text Gadamer’s descriptions of texts as immediate highlight the phenomenological character he retains in his thinking. Indeed, his experience of buildings recounted in his texts concerns an immediacy of experience wherein the body is inferred.³⁵ Further, there are echoes of Aristotle’s claim that touch is the most basic of the senses in the final section of *De Anima* when Gadamer discusses the interactions between mourners and the dead.

The figures that take leave from one another touch each other softly and stand in a silence which creates between the two a space of vibration—even when it is only the young boy and his dog. The one

³¹ See chapter 3.

³² Gadamer, ‘Bodily Experience and the Limits of Objectification’ *EH*, 76.

³³ Gadamer, ‘Bodily Experience and the Limits of Objectification’ *EH*, 78.

³⁴ Gadamer, ‘Bodily Experience and the Limits of Objectification’ *EH*, 79.

³⁵ Indeed, think of the emergence of the ‘gigantic church’ previously unnoticed, that reveals itself in Gadamer’s recounting of his return home to Breslau. Gadamer, “Ende Der Kunst?”

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who mourns always reaches out over the space of separation and gently takes hold of the arm of the dead.³⁶

The role of the body as a site of tension, between *harmonia* and dissonance might provide a model for thinking through the interruption effected by the work of architecture and the recovery of this experience in one's finite horizon. In what follows, we will focus on the ways an embodied encounter with architecture is inferred or directly referenced in Gadamer's account of art as 'play,' 'festival,' and 'symbol.' The moment of interruption that is the experience of the work of architecture might then be understood productively as a moment of 'ex-corporation' in which the body reveals itself as the site of understanding and dialogue with the work. For example, Gadamer describes immersion in the space of the cathedral of St Gallen as a 'productive tension' between the spatial volumes of the knave and the main isle. Such tension is experienced by and through the body, as an interpretive site that would otherwise be unnoticed in its passivity. In comparing tarrying to a 'disregarding oneself,' which we claim here is brought about through the body in its immersion in built spaces, Gadamer stresses the way in which the body both become distinct and recedes away in the event of understanding.³⁷

6.4 Play

For Gadamer, play is an essential element of the ontological being of the work of art. In 'technological-industrial society' play, like art, is too often dismissed as a pastime. Gadamer claims that this results in a misapprehension of both play and art as peripheral concerns that from without appear frivolous in relation to the serious concerns of work life. Gadamer's account both thwarts this understanding by illustrating the seriousness of play, and, as a result, blurs the divisions between subject and object by situating play in the

³⁶ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist' *GR*, 319.

³⁷ This notion of the body as becoming known and unknown through the productive tension of the aesthetic experience is an avenue for further research opened by this study. Specifically of interest would be applying this reading to Kidder's undeveloped claim that sites of meaning can act as 'touchstones' within the built world. Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects*, 31.

liminal space between 'I and Thou.'³⁸ This represents a significant departure from Schiller's 'play drive,' which Gadamer critiques as excessively subjectivist.³⁹ In placing the play drive as a mediation of the formal and sensuous drives, Schiller makes play an element of subjective consciousness and a matter of securing radical freedom for the subject that possesses it.⁴⁰ As Vilhauer stresses, Gadamer's formulation of play is precisely not about such freedom.⁴¹ Since participants remain endowed to rather than in control of the play that unfolds between them and the artwork, the game's unfolding remains impermeable to its participants, and since play encompasses both the artwork and 'historically effective consciousness,' it eludes comprehensive, objective description.⁴²

Play is an elementary phenomenon that pervades the whole of the animal world and, as is obvious, it determines man as a natural being as well.⁴³

Architecture presents something of a paradox for the notion of playfulness; on the one hand, the notion of play seems out of the question in an art-form regulated by the demands of physics, economy and client-needs. Inhabitants of architecture find their play curtailed by the need for shelter as well as the requirement to access services and institutions housed by architecture in the playing out of our daily commerce. On the other, postmodernism appears to have developed an aesthetic of playfulness, thumbing its nose at its austere predecessor, high modernism through the creation of projects that defy the possibility of construction, the impossible projects of Archigram or Heyduk,

³⁸ Vilhauer, *Gadamer's Ethics of Play*, 28.

³⁹ *TM*, 106.

⁴⁰ 'So the play impulse, in which both combine to function, will compel the mind at once morally and physically; it will, therefore, since it annuls all mere chance, annul all compulsion also, and set man free both physically and morally.' Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Reginald Snell (1795; repr., New York: Dover Books, 2004), 73–74.

⁴¹ '....the very "happening" of the movement is what is essential to play—a movement that emerges, as said, in-between the players, not inside any one of them.' Vilhauer, *Gadamer's Ethics of Play*, 33.

⁴² Di Cesare, *Gadamer*, 48–49.

⁴³ Gadamer, 'The Play of Art' *RB*, 123.

or the celebration of consumerism expressed in *Learning from Las Vegas*.⁴⁴ The overt superficiality of these movements, however, stands in sharp contrast to the medial and 'serious play' Gadamer describes.⁴⁵

Despite Gadamer's identification of the to-and-fro of play as characteristic of the structure of aesthetic experience, play finds its roots in the world's structure and, as such, Gadamer warns against a reductive Cartesian assumption that human play is merely marked out by the presence of intentionality.⁴⁶ This association between 'the uninhibited movement of play exhibited by superabundant life' serves to illustrate the productive tension between the seemingly uninhibited, and yet structured quality of the play Gadamer identifies in the natural world.⁴⁷ The 'transformation into structure' that emerges in play, thus liberates 'historically effective consciousness' from the burden of choice 'which constitutes the actual strain of existence.'⁴⁸ Giving oneself over to the structure of play creates a space of emergence in which *die Sache* can come to light. In the case of the work of architecture, where functionality is so prominent, these moments of 'freedom' have the potential to be even more valuable.

Such matters present themselves in art as the experience of the beautiful, *to kalon*. Gadamer's adoption and adaption of Aristotle's claim that the beautiful is something to which 'nothing can be added and nothing taken away' as something to be taken 'with a pinch of salt' opens up scope for the discussion

⁴⁴ Archigram (Group), *Archigram*, ed. Peter Cook (New Jersey: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999); Venturi and Scott Brown, *Learning from Las Vegas Rev Ed*.

⁴⁵ '...play itself contains its own, even sacred, seriousness.' Gadamer, *TM*, 107.

⁴⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Play of Art," in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, trans. Nicholas Walker (1977; repr., Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 125.

⁴⁷ There seems to be a strengthening of the commitment to play in Gadamer, consider this citation in *Truth and Method* where play is presented in its metaphorical use only. 'If we examine how the word "play" is used and concentrate on its so-called metaphorical senses, we find talk of the play of light, the play of the waves, the play of gears or parts of machinery, the interplay of limbs, the play of forces, the play of gnats, even a play on words. In each case, what is intended is to-and-fro movement that is not tied to any goal that would bring it to an end.' *TM*, 108. In his later essay 'The Play of Art' this consideration is directed instead to observed instances of playfighting in the animal kingdom. See 'The Play of Art' *RB*, 125. Also, 'The Relevance of the Beautiful' 23.

⁴⁸ *TM*, 109.

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of an area particularly crucial for architectural experience, that is, the adaption of existing spaces to new functions. Gadamer describes the beautiful as follows:

a concentration [of the beautiful] which is shown precisely by the fact that we may make a range of changes, by altering, replacing, adding, or removing something. Nevertheless, this is only possible on the basis of a central structure which must be left intact if we are not to destroy the unity of the work.⁴⁹

Gadamer makes the statement above in relation to the multiple iterations of works of theatre and musical performances. Despite their duplicity, they different performances keep their unity as one ‘work’ by respecting the core of beauty that allows *die Sache* to come to presence. Contemplating the notion of a core of beauty is a useful conceptual tool for understanding the success or failure of retrofitting spaces. Such additions work to reorient spaces to new purposes.



Figure 15 Tate Modern Turbine Hall Interior. Tate Modern London UK (Architects: Herzog and de Meuron) Image from Wikimedia Commons. Image credit: By the wub - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=42759780>

⁴⁹ Gadamer, ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 43.

Although Gadamer explains this through the example of the tempo in music that guides rather than restricts performers, we might apply this dictum to the work of Herzog and de Meuron at the Tate Modern.⁵⁰ Their minimal interventions into Scott's industrial design is evidence of an architectural approach that sensitively traverses the distinct position of an edifice within history, balancing these against its new aspirations within the cultural landscape. The retention of the stack chimney, initially not understood to be compatible with the building's new status as a gallery, acknowledges its position as a visual counterpoint to cupola St Paul's on the opposite bank of the Thames. In the interior, the use of bare wooden floors deviates from the conventions of 'white cube' design in an acknowledgement of the industrial roots of the space because of a desire by the architects to create a floor 'as such.'⁵¹ Their carefully developed approach integrates new elements into the building in a way that respects the integrity of the urban site as a whole, the large stairwells and use of heavy cast iron features, for instance. These unobtrusive interior interventions represent adherence to Gadamer's principle of the decorative at play. The space in the 'Turbine Hall,' although vast and striking, recedes willingly to foreground the works displayed in the space. The vast turbine hall functions as a common space conducive to large-scale installations, the free movement encouraged here arguably allows for the 'setting to work' and 'being at work' of the artwork itself. In part, perhaps the range of successful pieces shown in the space attests to its potential as a space for a genuine encounter through the creation of an aesthetic that although initially imposing, remains unobtrusive. Their renovation of the turbine hall, the least interventionist of the retrofit proposals submitted, represented a form of risk in its non-interventionist nature. The 'historically effective consciousness' that maintains an attentiveness to the transformative

⁵⁰ Tate Modern, London UK (Architects : Herzog and de Meuron, 2000)

⁵¹ 'Gadamer spoke of this surface as something magical – a wonderful wooden floor, immaculately well-kept and polished so that it filled the space with the smell of wax.' 'Gadamer's floor can become an emblem for a very powerful design strategy in its emphasis on materiality, gravity and maintenance, and its focus on the floor as a floor.' Jacques Herzog, "Gadamer's Floor," in *Herzog & de Meuron 1997-2001. The Complete Works. Volume 4*, ed. Gerhard Mack, vol. 4, 4 vols. (Basel / Boston / Berlin: Birkhäuser, 2008), 221–25; Herzog, Jacques, "Thinking of Gadamer's Floor."

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experience latent in the work of art mirrors this risk. The resultant modest space, however, allows for the play between viewers and work.



Figure 16 Tate Modern Exterior London, UK (Architects Herzog and de Meuron) Image from Wikimedia Commons Image Credit: Christine Matthews 'Tate Modern Viewed from Thames Pleasure Boat' (2003)

It is not architecture, however, but the notion of drama and musical improvisation that Gadamer refers to as an exemplar of play in art. Gadamer emphasises both the participatory element of play and its enduring, yet iterative quality.

Not only does a work of art never lose the trace of its original function which enables an expert to reconstruct it, but the work of art that has its place next to others in a gallery still has its own origin. It affirms itself, and the way it does so- by “killing” other things or using them to complement itself- is still a part of itself.⁵²

⁵² *TM*, 124.

However, is there a sense in which architecture prevents play? Those that stress functionality might argue that the *spielraum* of the work of architecture is limited. With the impingement of everyday life, so the possibilities for the productive play between work and 'historically effective consciousness' that emerges in the interstices might become marginalised. Despite this, there is another sense in which architecture exemplifies 'play' in the exploration of architectural space by 'historically effective consciousness.' Consider Gadamer's example of Dostoyevsky's *The Brother's Karamazov*.⁵³ Gadamer states that each reader constitutes the stairs down which Smerdyakov stumbles in 'his own way.'⁵⁴ Such reconstruction is contingent on a linear reading of the sentence itself. All readers must arrive at the fall in and through the same route to understand its trajectory within the wider narrative. Not so the work of architecture. Our corporeal negotiation of the space possesses playful freedom. Gadamer adds, 'This is not to deny that there is a possible starting point for aesthetic reflection...e.g. when one regards a building from the viewpoint of how it would look on its own or how its surroundings ought to look, or how to restore a painting.'⁵⁵ Play is a question of self-knowledge; the freedom in play is to become a part of the given presentation. The structure of the play of art allows for a kind of self-articulation unavailable in any of the other dialogical encounters Gadamer describes. Therefore, play in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is a 'serious endeavour' since, rather than performing the distracting function oft-associated with 'child's play,' the player here is 'taken up' with the play itself, so irresistible is the call or draw of this fundamental feature of the living world. Gadamer emphasises this through the claim to self-forgetfulness won through play:

This kind of being present is a kind of self-forgetfulness, and to be a spectator consists in giving oneself in self-forgetfulness to what one is watching. Here, self-forgetfulness is anything but a private condition, for it arises from devoting one's full attention to the matter at hand and this is the spectator's own positive accomplishment.⁵⁶

⁵³ Gadamer, 'The Relevance of the Beautiful' *RB*, 27.

⁵⁴ Gadamer, 'The Relevance of the Beautiful' *RB*, 27.

⁵⁵ *TM*, 122.

⁵⁶ *TM*, 125.

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Just as play requires the embodied involvement and engagement of ‘historically effective consciousness’ so, too, is a spatial realm implied that emphasises the decorative ‘double mediation’ of architecture that we acknowledged concerning its function as necessarily decorative. ‘Human play requires a playing field. Setting off the playing field- just like the setting off of sacred precincts, as Huizinga rightly points out—sets off the sphere of play as a closed world, one without transition and mediation to the world of aims.’⁵⁷

To undertake the self-forgetfulness that Gadamer describes requires a particular comportment by the viewer. Gadamer reminds us that ‘...one spoils the play of the work of art in the encounter if one tries to mix in observations about precise derivations.’⁵⁸ Because of this, Gadamer eschews the common understanding of play as a simple trivial diversion from ‘real’ matters. Gadamer insists play’s nature is ‘serious’ both because of what it demands from its participants and what it offers them.

In this sense architecture, which stands inalienably between the contextual matrix of its creation and within the surging tide of the present, is exemplary of the interplay between context, which Gadamer presents as resolved through the fusion of horizons. It is this understanding of contemporaneity that allows architecture to take a prominent, yet under-explored position within Gadamer’s aesthetics and that facilitates its elevation away from common debates around its functionality that so often leave works of architecture excluded from aesthetic enquiry, as the Pevsnerian line acutely shows.⁵⁹ In the formation of aesthetic hierarchies within philosophical aesthetics, architecture often lingers at the bottom of a progression towards more conceptual art forms. Even Heidegger seems to maintain this distinction: ‘Bridges and hangars, stadiums and power stations are not

⁵⁷ *TM*, 111–12.

⁵⁸ Gadamer, ‘Hermeneutics Tracking the Trace [on Derrida]’ *GR*, 396.

⁵⁹ Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*.

dwelling's railway stations and highways, dams and market halls are built, but they are not dwelling places.'⁶⁰

6.5 Symbolic Spaces

In turning Gadamer's descriptive tools to the Tate Modern space, we have highlighted the less strict divide between types of space. Gadamer variously describes the city, churches, homes and academic buildings as hermeneutic 'texts.'

Symbols conserve the presence of the immutable in the temporal, the links between the everyday, temporal world and the world of ideas.⁶¹

Gadamer presents the symbol as something that 'vouchsafes meaning' and so begins his description of the notion of 'symbol' through the example of the *tessera hospitalis* to underline the recognition at work in the operation of the beautiful in the work of art.⁶² As a social signal of mutual hospitality, each fragment points away from itself in a self-implicating manner. As mimetic in Gadamer's anti-Platonic sense, the artwork operates as a symbol, asserting its particularity to reveal a *Sache* to its dialogue partner. Gadamer differentiates between the artwork as 'symbol' and other commonplace instances of the symbolic that relate to its character as such, but that operates on a less profound level. In that the symbol captures the 'representational' capacities of art, that is its ability to 'vouchsafe' the meaning of a *Sache* that cannot obtain presence in any other way, it points beyond itself as the commonplace examples Gadamer provides⁶³. However, symbolic objects in everyday life lack the 'superabundance' of meaning that belongs to the artwork as *symbolon*. In this sense, the work of art retains its individuality, marking itself out from conventional contemporary symbols which are infinitely

⁶⁰ "BDT," 145. Although of course we should note that Heidegger cites Temples and Cathedrals as instances of 'authentic' dwelling that gather a historic community to themselves.

⁶¹ Pattabi Raman and Richard Coyne, "The Production of Architectural Criticism," *Architectural Theory Review* 5, no. 1 (April 1, 2000): 88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13264820009478390>.

⁶² 'The Relevance of the Beautiful' Gadamer, *RB*, 35, 31.

⁶³ Gadamer provides the examples of badges, insignia and religious symbols. *TM*, 151, 153. See also: *GC*, 71.

interchangeable: ‘...the experience of the beautiful, and particularly the beautiful in art, is the invocation of a potentially whole and holy order of things, wherever it may be found.’⁶⁴

The artwork's operation as ‘symbol,’ a fragment that prompts a reintegration with the ‘whole of life,’ prompts the hermeneutic subject to relate the particular and unique experience of art to the totality of their world. There is a crucial difference between the symbol in general and the specific showing of the idea indicated by Hegel. This distinction has two significant effects, as Gadamer notes, preventing the work's overtaking as the bearer of the idea through the notion of contemplating the idea itself, as Hegel claims in his ‘end of art’ thesis⁶⁵ ‘..the symbol is that other fragment that has always been sought in order to make whole our own fragmentary life.’⁶⁶

It is important to see that a work of art does not owe its real meaning to such an act of institution, even if it is a religious picture or a secular memorial. The public act of consecration or unveiling that assigns its purpose does not give it its significance. Rather, it is already a structure with a signifying function of its own, as a pictorial or non-pictorial representation, before it is assigned a function as a memorial. Erecting and dedicating a memorial—and it is not by accident that, after a certain historical distance has consecrated them, we speak of religious and secular works of architecture as architectural monuments—therefore only actualizes a function already implicit in the work’s own content.⁶⁷

In understanding monuments and works of architecture as works beyond the ceremonies that inaugurate their status as such, Gadamer takes a strong stance against functionalism, which interacts with his claim that architecture is necessarily decorative. Architectures, he writes, ‘prescribe and help fashion this kind of functional context.’⁶⁸ Such a statement brings to mind Maya Lin's Vietnam War Memorial in Washington.⁶⁹ Not only does the simple, the v-

⁶⁴ Gadamer, ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 32.

⁶⁵ Gadamer, ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 33.

⁶⁶ Gadamer, ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 32.

⁶⁷ *TM*, 155.

⁶⁸ *TM*, 155.

⁶⁹ *Vietnam Memorial*, Washington, USA (Architect: Maya Lin, 1982.)

shaped monument, possess a unique presence flanking the soft landscaping of its location, but it also immerses the viewer while standing in contradistinction to the other monuments in the park where it stands.



Figure 17 Aerial Image Vietnam War Memorial Washington, USA (Architect Maya Lin 1982) image: Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=78216>



Figure 18 Names of Vietnam Veterans Engraved on Memorial (image: By Hu Totya - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3158087>)

The memorial, completed in 1982, is as an early form of ‘anti-monument.’⁷⁰ It is an instance not of a symbol as a direct representation- a statue or effigy of those to be remembered, rather it is a symbol that plays host to meaning.⁷¹ To interact with the monument is to walk along the sloping V, witnessing it rise above you like a slow descent attesting to a mounting loss. It is a monumental form that insistently and quietly actualises its content, and although abstract, insists on a memorialisation that is non-celebratory. The monument resists convention by sinking into the ground rather than rising above it, the monument defies ordinary symbolic operations of the monumental and lacking formal elements of a building- without a roof, doorway or walls it operates at the very margins of the architectural. Despite its abstraction, the monument presents a particular atmosphere which we might understand through Gadamer’s account of the festive, which we consider next.

6.6 Architectural Space as ‘Festive’

Today we are constantly and intensely aware that the human world and the human gesture have a communicative power in relation to which most lavish expenditure of our world-transforming technological culture seems unsure, hesitant, laboured, and ephemeral.⁷²

Just as the artwork as play offers its structure and movement in its ontological character as ‘playful,’ it further operates to establish a unique temporality. It opens the space closely connected to humanity that Gadamer describes above.

⁷⁰ Anti-monuments can be described as material objects of memorialisation that operate in ‘opposition to traditional monumentality’ rejecting conventions such as: ‘prominence and durability, figurative representation and the glorification of past deeds.’ Quentin Stevens, Karen A. Franck, and Ruth Fazakerley, “Counter-Monuments: The Anti-Monumental and the Dialogic,” *The Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 6 (December 1, 2012): 952, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2012.746035>.

⁷¹ Oschner’s account stresses the memorial as a space that requires participation by a viewer/visitor. “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50, no. 3 (February 1, 1997): 156–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10464883.1997.10734719>. Griswold’s reflections on the memorial are prompted by his own visit to the space Charles L. Griswold and Stephen S. Griswold, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography,” *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 4 (July 1, 1986): 688–719, <https://doi.org/10.1086/448361>.

⁷² Gadamer, ‘The Festive Character of the Theatre’ *RB*, 65.

He describes this through the notion of the artwork as ‘festive.’ This institution of festive time represents a fundamental break from ‘work time’ that, like play, is collective or communal. Re-echoing his reorientation of the ‘classic’ from style or epoch to a mode of operation, Gadamer states that the festival infers repetition, even with a singular event. The being of the festival is that like festivals we recognise in common parlance rupture with the quotidian, creating a space of freedom for the being at work of the work of art. The festive in art brings about a rupture in temporal horizon, conventionally understood between ‘two extremes as bustle and boredom.’⁷³

Gadamer distinguishes the notion of the festival from the regimentation of work time.⁷⁴ In a claim akin to Dufrenne’s account of the aesthetic object, Gadamer states that the artwork as festival gives way to its unique temporality.⁷⁵ It is the festivity of the artwork that can usher in the self-sustaining operational play of the work itself. This might go some way towards clarifying his claims that a single element of a work of architecture may strike us in the course of our everyday being and doing. Despite this moment only making up a glimpse of our regular time, its internal temporal structure speaks to us of something other than the rational division of time in which ordinary life unfolds. The unique temporal quality of festive time or ‘filled time’ (*erfüllte Zeit*) that establishes the emergence of the artwork explains how Gadamer can at once claim that architecture is an art and yet that it stands within the ‘stream of history.’⁷⁶

“‘Filled time,’ on the other hand, does not last long nor does it pass away. And yet all kinds of things happen there.”⁷⁷

⁷³ Gadamer, ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ 42.

⁷⁴ *TM*, 126.

⁷⁵ ‘Objective time is still only an external means for the object to manifest this internal temporality of a world without objects or referents, and yet a world which is recognizable and imperiously offered.’ Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, trans. Edward Casey et al., *Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy* (1953; repr., Evanston Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 184.

⁷⁶ *TM*, 156.

⁷⁷ Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image- So True so Full of Being!’ *GR*, 217.

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Gadamer makes the same claim for the all-embracing nature of the experience of art as ‘festival,’ emphasising the distinct temporality of the experience of art with its repetition. ‘A festival is an experience of community and represents community in its most perfect form. A festival is meant for everyone.’⁷⁸

Like play, the festival itself is goalless, existing for its own sake, to be ‘enacted’ rather than attained.⁷⁹ Grondin compares the norms and values repeated at an academic conference and the notion of the festival.⁸⁰ The festival has a self-repetitive character, which Gadamer claims belongs even to the festival that only occurs once. In architecture, perhaps this sense of those ‘gathered’ together that evokes the space, not only for an individual viewer in a single moment, but a wider community of others that includes our future selves. In principle, in its permanence architecture postulates a form of infinite return.

Since the festival infers its repetition and indicates a community, it positions the viewer as fundamentally indebted to past and future communities of meaning. It is the inherent mobility of horizon as always unfolding that protects Gadamer from essentialist accusations. The inferred ontology of community is not a unitary community, united by an essence, but rather, a coming to an understanding of a given *Sache*, through a self-renewing experience of truth of such richness that we automatically infer a past community who has shared this appraisal and a future one that will contribute to the bringing about of its re-echoing. Because the artwork operates as a festival, the hermeneutic subject acknowledges that they are part of something larger than themselves. Gadamer's presentation of the festive, and

⁷⁸ Gadamer, ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 42.

⁷⁹ Gadamer, ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 41.

⁸⁰ Jean Grondin, “Play, Festival and Ritual in Gadamer: On the Theme of the Immemorial in His Later Works,” in *Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, ed. and trans. Lawrence Kennedy Schmidt (London: Lexington Books, 2001), 46.

its spatial unfolding, echoes the work of Pérez-Gómez and Bohme, who revisit the Romantic notion of *Stimmung*.⁸¹



Figure 19 British Museum Queen Elizabeth II Great Court, London, UK (Architects: Foster and Partners) Photograph By Diliff - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=29904221>

Such quiet communicates itself as, for example, when someone chances to encounter a great artistic or religious monument that suddenly strikes him very deeply. I am thinking of the National Museum in Athens...On entering the room for the first time, one is overcome by an all-embracing festive quiet and one senses how everyone is gathered together before what they encounter.⁸²

There is something of the ‘all-embracing festive quiet’ that Gadamer describes in relation to the museum in Athens and in the Foster and Partners

⁸¹ Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement: Architectural Meaning After the Crisis of Modern Science* (London: MIT Press, 2016); Gernot Böhme, *Atmospheric Architectures: The Aesthetics of Felt Spaces* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

⁸² Gadamer, ‘The Relevance of the Beautiful’ *RB*, 40.

redesign of the British Museum Great Court.⁸³ The two-acre atrium, flooded with natural light evokes spatial volume through the light that floods the space through the steel and glass roof that lays the shadows of its triangular steel frame across the floor to induce a distinct sense of rhythm. The careful fusion of CAD design practices in dialogue with the neo-classical structure represents a deft touch.⁸⁴

The Great Court was ‘one of Britain’s long-lost spaces’ re-designated for public use following the relocation of many books to the British Library.⁸⁵ Originally the courtyard had been intended as an enclosed public park in the centre of the museum complex, but when the succeeding architect placed a reading room in the centre of the space, it became unusable as such. The British Museum space presents festivity of a more frenetic kind than the sense of anticipation evoked in Gadamer’s recounting of the museum in Athens, but which mirrors the immersive and collective quality of the experience he expresses in his description.⁸⁶ In this sense, the atmosphere of the festive here mirrors the ‘vague quality’ of something that emerges through experiences with built space.⁸⁷

6.7 Tarrying

Tarrying is the mode of engaging with artworks that allows ‘genuine dialogue’ to emerge. The adoption of the Heideggerian term ‘*verweilen*’ here highlights the primacy of listening, lingering over mere interrogative analysis

⁸³ The British Museum Queen Elizabeth the II Great Court, London UK (Foster and Partners 1998-2000.)

⁸⁴ This is not Foster’s first intervention into a Neo-Classicist space. His project for the Reichstag in Berlin included the insertion of a transparent dome with a spiralling interior walkway, where the sense of symbolism in a conventional is more explicit than our example here. Reichstag building renovation, Berlin, Germany (Architects: Foster and Partners.)

⁸⁵ Norman Foster, Deyan Sudjic, and Spencer De Grey, *Norman Foster and the British Museum* (Munich: Prestel, 2001), 7.

⁸⁶ Foster notes that the intent of the project was to ‘recreate the city in microcosm’ Foster, Sudjic, and Grey, 10.

⁸⁷ ‘Here for the most part a vague quality of something being well known [*Bekanntheitsqualität*] can be noticed, and precisely this vagueness plays its role in the “statement” that the building is making. If one allows such a quotation to become the central and only object or causes it to be so, one can fail to notice the building itself.’ Gadamer, ‘Hermeneutics Tracking the Trace [on Derrida]’ *GR*, 396.

and follows Heidegger's endorsement of questioning and the question-worthy as 'the piety of thought.' Gadamer develops this model after Collingwood's formulation of the logic of question and answer, drawing further inspiration from Plato's notion of the 'soul in dialogue with itself.'⁸⁸ In the previous chapter we stated that the maintenance of *Bildung* required the cultivation of the *gebildete* that could be described as an attentiveness to the work and, in the case of engagements with the built world, elements of the everyday that might contain hidden abundances of meaning.⁸⁹ Concerning the 'letting be' demanded in the aesthetic encounter, Gadamer describes this process as 'tarrying' or 'lingering with.'⁹⁰

All three of the descriptive criteria Gadamer presents for the operations of the work of art are responsive and participatory. Play requires that one is given over to the structure of the play itself, the festive beckons submission to the work's own 'festive time', and the symbolic, reunited with the notion of the *tessera hospitalis* prompts a recognition that the experience of the work contains a multitude. Gadamer does not make extensive recourse to architecture in the explication of these criteria, focussing on drama and performance with play and the cultic festival as an explanation of the same. However, he claims in *The Artwork in Word and Image*, that he sets out to describe the operations of all art forms so we should be able to assume that the application of these criteria to the work of architecture is possible. The bringing about of the 'being played' that constitutes the experience of the work of art is contingent on 'historically effective consciousness' 'tarrying' with the work.⁹¹ That is, a willing and responsive participation with the work in dialogue. Given the work of art's function as a festival, there is potential

⁸⁸ R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Abingdon, Oxon: Oxford University Press, 1939), 35. It is an engagement with the built world, namely the Albert Memorial that prompts Collingwood's investigation in the dialogical relations between question and answer. 'Everything about it was visibly mis-shapen, corrupt, crawling, verminous; for a time I could not bear to look at it, and passed with averted eyes; recovering from this weakness, I forced myself to look, and face day by day the question: a thing so obviously, so incontrovertibly, so indefensibly bad, why had Scott done it?' Collingwood, 29.

⁸⁹ Recall here Gadamer's account of seeing the a church anew amid post-war destruction as discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four. Gadamer, "Ende Der Kunst?"

⁹⁰ Gadamer, 'Text and Interpretation' *GR*, 189.

⁹¹ *TM*, 120–21.

despite Gadamer's reputation as a moderate hermeneut to understand how disruptive such experiences might be.⁹² Such intercession into the flow of our 'work time' depends on the viewer's willingness to 'tarry' with the work. He describes tarrying with the work of art thusly:

An experience of art is like this: it is not a mere copy of something. Rather one is absorbed in it. It is more like a tarrying that waits and preserves in such a way that the work of art is allowed to come forth than it is like something we have done.⁹³

The account of 'tarrying' and the notion of the artwork as able to draw 'historically effective consciousness' into its distinct temporality, is connected to Gadamer's understanding of time, which he works to uncouple from the notion of its measurement, which he claims, like Heidegger, has 'diminish[ed] and replac[ed] the problem of the being of time.'⁹⁴ In his account of tarrying, Gadamer emphasises the impossibility of objectifying the event of experience, since it is in this moment that 'subjectivity' or 'historically effective consciousness' itself, is fully dissolved. Such dissolution renders the increase of self-knowledge in the return from exile possible. He claims that the activity of tarrying makes up: 'the highest form of activity and a highest reality.'⁹⁵ The priority Gadamer places on tarrying serves to stress that the time of tarrying is not the fleeting antidote to 'work time' but, rather, a more concrete experience of temporality.⁹⁶ In a world increasingly permeated by 'the rule of number' that relentlessly 'manifests itself ...in the form of the series, aggregate, addition and sequence,'⁹⁷ the artwork's autonomous interventions of time into patterns that reinforce the

⁹² Sheila Ross, "The Temporality of Tarrying in Gadamer," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 101–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276406063231>. Gadamer states in conversation with Carsten Dutt: 'It [the experience of art] jolts us, it knocks us over, and sets up a world of its own, into which we are drawn, as it were.' *GC*, 71.

⁹³ Gadamer, 'The Artwork in Word and Image' *GR*, 221.

⁹⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Concerning Empty and Full-Filled Time," trans. R. Philip O'Hara, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 8, no. 4 (1970): 342, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2041-6962.1970.tb02122.x>.

⁹⁵ 'Word and Picture' see also 'Disregarding oneself, regarding what is: that is the behaviour of a cultivated, I might almost say divine, consciousness' Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Praise of Theory Speeches and Essays*, trans. Chris Dawson, Yale Studies in Hermeneutics (London: Yale University Press, 1998), 45.

⁹⁶ Ross, "The Temporality of Tarrying in Gadamer," 107.

⁹⁷ Gadamer, 'The Speechless Image' *RB*, 89.

false norm of measured time possess the potential of reconnecting us with the form of 'natural time' even as modern life increasingly loses sight of it. We might claim, with Gadamer, that the illusory impression that an artwork could ever be 'completed', which Gadamer's thinking of the work of art corrects, is connected to the dominant notion of time as punctuated and 'measured' wherein events possess only a defined and quantifiable duration. Against the all-pervasiveness of measure, Gadamer's treatment of 'tarrying' works to correct the conflation of leisure and idleness. 'Idleness as a refusal of life from within life is tantamount to a falling away, a covering over of life, whereas leisure, on the other hand, is a way of taking up the world, by taking pause.'⁹⁸

...we still have to go beyond the purely artistic quality of the building considered as an image and actually approach it as architectural art in its own right. To do that we have to go up to the building and wander around it. Both inside and out.⁹⁹

Thus tarrying, with architecture, must be a corporeal *and* temporal concern.¹⁰⁰ Here, we need to make recourse to Gadamer's writing on health to understand how he describes the embodied operation of 'measuring.' Gadamer insists that 'we have to enter into and explore the work of architecture.'¹⁰¹ In describing his own interactions with architecture, Gadamer implies the importance of the body in each of the instances of interpretation that he describes. It is the exploration of a building that facilitates his reading of the Cathedral of St Gallen in *Über das Lesen von Bauern und Bildern*, and the act of crossing the threshold of the translation into the street that effects the independent emergence of the 'gargantuan church' in *Ende Der Kunst*.¹⁰² This concurs with Robinson:

To appreciate a work of architecture fully requires not only grasping the structure of a building with the eyes and mind, but also interacting with it, moving through and around it, feeling what it is like to live or

⁹⁸ Risser, "Poetic Dwelling in Gadamer's Hermeneutics," 371.

⁹⁹ Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," 45.

¹⁰⁰. Indeed, given the presupposition of a 'field of play' indicated in Gadamer's account of the same and the 'double mediation' that he describes concerning architecture's function as 'decorative.'

¹⁰¹ Gadamer, "Über das Lesen von Bauten und Bildern."

¹⁰² Gadamer, "Ende Der Kunst?," 81.

work or act in it, to follow its paths, enter its doors, move over its thresholds, pass along its corridors, look out of its windows, and work or play or walk about in its rooms.¹⁰³

Merely viewing images of St Paul's Cathedral cannot prepare anyone for the experience of the subtle echoes of the whispering gallery which permeate the space. This embodied experience affects a feeling of hushed reverence that cannot be understood precisely in any other manner than a corporeal negotiation of the space itself.^{104,105} All this may work as a preliminary defence of Gadamer against accusations from theorists that hastily conclude his concern with dialogue and tradition precludes a thoroughgoing account of the body in his thought.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, it is not only in the experience of architecture and the work of art that corporeal presence is demanded. Gadamer stresses the greater depth of face-to-face discussion over the use of distancing telecommunications.¹⁰⁷

The way one experiences the world, through seeing and hearing and especially tasting, remains inevitably a private secret.... Just as our sensory perception of the world is always inextricably private, so are our drives and our interests. And reason, which we share in common, and which allows each of us to grasp what is common or universal, remains helpless against the blind spots that our individuality nourishes in us.¹⁰⁸

6.8 Conclusion

We have argued that Gadamer's account of the ontological structure of the 'event' of an artwork and our participative encounter with it can be applied

¹⁰³ Robinson, "On Being Moved by Architecture," 340.

¹⁰⁴ Moreover, such experience infers the importance of 'other players' In the case of architecture that we acknowledged in the previous chapter.

¹⁰⁵ This experience is evocative of Gombrich's appraisal of Wren's design, 'Its aim is not to conjure up a vision of another world, but rather to allow us to collect our thoughts' E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon, 1951), 344.

¹⁰⁶ Schott, "Whose Home Is It Anyway? A Feminist Response to Gadamer's Hermeneutics."

¹⁰⁷ 'What never happens in a telephone conversation are those experiences through which people foster an intimacy with one another, where step by step they get deeper into the conversation and in the end are so engrossed in it that a community comes into being between the partners in the conversation, a community that can never again be riven' Gadamer, "The Incapacity for Conversation," 352; Gadamer, *PT*, 30–31.

¹⁰⁸ Gadamer, "The Incapacity for Conversation," 354.

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fruitfully to the experience of architecture, particularly its subtle nature as the backdrop to our lived experience through Gadamer's examples and the others suggested here. With each of the 'self-fulfilling' character of the beautiful in art as play, festival and symbol, we have suggested possible examples where we see Gadamer's accounts of these features at work. Across all three of these features of the work of art, its nature as play, festival and symbol, Gadamer's reading has stressed the necessity for engagement that seeks neither to control nor influence the course of the events. Play functions such that it institutes its own ontological structure over the players, one that eludes complete explication. The examples given here, as with Gadamer's own reflections on art, can only act as a pale re-description of an act of responsive participation whose depth lies in its particularity.

Developing an account of the body in dialogue is a task not undertaken explicitly by Gadamer, but is one that may enhance thinking about the role of architecture in his aesthetics, deepening our understanding of the implications for dialogical understanding.

Throughout this chapter, a consideration of the participatory nature of Gadamer's account of the experience of art, its intercession as playful interlocutor, disrupting the mathematical regimen of regulated and punctuated time to indicate deeper truths and to assert its particularity, indicate two key things. That the fullness of the experience of art demands of 'historically effective consciousness' an attentiveness of its whole being, and, against assertions of conservatism often levelled at Gadamer, that such attentiveness can result in a radical break with the continual and conventional flow of events.

His references to architecture in relation to the lived experience imply the necessity of embodied experience which we have explored above connecting the notion of attentive and participative tarrying to the lived body as the measure (*metrion*) of the appropriate (*das Angemessene*), and the site of the

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first dialogue with the self.¹⁰⁹ In itself this chapter uncovers a deeper question of how far Gadamer, a thinker so concerned with textuality and dialogue, as we will see in our following chapter, has a robust enough account of the body to meet the concerns of some of his critics.

We have found some resonance between Gadamer's account of art as play, festival and symbol and the experience of the work of architecture. However, the accessing of such rich experiences demands an attentive and responsive humility that entails a risk that, in crossing the threshold we may return to the world radically changed. In our next and final chapter we consider Gadamer account of the world as text, and the types of text that resist textuality in a specific sense.

¹⁰⁹ Gadamer's reference here to the 'appropriate' an 'inner measure which is proper to a self-sustaining whole' echoes the connection he re-establishes between decoration and decorum discussed in the previous chapter. 'Between Philosophy and Practical Medicine' *EH*, 98. Also 'Praise of Theory' *PT*, 30.

7 Reading Buildings- An Exploration of the 'World-as-Text'

7.1 Introduction

We must “read” the building, which means that not only must we see it – as we would do with a photographic reproduction – but we must also go where it is, walk around it, enter into it so that we gradually come to build it up, so to speak, for ourselves.¹

As we saw in our previous chapter, the event of understanding architecture demands embodied engagement. As Coyne states, crossing the threshold of a building possesses transformative potential since the contrasts between exterior and interior exploits an often-productive tension.² Our closing chapter engages with Gadamer's claim that interpreting artworks constitutes an act of reading and tests the extension of this claim to the work of architecture. This chapter considers Gadamer's account of the reading of building with particular reference to two later essays: ‘Text and Interpretation’ and ‘The Artwork in Word and Image.’³ The consideration of ‘Text and Interpretation’ leads us organically to a juxtaposition of philosophical hermeneutics and deconstruction. Phillippe Forget arranged the Gadamer-Derrida encounter at the Goethe Institute in 1981. Attendees hoped that this meeting would yield an enlightening and lively debate between two major thinkers in contemporary philosophy.⁴ However, listeners were disappointed that the ‘improbable debate’ they hoped for did not come to pass.⁵ Although Derrida and Gadamer may have ‘talked past’ one another over the course of the symposium, each thinker continued an engagement with the other through writings after the event. Gadamer’s studious search for common ground, both in his public addresses and subsequent essays, as

¹ ‘Ähnlich gilt für das Bauwerk, daß wir es >lesen< müssen; und das heißt, daß wir es nicht nur - wie eine fotografische Reproduktion - anschauen, sondern auf es zu, um es herum, in es hineingehen und es auf diese schreitende Weise gleichsam für uns aufbauen.’

Gadamer, “Über das Lesen von Bauten und Bildern,” 334.

² Coyne, “Hermeneutics Architecture and Design,” 561.

³ Gadamer, “The Artwork in Word and Image- So True, so Full of Being!”

⁴ Di Cesare, “Hermeneutics and Deconstruction,” 588.

⁵ Forget describes the encounter as one that ‘uph[o]eld denial, at the challenge's expense.’ Phillippe Forget, “Arguments,” in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer Derrida Encounter*, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 129.

opposed to Derrida's celebration of the event as an 'epoché that made one hold one's breath, without judgment or conclusion'⁶ seem to confirm that 'hermeneutics moves from unity and [...] deconstruction proceeds from difference.'⁷ Analogously, it is the proceeding from difference perhaps that was also the undoing of Derrida's collaboration with Peter Eisenman. Transcripts of the consultation meetings for their unrealised collaboration for Bernard Tschumi's *parc de la Villette* project seem to indicate another instance of unfulfilled dialogue.⁹ We will return to this at the end of our chapter.

For now we will follow the conflict between Gadamer and Derrida in our discussion here through the difference outlined above, namely proceeding from unity (hermeneutics) or proceeding from difference (deconstruction.) This comparison considers Gadamer and Derrida's approaches to unity and difference in the reading of text, the 'speechless arts' and the reader.

In our preceding chapters, we have acknowledged Gadamer's commitment to the to-and-fro movement of dialogue as the 'sparks manage to fly.'¹⁰ Dialogue takes a position of primacy in his account of reading allowing the meaning to be 'construed' from the text.¹¹ The 'word' possesses a further unity of meaning which retains a revelatory power, and an ability to address the viewer. In this way, the 'word' of the eminent text keeps its enduring ability to address the reader which leads Gadamer to reprise the theme of friendship to describe the unity of word and *Sache*.¹² I bring this into stark contrast with Derrida's account of the iterability of the *Gramme*. The

⁶ Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman, *Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman*, ed. Jeffrey Kipnis and Thomas Leiser (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997).

⁷ Di Cesare, "Hermeneutics and Deconstruction," 589.

⁸ Parc De La Villette, Paris France (Architect: Bernard Tschumi 1989-1996)

⁹ Rather than the commissioned *Follie* for Tschumi's *Parc* project, the attempt at collaboration was documented in a series of transcriptions in a book that defies reading through irregular pagination and punctured pages.

¹⁰ "Hermeneutics on the Trail," in *Hermeneutics Between History and Philosophy: The Selected Writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer Volume I*, ed. and trans. Pol Vandeveld and Arun Iyer (1994; repr., London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 182.

¹¹ Gadamer 'Text and Interpretation' *GR*, 189.

¹² Gadamer 'On the Contribution of Poetry to the Search for Truth' *RB*, 109.

discovery of the unity of the text and the understanding of the ‘poetic word’ is contingent on the ‘goodwill’ of the reader as a dialogue partner. This final point of comparison emerges between the ‘Readers’ of ‘philosophical hermeneutics’ and deconstruction. Proceeding from Gadamer’s assertion after Heidegger that, ‘agreement [...] is more primordial than misunderstanding’ will recall the account of language in Chapter Two, as a unifying horizon that ‘historically effective consciousness’ emerges from and thus is latent in every moment of understanding *and* misunderstanding.¹³ We will recall the notion of *atopos* discussed therein to emphasise that it is precisely the grounding of experience in ‘linguisticity’ that allows for the repeated ruptures that constitute ‘understanding.’¹⁴

Much of the conflict between Gadamer and Derrida emerges through their conflicting critiques of metaphysics. A brief account of this will inform the discussions of text, word and reader in this chapter. At the close of the chapter we consider texts that Gadamer identifies as resistant to his account of textuality and its concomitant return to dialogue. There are the ‘Antitext,’ the ‘Pseudotext’ and the ‘Pretext.’¹⁵ At the close of this discussion, we will suggest examples of these three challenging texts in the built world. Concomitant with Gadamer’s claims that it is the ‘work of art that speaks to us most directly’ all eminent text will, for him, prompt a return to speaking.¹⁶ First, we will consider the relations between architecture and language as a frame for our later discussion of building and reading.

7.2 Architecture as Language

There has been a shift away from the understanding of architecture and of spaces more broadly as ‘texts,’ as Janz has noted.¹⁷ In part, this is an outcome

¹³ Gadamer ‘Language and Understanding’ *GR*, 96.

¹⁴ Di Cesare, “Hermeneutics and Deconstruction,” 592.

¹⁵ Gadamer ‘Text and Interpretation’ *GR*, 176.

Here, as the sense of the German terms *Antitexte*, *Pseudotexte*, and *Prätexete* are not lost in English translation, the English terms are used in the interests of accessibility to the anglophone reader.

¹⁶ Gadamer ‘Aesthetics and Hermeneutics’ *GR*, 124.

¹⁷ Bruce Janz, “Is Place a Text?,” in *Space, Place and Hermeneutics* (Springer International Publishing, 2017), 23–24.

of the drive within architectural theory to displace occularcentrism from its hegemonic position in western aesthetics.¹⁸ Previous efforts at bringing architecture and language into proximity have been to highlight its similarity to other artforms (literature or music) and bolster its claim to the status of ‘art.’¹⁹ However, in attempting to render the ‘language of architecture’ as a syntactic language, such theories often overlook the surplus of meaning we encounter when we enter a built space.²⁰ We have already seen that Gadamer’s account of language moves against such nominalist accounts to stress ‘living language’ as a ground of community.

One advantage of the move away from the ‘Architecture as Language’ approach is that it allows for an emphasis on embodiment and with it, an emphasis on the particularities of architecture, light, sound and materiality, for example. The implication of the body in our discussion of play, festival and symbol in the previous chapter indicated the scope for a dialogical approach and embodiment to compliment one another. The citation from Gadamer with which we opened this chapter suggests that ‘reading’ architecture is an explicitly embodied act, something we considered in our previous chapter in relation to play, festival and symbol. Architecture and texts have much in common. The opposition between high architecture and vernacular building can be compared to the distinctions between dialectical speech and genteel forms of a given language.²¹ Firstly, as Gadamer notes, one of architecture’s unique capacities is to shape space, denoting the structures that surround *Bildung*, inscribing and circumscribing behaviour.

¹⁸ See in particular, Palasmaa who urges for a critical examination of the forces that shape the prevalent account of vision, promoting instead a haptic account of spatial experiences. *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture of the Senses* (London: Wiley Blackwell, 1996), 19, 40.

¹⁹ Martin Donougho, “The Language of Architecture,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 21, no. 3 (1987): 56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3332870>.

²⁰ Nelson Goodman, “How Buildings Mean,” *Critical Inquiry* 11, no. 4 (June 1, 1985): 642–53, <https://doi.org/10.1086/448311>.

²¹ For a definition of the vernacular architecture as using local materials, the skill of craftspeople and traditional techniques see Glassie “Architects, Vernacular Traditions, And Society,” *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 1, no. 2 (1990): 11.

It seems that we can detect some similarity between Gadamer approach to architecture and his approach to language here. Just as he eschews the high conceptual language of philosophy, he approaches buildings through anecdotal reporting that indicates their position within his own self-narrative.

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We will return to this theme here in an explicit consideration of ritual and its deeper relations to language.

In that, ‘historically effective consciousness’ must physically negotiate the space; we can denote a corporeal act of reading wherein familiarity between ‘historically effective consciousness’ and the space in question decides its legibility. For example, my ability to read a Gothic cathedral as a white westerner is a product of familiarity with its social standing and the practices relevant to it, where the ceremonies and practices concomitant with a Buddhist temple would, at first, seem challenging. Despite this, some elements of the space, its sacred and hushed atmosphere might translate across, as in the practice of reading one form of text and another and likewise would increase one’s architectural lexicon.^{22, 23} In the person of the architect we have a discernible ‘author’ of the text (albeit reduced in prominence by Gadamer’s rejection of authorial intent as a measure of an interpretation’s accuracy) and a distinct ‘readership’ in those that explore a given edifice. The mythology of architecture and language runs deep. Associated with God’s punishment for the idolatry of the tower of Babel, man is punished (or perhaps gifted) with the confusion of languages.²⁴ We will see in the account of the ‘word’ that Gadamer will retain some of its naming power, describing it as ‘gold.’

It may be then that the rejection of a linguistic approach by architecture is a hasty reaction against analytic theories that attempt to construct buildings as syntactic language that reduces the subjective elements of interacting with the built world by reducing the communicative capacities of buildings to fixed systems of referents where the viewer is simply required to ‘decode’ the system of ‘exemplification’ at work in the edifice. Gadamer’s approach may

²² Janz, “Is Place a Text?,” 27.

²³ As Moore states of the account of Japanese dwelling in *In Praise of Shadows*: ‘Thus darkness illuminates for us a culture very different from our own; but at the same time it helps us look deep into ourselves to our own inhabitation of our world.’ “Forward,” in *In Praise of Shadows*, by Junichiro Tanizaki, trans. Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker (London: Random House, 2001), 2.

²⁴ Genesis 11:2-11:9

be said to illustrate the deeper and less acknowledged connections between architecture and ‘linguisticity.’ This is evidenced in the ways he allows for the unique vantage point of the individual as expressed in terms of their unique position within a horizon of historical and cultural meaning, and yet, through the process of reading, and the case of the ‘eminent text,’ explains the continued resonance of certain built spaces. To progress his notion of reading artworks, Gadamer suggests derivations of *lesen* in relation to the act of reading: ‘*Anlesen* (begin to read) *Weiterlesen* (reading further) *Nachlesen* (just checking in) and *vorlesen* (reading aloud.)’²⁵ These point to the following account of reading here in their mutual relation to terms that connote ‘harvesting.’²⁶ This highlights Gadamer’s understanding of language as a lived horizon, as a living thing belonging to the worldly event of understanding, and his rejection of ‘the hypothesis that a philosophical language exists separated from the language of life.’²⁷ Recall the divergence from Heidegger that Gadamer makes in this regard.²⁸ Di Cesare clarifies this progression in Gadamer’s thought as follows:

Gadamer indicates two ways, perhaps only one path, that in the wake of Heidegger’s attempts to leave the language of metaphysics behind, could lead us out into the open: the way of hermeneutics, which returns from dialectic to dialogue, and the way of deconstruction that, starting from *écriture*, brings about the laceration of metaphysics.²⁹

Both Gadamer and Derrida outline their approaches to language against Plato. It is to the notion of language in the *Phaedrus* that we look to next.

7.3 Written in the Soul

At the close of his first response to Gadamer, Derrida attempts to draw philosophical hermeneutics close to metaphysics or to certain strands of

²⁵ Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image-So True, so Full of Being!’ *GR*, 217.

²⁶ Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image-So True, so Full of Being!’ *GR*, 217–18.

²⁷ Di Cesare, *Utopia of Understanding*, 148.

²⁸ See Chapter 2.

²⁹ Di Cesare, *Utopia of Understanding*, 148.

metaphysical thinking.³⁰ A brief examination of Gadamer's reception of Plato's distinctions between speech and writing will show that this is not the case. Both Gadamer and Derrida refer to Plato's account of writing and speech in the *Phaedrus*. To teach his young pupil about the uses of rhetoric, Socrates recounts the Egyptian myth of Thamus' dismissal of writing the art of which will 'induce forgetfulness in the souls of those who learn it' and thus writing can only be a pale imitation of wisdom.³¹ Returning to his dialogue, Socrates emphasised the point further speaking in favour of the discourse that is written 'in the soul of the listener.'³² In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer refers to Plato's so-called dismissal of writing in the *Phaedrus* as an ironic exaggeration³³ as well as questioning the claim in the *Protagoras* that text is resistant to speech.³⁴ Further, he is critical of Plato's avoidance of the externality of language in the *Seventh Letter*.³⁵ Gadamer insists that the 'real hermeneutical task' is the continual transformation or translation of the written text 'back to speech.'³⁶ Gadamer accepts that the written text here presents the greater challenge because as a speechless interlocutor, or better an interlocutor that cannot clarify its meaning or respond directly to your questions, it 'makes the understanding reader the arbiter of its claim to truth.'³⁷

Derrida's analysis of the *Phaedrus* stresses the tension in Plato's designation of the written word as *Pharmakon*. His historiography in Plato's Pharmacy looks to recover its original meaning as 'both remedy and poison,' exposing

³⁰ Jacques Derrida, "Three Questions to Hans-Georg Gadamer," in *The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, trans. Diane Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (1981; repr., Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 53–54.

³¹ Plato, *Phaedrus* 275b

³² Plato, *Phaedrus* 276a

³³ '...writing shares a strange feature with painting. The offspring of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent.' Plato, *Phaedrus* 275d.

Dostal also notes this difference between interactions with text and dialogue partners. "Gadamerian Hermeneutics and Irony: Between Strauss and Derrida," *Research in Phenomenology* 38, no. 2 (January 1, 2008): 250, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156916408X286996>.

³⁴ *TM*, 359.

³⁵ *TM*, 425.

³⁶ *TM*, 411.

³⁷ *TM*, 412.

its simultaneous beneficence and maleficence.³⁸ Just as he accuses Gadamer of concealing a ‘good will to power’ in their *Goethe-Institut* encounter, he treats Socrates’ claim against writing in the *Phaedrus* as a denial of indeterminate meaning at the heart of his word. He claims that such a resolution of otherness is constitutive of a metaphysics of presence that insists on the coherence of its own worldview by foreclosing on alterity.³⁹ In contrast to Derrida, Gadamer calls the written word or text, the ‘rigid form[s] of written relations’ that arise from the natural play of language in dialogue that constitutes the structure of human reason. The promotion of dialogue, aside from portraying a commitment to a Socratic humility, reflects Gadamer’s own challenges with writing, reportedly preferring to engage in dialogue over producing writing.⁴⁰

Absence as the boundary of language is fundamental for both Gadamer and Derrida. Gadamer contends that prior commonality and agreement underpins silence and speechlessness. Derrida will insist that absence is the criterion of writing, showing its priority over the spoken *word*. The image that inspired Derrida’s Postcards project, Matthew Paris’ 13th-Century illustration (see Figure 20) shows this relation. Here it is Plato the writer who controls Socrates’ speech despite in his absence from the text. Despite this critique of Plato as ushering in metaphysics or preparing the way for metaphysics, a critique which Derrida shares with Heidegger, the erasure of both writer and reader occurs in Derrida and Gadamer, but by different means. For Gadamer, both author and interpreter disappear behind the truth of the text itself which emerges through the participatory act of receptive interpretation. In deconstruction, a multitude of meaning assures the ‘Death of the Author,’ but the subject/interpreter as a writer is invited in to an infinite free play of written forms.⁴¹ This radical freedom possesses a political dimension in its ability to

³⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), 70–71.

³⁹ Michelfelder and Palmer, *Dialogue and Deconstruction*, 165.

⁴⁰ Di Cesare, *Gadamer*, 2.

⁴¹ Barthes describes the writer after the ‘death of the author’ as follows: ‘For him, on the contrary, the hand, cut off from any voice, borne by a pure gesture of inscription (and not of expression), traces a field without origin - or which, at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins.’ Roland Barthes,

question unitary meaning, and again exposes the same critique of Gadamer's potential recourse to unity and respect of the authority of tradition that we saw in his debate with Habermas. Derrida himself experiments with the infinite possibilities of surface meanings, turning his texts into *écriture* as bricolage.⁴² In keeping with his commitment to living dialogue, Gadamer asserts the necessity of the text's return to question-worthiness and living speech through the act of reading and interpreting.



Figure 20 Socrates taking dictation from Plato, MS. Ashmole 304, fols. 31v-32r, Bodelian Libraries, Oxford University. image credit: <https://genius.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/exhibits/browse/fortune-telling-tracts/>

7.4 Text

"The Death of the Author," in *Image Music Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (1968; repr., London: HarperCollins, 1977), 146.

⁴² Consider the fragmentary nature of the postcards project, or, the challenge of reading the relations across the layout of his 'Tympan' a structure of conflicting columns of text reminiscent of Rem Koolhaas' fragmentary texts.

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In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida seeks to subvert the ‘system of hearing’ that has, as a ‘noncontingent signifier,’ relegated writing to a ‘secondary and instrumental function’ in Western thought.⁴³ Where Derrida's project heralds the ‘death of speech,’ or at least ‘a new situation for speech.’ Gadamer will maintain the ‘life of the dialogue.’⁴⁴ For both thinkers, the notion of rupture will instigate the moves toward (Gadamer) and away from (Derrida) spoken language. Here, we will focus on Gadamer’s account. In claiming that the interpretation is reading, Gadamer must explain the text’s transition to speech. He does this through the example of the eminent texts performing an exemplary form of ‘speaking.’ Gadamer defines reading in contradistinction to other forms of mere recitation and operates with an expansive notion of ‘texts’ that embraces a diversity of art forms. Genuine reading is thus an act of translation, a ‘changing back’ that resuscitates the text re-inaugurating it as dialogue.⁴⁵ This presupposes an understanding of the text, and mere recitation will not suffice, as Gadamer emphasises:

Whoever reads a text or repeats words without understanding them—no matter how much expression, articulation, and intonation goes into such speaking—will pass right by the sense of the words and their meaning will not be conveyed.⁴⁶

Speech shows the thinking underpinned by the spontaneity of natural language. Gadamer shows Kleist's analysis of the *viva voce* process as an illustration of such spontaneity contrasting ‘speaking’ and ‘recitatio.’⁴⁷ This serves to reject any notion of passivity on the part of the reader. As Gadamer

⁴³ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1974; repr., Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013), 8.

⁴⁴ Gadamer, ‘Autobiographical Reflections: in conversation with Jean Grondin’ *GR*, 15.

⁴⁵ Gadamer describes the written word as a ‘dead thing’ brought alive again in the act of reading. *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Bloomsbury Revelations (1975; repr., London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 574.

⁴⁶ Gadamer, ‘Hermeneutics and Logocentrism’ *Dialogue and Deconstruction*, 124.

⁴⁷ This kind of speech is nothing less than articulated thought. The chains of ideas and of their designations proceed together at the same speed, and the mental documents for the one and for the other agree. Then speech is not an impediment, a sort of brake on the wheel of intellect, but like a second wheel running parallel with it on the same axle.’ Heinrich Von Kleist, “On the Gradual Construction of Thoughts during Speech,” trans. Michael Hamburger, *German Life and Letters* 5, no. 1 (1951): 44. ‘Towards a Phenomenology of Ritual and Language’ *Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer’s Hermeneutics*, 40.

has it, 'Reading' is 'the basic form in which all encounter with art takes place[...] not only in relation to texts, then, but also in relation to pictures, sculpture and buildings.'⁴⁸ The work of art, even the 'speechless arts' requires reintegration 'into the self-understanding of each person' for dialogue to occur.⁴⁹ It is in the dialogue that *Sache*, the subject matters or truths raised by art can come to light. With architecture, the construction of the building-as-text is insufficient; it requires a reader. That is an embodied subject that will engage in the corporeal negotiation of space described by Gadamer at the opening of this chapter.⁵⁰ This process, Gadamer states, possesses a unique temporal structure wherein the reader does not simply progress from text to speech but instead meaning 'crystallizes' as a whole.⁵¹ Since this occurs between the text and interpreter, there is a sense in which both text and reader are subordinate to the truth that emerges between them.⁵²

In contrast, from the hermeneutical standpoint—which is the standpoint of every reader—the text is a mere intermediate product [*Zwischenprodukt*], a phase in the event of understanding that, as such, certainly includes a certain amount of abstraction, namely, the isolation and reification that is involved in this very phase.⁵³

Gadamer is careful to differentiate his account of reading from the notion of mere 'reproduction.'⁵⁴ Reading for Gadamer is a process of returning the text to the living voice, and, as such presupposes an act of interpretation on the part of the reader. Again, Gadamer stresses the receptivity and participation of the reader to bring *die Sache* out of the text.⁵⁵ This leads to a differentiation between music and theatre, where the work cannot operate through the same structure as the written text, because both art forms require performance by musicians or dramaturgs. The process from written signs, music or script to

⁴⁸ Gadamer, "Reflections on My Philosophical Journey," 51.

⁴⁹ Gadamer, 'Aesthetics and Hermeneutics' GR, 128.

⁵⁰ See the opening citation, Gadamer, "Über das Lesen von Bauten und Bildern," 334.

⁵¹ Gadamer, 'Text and Interpretation' GR, 187.

⁵² Gadamer, 'Aesthetics and Hermeneutics' GR, 128.

⁵³ Gadamer, 'Text and Interpretation' GR, 169.

⁵⁴ Gadamer, 'On the Truth of the Word' GR, 145.

⁵⁵ It is the model of the dialogue as lived, unpredictable and fundamentally incomplete that acts as a defence against Gadamer's account of *die Sache* becoming little more than essentialism.

interlocutor is therefore less direct. Therefore, we might claim then that the ‘speechless arts’ are closer to Gadamer’s literary text, since they require no interpretive ‘middle man.’

At the close of his 1992 essay, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image’, Gadamer explicitly addresses the work of architecture. Here, as in *Truth and Method*, he stresses its ‘double-function,’ alerting the reader to two tendencies that create barriers to reading buildings.⁵⁶ The first is an aestheticizing approach that perceives the work as an image, brought about by the proliferation of photographic reproductions of works, leading to ‘a feeling of disappointment when one does not encounter in the building itself the false appearance of a painting.’⁵⁷ The second, ‘parallel’ problem, is a purely functionalist consideration of the building. Slipping into either of these bifurcations within the act of reading buildings has the result of overlooking the way in which, according to Gadamer, the work of architecture appears in its *Vollzug* as a subtle rupture within the course of its regular use. Unlike painting, for example, which invites uninterrupted consideration, the work of architecture must affect a rupture within the quotidian. As Gadamer puts it, ‘It emerges as an artwork only when, in the middle of its use, something wonderful shines forth, as with everything that is beautiful.’ Architecture’s distinction lies the way the artistic element of the work ‘holds back.’⁵⁸ Gadamer also further stresses intertextuality between architectural styles, think for example, of the way that Le Corbusier’s *Villa Savoye* ‘cites’ classical pilasters.⁵⁹

Or we can think of contemporary architectural style, in which citation plays a large role. Here, we are at most only able to sense a vague quality of familiarity, but it is precisely in this vagueness that this familiarity represents a contribution to the ‘statement’ [*Aussage*] made by the building.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image-so True so full of being!’ *GR*, 220–24.

⁵⁷ Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image-so True so full of being!’ *GR*, 221.

⁵⁸ Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image-so True so full of being!’ *GR* 221.

⁵⁹ *Le Villa Savoye*, Paris, France (Architect Le Corbusier, 1929-1931)

⁶⁰ Gadamer, “Hermeneutics on the Trail,” 197.

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Gadamer's extension of the account of reading to encompass even 'speechless arts' constitutes an attempt to 'form a concept of art that can account for the widest range of the arts.'⁶¹ The 'vague' silent statement made by the building, as we will see next need not indicate its incapacity to be richly communicative. Further, this shift from 'text' towards 'world-as-text' is the culmination of a more encompassing definition of hermeneutics' realm of application that finds its culmination in his claim that 'aesthetics must be absorbed into hermeneutics.'⁶² For each text, the ground of its meaning is the spoken, its coming to being in speech, even if this is only a dialogue within the 'inner ear' of the listener. Even this moment of self-reflection constitutes an act of dialogue for Gadamer. It is those silent moments in reading that we will next consider as well as the relation between these tension-filled moments of abundant silence in relation to the horizon of linguisticity.

7.5 The Speechless

To think is to think something with oneself; and to think something with oneself is to say something to oneself.⁶³

Gadamer characterises the interiority of thought as 'infinite dialogue with ourselves.'⁶⁴ Rather than understanding moments of silence as the absence of speech, Gadamer states that moments where language makes itself conspicuous by its absence, for example unvoiced consent between close friends, or being 'being struck dumb with admiration' are evidence of the primacy of 'linguisticity.'⁶⁵ In the former's case, wordless agreement, these moments implicate a horizon of prior speech that secures the mutually unvoiced meaning. 'Silent understanding [...] rests on a network of previous understandings, and these understandings reside in language.'⁶⁶ The latter example, induced by the 'breathtaking nearness' of the work of art, which

⁶¹ Richard E. Palmer, "Ritual, Rightness and Truth in Two Late Works of Hans-Georg Gadamer," in *The Philosophy of Hans Georg Gadamer*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Illinois: Open Court, 1997), 537.

⁶² *GC*, 76.

⁶³ *TM*, 569.

⁶⁴ *TM*, 569.

⁶⁵ Gadamer 'Language and Understanding' *GR*, 92–93.

⁶⁶ Palmer in 'Translator's introduction to *Language and Understanding*' *GR*, 90.

leaves us at a 'loss for words' indicates a breakdown in language that testifies to a human need to bring something to speech.⁶⁷ The intangible feeling that one construes from the engagement with art, and our 'reading' of it, are the 'beginning of speech' for Gadamer.⁶⁸ He underlines this in the essay 'The Speechless Image' Gadamer stresses the etymological nearness of *Stumm* (mute) and *Stammeln* (stammer.)⁶⁹ In this way, new understandings, ways of seeing and thinking about the world are inaugurated in the moment of speechlessness that occurs before their being brought to expression. In this relation silence and speech are held together in productive tension for Gadamer. Therefore, the breach in language, or the disruption of that same can be said to possess a position of fundamental importance within Gadamer's account of reading.⁷⁰

Encounters with 'speechless arts' are situations where 'alterity between the interlocutors is diminished' since these 'speechless arts' cannot verbally present their dialogues partner with the kind of 'interpretive checks' ordinarily provided by the embodied other.⁷¹ It appears above that Gadamer is perhaps suggesting that architecture consistently speaks with a voice of silence. This would appear to be supported by the examples of architecture Gadamer provides, and to support the role of architecture as 'decorative.' The ineffable quality of the experience of building, that it does not directly communicate content like the work of literature does, for example, may in Gadamer's above account indicate its communicative potential rather than its limited capacity as an artwork.

[...] the awareness that every speaker has in each moment when he or she seeks the correct word [...] the awareness that he or she never completely attains it. What reaches the other through language, what has been said in words, is always less than what has been meant or intended. An unstilled desire for the appropriate word—that is what

⁶⁷ Gadamer, 'On The Truth of The Word' *GR*, 155.

⁶⁸ Gadamer, 'Language and Understanding' *GR*, 93.

⁶⁹ Gadamer, 'The Speechless Image' *RB*, 83.

⁷⁰ Recall Gadamer's recourse to Plato in Chapter 2 in order to describe the expansion of a linguistic horizon as a fluctuation between the *oikieon* and the *atopon*.

⁷¹ David Vessey, "Dialogue, Goodwill, and Community," in *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Niall Keane and Chris Lawn (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 312.

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constitutes the true life and essence of language. Here a close relationship appears between the inability to satisfy this desire, *désir* (Lacan), and the fact that our own human existence dissipates in time and before death.⁷²

There is a second sense in which Gadamer investigates the ‘overwhelming impression[s]’ that can come from the built world.⁷³ Gadamer explores the theme of ritual in the later essay *Towards a Phenomenology of Ritual and Language*. Like silence, ritual does not *require* conversation operating in a way similar to the description of ‘festival’ in the previous chapter. In these settings although language is used, this does not occur in the free-flowing and unpredictable form of the conversation. For example, the learned call-and-response in the Mass cannot be described as a conversation between priest and congregation. Rather, the forms of behaviour learned here indicate what Gadamer terms ‘*ein Gesamt*’, a whole in which one takes part.⁷⁴ As a part of the lived horizon, ritual and language are acquired together, in lived journey of experience. This allows Gadamer to frame ‘real speaking’ into a category ‘that can occur not just in conversation or in poetry, but more inclusively, more universally, in the rituals of our communal life.’⁷⁵ Rituals can be described as the practices where concepts such as tradition and its transmission become experiential, personal and participatory.

Such participatory practices happen in and among the spaces constructed for them. As such, Gadamer’s account of ritual underpins a connection between architecture and community that allows their speechlessness to maintain an intimate connection to language without falling into the reductive descriptions of iconology, or simply becoming understood as a form of built language. The practice of rite and ritual serve as a source of understanding, cohesion, and crucially a measure of ‘rightness’ for the members of that community.⁷⁶ The fulfilment of ritual, is intimately connected to its

⁷² Gadamer, 'The Boundaries of Language' Schmidt, *Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, 17.

⁷³ Gadamer, 'Towards a Phenomenology of Ritual and Language' 38.

⁷⁴ Gadamer, "Towards a Phenomenology of Ritual and Language," 31.

⁷⁵ Palmer, "Ritual, Rightness and Truth in Two Late Works of Hans-Georg Gadamer," 532.

⁷⁶ Palmer, 533.

application, affecting a union of *ethos* and *logos*, through its ‘rational and normative side.’⁷⁷ This distinguishes ritual actions sharply from the interpretation of a given text, where the logic and play of question and answer constitutes a back and forth movement between reader and word. Ritual actions, however, that use language ‘performatively’ serve to underline Gadamer’s project of situating language in a ‘lifeworld.’ We might say with Gadamer, that the rites and rituals that secure the being together of a community are a phenomenologically prior to the intricate work of interpretation. Just as the architectural work operates decoratively for other artworks, allowing them to speak through shaping space, the rituals and rite that take place in the built world are part of a rich penumbra of behaviours that confirm the *Miteinander* that occurs in conversation, not as an individual dynamic exchange between individuals but within a greater communal whole. As such, these rituals Gadamer reminds us are not a part of history which thinking has outgrown, but rather, an essential, if unacknowledged facet of being.

It is important to retain this: being is not just presence. That type of being that is temporalized, begins each morning anew, and with each new beginning reorients itself, and all this in the with-one-another of language and ritual, from “Good Morning” to “Good Night” when the conversations with oneself and with others, and all the rituals of symbolic behaviour, sink into the darkness, like the darkness of death. All this should be “correct.”⁷⁸

Gadamer’s account of the relationship between language ritual and the act of reading indicate new spaces of consideration in the case of architecture. As the fora where the everyday ritual actions of a community take place, the ‘space shaping’ function of the architectural exhibits a subtle power in making spaces for these small actions that reconnect us daily with the routines and rituals that help constitute the community that we are.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Gadamer, ‘Towards a Phenomenology of Ritual and of Language’ *Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer’s Hermeneutics*, 49.

⁷⁸ Gadamer, ‘Towards a Phenomenology of Ritual and of Language’ 50.

⁷⁹ It is worth noting that Gadamer cites the ‘correctness’ of the performance of social rituals as well as citing architecture and music as the arts of ‘getting it just right.’ Gadamer, ‘The Art Work in Word and Image- So True, so full of Being!’ *GR*, 209.

7.6 Reader

The richness of the text sets a large task for its reader, and in considering them, our discussion returns to the contrast between hermeneutics and deconstruction. The move towards unity and difference that we took to categorise these two projects respectively create different tasks for the reader. However, they begin with some common understandings. Both Derrida and Gadamer understand language as polysemic, words can possess shifting and multiple meanings.⁸⁰

Language is such that, whatever particular meaning a word may possess, words do not have a single unchanging meaning; rather, they possess a fluctuating range of meanings, and precisely this fluctuation constitutes the peculiar risk of speaking.⁸¹

Where Gadamer's approach to reading the world as text constitutes a 'being-toward-the-text,' Derrida's rejection of any ontological account of being appears to dissolve into a 'text-towards-the-text.' This is exemplified in his 'postcards' project. In this project, constituted of fragments from an anonymous sender, Derrida's contention that 'the writings we receive from the past do not and cannot have any determined recipients' is highlighted.⁸² Although Gadamer provides an account of onto-ethical obligations that shape the engagements between 'historically effective consciousness' and the texts of tradition and '*Bildung*', Derrida's interpreter, who accepts the rejection of any essential shared content, is instead permitted infinite play within a language world where 'ownership is in constant dispute, and where furthermore there are no essential contents of understanding to be shared.'⁸³ However, they remained robbed of the notion of any connection of lasting value. Pursuing a 'collective monologue' of infinite self-erasure, the non-

⁸⁰ Jacques Derrida, "Tympan," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982), xxiv.

⁸¹ Gadamer, 'Language and Understanding' *GR*, 106.

⁸² Catherine H. Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 227.

⁸³ Gabe Eisenstein, "The Privilege of Sharing: Dead Ends and the Life of Language," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Richard E. Palmer and Diane P. Michelfelder (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 270.

subject of deconstruction exchanges depth of dialogue for the isolation of unending *écriture*.⁸⁴

The value of the poetic word induces care on behalf of its interpreter. Gadamer articulates the value of the poetic word through an analogy to money developed after Paul Valéry. ‘Ordinary language resembles a coin that we pass around among ourselves in place of something else, whereas poetic language is like gold itself.’⁸⁵ Like the enduring value of gold, the poetic word possesses an insistence and self-affirming value of the ‘true friend.’

When we say that someone is a ‘true friend’ we mean by this that someone has proved himself or herself to be a friend and not simply given us the impression of friendly support and sympathy. It has emerged that this is a real friend. He is now ‘unconcealed’, as Heidegger would say.⁸⁶

The listening to and for the ‘word’ requires a careful attentiveness of the ‘inner-ear’ for Gadamer.⁸⁷ Derrida rejects the claim of such listening as the further sign of a metaphysics of presence that he believes denies alterity. However, as we have seen above in the discussion of speechlessness, it is just these breaks or ruptures in language that the hermeneutic ‘reader’ is attentive to. It is these moments of tension that make up a profundity of experience, and without them, ‘living language,’ as Gadamer describes it, ceases to survive. Despite presenting an expansive definition of ‘text,’ Gadamer places limits on textuality. We will consider these limits in relation to the built world as they constitute exceptions to the work of architecture as text.

7.7 Resisting ‘Textuality’

Having traced above the connections between reading and building as well as showing the communicative capacities of the ‘speechless art’ that is architecture, we should consider which built ‘texts’ resist their role as such.

⁸⁴ Donald G. Marshall, “Dialogue and *Écriture*,” in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer Derrida Encounter*, ed. Richard E. Palmer and Diane P. Michelfelder (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 207.

⁸⁵ Gadamer, ‘Composition and Interpretation’ *RB*, 67.

⁸⁶ Gadamer, ‘On the Contribution of poetry to the search for Truth’ *RB*, 108.

⁸⁷ Gadamer, ‘Text and Interpretation’ *GR*, 181.

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In the built world, particularly in the city, there are spaces that seem to fall short of the possibility of reading. In these cases, it seems fair to claim that this architecture lacks legibility for reasons of poor quality, rather than due to poor readership. Here we turn to *Text and Interpretation* to explore texts Gadamer describes as challenges to his textuality thesis and suggests some architectural counterparts.⁸⁸ Then, we contrast Derrida's own interventions into architecture, focusing on the unrealised Chora-L works with Peter Eisenman.⁸⁹

Without a proper schema to arbitrate the hierarchy of interpretations, the work of architecture as 'speechless art' is particularly susceptible to being 'made to mean anything' by the 'bad faith' interlocutor. In our chapter on the decorative, we saw that Gadamer stressed the 'vagueness' that describes the effect of the work of architecture. This being the case, which makes the work of architecture easy to overlook. Equally, without a means of differentiating good from bad architecture, Gadamer's account is at risk of leaving the reader waiting for the 'right perspective' or a new 'ontological valence' to emerge.⁹⁰ We might indeed ask whether the notion of attentive reading here might begin to operate as a form of apologia for sub-standard building. If Gadamer makes the truth claim of the work stronger than the critical assessment of the reader, it is unclear the point at which 'historically effective consciousness' can abandon the search for meaning in their built environment. Gadamer describes the eminent text as: 'a text fixes the pure speech act and therefore has an eminent relation to writing.'⁹¹

To this Gadamer outlines three 'countertexts,'- "antitexts" [*Antitexte*], "pseudotexts" [*Pseudotexte*], and "pretexts" [*Prätexete*]' that is, types 'of text-opposed texts'⁹² which 'throw into relief what it means for a text to be a text

⁸⁸ Of course, in Gadamer's 'Text and Interpretation' these examples appear as a contrast to the 'eminent text' as literary work. The examples suggested here are simply a means of extending his account of reading toward architecture to the fullest extent.

⁸⁹ Derrida and Eisenman, *Chora L Works*.

⁹⁰ *TM*, 142.

⁹¹ *TM*, 600.

⁹² Gadamer, 'Text and Interpretation' *GR*, 177.

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in its fullest sense.’⁹³ He outlines these in the first address of his encounter with Derrida in 1981 entitled, ‘Text and Interpretation.’⁹⁴ These ‘countertexts’ resist the form of reading that draws the reader back into genuine dialogue. These are: ‘Antitexts’ ‘Pseudotexts’ and ‘Pretexts.’ We will recount these here and suggest some possible examples of architecture that might belong to these categories.⁹⁵

The Antitext, Gadamer writes, refuses to be a text in the usual sense because ‘the situation of interactive speaking in which they take place is the dominant factor’ and its epitome in the joke, or the ironic.⁹⁶ The Antitext is thus, a contradictory statement, a statement where the intended meaning is precisely otherwise. Such statements highlight the shared field of understanding occupied by the text and its community of interpreters, and thus the pre-eminence of the interpretive context over the text itself. Gadamer highlights the use of irony and comedy among the Attic aristocracy as an example. In this sense, the ring-fenced, hidden meaning of the text fostered solidarity among the community of nobles towards whom they directed it. As a result, the ‘antitext’, possessing a meaning emergent in the text, is circumscribed, both as emergent content (the precise opposite of the given statement) and operates only in relation to the interpretive community with which it shares its geographic or temporal horizon. Thus the ‘Antitext’ resists the superabundance, or “suspension” of the immediate relation to reality’ that Gadamer associates with the ‘eminent text.’⁹⁷ Its reliance on situational common ground appears to preclude its attainment of the fulfilled resonance of the eminent text since its resonance dies with the specific community toward whom they direct it. Elsewhere, Gadamer addresses irony as a case which exposes the ‘boundaries of language.’⁹⁸ As Dostal acknowledges, irony presents a definite difficulty for Gadamer’s hermeneutics as optimistic and

⁹³ Gadamer, ‘Text and Interpretation’ *GR*, 175.

⁹⁴ Gadamer, ‘Text and Interpretation’ *GR*, 157–91.

⁹⁵ Gadamer, ‘Text and Interpretation’ *GR*, 176.

⁹⁶ Gadamer, ‘Text and Interpretation’ *GR*, 176.

⁹⁷ *TM*, 601.

⁹⁸ Gadamer, “Towards a Phenomenology of Ritual and Language,” 46.

dialogical.⁹⁹ The robust virtue of trust he accords the ‘historically effective consciousness’ appeared problematic in chapter two, and the issue of irony attenuates the issues Habermas cites with respect operating ‘behind the back’ of language, so to speak. The issue here is whether, in the openness that constitutes hermeneutic attentiveness, we might miss cynical operations of irony, defined as a situation where our interlocutor says ‘something other than what one means.’¹⁰⁰ On his final analysis, however, Gadamer states that the intention of irony is solidarity between those in an immediate community because of the very fact that there is a tacit understanding that the ‘real’ meaning of the statement is contrariwise.¹⁰¹

We must ask, what might be the equivalent to such a text in the case of architecture? Buildings for whom the irony or statement that they are other than what they are eludes those who use them. Post-modern architectures provide examples of such ‘irony’ rendered permanent. We will consider one of these. The Venturi and Scott Brown design of the Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery is precisely what it is not.¹⁰² As typical of the architects’ ‘decorated shed’ style, the traditionalist-appeasing façade of the building’s frontage conceals a structure that ‘undressed’ would simply appear as a warehouse for art. These subtle indications that this is not simply a neo-classical building are ‘hiding in plain sight.’ The carefully compressed cornices at the upper left-hand corner of the frontage or luridly colourful columns nestled in an alcove in stark relief against the smooth white of the Portland Stone of the facade. Most commentaries on the building remark upon the unusual context of the contract awarded to the architects in question, which was the result of an intense debate that shapes the design itself unbeknownst to many visitors. Originally, the contract to renovate the space was awarded to *Ahrends, Burton and Karalek*, who proposed a building in

⁹⁹ “Gadamerian Hermeneutics and Irony,” 254.

¹⁰⁰ Dostal, 254.

¹⁰¹ This echoes Aristotle’s description of Socrates virtuous self-deprecation that spares another their blushes that emerge at their feelings of inferiority. As *phronimos*, Socrates self-effacement is presented as a magnanimous choice in the interests of his interlocutors. Aristotle, NE 1127b

¹⁰² Sainsbury Wing, National Gallery, London UK (Architects: Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Barry Edward Middleton) constructed 1989-1991.

the British Hi-Tech style, not dissimilar to the Lloyds Bank building (see Figure 21.)¹⁰³ In a speech to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), in 1984, the Prince of Wales decried the modernist design as ‘a monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend.’¹⁰⁴ This public criticism led to the award being reissued to Venturi et al. and they developed a subtle design schema that played with the tension between traditionalism of Pall Mall and the modernist styles that existed elsewhere in the city. The resultant structure heavily compresses the Neo-classicist elements into the design, to an effect that pleases those familiar with the somewhat controversial history of the space. However, to the uninitiated it merely presents as a peaceable offering in harmony with the traditionalist feel of the rest of Trafalgar Square. In as much as the understanding or reading of this design is ‘context specific’, we might claim that it meets the criteria for pseudo-text.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ The Lloyds Building, London UK. (Architects: Richard Rogers and Partners, now Rogers Stirk Harbour and Partners, 1986.)

¹⁰⁴ HRH Prince of Wales, “A Speech by HRH The Prince of Wales at the 150th Anniversary of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Royal Gala Evening at Hampton Court Palace | Prince of Wales,” 1984, <https://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/speech/speech-hrh-prince-wales-150th-anniversary-royal-institute-british-architects-riba-royal-gala>.

¹⁰⁵ This appraisal would likely prove unpopular with architectural aficionados, who have lauded the design. However, the suggestion here is that it simply fulfils the loose criteria Gadamer presents for the differentiation of texts.

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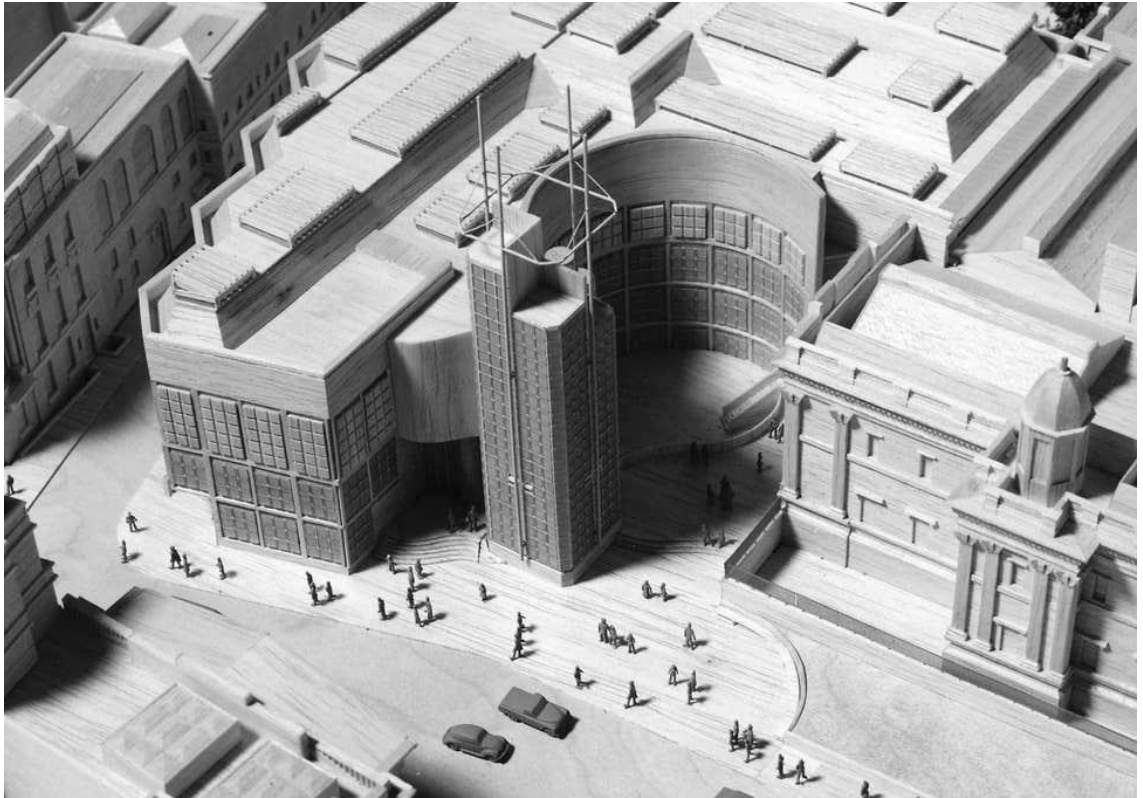


Figure 21 National Gallery Extension Proposal by Ahrends, Burton, and Koralek (London, 1982) RIBA Collections. Image: <https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landing-page/london-history-day-unbuilt-london>



Figure 22 National Gallery Extension, London UK, 1989-1991 (Architects Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Associates Photograph by Richard George - Own work, CC BY 2.5, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=715349>)

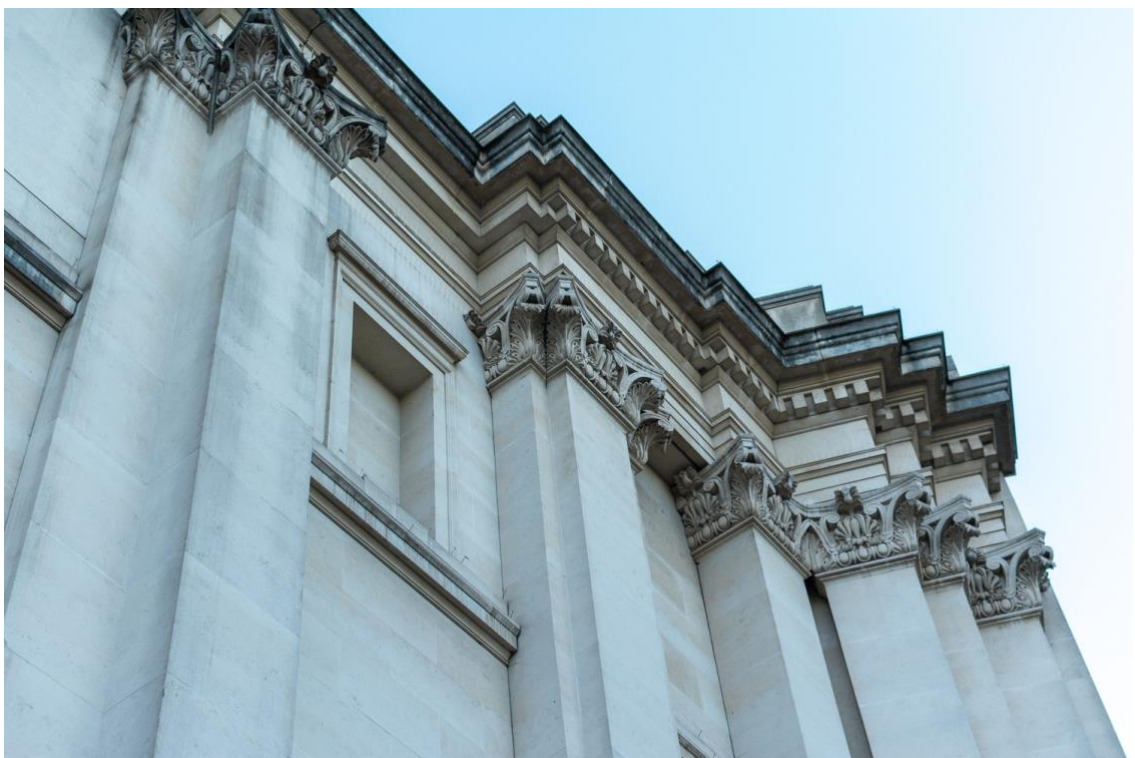


Figure 23 The 'Echo' Facade Sainsbury Wing National Gallery, London UK (Architects Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates.) Image credit: Valentino Danilo Matteis <https://www.archdaily.com/781839/ad-classics-sainsbury-wing-national-gallery-london-venturi->

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scott-brown/56ba28fce58ece3ac7000004-ad-classics-sainsbury-wing-national-gallery-london-venturi-scott-brown-photo

This example perhaps raises the question, however, of the distinction between an ironic text, and an author's ironic intent. In chapter four, Gadamer's staunch dismissal of the *mens auctoris* which gained him much critique from Hirsch would suggest that we cannot depend on the architect's here as a source of meaning. Indeed, Gadamer himself faces the same issue in his rejection of the ironic texts despite his embrace of Plato's literary work. Irony is a principal tool for Socrates, as we saw in his interaction with the youth at the *Paelestra* in the discussion of friendship. Certainly, the extension to the National Gallery is deft in its execution and betrays the 'tongue in cheek' style that infuses Venturi's architectural practice. Gadamer's claim here is that the Antitext as 'countertext' resists, but does not completely forbid of reading.

The second form of resistant text Gadamer terms 'pseudotexts' and these are epitomised by their operation as 'fillers.'¹⁰⁶ In their status as such, Gadamer likens them to the 'dead wood' of the text that the translator resists carrying over to the whole lest it 'actually destroys the flow of what is supposed to be transmitted in the text.'¹⁰⁷ Certainly 'dead' spaces of post-modernity would seem to have this status. Recall that Gadamer describes the city as a work of art. But post-modern cities are awash with spaces that lack resonance despite the whole having significance.¹⁰⁸ As urban readers and translators, does Gadamer advocate the 'reading past' of these empty spaces as we construe a sense of the city as a whole? Within the individual building, perhaps this allows for a single element of the structure to resonate for us where the whole at large lacks meaning.

¹⁰⁶ Gadamer, 'Text and Interpretation' *GR*, 177.

¹⁰⁷ Gadamer, 'Text and Interpretation' *GR*, 177.

¹⁰⁸ Indeed, a group of Italian Scholars have suggested that incomplete buildings, casualties of partial development programmes and economic fluctuations have come to constitute a new 'vernacular style.' It may be that these incomplete spaces constitute 'pseudotexts' in Gadamer's sense, given that they are spaces one 'reads past' in traversing the city. Gabriele Basilico, *Incompiuto. La Nascita Di Uno Stile-The Birth of a Style*. Ediz. Bilingue (Milan: Humboldt Books, 2018).

The third of these contradistinctions to the ‘eminent text,’ is the ‘pretext.’ These are texts wherein ‘one’s understanding is not complete when one grasps their overt meaning’ and as such they constitute the narrow realm proper to psychoanalysis and the critique of ideology.¹⁰⁹ As such, Gadamer states: ‘The interpretive task, then, is to see through the wall of pretence and mediate what is truly coming to expression within the text.’¹¹⁰ Here, Gadamer suggests that ideological texts unmask themselves as such:

The very concept of ideology tells us that there is something in the media that shape public opinion that is not really reliable information but has a hidden guiding interest for which the information distributed serves only as a pretext.¹¹¹

Gadamer claims that the ‘tenaciousness’ of Habermas’ Critique of Ideology itself serves as a form ideology since its approach towards, and therefore interpretation of a given text always bring with it a backdrop of ‘anti-bourgeois interests, or whatever interests they may be, while at the same time masking its own tendentiousness as critique.’¹¹² Indeed Habermas might equally respond that Gadamer’s own thought masks an interest in upholding tradition in its background as we saw in Chapter Three. We might question whether Derrida’s text for *Chora-L works* can be considered a ‘pseudotext.’ True to the ways in which Derrida’s other publications ‘defy classification’, the book itself resists its reader; punctured throughout with the same grid pattern as Tschumi’s *Parc* proposal¹¹³

Derrida’s own foray into architecture in fact resisted physicality perhaps as a result of the tenaciousness of deconstruction. As a collaboration between the philosopher and Peter Eisenmann, the project was to form one of the follies in Tschumi’s Parc de La Villette project.¹¹⁴ The unrealised outcome, which should have been based on Plato’s treatment of the theme of Chora in the

¹⁰⁹ Gadamer, ‘Text and Interpretation’ *GR*, 177.

¹¹⁰ Gadamer, ‘Text and Interpretation’ *GR*, 177.

¹¹¹ Gadamer, ‘Text and Interpretation’ *GR*, 178.

¹¹² Gadamer, ‘Text and Interpretation’ *GR*, 178.

¹¹³ Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2003), 18.

¹¹⁴ Parc de La Villette, Paris, France (Lead Architect: Bernard Tschumi, 1982-1998)

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Timeaus, amounted to nothing more than a self-indexing book, which eludes interpretation through the disruptive layout. Pages are perforated through the book, denying the reader access to some of the text and the frontispiece and publishing credits appear mid-way through the transcriptions of design meetings that tell the story of a collaboration of ‘defensiveness, duplicity and conflict.’¹¹⁵

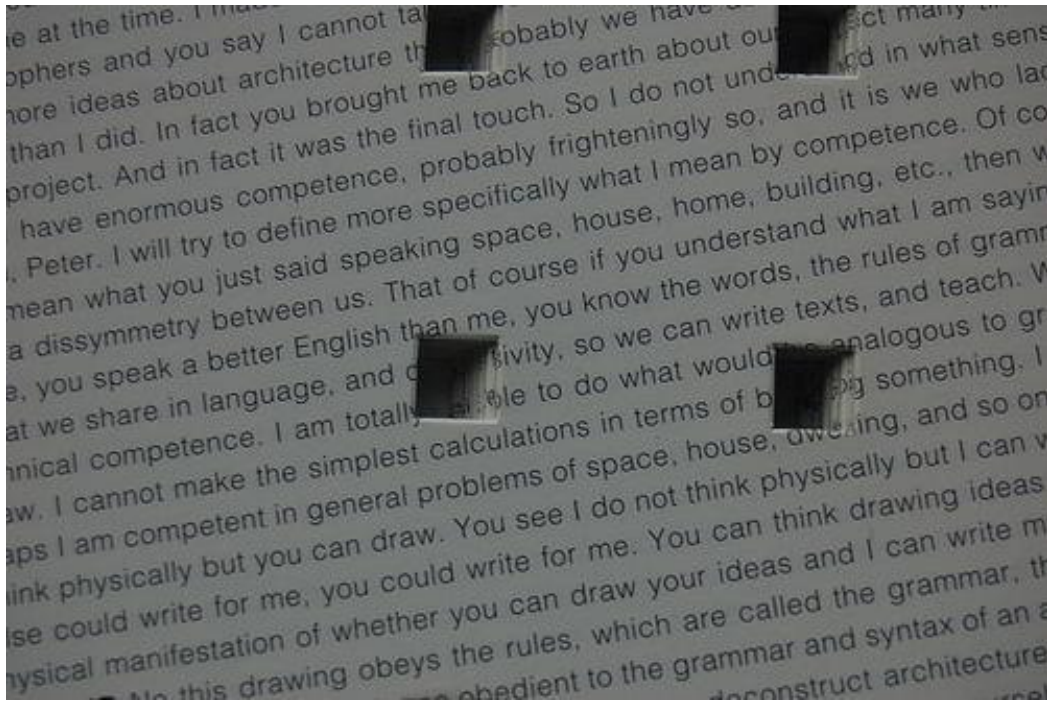


Figure 24 Page View of Chora-L Works showing page perforations that disrupt reading. Image Credit: Lucy Elvis.

Inspirations cited for the proposed structure constitute a patchwork of Eisenmann’s existing aspirational designs (a disseminated but never erected proposal for the Cannaregio project and references to his Venice Biennale project Romeo and Juliette.) Derrida’s own position within the project radically shifts too as is apparent from the transcripts. At times insisting on the impossibility of the structure itself, *Chora* as a vacuum that cannot be physicalised, and at others quashing architectural experimentation for fears of public safety. In this sense, deconstruction reveals itself as similar to the critique of ideology, as it always places itself in opposition to a given text.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Kipnis, cited in Richard Coyne, *Derrida for Architects* (London: Routledge, 2011), 48.

¹¹⁶ Although this seeming antipathy between philosophical hermeneutics and deconstruction may lead some thinkers to refute the productivity of their juxtaposition here, the continuing dialogue between Derrida and Gadamer might indicate otherwise. At the very least, it serves as an illustration of the persistence of engagement that

In the context of creation, this leaves Derrida only in opposition to Eisenmann and the project in stagnation.

This is perhaps where the difference between philosophical hermeneutics can be felt most sharply. In only aiming for difference, deconstruction in architecture can only be parasitic on what is. That is, as marked out against a set of existing practices, it requires a tradition in against which to react. Once the ‘deconstruction’ of the built horizon is completed, the future of the deconstructivism as an architectural project might be mired in uncertainty. This aesthetic of contradictions rejects the accrued knowledge of practice and living. As Jencks notes, this struggles to be expressed meaningfully in the permanence of a built form.

And here is the real contradiction in Deconstruction: in spite of the claims to pluralism, *différance*, ‘a war on totality’ and defence of ‘otherness’, this hermetic work is often monist, elitist, intolerant and conveys a ‘sameness.’ Perhaps, in architecture, this is a result of staring into the Void for too long: it has resulted in a private religious language of self-denial. Because of such suppressions and contradictions, one could argue that a real Deconstructionist architecture of variety and humour has yet to exist.¹¹⁷

In the end perhaps the last fortress of metaphysics, in its actuality, needs an approach that possesses constancy but not fragmentation. Where the understanding of hermeneutics can be found in engagements in the world, Deconstruction can only be glimpsed in its texts. When asked what an architecture of deconstruction could be, Derrida could but reply:

I am unable to draw out of my text an architectural model. But if there is one, well read the text. Inhabit the text if you can.¹¹⁸

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philosophical hermeneutics expects of ‘readers’ in their every engagement with a given text.

¹¹⁷ Charles Jencks and George Baird, *Meaning in Architecture* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1969), 131.

¹¹⁸ Derrida, cited in Francesco Vitale, *The Last Fortress of Metaphysics: Jacques Derrida and the Deconstruction of Architecture* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2018), 98.

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The above has explored Gadamer's account of 'reading' building and the conflict between Gadamer's philosophy and deconstruction, as well as ideology critique. Stressing the progress within hermeneutics towards unity and in deconstruction towards difference, we nonetheless found that interruption and rupture play an essential role in Gadamer's account of reading. Against claims that architecture and language do not contribute to one-another's understanding, we found in Gadamer's account of ritual in particular, grounds for a reconsideration of this relation.

We pointed to a possible implicit account of embodied experience in architecture with reference to the need for bodily exploration of spaces and Gadamer's despairing of the practice of only encountering the work of architecture as an image. The analogy with reading, although fruitful, only serves to further mask what could be a productive area of his thought and alleviate some of the critique he receives from phenomenological and even feminist quarters. To avoid such hasty dismissal of hermeneutics it is essential to foreground the fact that Gadamer's account of 'reading' is much broader than the notions of comprehension carried forward into everyday usage. When so-doing, the possibility of philosophical hermeneutics as a framework for thinking through the particularity of architecture as an artform in which ocular and haptic knowledge achieve a particular form interplay becomes apparent.

Given the particular role that Gadamer assigns to architecture at the close of the late essay *The Artwork in Word and Image*, it is surprising that this theme has not received more attention. Indeed, as that work constantly poised as 'unshakable' phenomena it would appear to fall to the work of architecture not only to provide dwelling, but to gently return a lost readership to the beautiful. The question remains whether we are able to perform the heady task of tuning our inner ear, so overwhelmed by a flood of information, assuaged constantly by pseudo- or anti- texts.

The position of the interpreter in Gadamer and Derrida is fundamentally opposed. We can see this in the different incarnations of Socrates promoted

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by Gadamer and Derrida. In philosophical hermeneutics, after Socrates, the interpreter becomes knowledgeable in the fact of what they don't know, the struggle to bring the text to language. For Derrida, Socrates as a provocative questioner stands outside the introduction of systematic attempts to philosophise. For Gadamer it is the assumption of the text's truth that works against relativism in interpretation. On the one hand, 'historically effective consciousness' stands empowered by its character as enmeshed within a tradition, and yet the insistence that the text operates as a 'Thou' has the potential to annul its power to creatively interpret. The radical freedom of the deconstructive position lies in the assumed authority of the reader to look beyond any of the traditional oppositions with which they might be faced. Although Derrida and deconstruction may win out in the realm of interpretive freedom, such an unending play of interpretation has none of the reflexive riches of Gadamer's thought for the 'historically effective consciousness' is willing to shrug off the hubris of subjectivity. Indeed, such an assumption demands a treatment of the text or the other in dialogue as authoritative, but it also contains the possibility for the development of richer self-knowledge. In Derrida's groundless 'chessboard' interpretations, however novel or subjectively satisfying, can communicate nothing other than the indeterminacy of the practice of interpretation itself.

If we remind ourselves that the purpose of this thesis is to understand the contribution of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics to understanding the experience of architecture, we already betray a foregone conclusion to the confrontation between Gadamer and Derrida. Where Gadamer seeks to find meaning in the utterances, and broken silences of his interlocutors, the project of deconstruction is an infinite cycle problematising assumed or established meaning. Gadamer's altercation with deconstruction raises the question of whether philosophical hermeneutics offers too much authority to the text for interpretation. Can the 'historically effective consciousness', no matter how 'open to the claim of the other', recover this from the vast matrix of prejudices that constitute our thrownness, as well as hearing past the increasing clamour of technology and drive for rational or objective justifications for our claims that beset us at every turn?

Conclusion

In this thesis we have undertaken a thematically shaped account of Gadamer's approach to architecture. Beginning with an exploration of the horizon set the stage for an understanding of philosophical hermeneutics' approach to beauty in the built world as one of movement, mobility and dynamism. That is an aliveness secured through the responsive participation of 'historically effective consciousness.' Considering the *horizont* of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics served to present him as a thinker who rejects both Hegel's transformation of Platonic dialogue into a defined method and critically responds to the understanding of horizon presented by Husserl and Nietzsche. We then progressed to a critical discussion of the role of tradition and *Bildung* in provoking and shaping the 'event' of understanding and tested these in relation to architecture. We then explored Gadamer's ontology of art with a focus on decoration, ornament and occasion and play, festival and symbol, and finally, tested Gadamer's approach to the experience of art as an act of reading.

These themes became even more apparent because of the focus on 'historically effective consciousness' as opposed to the implications of hermeneutics for design practice and design education prompted by the gap in the current literature. Our findings here work in tandem with, rather than in opposition to, the work of thinkers such as Snodgrass and Coyne, and Harries' investigation into the relationship between *ethos* and architecture.¹ Particularly in the reunion between moral knowing and *Bildung*, and decoration and decorum that emerged in our discussions of the same, Gadamer's account serves to support the notion that architecture, indeed all works of art, are connected to *ethos*, but that the reciprocity between the work and the interpreter demands that it is not only the work or its creator but the understanding-interpreter that must maintain this connection. In this respect the interpretation of works of art can reveal a rich penumbra of existence in

¹ Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*; Snodgrass and Coyne, *Interpretation in Architecture*.

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the world with others. The maintenance and well-founded critique of culture and of tradition is in fact contingent on this participation.²

This thesis set itself three key tasks, one, describing Gadamer's account of architecture, two exploring its implications for the understanding of architecture, and three, to do so with an explicit focus on the hermeneutic subject. The first being providing an account of Gadamer's approach to architecture.³ This emerged across the chapters both by focussing on the implications of key features of Gadamer's 'practical philosophy' for the understanding of architecture in our first four chapters and an explicit focus on Gadamer's address of architecture as an art form in the final three. Of particular significance was the way in which Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics effected a return of 'decorative arts' 'to the centre' of aesthetic questions.⁴ This centrality was emphasised through his critique of 'aesthetic consciousness,' which gives way to his confirmation of 'occasionality' as an ontological feature of all forms of art. In this sense, we saw that architecture was exemplary for the very way that it maintains a tie to its context.⁵ In stressing the role of architecture in 'giving shape to space,' the centrality Gadamer offers to architecture in the shaping of life serves to stress the notion of architectural spaces replete with alluring movement, between multiple interpretations that happen within its walls and through the changing character of successive interpretations of the same space. This thesis has made a conscious effort to consider Gadamer's account of architecture in relation to contemporary architectural works. This has shown that, in shifting away from understanding buildings as 'essential types' to understanding them as occasional, it provides conceptual tools to understand the retention of spatial character belonging to successful projects that move spaces from one function to another.⁶ By insisting that 'the zero point is an illusion,' Gadamer

² This was particularly emphasised Chapters Two and Three.

³ This was given some urgency due to the piecemeal ways in which his thinking on architecture have been variously taken up by scholars of architectural theory and the marginal position of architecture within the philosophy of art. Fisher, "Philosophy of Architecture"; Richards, *Architect Knows Best*.

⁴ *TM*, 144.

⁵ *TM*, 157.

⁶ We considered the example of the Tate Modern in this regard in Chapter Six.

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creates a thinking about architecture distinct from the claims of formalism or essentialism.⁷ In this sense, architecture may point the way towards an ‘originary’ but never a tangible origin.⁸ Furthermore, in stressing the space-shaping function of the work of architecture, Gadamer upsets conventional aesthetic hierarchies that understand architecture as subordinate to other art forms. In the designation of the work of architecture as a ‘text’, Gadamer presents the very expressive ‘speechlessness’ or soundlessness of architecture as an indication of its superabundance rather than a limitation of its communicative capacity. Nonetheless, Gadamer preserves a uniquely prominent position for the written text that threatens to undermine the productive work his account of architecture does.

As text, the work of architecture demands a reader, and it was the understanding of architecture from the standpoint of ‘historically effective consciousness’ that was the second task of this thesis. Far from a recondite artform the preserve of ‘experts’ and practitioners, Gadamer’s account of architecture makes the case for why we should care about and for our built environment. For the hermeneutic interpreter, Gadamer’s account presents relations with buildings as responsive, participatory and dialogical, and his expansive definition of art, indicated in the broadening of the concept of ornament, opens the possibility for a hermeneutics that embraces high architecture, but also vernacular architecture – what we experience within our everyday, and against which we understand the arresting character of eminent architectural texts.⁹ The eminent text serves an indexical function in developing the interpretation of the architecture of the everyday.¹⁰

One further effect of the explicit focus on the relationship between ‘historically effective consciousness’ and the work of architecture was the

⁷ Gadamer, Gehron, and Ree, “Without Poets There Is No Philosophy,” 29.

⁸ Di Cesare, *Gadamer*.

⁹ Using Gadamer’s account of architecture to create a hermeneutics of vernacular architecture in particular would progress understanding of the built world. Since the starting point of this thesis however was to consider architecture within Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, such consideration lies beyond the scope of this study.

¹⁰ This can be compared to the relationship Pickering expresses between the new and traditional. Pickering, “History as Horizon: Gadamer, Tradition and Critique.”

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drawing into greater focus Gadamer's account of friendship, not often considered in studies of his philosophy of art. This was particularly the case in our account of home in Chapter Two, in the problematisation of both belonging to and experiencing history in Chapter Three, our account of *Bildung* and the 'golden' nature of the poetic word discussed in our final chapter. Understanding architecture through the model of friendship that Gadamer recovers from the Greeks is fruitful in understanding the mutual relations between interpreter and interpreted texts, and sheds light on the possibility of transcendence that Gadamer's personal anecdotes on his experience with the built world seem to imply.¹¹ Architecture uniquely defies the musealisation of the arts that Gadamer identified as corresponding to the Enlightenment process of 'aesthetic differentiation,' which underplays the intimate contextual connections between the work and its interpreter. This places architecture in a unique position to proffer moment of the beautiful amid the quotidian to the attentive reader. However, it remains unclear whether Gadamer's faith in hermeneutic reason and the model of friendship as responsive and reciprocal is a sufficient bulwark against the false friendship proffered by the ideological text. Indeed, as we saw in Chapter Seven, Gadamer stops short of designating such examples as non-texts, which on a charitable reading is an indication of the philosopher practicing the very fallibility his hermeneutics expects of the interpreter but yet leaves the hermeneutic subject devoid of criteria upon which to reject the text's claim outright.¹² Further evidence of a commitment to philosophical praxis can be found in the engagements with Habermas and Derrida, with whom despite the gulf that separates the critique of ideology and deconstruction from philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer consistently tries to uncover common ground.

¹¹ The Weinbrenner staircase that features in the accounts of Gadamer and architecture given by Kidder, Gens and Snodgrass and Coyne, and the concept of the 'floor as such' developed by Herzog and de Meuron through their interactions with the philosopher. Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects*; Gens, "The Configuration of Space Through Architecture in the Thinking of Gadamer"; Snodgrass and Coyne, *Interpretation in Architecture*; Herzog, Jacques, "Thinking of Gadamer's Floor."

¹² Bernstein problematises Gadamer's recourse to Aristotelian *phronesis* on the grounds that post-modernity constitutes a 'corrupt' *polis* where praxis as *phronesis* cannot flourish. Bernstein, "From Hermeneutics to Praxis," 841.

Conclusion

Therefore, in fulfilling the third task of this thesis we found that the receptivity and openness required of the hermeneutic subject in their interactions with architecture whilst containing the scope to deepen our relationship to the lived world, indicates some tensions in the approach of philosophical hermeneutics when tested in the case of architecture. In a number of instances, the tension that enervates the ‘aliveness’ of the experience of art risks falling into an excess of authority for the text, or an eclipsing of disruptive experience by belonging. A further consideration, therefore, of the relations between embodied experience and the ontological operations of architecture as uncovering beauty amid the everyday, and its differentiation from mere attachment through sentiment bred through familiarity is required. To ‘hear’ the work’s claim then requires, ‘the ear, the sensitivity for perceiving prior determinations, anticipations, and imprints that reside in concepts.’¹³

In stressing the contingency of the work’s truth claim on the attentiveness of the hermeneutic subject, Gadamer presents an expansive task to said subject. We saw that the hermeneutic subject in Gadamer’s thought has the responsibility of continuous cultivation, an openness to the world and its texts that allows their voices to speak, and thus ‘cultivates itself.’ The propensity to dialogue thus can be understood as a form of *hexis* that must be fostered through the unique capacity of genuine dialogue to bring about *synopsis* (construing meaning in the act of reading the ‘world-as-text’) and *diahairesis* (differentiation). In architectural discourse, a field dominated by discourse between theorists and practitioners, we might strengthen Davey’s claim that Gadamer erodes the practitioner/theoretician divide, and assert that he emphasises the necessity of engagement by ‘historically effective consciousness’ with the products of culture.¹⁴ Indeed, Gadamer makes philosophical thinking the concern of all ‘human beings’:

¹³ Gadamer, “Reflections on My Philosophical Journey,” 17.

¹⁴ Davey, *Unfinished Worlds*, 109.

Conclusion

Well, there is a very popular prejudice, that philosophy is just a speciality of philosophers. But that is erroneous. It is a speciality for all human beings.¹⁵

This thesis, while accomplishing its task of systematically addressing Gadamer's account of architecture and the implications therein for work and interpreter, has opened up space for the further investigation of themes it identified. The account of embodiment in Chapter Six, for example, might be progressed in relation to place as well as architecture, as well as considering Gadamer's account of technology in relation to the increasing use of parametric design to shape the urban landscape.

Given that Gadamer's account has stressed the role architecture can play in effecting an 'increase in being' for its interpreter, this raises questions for aesthetic education. The notion of *phronesis* for Aristotle is contingent on the formation of habit (*hexis*). In rejecting the architectural expert, Gadamer begs the question of who may act as an exemplar of the form of 'radically undogmatic' world-relation he demands of the 'hermeneutic subject.'¹⁶ Gadamer's hermeneutics prompts us to ask *how* one develops the sensitivity necessary to participate in meaningful dialogue with the built world. In our contemporary world, one in which the work of architecture's voice of silence, what Gadamer describes as its vague quality (*Bekanntheitsqualität*), is increasingly lost as attentiveness to the world is drowned out by the prevalence of technology.¹⁷ Gadamer is critical of the ways in which technology disturbs the potential for the poetic word to reveal itself, a critique that reveals its complexity when considered in relation to the increasing use of technology in architectural design.

Gadamer's account of interpretation as *praxis*, guided by *phronesis*, implies that deeper dialogues between architecture and 'historically effective consciousness' must be fostered through exemplary habituation. Gadamer's description of the epistemic risk and indeterminacy of each dialogue between

¹⁵ Gadamer, Gehron, and Ree, "Without Poets There Is No Philosophy," 29.

¹⁶ *TM*, 364.

¹⁷ Gadamer, 'Hermeneutics Tracking the Trace [On Derrida]' *GR*, 396.

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‘historically effective consciousness’ and the work of art suggests that the relationship between the ‘historically effective consciousness’ and its built world is one of fruitful tension.¹⁸ If engagements with art are the paradigm of meaningful dialogue with one another, and a source of our understanding of belonging in and with the world, then exploring this tension project possesses critical urgency. As such, this thesis in providing an account of Gadamer’s approach to architecture has posed a challenge both to philosophical hermeneutics, and to the philosophy of architecture.

In closing, we can claim that Gadamer’s account of architecture serves to emphasise why we should attend to our built world, and that perhaps, in the ‘well-mixed drink of life,’ it is architecture, ‘the art of getting it just right’ that should demand more of our attention.¹⁹

¹⁸ David Kennedy, “Hans-Georg Gadamer’s Dialectic of Dialogue and the Epistemology of the Community of Inquiry,” *Analytic Teaching* 11, no. 1 (1990), <http://journal.viterbo.edu/index.php/at/article/view/529>.

¹⁹ Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image’ *GR*, 209.

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