

Original article

УДК 111.1

doi: 10.17223/1998863X/65/10

HANS-GEORG GADAMER: *VERBUM INTERIUS* IMPORTANCE FOR HERMENEUTICS

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Abstract. The aim of the article is to show the importance of the scholastic interpretation of *verbum interius* for Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. The article also discusses the problem of correlation between *verbum interius* and its expression in the "outer word". Gadamer integrated the Augustinian concept of *verbum interius* into his theory of hermeneutics in order to overcome the forgetfulness of language in antiquity. The article also shows how the Augustinian distinction between *actus signatus* and *actus exercitus*, discussed by Heidegger, opened up a hermeneutic approach to the "inner word" that differs from apophantics. Gadamer linked the lack of semantic fullness of the "outer word" to the experience of the *Unvordenklichkeit*. The article defends the thesis that the problematic correlation between the "inner word" and the "outer word" can be clarified using Husserl's phenomenological attitude, which describes how we know the meaning of subject matter through different "perspectives" (*Abschattungen*). The "inner word" mentioned by Gadamer in the phenomenological sense is always given only in the expression of the "outer word" as a partial perspective and is incomplete in this respect. External expressions are not a defect of the full "inner word", but are the only possible way or form of it, though not always perfect. The different expressions of the "outer word" referring to the partial meaning of the subject matter do not in any way lead to the relativization of the expressions themselves, because they all arise from the same "inner word". However, this identity of the "inner word" is detected only in the difference of external expressions.

Keywords: Gadamer; Augustinus; *verbum interius*; language; hermeneutics

For citation: Mickevičius, A. (2022) Hans-Georg Gadamer: *verbum interius* importance for hermeneutics. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filosofiya. Sotsiologiya. Politologiya – Tomsk State University Journal of Philosophy, Sociology and Political Science*. 65. pp. 100–110. doi: 10.17223/1998863X/65/10

Научная статья

Х.-Г. ГАДАМЕР: ЗНАЧИМОСТЬ *VERBUM INTERIUS* ДЛЯ ГЕРМЕНЕВТИКИ

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Аннотация. Анализируется важность схоластической интерпретации *verbum interius* для философской герменевтики Гадамера. Исследуется проблема корреляции *verbum interius* и его выражения во «внешнем слове». Показано, что невыразимость полноты смысла во «внешнем слове» поздний Гадамер связывает с опытом *Unvordenklichkeit*. Обоснован тезис, согласно которому проблематичную корреляцию между «внутренним словом» и «внешним словом» можно прояснить на основе учения Гуссерля о феноменологической установке, в котором познание предмета трактуется как опосредованное «перспективными оттенками» (*Abschattungen*).

Ключевые слова: Гадамер, Августин, *verbum interius*, язык, герменевтика

Для цитирования: Mickevičius A. Hans-Georg Gadamer: *verbum interius* importance for hermeneutics // Вестник Томского государственного университета. Философия. Социология. Политология. 2022. № 65. С. 100–110. doi: 10.17223/1998863X/65/10

Introduction

According to Jean Grondin, when he asked Gadamer “to explain more exactly what the universal aspect of hermeneutics consisted in”, he answered thus: “In the *verbum interius*”. Asked by Grondin for clarification, Gadamer continued: “This universality consists in inner speech, in that one cannot say everything. One cannot express everything that one has in mind, the *logos endiathetos*. That is something I learned from Augustine’s *De trinitate*. This experience is universal: the *actus signatus* is never completely covered by the *actus exercitus*” [1. P. xiii–xiv]. Gadamer’s statement surprised many researchers and interpreters of his philosophical hermeneutics because he devoted only one short and not very detailed chapter to the analysis of the *verbum interius* in his main work *Truth and Method*. Commentators had to fill this gap of incompleteness with their research. This Gadamer’s statement on the importance of *verbum interius* for hermeneutics was initially marked by significant research by Grondin, and later by solid monographs by John Arthos [2] and Mirela Oliva [3]. The articles of Theodore Kisiel [4], Dominico Kaegi [5], Günter Figal [6], James C. Risser [7] also contributed interestingly and significantly to the further considerations of the topic of *verbum interius* in hermeneutics. Taking into account and arguing with the positions of the above authors, this article aims to show the importance of the scholastic treatment of *verbum interius* for Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics. The first part of the article seeks to show how Gadamer understands the so-called “forgetfulness of language” in antiquity. The second part pays considerable attention to the influence of Martin Heidegger on Gadamer’s hermeneutic analysis of the *verbum interius*. The third part is devoted to the analysis of the concept of *verbum interius* itself, showing how Gadamer achieves the inner unity of word and thinking and the unity of word and thing based on this concept. My own interpretive effort in explaining the importance of the *verbum interius* to hermeneutics has been to seek not so much theological but more phenomenological resources of explication. Therefore, Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological motif about the perception of some thing in different “perspectives” [Abschattungen] at the end of the article is my own interpretive effort to explain more clearly the phenomenological peculiarities of the correlation between the “inner word” and its external expression.

“Forgetfulness of language” in the Greek ontology

Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics linked understanding of meaning to language. The third part of the work *Truth and Method* is specifically intended to show that the experience of meaning realized in hermeneutic understanding is linguistic, that “conversation has a spirit of its own, and that the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth within it – i.e., that it allows something to “emerge” which henceforth exists” [8. P. 385]. Language is viewed not as a separate object of study, but as a universal medium in which hermeneutic understanding occurs. Gadamer is concerned with a proper understanding of the intended meaning in interpersonal verbal communication. Therefore, the problems of verbal expression of the real communication partner are in fact inseparable from the problem of herme-

neutic understanding itself. On the other hand, it was also important for him to understand the meaning of the written cultural tradition. This circumstance makes it even more difficult to understand the implied meaning since writing is an orphan of the living word and it cannot defend itself against unreasonable interpreters of its meaning. Following Plato, Gadamer refers to the separation of writing from speech. Like Plato, he acknowledges that “writing is self-alienation” [8. P. 392] and that “in relation to language writing seems a secondary phenomenon” [8. P. 394]. Such an approach to “writing” in relation to the “word” in no way diminishes the value of the written text and the meaning it conveys. Gadamer formulates the task: “Because meaning has undergone a kind of self-alienation through being written down, this transformation back is the real hermeneutical task. The meaning of what has been said is to be stated anew, simply on the basis of the words passed on by means of the written signs. In contrast to the spoken word there is no other aid in interpreting the written” [8. P. 395]. It is only important to emphasize that the task of reviving the intentional meaning of writing in living linguistic understanding is motivated by the much more general and important goal of seeking recognition of the “internal unity of word and thing (Sache)”. In search of this unity of word and thing, Gadamer turns to antiquity and accuses the Greek ontology of forgetting language: “Plato’s discovery of the ideas conceals the true nature of language even more than the theories of the Sophists, who developed their own art (*techne*) in the use and abuse of language” [8. P. 408]. Faced with such an assessment, the initial impression is that “we cannot believe with our eyes, the verdict is so harsh. Plato was a greater didimilator than the Sophists, and Gadamer wrote it!” [9. P. 132]. It is therefore necessary below to explain what Gadamer meant when he spoke of the forgetfulness of language in Plato’s philosophy, and why and in what sense it does not fulfill Gadamer’s quest to find the intimate unity of word and thing.

Gadamer focuses on the analysis of Plato’s *Cratylus*, which presents two theories that attempt to define the relationship between word and thing [Sache]. The so-called “conventionalist theory” linked the correctness of names to convention and agreement [10. P. 103, 384d]. In contrast, the so-called “natural correctness of names” argued “that there is a correctness of name for each thing, one that belongs to it by nature” [10. P. 103, 383a–b]. The limitation of the theory of conventionalism is that we cannot change the meanings of words as we wish. The limitation of the theory of natural correctness of names is that we cannot look at the things referred to and criticize the words for not correctly representing them. However, as we shall see, both theories are based on a generally accepted assumption: they regard things themselves as if they are known in advance, and the word is turned into a tool to be produced and ultimately treated only as an instrumental sign of the mind itself. According to Gadamer, the Platonic dialectic is committed to make thought dependent on itself alone and to open it to its true objects, “ideas”, and this means “that it is not the word that opens up the way to truth. Rather, on the contrary, the adequacy of the word can be judged only from the knowledge of the thing it refers to” [8. P. 407–408]. This circumstance partly explains the meaning of Gadamer’s critical observation mentioned above that the true essence of language was obscured by the ideas discovered by Plato, no less than the theories of the Sophists. Regretting the forgetfulness of the “word” in Plato’s theory, Gadamer stated: “Plato avoids considering the real relationship between words and things. <...> The

pure thought of ideas, *dianoia*, is silent, for it is a dialogue of the soul with logos itself (*aneu phōnēs*). <...> Plato undoubtedly did not consider the fact that the process of thought, if conceived as a dialogue of soul, itself involves a connection with language. <...> Language is a tool, a copy constructed and judged in terms of the original, the things themselves. <...> For him the copy and the original constitute the metaphysical model for everything within the noetic sphere” [8. P. 408–409]. Thus, according to Gadamer, for Plato, the “word” (*onoma*) is simply a tool whose value of justice is determined on the basis of pre-existing ideas. For Plato, the “word” is correct when it represents thing, in other words, when it is a *mimesis*.

Gadamer partly supported Plato’s position that the mimesis relationship is somewhat involved in language formation. But he categorically stated that, in Plato’s philosophy, “language is taken to be something wholly detached from the being of what is under consideration; it is taken to be an instrument of subjectivity” [8. P. 416]. Opposing this position, Gadamer argued that the “word” is not just a sign and that language is something other than a mere sign system denoting the totality of objects. According to Gadamer, “language and thinking about things are so bound together that it is an abstraction to conceive of the system of truths as a pre-given system of possibilities of being for which the signifying subject selects corresponding signs” [8. P. 416]. For Gadamer, the forgetfulness of language in the Greek ontology meant that Plato, in analyzing the relationship between word and object, speech and thought, simply relied on ideas as a pre-given system of possibilities of being. All the “words” used by the subject had to be subordinated to this pre-known system. As a result, the living “word” in the Greek ontology became merely a sign of a pre-known being, i. e. it was reduced only to the pure sign (Plato) and Aristotle’s forms of assertions. According to Donatella Di Cesare’s observation, the “forgetfulness of language” mentioned by Gadamer means that “the innermost link between language and thought has been severed. As a result, thinking appears independent of language, and language gets demoted to the status of a mere tool of thought” [11. P. 144]. However, this forgetfulness of language in Western thinking, according to Gadamer, was not absolute. It is therefore necessary for us to analyze and explain below what the Christian interpretation of the *verbum interius* brings to the mysterious search for the unity of word and thing, word and thought compared to antiquity and why it is so important to Gadamer.

Heidegger’s influence on Gadamer

Later, after the appearance of *Truth and Method* in the article “Towards a Phenomenology of Ritual and Language” published in 1992, Gadamer wrote: “I myself relied on Augustine’s reception of Stoic teaching of the “inner word”. Augustine refers to this in order to bring closer to human thinking the mystery of the Incarnation, where the word “becomes flesh”. In this Cristian message a doubling of the world is explicitly avoided. The inner speaking is not the pattern for the expressed speaking, but the whole is process of its own mysterious structure. This should not be called Platonism” [12. P. 33–34]. First, Gadamer’s reference to Augustine’s *verbum interius*, and at the same time his desire to transcend dualistic Greek metaphysics, enabled him to overcome the forgetfulness of language in Greek thought. Secondly, Gadamer relied mainly on the Augustinian distinction between *actus signatus* and *actus exercitus* shown by the young Heidegger: “I can remember what enormous significance it had for my generation when Heidegger

acquainted us for the first time with a scholastic distinction that pointed in the same direction, namely, the distinction between the *actus signatus* and the *actus exercitus*" [13. P. 123]. As Riser pointed out, "since the *actus signatus* affects the condition of reflection that takes place in the statement with its structure of predication, the *actus exercitus* is a more direct apprehension of an object that expresses" [7. P. 150].

Nevertheless, what content does Gadamer's saying that his own research follows Heidegger hide? As for the importance of Heidegger's position to Gadamer and at the same time to better understand Gadamer's own hermeneutic approach to his question of *verbum interius*, it is important for us to explain what Heidegger meant by distinguishing between *actus signatus* and *actus exercitus*. Heidegger linked the difference between *actus signatus* and *actus exercitus* to the so-called "formal indication" [Formalanzeigen], which provides only pre-predictive attention to any study and which differs from apophantics. In his lectures on Augustine and Neoplatonism in the winter semester of 1920/21, Heidegger began to explain the structural relationship between the "formal indication" and the phenomenological approach that differs from apophantics. In his lecture Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion, he devoted three brief paragraphs to the systematic explanations of the "formal indication" (§§ 11–13). The problem of the "formal indication" belongs to the "theory" of the phenomenological method itself, in the broad sense, to the problem of the *theoretical*, of the theoretical act, the phenomenon of *differentiating*. According to him, each phenomenon as a meaningful unity is concretized by three moments: content (primordial "what" – [ursprünglichen "Was"]), relation (primordial "how" arising from primordial "what" experience) and performance [Vollzug] (linking the first two elements into a phenomenal relationship). These three directions of sense (content, relational, enactment-sense) do not simply coexist. The "phenomenon" itself is the totality of sense in these three directions. Phenomenology as an explication of such a "phenomenon" is performed by verbal means. Phenomenology as an explication of the totality of these three moments "gives the *logos*" of the 'phenomenon, the *logos*" in the sense of "*verbum internum*" (not in the sense of logical abstraction [*Logisierung*]" [14. P. 63].

It is not just a formal coincidence between the *verbum internum* mentioned by Heidegger and the *verbum interius* that Gadamer is interested in. According to Grondin, Heidegger showed an important position: "The statement, as a secondary manifestation, is the propositional fallout (*Niederschlag*) of an existential (*daseinsmassigen*) relationship to the world whereby the proposition levels everything to the language of the given ('S is P'). Working behind the proposition is that which Heidegger names the "hermeneutical". Before the apophantic (i.e., propositional) 'as' stands the more content-laden hermeneutical 'as'. <...> This is true Augustinianism" [15. P. 102]. By linking the distinction between *actus signatus* and *actus exercitus* to a "formal reference", Heidegger showed the pre-predicative element in hermeneutics. Gadamer took this position of Heidegger. Gadamer, in the 1964 article "The Marburg Theology", very clearly named what Heidegger fascinated him with: "in Marburg, <...> Heidegger was concerned with a scholastic contradiction and spoke of the distinction between *actus signatus* [an act that has been explicitly designated as spontaneously executed] and *actus exercitus* [a spontaneously executed act]. These scholastic concepts correspond roughly to the concepts *reflexive* and *directe*. <...> This ability to reverse the

transition from that which is immediate and direct into the reflexive intention seemed to us then to be a way to freedom. This promised to liberate thinking from the inescapable circle of reflection” [16. P. 33–34]. This focus on showing Heidegger’s and Gadamer’s inner connections was important to me because I wanted to show that Gadamer, who sought the unity of word and thing and explained scholastic *verbum interius*, methodically relied on Heidegger’s hermeneutic approach, which differs from apophantics.

“*Verbum interius*” and experience of “Unverdenklichkeit”

In *Truth and Method* Gadamer presented an analysis of chapters 10–15 of Book XV of Augustine’s *De Trinitate* and a brief position of Aquinas. In his view, the forgetfulness of language in Western thought cannot be considered complete and attention must be paid to the Christian idea of incarnation, which is “most closely related to the problem of the word” [8. P. 418]. Christian dogmatics here is based primarily on the Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <...> And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1: 1–14). Augustine used the model of language to approach the mystery of the incarnation. Gadamer does the opposite: he uses the model of the idea of Christian incarnation to rethink the event of language. Augustine relied on the distinction introduced by the Stoics between the “outer logos” and the “inner logos” (*logos prophorikos and endiathetos*). For the Stoics, the “inner logos” denotes an ability that precedes the linguistic externalization of thinking and describes man as such. The Stoics emphasized precisely the “inner logos”, and the uttered “outer logos” was seen only as a secondary process that merely exteriorizes the mental sphere. In contrast to the Stoics, the Augustinian conception of language based on the incarnation emphasizes the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the “outer logos”. The idea of *logos* seen only as a secondary or less significant manifestation is incompatible with the Christian thought. The materiality of the embodied meaning becomes significant here. This attracts Gadamer, because the understanding of meaning as the fulfillment of the “inner word” in the “outer word” is nothing more than the hermeneutic experience itself. In other words, when Gadamer says that the scholastic “analogy between the inner and the outer word, speaking the word aloud in the vox, now acquires an exemplary value” [8. P. 418], he means that the phonetic language or the “outer word” is not just a random expression. The spoken word is an inner component of the “inner word” or thinking. The “outer word” and the “inner word” are internally related, just as lightning is inseparable from its expression in lightning. Commenting on this important relationship for Gadamer between the inner and the outer word, Günther Figal insightfully explained: “Just as God does not turn himself into man but rather becomes man while nonetheless remaining God, so also in speaking, nothing is exteriorized that as “inner” was completely different – such as a thought without speech. What comes to the fore is therefore no external shape (*Gestalt*), no mere appearance, which must be traced back to that which stands “behind” it. What appears has always already been that which is essential, and it brings its essence (*Wesen*) with it in the appearance. The “interior” is neither hidden behind some “external” appearance nor is it veiled or clouded, but rather it reveals itself” [6. P. 114].

How should we correctly understand this peculiarity of the appearance of the “inner word” in the “outer word” in Gadamer’s hermeneutics? In order to show the

importance of scholastic “inner word” and incarnation for Gadamer, who cared about the unity of word and thing, as well as the inner unity of word and thought, three important aspects for his hermeneutics could be pointed out. The first aspect is that Gadamer emphasized the *identity* of the “inner word” and the “outer word” in the process of incarnation. This identity meant for him that the externalization of speech is not a secondary result of a separate act of pure thinking. The materiality of language, the “outer word” ceases to be considered only as an imperfect manifestation of the inner thought and instead becomes the only possible means of actualizing it. In this sense, Augustine’s *verbum interius* and Christian conception of incarnation meant to Gadamer the only exception to the forgetfulness of language. Gadamer is concerned not only with the internal unity of word and thing, but also with the internal unity of word and thought, which, in his opinion, was forgotten by Plato and later revived in scholasticism. “The inner mental word is just as consubstantial with thought as is God the Son with God the Father” [8. P. 420].

The second thematic aspect that Gadamer emphasized is that incarnation is both an *event* and a *process* or *peculiar formation*. In the hermeneutic sense, the rendering of a word and thus its transformation into the flesh is an inner element of the meaning itself, i.e. a meaning that can be understood, shared through communication, and communicated. According to Gadamer, Augustine’s conception of language implied that meaning is a peculiar process, i.e. thinking as such always exists as thinking embodied in language and can be neither before nor beyond language. The peculiarity of “word” formation consists in that “the inner unity of thinking and speaking to oneself, which corresponds to the Trinitarian mystery of the incarnation, implies that the inner mental word *is not formed by a reflective act*. A person who thinks something – i.e., says it to himself – means by it the thing that he thinks. His mind is not directed back toward his own thinking when he forms the word” [8. P. 425]. Of course, the word is the product of the work of the human mind. However, the “word” does not appear in the realm of pure thinking, because in thinking a person does not move from pure thinking to speaking to himself: “The thought seeking expression refers not to the mind but to the thing. Thus the word is not the expression of the mind but is concerned with the *similitudo rei*” [8. P. 425]. Referring to Aquinas’ eloquent metaphor, Gadamer stated that “in this respect the word resembles light, which is what makes color visible” [8. P. 425].

The third thematic aspect important to Gadamer was to show the differences between the word of God and the word of man: “Unlike the divine word, the human word is essentially incomplete. No human word can express our mind completely” [8. P. 424]. Although, as Aquinas argued, “the word is like a mirror in which the thing is seen”, unfortunately, the words we use are often imperfect for knowing things. According to Gadamer, the error of Platonism and Gnosticism was the belief that imaginary perfection of thought could be found in the pure noetic realm, the *logo endiathetos*. For Gadamer, the “inner word”, despite its imperfect expression in the “outer word”, remains an indispensable condition for understanding the subject matter: “From this essential imperfection it follows that the human word is not one, like the divine word, but must necessarily be many words. Hence the variety of words does not in any way mean that the individual word has some remediable deficiency, in that it did not completely express what the mind is thinking; but because our intellect is imperfect <...> it needs the multiplicity of words” [8. P. 424]. The fact that the human word does not reach the fullness of the mean-

ing of the subject matter is not any imperfection of the language, does not refer to the “correctness of names”, as Platonism asserted, but is the result of the limitations of human existence. Gadamer showed that the human mind is not pure *noesis*, that understanding the meaning of a subject matter in language medium goes hand in hand with the word itself and is inseparable from the recognition of the boundaries of human existence.

It can be argued that in his hermeneutical reflections on *verbum interius*, Gadamer emphasized two different aspects, which are rather not contradictory but complementary. Firstly, Gadamer demands an *identity* between thinking and its linguistic expression. There is no thinking without language. Secondly, he showed that in verbal language (*logos prophorikos*) we cannot achieve full expression (*logos endiathetos*) of what we would like or be required to say in order to be adequately understood. Jean Grondin was one of the first commentators on Gadamer’s “inner word”. Following Gadamer’s line of argument on the relationship between thinking and the word, he identified two key moments. First, the “inner word”, which Augustine sometimes called the “word of the heart” (*verbum cordis*), and its “external” expression are inseparable: “The pure act of thinking should not be distinguished from its exteriorization and of its linguistic manifestation. The materiality of language is not the imperfect manifestation of thought but rather its veritable mode of actualization” [17. P. 477]. The second thematic aspect, which introduces tension with the first and revives the mystery of this phenomenon, according to Grondin, is that the “inner word” cannot be completely exhausted in its outer expression: “Like Christian incarnation, the external manifestation of the *logos* continues to return to the *verbum interius*, to a ‘thought’ that never exhausts itself in expression, and will never be accessible in an objective and definitive manner” [17. P. 477]. In developing this theme, Grondin paid special attention to “experience of the unsayable”. The words that we are able to speak are “an insignificant total, because that which we wish to say, wish to cry out, exceeds infinitely all that we are able to say, so that the silence or the inexpressible says so much more” [18. P. 184]. Grondin’s position provoked some critical remarks from later commentators who were concerned about the importance and problems of the “inner word” in Gadamer’s hermeneutics. Thus Dominic Kaegi, referring to Grondin’s interpretation of the “inner word” in *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, argued: “The relation that Gadamer has in view when he discusses the doctrine of the *verbum interius* is in no way, as Grondin suggests, the relationship between the inner and outer word, but rather between the word and the thing (*Sache*)” [5. P. 129]. According to John Arthos, in describing Gadamer’s “inner word” Grondin “came too close to to a subjectivist idiom that does not square with the resolutely social character of Gadamer’s thought. <...> Although Grondin distanced the *verbum* emphatically from the trope of the Romantic ineffable, his descriptions generally situated themselves within the subjectivist strains of our Augustinian heritage” [19. P. 168–169]. Of course, Kaegi is right in saying that Gadamer spoke of the unity of word and thing (*Sache*). On the other hand, Gadamer was no less concerned with the inner unity of word and thought, the unity of speech and thought [8. P. 418, 430, 431]. That is what Grondin pointed out. Secondly, later Gadamer himself confirmed the fact that the “outer word” does not fully convey what we would like to say or fully understand. He referred to the “*Unvordenklichkeit*”, i.e. something that is completely impossible to convey in the “outer word” or experience. In the 1989

article, “Hermeneutics and Ontological Difference”, Gadamer stated: “It is the insight that life does not simply grow and emerge like a seed-grain accessible to everyone, as the seed in the earth opens out into blossom and fruit. <...> On the contrary, life is constantly forming a cover that it builds around itself. There is a word of Heidegger’s <...> : “Life is vague” [Das Leben ist diesig]. One must think of the shipsail and know the sea in order to understand this word correctly. <...> So we always come to a limit of all openness. As a philosopher, Schelling used the expression *das Unvordenkliche* to describe such limits. <...> Everyone knows something about it. I recall for instance here the impassable meaning of home. What it means to us is something that one can never quite convey. A possession? A beloved thing? A seeing once again? A thinking and returning back to memories? All these are the impassable meanings that collect themselves in human life. They can challenge our efforts to understand. One wants to set free what lies there in the dark, and yet one experiences how it constantly withdraws itself” [20. P. 63–64]. We see that Gadamer’s reference to the *Unvordenklichkeit*’s experience means the withdrawal of meaning or the inability of the “outer word” to convey the meaning of the subject matter completely and thus confirms Grondin’s observation of the “experience of the unsayable”. The fact that the “outer word” does not always reach the desired fullness of meaning in hermenutic understanding should in no way lead us to a hasty conclusion about any defect in the “outer word”. Likewise, this experience of *Unvordenklichkeit* should in no way be reduced to the romantic attitude of *individuum est ineffabile*.

My thesis is that the correlation between the “inner word” and the “outer word” can be interpreted using Husserl’s phenomenological attitude, which describes how we know the meaning of a subject matter only through its different expression of “perspectives” (*Abschattungen*). Just as Husserl said that each perception is only one partial aspect of the perceived object, and thus indicates the incomplete meaning of the object, so the “outer word” is an incomplete presentation of the “inner word”. The “inner word” is like the “thing-in-itself”, which is necessary to be understood not as transcendent being, in the sense of Immanuel Kant, but phenomenologically: “Seen phenomenologically, the “thing-in-itself” is, as Husserl has shown, nothing but the continuity with which the various perceptual perspectives [*Abschattungen*] on objects shade into one another. <...> In the same way as with perception we can speak of the “linguistic shadings” that the world undergoes in different language-worlds” [8. P. 444]. Of course, Gadamer used this Husserlian motif to show a phenomenological correlation between the general world horizon and its different linguistic aspects and did not mention the correlation between the “inner” and “outer” word in this context. I deliberately use this Husserlian motif mentioned by Gadamer as my further interpretation to explain even more clearly the correlation between the “inner word” and the “outer word” phenomenologically. The “inner word” mentioned by Gadamer in the phenomenological sense is always given only in the expression of the “outer word” as a partial perspective and is incomplete in this respect. *Verbum interius* is not otherwise detectable directly, but only in the external expressions in which it opens itself. These expressions, as *different* and *partial perspectives* of the “outer word”, are not to be regarded as a defect of the complete “inner word”, but are the only possible way or form of the appearance of the *verbum interius* itself. Although these expressions are not always perfect and fully convey the subject matter itself but their meaning

can be hermeneutically expanded in the future. Finally, all this partly sheds light on the dialectical relationship between *identity* and *difference*. Different expressions of the “outer word” referring to a different, partial and incomplete meaning of a perceived thing do not provide for the relativization of the expressions themselves, because they all arise from one and the same “inner word”, i.e. thinking that thinks about the subject matter. Again, this *identity* of the “inner word” is found only in the *difference* of external expressions. Being one and the same and yet of being different, according to Gadamer, is “the paradox that is true of all traditional material” [8. P. 468].

Concluding remarks

1. Gadamer integrated the Augustinian concept of *verbum interius* into his theory of hermeneutics in order to overcome the “forgetfulness of language” in Plato’s philosophy. According to him, the forgetfulness of language meant that Plato simply relied on ideas as a pre-given system of possibilities of being. As a result, the word in the Greek ontology became merely a sign of a pre-known being, i.e. it was reduced only to the pure sign (Plato) and Aristotle’s forms of assertions.

2. Based on the Augustinian notion of *verbum interius*, Gadamer sought to explain the unity of word and thing, and at the same time the inner unity of word and thought, which antiquity forgot. The Augustinian distinction between *actus signatus* and *actus exercitus* for Gadamer, early discussed by Heidegger, opened up a hermeneutic approach to the “inner word” that differs from apophantics.

3. Gadamer linked the lack of semantic fullness of the “outer word” with the experience of *Unvordenklichkeit*, which has nothing to do with the romantic attitude *individuum est ineffabile*.

4. The correlation between the “inner word” and the “outer word” can be explained using Husserl’s phenomenological attitude, which describes how we know the meaning of subject matter through different “perspectives” (*Abschattungen*). Just as each perception is only one partial aspect of the perceived object, and thus indicates the incomplete meaning of the thing, so the “outer word” is an incomplete presentation of the “inner word”. The “inner word” in the phenomenological sense is always given only in the expression of the “outer word” as a partial perspective and is incomplete in this respect. *Verbum interius* is not otherwise detectable directly, but only in the external expressions in which it opens itself. These expressions, as different and partial perspectives of the “outer word”, are not to be regarded as a defect of the complete “inner word”, but are the only possible way or form of the appearance of *verbum interius* itself.

5. Finally, all this partly sheds light on the dialectical relationship between *identity* and *difference*. Different expressions of the outer word referring to a different, partial and incomplete meaning of a perceived thing do not provide for the relativization of the expressions themselves, because they all arise from one and the same “inner word”, i.e. thinking that thinks about a thing. Again, this *identity* of the “inner word” is found only in the *difference* of external expressions.

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*Статья поступила в редакцию 30.06.2021;
одобрена после рецензирования 25.10.2021; принята к публикации 03.03.2022*

*The article was submitted 30.06.2021;
approved after reviewing 25.10.2021; accepted for publication 03.03.2022*