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# GADAMER ON HEGEL: 'TAKING FINITUDE SERIOUSLY' AND 'THE UNBREAKABLE CIRCLE OF REFLECTION'

William Maker

Three of the major schools of contemporary continental thought — critical theory, post-structuralism and philosophical hermeneutics — are alike, despite the manifold differences which distinguish them, in criticizing and rejecting the traditional aim of modern philosophy: Our Cartesian legacy as defined by the ideal of an autonomous, fully transparent, self-legitimizing standpoint of reason as a standpoint attainable by the reflective ego, consciousness or thinking self.<sup>1</sup> To a degree, this common point also marks the importance, for them, of Hegel. All can be said to be involved in a love/hate relationship with him. Both the negative and positive impact of Hegel on critical theory is clearly acknowledged, at least by Habermas.<sup>2</sup> More intriguing is the self-understanding of Hegel's influence on post-structuralism as expressed by Foucault: "...our age, whether through logic or epistemology, whether through Marx or Nietzsche, is attempting to flee Hegel....But truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. It assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps, is close to us; it implies a knowledge, in that which permits us to think against Hegel, of that which remains Hegelian. We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us."<sup>3</sup>

I have quoted Foucault on Hegel because I think one of the points on which post-structuralism and hermeneutics are closest consists in their shared self-understandings of the complexity and the ambiguous character of their respective relations to Hegel.<sup>4</sup> Foucault's remarks might just as well have been expressed by Gadamer. In fact, Gadamer tells us: "Concisely stated, the issue here is whether or not the comprehensive mediation of every conceivable path of thought, which Hegel undertook, might not of necessity give the lie to every attempt to break out of the circle of reflection in which thought thinks itself. In the end, is even the position which Heidegger tries to establish in opposition to Hegel trapped within the sphere of the inner infinity of reflection?"<sup>5</sup> Indeed, of all contemporary thinkers who take Hegel seriously and are yet critical of him, Gadamer is the most sensitive and appreciative, the most alert to Hegel's nuances and the most willing to acknowledge both the importance of Hegel's influence and the continuing challenge which Hegel presents to his own philosophical position. In Gadamer's words: "...it is of central importance for the hermeneutic problem that it should come to grips with Hegel."<sup>6</sup>

In what follows, I shall (1) reflect on the complex ambiguity of the Gadamer-Hegel relationship, indicating the points on which they are in disagreement, the points where they come close to one another, and the points where there is an unresolved tension in their relation. In addition, and in the course of this task, I shall indicate (2) what I think it means, and why it is important, for hermeneutics to overcome Hegel. Lastly (3) I shall close with a few words on how Gadamer's Hegel interpretation provides us, as students of both Hegel and Gadamer, with a further philosophical task.

Central to understanding the importance and the complexity of the Gadamer-Hegel relation-

ship are three interrelated issues: (a) the rejection of subjectivity, (b) the issue of finitude and (c) the problem of the circle of reflection. My central thesis is that on all these points of impact between Gadamer and Hegel there exists an underlying ambiguity in Gadamer's position on Hegel. Furthermore, I believe that the ambiguity, or, more positively expressed, the openness of Gadamer's Hegel understanding — his refusal to rapidly make summary judgments of dismissal — might help us to perceive an ambiguity in Hegel's own position on these matters and thus open the way for continuing dialogue with Gadamer and Hegel.

(a) Amongst interpreters of Hegel, Gadamer has a highly sophisticated appreciation of the fact that Hegel's completion of transcendental idealism is effected in and through a critique of egological subjectivity and the epistemology founded on it. "For it is Hegel who explicitly carried the dialectic mind or spirit beyond the forms of subjective spirit, beyond consciousness and self-consciousness."<sup>7</sup> Yet what is initially unclear in Gadamer is the degree to which Hegel carries out such a critique and the extent to which his critique is effective, for Gadamer also notes critically that Hegel's project proclaims itself as having "free self-consciousness."<sup>8</sup> Did Hegel fully overcome subjectivity? Or did he only produce its ultimate or penultimate transformation into an absolute subjectivity? Does an absolute consciousness which is neither consciousness per se nor self-consciousness but is in essence still a consciousness pervade in Hegel's thought? It seems to me that this is the point that Gadamer is getting at, and that his interpretation of Hegel gives an affirmative answer to the last two questions. The point of difference seems to be that the "free self-consciousness" which Hegel affirms is not an individual, finite self-consciousness, but rather the self-consciousness of spirit, and that what Gadamer is critical of is not the notion of spirit per se but rather the idea of such a self-conscious spirit as being capable of full and unconditioned self-transparency, i.e., as being the progenitor of an absolute knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

Reading Gadamer in this way, it is clear that for him Hegel's rejection of subjectivity is incomplete. It is only a rejection of its primitive or egological forms, such that the basic structure of the ego or consciousness remains dominant. "Precisely this elevation [of the "empirical 'I' to the transcendental 'I'"] is what Hegel claims to have accomplished through the *Phenomenology*:...Hegel demonstrated that the I is spirit."<sup>11</sup> Thus what Gadamer sees as purification is not at all a thoroughgoing rejection; the knowing subject qua individual, finite consciousness has its limited character recognised, but not acknowledged as final. Rather, the urge of reflection for totality and complete transparency drove Hegel's philosophy on to proclaim the false triumph of an infinite ego (spirit) which, rather than accepting its finitude as defined by the limiting conditions of an other, swallows or subsumes the other into itself: "Absolute knowing is thus the result of a purification in the sense that the truth of Fichte's concept of the transcendental 'I' emerges, not merely as being a subject, but rather as reason and spirit and, accordingly, as all of reality."<sup>12</sup> So, despite the fact that "Hegel's concept of spirit...transcends the subjective form of self-consciousness..." the ultimate structure of consciousness remains dominant, for "(T)he light in which all truth is seen is cast from consciousness's becoming clear about itself."<sup>13</sup>

Thus, in regard to subjectivity what initially appears to be an ambiguity in Gadamer's reading of Hegel can be resolved by paying closer attention to Gadamer's texts: He thinks that a variety of modes of subjective consciousness are overcome by Hegel, but the basic form of consciousness prevails and is absolutized. Nonetheless, subjectivity is important because it is intimately related to the issues (b) of finitude and (c) of reflection. In addition, all three are ultimately crucial because of the fact that, in their interconnection one with another, they define the focal point of hermeneutics' confrontation with Hegel and because it is around them and around this confrontation that the even more basic issue of the foundation and legitimacy of hermeneutics

revolves. That is to say: The confrontation between Hegel and hermeneutics on subjectivity, finitude, and reflection is directly connected not only with hermeneutics' attempts to overcome Hegel, but also with the question of the foundations of hermeneutics itself. As I shall suggest, these are different ways of approaching the same issue. Thus the question as to whether or not hermeneutics has succeeded in founding itself philosophically is intimately tied to the question as to whether or not it has succeeded in overcoming Hegel.

Determining the precise nature and limits of subjectivity is crucial in this respect simply because the keystone of hermeneutics itself, as well as its critique of Hegel, lies in its affirmation of the primacy of finitude, as defined in part by the notion that the thinking subject cannot attain to the full self-transparency of an absolute knowing. For hermeneutics this is a *fundamentum inconcussum*, and the rejection of Hegel hinges on it: "In its uniqueness, finitude and historicity, however, human *Dasein* would preferably be recognized not as an instance of an *eidōs*, but rather as itself the most real factor of all."<sup>14</sup>

But, despite his rejection of what he sees as Hegel's transcendence of *Dasein* in its uniqueness and finitude, it is with good reason that Gadamer speaks of Hegel's dialectic as "a continual source of irritation."<sup>15</sup> For the deeper complexity of the issue of subjectivity, reflected in Gadamer's understanding of Hegel, and especially as regards the matters of finitude and reflection, concerns the manner in which one is to go about establishing the finitude of consciousness or subjectivity, and hence concerns the question of the foundations of hermeneutics itself. The problem consists in doing this in a way which is philosophically adequate, but which does not lead, just in virtue of this adequacy, to the transcendence into an absolute consciousness. The decisive foundational question for hermeneutics, one which prevails despite its rejection of the perceived Hegelian notion of absolute subjectivity concerns the following: How is one to bring finitude — the self-evident awareness of the limited character of all human subjectivity — to *philosophical* legitimacy? This meta-question, which delineates the deeper level of the Hegel-Gadamer relation, is connected with the problem of reflection, for the preeminent method of philosophical discourse is that of reflective thought. How is the pre-philosophical experience or awareness of finitude to be articulated in such a way that, despite reflection's demand for an accounting of the conditions of the possibility of the *philosophical* knowing of this fact, such an accounting does not become "trapped within the sphere of the inner infinity of reflection"?<sup>16</sup> How does one articulate finitude in such a way that the very possibility of such an articulation does not testify to the infinite power and capacity of the reflecting philosophical subject and such that reason remains "aware that human knowledge is limited and will remain limited, even if it is conscious of its own limit?"<sup>17</sup>

It is evidence both of the depths of Gadamer's philosophical understanding and of the extent of his openness that he is aware of this situation and the reflective-Hegelian objections which it presents to his own position. Where does he stand in regard to reflection's demand for a full accounting of the 'position from which' he makes his philosophical claims? And where does he see the locus for a philosophically adequate articulation of finitude? I think we will see that Gadamer's position on the former question is marked by an inner tension or ambiguity which is not ultimately resolved, but which is broken off by his decision to reject reflection by stepping outside of its circle. An assessment of the extent to which hermeneutics overcomes Hegel must focus on this move. Furthermore, we will see that both his rejection of reflection and his delineation of the nature of finitude are mediated by his complex dialogue with Hegel.

The crux of the tension within hermeneutics in regard to reflection, and the problematic character of reflection for it, lies in the need for a balanced or self-limiting reflection. Insofar as

it articulates finitude philosophically, rather than as a dogmatic article of faith, hermeneutics must make use of and is a version of the philosophy of reflection.<sup>18</sup> As such, Gadamer by no means straightforwardly denies the demand for a reflective or philosophical grounding of the conditions of its own possibility: "It is a question of recognizing in it [hermeneutics] an experience of truth that must not only be justified philosophically, but which is itself a mode of philosophizing."<sup>19</sup> Reflection cannot be fully renounced, for it is in and through reflection — and historically in Kant's philosophy — that we reach, if not the awareness of our finitude, at least a philosophical articulation of those conditions which define it: Reflective self-understanding is that activity in and through which we come to an awareness of our situatedness. In addition, hermeneutics' claim to universality requires that it ground itself and legitimate this claim: "the hermeneutic problematic....must establish its own universality."<sup>20</sup> Yet reflection is dangerous, for it demands 'validation everywhere' and offers itself as a "power" to afford this validation which is "false."<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, it cannot deny the question of its own possibility: "Anyone who takes seriously the finitude of human existence and constructs no... 'transcendental ego' to which everything can be traced back, will not be able to escape the question of how his own thinking as transcendental is empirically possible."<sup>22</sup> It would seem then that the very rejection of the infinite capacity for reflective grounding which hermeneutics demands forces it to pay even greater attention to the question of its own foundation. A self-limiting philosophy of reflection must pay special attention to this issue, and in a hermeneutics which does so Gadamer seems to see the truth of the claims of the philosophy of reflection properly realized: "Hermeneutics achieves its actual productivity only when it musters sufficient self-reflection to reflect simultaneously about its own critical endeavors, that is, about its own limitations and the relativity of its own position. Hermeneutical reflection that does that seems to me to come closer to the real ideal of knowledge, because it also makes us aware of the illusion of reflection."<sup>23</sup>

But the decisive question concerns whether or not and how this self-limitation of reflection — which, if it were a *self*-limitation would ground hermeneutics' assertions concerning finitude and thus substantiate its rejection of Hegel in a twofold way — can be achieved. How is the self-limiting reflection of hermeneutics, understood as an expression of its own relativity, to be effected in a way that is not self-defeating? In confronting the issue of hermeneutics' rejection of reflection, Gadamer notes that reflective arguments against hermeneutics are "formally correct" in that they "demonstrate the inner contradictions of all relativist views." Yet they "have something about them that suggests that they are attempting to bowl one over. However cogent they seem, they still miss the main point. In making use of them, one is proved right, yet they do not express any superior insight of any value." They are "sophistic" and "in fact they tell us nothing."<sup>24</sup> This invective, which is not directed against Hegel, marks the point where the intimations of a reflectively adequate self-limiting philosophy of reflection are broken off, the point where Gadamer, in a highly self-reflective way, consciously steps outside of the circle of reflection. Thus, through his own self-reflection, Gadamer comes to realize that reflection cannot be limited from within: "Polemics against an absolute thinker has itself no starting point. The Archimedean point from where Hegel's philosophy could be toppled can never be found through reflection. This is precisely the formal quality of reflective philosophy, that there cannot be a position that is not drawn into the reflective movement of consciousness coming to itself."<sup>25</sup>

Gadamer appreciates what it is, from the standpoint of reflection, that is unacceptable in his own thought: "To be sure it is 'obvious' that finitude is a privative determination of thought and as such presupposes its opposite, transcendence.... Who will deny that? I contend however, that we have learned once and for all from Kant that such 'obvious' ways of thought can mediate

## Maker: Gadamer on Hegel: 'Taking Finitude Seriously' and 'The Unbreakabl

no possible knowledge to us finite beings. Dependence on possible experience and demonstration by means of it remain the alpha and omega of all responsible thought."<sup>26</sup> And thus: "It seems to me that it is essential for taking finitude seriously...that...experience renounce all dialectical supplementation."<sup>27</sup> We come then to the bottom line vis a vis reflection: it must be broken with. But even this break deepens the ambiguous character of hermeneutics' relation with Hegel: On the one hand, Hegel is acknowledged as articulating a successful critique of egological subjectivism. By implication, this is also a critique of the transcendental philosophy of his predecessors, and hence a critique of Kant. On the other hand, hermeneutics returns to Kant's philosophy as the *locus classicus* for its assertion of finitude and its denunciation of the powers of reflection. Once again though, Gadamer is to be given credit for his appreciation of the untenability of this position as viewed from the standpoint of reflection: "...this critique of idealism [Kant's and Heidegger's] was faced then as now, with the comprehensive claim of the transcendental position. Inasmuch as philosophical reflection did not want to leave unconsidered any possible area of thought... — and, since Hegel, this was the claim of transcendental philosophy — it had already included every possible objection within the total reflection of the mind."<sup>28</sup> And testifying to the strength of the reflective position in Hegel, he notes: "It is necessary to recognize the compulsive power of reflective philosophy and admit that Hegel's critics never succeeded in breaking its magic spell. We shall be able to detach the problem of an historical hermeneutics from the hybrid consequences of speculative idealism if we refuse to be satisfied with the irrationalistic reduction of it, but preserve the truth of Hegel's thought....we are concerned to conceive a reality which is beyond the omnipotence of reflection. This was precisely the point against which the criticism of Hegel was directed and where the principle of reflective philosophy proved superior to all its critics."<sup>29</sup>

Does Gadamer succeed in 'breaking the magic spell' of Hegelian reflection? Does he feel that he has succeeded in doing this and in overcoming Hegel? Reflecting what I believe is Gadamer's own position, I think we have to answer: yes and no. No in that, and as I think Gadamer himself appreciates, his rejection of reflection is a step outside of the circle rather than a genuine breaking of it. A step outside because, from the standpoint of reflective philosophy, he seems not to have come up with an articulation of finitude which will satisfy the insistent demand of reflection for a reflective accounting or grounding of the legitimacy of the position from which the primacy of finitude is asserted. The qualified answer of yes to the question is evidenced by Gadamer's unquestioned belief that this reflective demand is fundamentally illegitimate, at least in part because to meet it must lead, in his eyes, to a renunciation of the primary datum of finitude. Insofar as finitude remains the "alpha and omega" of hermeneutics, and insofar as Gadamer is correct in holding that no reflectively adequate philosophy of reflection can succeed in limiting itself, then it is clear for him that hermeneutics constitutes a superior philosophical position vis a vis Hegel despite its inability to mount that mode of a critique of infinite reflection which reflective philosophy would acknowledge: a reflective, that is, a thoroughly immanent one.<sup>30</sup>

Given his acknowledgement of the fact that Hegel proves superior to the critiques of his position implicit in Kant and explicit in Heidegger, I think we can see in Gadamer's own efforts to articulate the fundamental character of finitude a development mediated by his understanding of and confrontation with Hegel.<sup>31</sup> I will not argue this point in detail, but I believe that Gadamer's so-called "linguistic turn" — his emphasis on language rather than *Dasein* as the primary datum of finitude — stems from his realization that the attempt to present finitude in terms of the subject, along the lines of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Being and Time*, relocates one within the reflective and problematic format of Hegelian philosophy. Thus Gadamer

turns to the experience and phenomenon of language because of his realization of the inadequacy of the Kantian and Heideggerian critiques of reflective idealism, and in order to effect his own conception of a "reality which is beyond the omnipotence of reflection."<sup>32</sup>

I will omit a consideration of whether or not language, as it is conceived either by the later Heidegger or Gadamer, suffices to meet Hegelian objections. I want to return instead to the theme of the complexity and ambiguity of the Gadamer-Hegel relationship by first of all noting the points where Gadamer emphasizes his closeness to Hegel, including that point where Gadamer notes an ambiguity in Hegel himself.

I noted earlier that Gadamer's rejection, despite their "formal correctness," of reflective arguments against hermeneutics is not directed by him against Hegel. In fact, Gadamer himself is quite explicit about the closeness of his project with Hegel's. It seems to me that there are two central and related points of contact here: (1) Gadamer acknowledges, as we saw, the importance of Hegel's critique of egological subjectivity, and remarking on the necessity of 'coming to grips' with Hegel he writes: "...Hegel's whole philosophy of the mind claims to achieve the total fusion of history with the present. It is concerned not with a reflective formalism, but with the same thing as we are. Hegel has thought through the historical dimension in which the problem of hermeneutics is rooted."<sup>33</sup> Clearly, Hegel's emphasis on history, and especially on the necessity of historical consciousness for philosophy is a central point where the Hegelian and hermeneutic projects meet. Again, the crucial point of difference is the perceived Hegelian claim to absoluteness, specifically his claim to have achieved an absolute historical consciousness: "Hegel's application to history, insofar as he saw it as part of the absolute self-consciousness of philosophy, does not do justice to the human consciousness."<sup>34</sup> Yet Gadamer reaffirms a long-noted ambiguity in Hegel's view of his own position in and to history. The basis for this ambiguity is the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, and it marks an ambiguity which has been historically effective since the split between the right and left Hegelians following Hegel's death.<sup>35</sup>

The second point of contact concerns the earlier noted issues of the idea of a self-limiting (non-absolute) philosophy of reflection and the proper manner in which finitude is to be philosophically grounded. As mentioned, Gadamer's position on these matters is especially sensitive for, (a) he is aware of the difficulties involved in establishing finitude in a philosophically satisfactory way and (b) he is also aware that Hegel's philosophy not only provides a critique of subjectivism but also presents, in its further development, a serious challenge to attempts to locate finitude primarily in a notion of subjectivity or *Dasein*. Gadamer's position on Hegel here is complex for, although unquestionably critical of what he sees as Hegel's absolutism, he nonetheless sees the parallels between his notion of language and Hegel's concept of spirit: "...despite his speculative dialectical transcendence of the Kantian concept of finitude.... (Hegel's) concept of spirit is still the basis of every critique of subjective spirit.... This concept of spirit that transcends the subjectivity of the ego has its counterpart in the phenomenon of language...." But "...in contrast to the concept of spirit...the phenomenon of language has the merit of being appropriate to our finitude."<sup>36</sup>

To summarize the Gadamer-Hegel relationship: For Gadamer, the positive aspects of Hegel's thought are: (1) The definitive critique of egological subjectivity (including the notion of a dialectics of experience.)<sup>37</sup> (2) The emphasis on history. (3) The development of "spirit" as a notion which transcends subjectivity and which points towards the phenomenon of language. In each of these cases, however, the breaking point lies in Hegel's insistent pushing of reflection on to completion, a drive which is seen as transforming his philosophy into absolutism in its ultimate desire to overcome all otherness and to attain certain self-knowledge in a reflective conscious-

ness which transcends all experience.<sup>38</sup> In short, from Gadamer's point of view it is the reflective desire for radical justification — 'validation everywhere' — and for completion, the lust to grasp totality, which brings Hegel to reject finitude despite his anticipations of the hermeneutic position.<sup>39</sup>

Yet it is just reflection itself, specifically its demand for full accounting and complete coherence, which makes it possible for us, having read Gadamer and Hegel, to continue a dialogue with both of them, a dialogue centered on the question of the possibility of a self-limiting philosophy of reflection. For, although reflection in Hegel seems to lead to absolutism, it is reflection or dialectics, in their openness, which compels us to seriously consider the question of the foundations of hermeneutics. In the spirit of such a dialectic, I will close with the following remarks on this topic, a topic which Gadamer and Hegel ask us to consider.

Despite his unequivocal rejection of Hegel's absolutism, we can rethink Gadamer's grounds for it in reflective, if not Hegelian terms: A central reason for Gadamer's rejection, paralleling that of finitude in its importance, lies in hermeneutics' basic concern with openness and its corresponding critique of dogmatism. In reflective-hegelian language, the core of this aspect of Gadamer's rejection of Hegel lies in what he sees as Hegel's affirmation of a closed or self-completing infinity. Moving dialectically beyond what is perceived as that point of closure in Hegel, and appreciating through Hegel the problematic character of attempts to establish finitude in terms of subjectivity, we can view Gadamer's introduction of language as an effort to satisfy *both* the reflective demand for adequate philosophical articulation and the hermeneutic demand for the primacy of finitude. Hence it is no accident that Gadamer speaks of the virtues of his notion of language in *reflective* terms as something "genuinely universal" and "infinite while yet finite."<sup>40</sup> To this extent we might try to understand and further develop Gadamer's position as one which remains within the problematic of reflective philosophy. In doing this — appropriating Gadamer while moving beyond him — we can think of this task as having three related aims: (1) To meet in the phenomenon of language, or perhaps elsewhere, reflection's concern for the adequate expression and grounding of the truth we wish to tell. While so doing (2) also avoiding the Scylla of an absolutization of language in its infinity. That is, a transformation of it into a mystical *Urgrund*, which, owing to our inability to grasp it, swallows up everything into itself in the manner of an absolute consciousness and thus functions as a justification for the abandonment of critical thought. And also (3) skirting the Charybdis of absolutizing language in its *finitude* as a limiting condition. That is, as definitive of a fixed and rigid limit which cannot be transcended. In the end of course, (2) and (3) lead to the same thing: the paralyzing of thought.<sup>41</sup>

From the point of view of the philosophy of reflection, which stands accused by Gadamer of having affirmed an absolute infinite (2), it is (3) which is the special danger in all philosophies of finitude: That while speaking of openness and against dogmatism, their very attempts to articulate the conditions which demand openness — namely, the finite character of all knowing — threaten to transform these very conditions into dogmatic absolute limits. Despite the tendency of philosophers of finitude to brush this issue aside, to reassure us of their good intentions, their perceived absolutization of the finite presents an obstacle to the acceptance of their philosophies: Witness Habermas' critique of Gadamer, whatever else you might think of it.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, Gadamer's special concern to avoid both the absolutization of infinity and the absolutization of finitude, a concern whose logical point of reference lies in Hegel's consideration of the dialectic of infinity in the *Logic*, testifies to his continuity with the best aspects of the philosophy of reflection and Hegel. In short, Gadamer's understanding of Hegel, his effort to philosophize *with* Hegel, exemplifies the truth and value of his own teachings on interpretation.

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NOTES

1 Cf. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, (University of California Press: 1976), the essay "Man and Language," pp. 61-62 for his discussion of this Cartesian legacy as providing "the background for all of modern thought."

2 Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest*, (Beacon Press: 1970).

3 Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, (Harper and Row: 1976), "The Discourse on Language," p. 235.

4 The simplest way of putting this point is to say that they all — including Marx and Richard Rorty — wish to break off reading the *Phenomenology* at some point or another prior to "Absolute Knowing."

5 Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, (Yale University Press: 1976), the essay "Hegel and Heidegger," pp. 101-102.

6 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, (The Seabury Press: 1975), pp. 309-310

7 *Hegel's Dialectic*, "Hegel and Heidegger," p. 104.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

9 Hegel speaks, in the *Logic*, of overcoming the "Form der Gegenständlichkeit" in the *Phenomenology*. As this is traditionally interpreted, it is not a complete overcoming of consciousness. For a different interpretation of this, and of the whole nature of Hegelian science, see my article "Understanding Hegel Today," in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy XIX*, 3 (July 1981).

10 "The hermeneutical consciousness does not compete with that self-transparency that Hegel took to constitute absolute knowledge and the highest mode of being." *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, "On The Problem of Self-Understanding," p. 55.

11 *Hegel's Dialectic*, "The Idea of Hegel's Logic," p. 77. Cf. also p. 11, "Hegel and the Dialectic of the Ancient Philosophers."

12 *Hegel's Dialectic*, p. 78.

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, "The Phenomenological Movement," p. 135. Also: "...understanding is not suitably conceived at all as a consciousness of something, since the whole process of understanding itself enters into an event, it brought about by it and is permeated by it." *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, "The Philosophical Foundations of the Twentieth Century," p. 125. But "For Hegel, it is necessary, of course, that the movement of consciousness, experience should lead to a self-knowledge that no longer has anything different or alien to itself....(for Hegel) the dialectic of experience must end with the overcoming of all experience, which is attained in absolute knowledge, ie, in the complete identity of consciousness and object." *Truth and Method*, pp. 318-319. And: "Real experience is that in which man becomes aware of his finiteness." *Truth and Method*, p. 320.

15 *Hegel's Dialectic*, p. 3.

16 *Ibid.*, "Hegel and Heidegger," p. 102.

17 *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, "Semantics and Hermeneutics," p. 94.

18 Despite Gadamer's emphasis on the reflective dimension of hermeneutics and on the continuity of hermeneutics with the reflective tradition, he does intimate that the only true expression of finitude is to be attained in religious experience: "The real concept of self-understanding...is not to be conceived in terms of the model of perfected self-consciousness, but rather in terms of religious experience." *Philosophical Hermeneutics* "The Nature of Things and the Language of Things," p. 80.

19 *Truth and Method*, p. xiii.

## Maker: Gadamer on Hegel: 'Taking Finitude Seriously' and 'The Unbreakabl

20 *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection," p. 37. On the universality of hermeneutics: "Hermeneutic reflection, however, is universal in its possible application." *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 93. "The phenomenon of understanding not only pervades all human relation to the world. It also has an independent validity within science and resists any attempt to reduce it into a method of science." *Truth and Method*, p. xii. "It is important to realize that this phenomenon [the hermeneutical problematic] is not secondary in human existence, and hermeneutics is not to be viewed as a mere subordinate discipline within the arena of *Geisteswissenschaften*." *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 19

21 *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 33 - 34.

22 *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection, p. 36.

23 *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, "Semantics and Hermeneutics, p. 93.

24 *Truth and Method*, pp. 308-309.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 308.

26 *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, "The Phenomenological Movement," p. 172.

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Truth and Method*, p. 225.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 307. Also: "The varied critique of this philosophy of absolute reason by Hegel's critics cannot withstand the logical consequences of total dialectical self-mediation that Hegel has set out..." *Truth and Method*, p. 307. And "It cannot be denied that the objections of Feuerbach and Kierkegaard are already taken care of...by Hegel." p. 308.

30 This is the method of criticism which, according to Hegel, is the only suitable form of *philosophical* criticism: "With respect to the refutation of a philosophic system, the general observation was made in another place that it must be purged of the erroneous idea that the system is to be presented as false throughout, and that the true system is just opposed to the false." Certainly, Gadamer cannot be accused of doing that. But: "Further, the refutation must not come from outside; that is, it must not proceed from assumptions which lie beyond that system and do not correspond with it.... True refutation must engage the force of the opponent and must place itself within the compass of his strength; the task is not advanced if he is attacked outside himself and the case is carried in his absence." *Science of Logic*, vol. 2, pp. 214-215; Johnston and Struthers translation, (Macmillan: 1929.) Thus, insofar as finitude, as explicated by Gadamer, is an 'assumption which lies beyond the system,' his critique fails as one which reflective philosophy is compelled to recognize as telling, and reflective philosophy and hermeneutics remain at loggerheads. Whether or not it is possible to demonstrate immanently, in and through reflection, that reflection itself has limits and must acknowledge finitude is a question which lies beyond the scope of this paper.

31 Cf. especially the article "Hegel and Heidegger" in *Hegel's Dialectic*.

32 *Truth and Method*, p. 307. Cf. also *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, pp. 50, 61-62.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 310.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 319.

35 "The claim which Hegel's philosophy makes contains in it an equivocation which in turn is responsible for the fact that this man assumes the historical role that he does." *Hegel's Dialectic*, p. 101. Gadamer is referring here to Hegel's claim to have completed western metaphysics and to being the consummation of philosophical thought. Cf. the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, pp. 11-12, Knox translation, (Oxford University Press: 1952).

36 *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, "The Philosophical Foundations of the Twentieth Century," p. 128.

37 On Gadamer's appropriation and transformation of the Hegelian notion of dialectics, cf. especially *Truth and Method*, pp. 414ff. in particular pp. 421-423.

38 Hence: "Thus the question arises of the degree to which the dialectical superiority of reflective philosophy corresponds to a factual truth and how far it merely creates a formal appearance. For the arguments of reflective philosophy cannot ultimately conceal the fact that there is some truth in the critique of speculative thought based on the standpoint of finite human consciousness." *Truth and Method* p. 308.

39 "Tradition is no proof and validation of something, in any case not where validation is demanded by reflection. But the point is this: where does reflection demand it? Everywhere? I would object to such an answer on the grounds of the finitude of human existence and the essential particularity of reflection." *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection," p. 34.

40 "But the basis of such demonstration [demonstration "by means of possible experience"] is genuinely universal and if one can so express it, infinite in a finite way. All our ways of thinking are dependent upon the universality of language." *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. "The Phenomenological Movement," p. 172 "...in contrast to the concept of spirit that Hegel drew from the Christian tradition, the phenomenon of language has the merit of being appropriate to our finitude. It is infinite as is spirit, and yet finite, as is every event." *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 128.

41 Gadamer's remarks seem to suggest that language ("the real mark of our finitude" *Philosophical Hermeneutics* p. 64) is both an all-encompassing non-transcendible absolute while nonetheless *not* being an absolute limit for thought: For, on the one hand, "...it is part of the nature of language that it has a completely unfathomable unconsciousness of itself," and "...in all our knowledge of ourselves and in all knowledge of the world, we are already encompassed by the language that is our own." *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 62. On the other hand: "Our capacity for saying keeps pace untiringly with the universality of reason." *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 67.

42 "The universality of the hermeneutic perspective is all-encompassing. I once formulated this by saying that being that can be understood is language. This is certainly not a metaphysical assertion." *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 103. For Habermas's critique of Gadamer, cf. *Philosophische Rundschau*, XIV, Beiheft 5, (1967) pp. 149-180. Gadamer responds in "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*.