1

The History of Hermeneutics

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The topic of the history of hermeneutics was always given at least some consideration in the varied and occasionally conflicting accounts of hermeneutic philosophy offered by Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), and Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005). Heidegger discussed the topic in an early work, *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (Heidegger 1999). In that work, he spoke about *the original meaning* and *development* of the word "hermeneutics." His history of hermeneutics was, then, the story of a concept, a *Begriffsgeschichte*.[1] But that history of the concept was not to be taken as a "history" in any conventional sense of the term. That is to say, it was not narrowly historiographical.[2] Gadamer and Ricoeur shared a different view of the history of hermeneutics. It was, for them, the history of the "hermeneutic problem." Gadamer presented his account of that history in *Truth and Method* (Gadamer 2003). Although the focus of Gadamer's history of hermeneutics was not the same as Heidegger's, Gadamer followed Heidegger in rejecting the standard model of intellectual history in favour of history as critique or "destruction" (*Destruktion*). Ricoeur's history of the "hermeneutic problem" was more conventional, although he did make the point that it was impossible to assume a neutral perspective on that history. All that he could hope to do, he said, was "to describe the state of the hermeneutical problem, such as I receive and perceive it, before offering my own contribution to the debate" (Ricoeur 1981, 43). He presented his version of the history of the "hermeneutic problem" in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*.

This chapter has four parts. The first part tries to explain why Heidegger felt obliged to jettison the most commonly used senses of "history," and how he arrived at the two senses that he considered appropriate for use in philosophical investigations. The second part then draws on those explanations as it comments on key features of Heidegger's history of the concept of hermeneutics. The third part is devoted to Gadamer's history of the "hermeneutic problem." It discusses points of continuity between Heidegger's version of historical inquiry and that of Gadamer; and notes the distinctive features of Gadamer's history of the "hermeneutic problem." The fourth part discusses Ricoeur's version of the history of hermeneutics, underscoring its concern with two "preoccupations" in the recent history of hermeneutics: "deregionalization" and "radicalization."

Heidegger's Destruction of the Six Senses of "History"

In the Summer Semester of 1920, in a lecture course entitled, *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression: Theory of Philosophical Concept Formation*, Heidegger identified six different senses of the word "history" (Heidegger 1993, 43–44). Theodore Kisiel lists them as follows:

1. My friend studies history.
2. My friend knows the history of philosophy.
3. There are people (*Volk*) who have no history.
4. History is the magister of life.
5. This man has a sorry history.
6. Today I underwent an unpleasant history (Kisiel 1993, 127).

Heidegger then analyzed each one of those senses in turn, using a modified version of Husserl's method of intentional analysis.[3] Heidegger had modified the method so that it would also permit the identification of a concept type which was unknown to Husserl. Husserl employed "order concepts" (*Ordnungsbegriffe*), which had a two-part structure: (1) a "content sense" (*Gehaltsinn*); and (2) a "reference sense" (*Bezugssinn*). But Heidegger was not interested in concepts of that type. His point was that it was also possible to encounter and indeed to use concepts that have a three-part structure: (1) a "content sense"; (2) a "reference sense"; and (3) a "performance or enactment sense" (*Vollzugssinn*). He gave the name "expression concepts" (*Ausdrucksbegriffe*) to that second group of concepts. As we shall see, he had a particular interest in "expression concepts", believing that they were better suited to the task of capturing phenomena like history and indeed life itself.

The main purpose of Heidegger's intentional analysis of the six senses of the word "history" was to establish which ones were "order concepts", which ones "expression concepts." And the plan was to work with the latter and simply disregard the former. To allow him to make the correct judgment about the six senses of "history," his modified version of phenomenological analysis involved an attempted re-enactment of the "performance sense." The idea was that if the attempt at re-enactment were to fail, Heidegger would know that he was dealing with an "order concept." He used the term "destruction" (*Destruktion*) to refer to the attempted re-enactment of the "performance sense"; he used the term "phenomenological dijudication" (*phänomenologische Diiudication*) (Heidegger 1993, 74) to refer to the judgment that was made in the course of that exercise.

Heidegger looked upon "order concepts" as concepts that had had their "performance sense" severed (Greisch 2000, 103). They had, he thought, suffered an "erosion of meaning" (*Verblassen der Bedeutsamkeit*) (Heidegger 1993, 37). But, as Jean Greisch reminds us, this "erosion of meaning" had nothing to do with faulty memory or lack of interest. Nothing had been forgotten. Nothing had gone unnoticed. It was solely a matter of the cessation of a practice or performance. Of course, "order concepts" retained their "content sense" and their "reference sense," and so could still be used to say something intelligible about things in the world. But this use-value was immediately offset by a characteristic failing: "order concepts" *objectified* history and other temporally structured phenomena. Heidegger hoped that his deconstructive strategy would allow him to counteract the tendency toward objectification which, he noted, was then prevalent in philosophical circles.

Of the *six* senses of the word "history," whose "performance sense" Heidegger tried to re-enact, two were judged to be "order concepts." They were (1) "My friend studies history" (i.e., "history" in the sense of scientific or academic inquiry); and (2) "My friend knows the history of philosophy" (i.e., "history" in the sense of the focus of such an inquiry) (Heidegger 1993, 43). Heidegger held that when the term "history" is used in either of those senses, the experience of life is diluted. Fortunately, there were, he thought, other nonobjectifying senses of "history" to be found, two of which he judged suitable for use by philosophers.

The first of those was (3) "There are people (*Volk*) who have no history" (i.e., "history" in the sense of tradition) (Heidegger 1993, 43). As Heidegger noted, the medieval Christians showed that it is possible to have or to live "history" in the sense of tradition. Having or living a tradition is all about relating to a people. And this relationship "involves a sense that I, as a latecomer, am following something that preceded me. I sense that this past is being preserved for the sake of my own becoming" (Kisiel 1993, 128). Heidegger thought that the following captured the second sense of the word "history", which philosophers might safely use: (5) "This man has a sorry history" (Heidegger 1993, 44).[4] He drew a careful distinction between the manner in which a man has a personal history and a people have a tradition. He held that the relationship that a man has with his own past is "deeper and more intimate" than the relationship between a people and their tradition (Kisiel 1993, 128). The man's past has become part of who he is; it is present in his "inner tendencies." And it was because of the depth and intimate nature of the man's relationship with his own past that Heidegger considered "history" in the sense of having a sorry history to be the more "original" of the two.

Heidegger's History of the Concept of Hermeneutics

Three years later, in the lectures on the hermeneutics of facticity, Heidegger would make the following statement: "A few references will allow us to narrow down the original meaning of this word [namely, "hermeneutics"] and understand as well the way its meaning has changed" (Heidegger 1999, 6). He would also comment on a series of phrases and some longer statements taken from works by Plato, Aristotle, Philostratus, Thucydides, Philo, Aristeas, Augustine, Johannes Jakob Rambach, Schleiermacher, and Dilthey. If you did not know that he was already trying to work out an alternative to the existing model of historical inquiry, you would be forgiven for thinking that you were looking at the notes for a fairly standard history of ideas (Heidegger's history of hermeneutics is essentially a set of concise and at times highly condensed lecture notes). But as the lectures of the Summer Semester of 1920 have indicated, Heidegger had a special interest in "expression" concepts and simply refused to use "order concepts." So, even if the appearance of his history of the concept of hermeneutics suggests otherwise, it is not a conventional history of ideas.

The challenge now is to arrive at a clear understanding of what Heidegger meant by the history of the concept of hermeneutics. The first thing to clarify is the sense of the easily misunderstood phrase, "original meaning." As Heidegger's "destruction" of the six senses of "history" has shown, the "original meaning" of a word is not necessarily the sense it had for the first person ever to have used the term. Indeed, commenting specifically on the word "hermeneutics," Heidegger notes that "its etymology is obscure" (Heidegger 1999, 6). What makes one particular sense of a word like "history" or "hermeneutics" *the original meaning* is its unsurpassed bond with a human agent. As we have already noted, Heidegger considered "This man has a sorry history" to be the most original sense of "history" because the relationship that a man has with his own past is the deepest and most intimate relationship with the past that it is possible to have (Heidegger 1993, 47–48).

In the lectures on the hermeneutics of facticity, Heidegger makes a statement about the way he uses the "expression '*hermeneutics*'," which points to a relationship that could also be described as deep and intimate. Here is Heidegger's statement: "The expression 'hermeneutics' is used here to indicate the unified manner of the engaging, approaching, accessing, interrogating, and explicating of facticity [i.e., the being of Dasein]" (Heidegger 1999, 6). It is easy to see how a man could be said to have a deep and intimate relationship with his own past, but could the same be said of a man's relationship to "hermeneutics," as Heidegger uses that expression? I believe so. Hermeneutics in the sense of a "unified manner" of conducting an inquiry into the being of Dasein is a *way* of going about that task that a man can rightly call his own. Indeed, he could be described as *having* hermeneutics in much the same way as Audrey Hepburn

had a very particular style. Now, having "hermeneutics" in this sense is surely the deepest and most intimate relationship with hermeneutics that an individual can have, making it the "original meaning" of the term. Heidegger's expression concept is the "original meaning" not because Heidegger learned that that was what Plato or Aristotle meant by the term, but because of the depth and intimacy of the bond between the one who enquires into the being of Dasein and the "hermeneutics" (i.e., the "unified manner" of doing a range of things), which characterizes his approach.

The next thing to get clear about is Heidegger's reasons for making reference to works by a whole series of "historical" figures, starting with Plato and ending with Dilthey. This will bring us face to face with Heidegger's use of "history" in the sense of *tradition*. It is clear from his lecture notes that Heidegger was not interested in tracing the lines of influence from one philosopher to the next. In fact, he had little interest in the "historical" figures as such. What he was interested in was the way in which the concept of hermeneutics had developed over time. As he saw it, that concept started out as an "expression concept" which, as we have already seen, meant it had a "performance sense" or practice dimension. But at some point in the seventeenth century (Heidegger lists a number of culprits), the concept of hermeneutics lost its "performance sense," that is to say, it ceased to have a practice dimension. Thereafter, says Heidegger, hermeneutics became a "doctrine" or a "discipline" (Heidegger 1999, 10).

There is a marked absence of neutrality in Heidegger's history of the concept of hermeneutics; and this says a lot about the type of history it is. This is "history" in the sense of tradition, and, as Heidegger will explain in the lectures of the Summer Semester of 1927, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, there are just two options when it comes to one's tradition: appropriate it or disregard it (Kisiel and van Buren 1994, 124).[5] He is not quite so explicit about what he is doing with the tradition of hermeneutics in the Summer Semester of 1920. But there is no doubt that, in those lectures, he assumes a negative attitude toward the versions of "hermeneutics" that emerge from the seventeenth century onward, while he is positively disposed toward all the other versions. Indeed, he is especially appreciative of Augustine, who, he maintains, "provides the first 'hermeneutics' in grand style" (Heidegger 1999, 9).

Let us turn now to consider some of the detail of Heidegger's conceptual story. The narrative begins by focusing attention on a mythical figure: "the messenger of the gods" (Heidegger 1999, 6). Heidegger announces that although the etymology of "hermeneutics" is obscure, the word is related to the name "Ἑρμῆς [Hermes]." He does not discuss the nature of that relationship, leaving us to speculate on what he might have had in mind. One possibility is that he was looking to make an indirect connection between hermeneutics and interpretation. Although the etymology of the name, "Ἑρμῆς [Hermes]", is disputed, there are some grounds for claiming that it is derived from ἑρμηνεύς ("interpreter"). A second possibility is that Heidegger wanted his students to associate hermeneutics with the endeavors of the energetic messenger of the gods. This second possibility would fit neatly with his claim that the "traditional" concept of hermeneutics has a "performance sense."

Heidegger's notes provide a brief commentary on a number of lines and phrases in Plato's work, which suggests that Plato had his own version of hermeneutics. Commenting specifically on the *Theaetetus*, Heidegger explains that Plato's "hermeneutics is the announcement and making known of the being of a being in its being in relation to … (me)" (Heidegger 1999, 7). Heidegger's next set of references is taken from the work of Aristotle, and once again Heidegger identifies a version of hermeneutics that has a practice dimension. His notes also suggest that the transition from Plato to Aristotle marks a subtle but significant change in the concept. That is to say, the concept is no longer associated with the actions of a "herald" (Plato), but is rather linked to "conversation" or "discourse" (Aristotle). In Aristotle, notes Heidegger, quoting a line from the *Politics*: "discourse '*makes* beings openly manifest, accessible for our seeing and having of them in their expediency and inexpediency'" (Heidegger 1999, 7).

Heidegger's "history of the meaning of the word ['hermeneutics']" places great importance on a decision, made by "the first generation after Theophrastus and Eudemus [i.e., Aristotle's successors]" to give the name *On Interpretation* to one "particular investigation" of Aristotle's, which had been

"handed down" without a title (Heidegger 1999, 8). Heidegger holds that the recognition that hermeneutics and interpretation are one is something that would unite all members of the tradition up to, but *not* including the seventeenth-century exegetes and philologists. His notes also point to additional practices, which came to be associated with hermeneutics over time. Those practices included "translation," from one language to another, and "commentary" (Heidegger 1999, 9). Heidegger is clearly impressed by the accuracy of Augustine's description of the heavy demands placed on the interpreter "of ambiguous passages in Scripture"; he also praises Augustine for viewing hermeneutics in a "comprehensive and living manner" (Heidegger, 199, 9–10). Finally, his notes suggest that he believes that the Patristic period and Luther represented "[t]he decisive epochs in the actual development of hermeneutics" (Heidegger 1999, 11).

It is the tradition of hermeneutics from Plato and Aristotle to the late sixteenth century that Heidegger wants to appropriate, and all the indications are that, in doing so, he will try to facilitate the further development of the concept of hermeneutics. However, he will disregard all the works on hermeneutics that were written from the seventeenth century onward. He thinks that, in the seventeenth century, hermeneutics ceased to be "interpretation itself, but became a doctrine about the conditions, the objects, the means, and the communication and practical application of interpretation" (Heidegger 1999, 10). Heidegger's notes indicate that he planned to illustrate this significant erosion of meaning with reference to a study by Johannes Jakob Rambach.

Heidegger goes on to make a brief reference to Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), who, he maintains, "reduced" the idea of hermeneutics to "an 'art {technique} of understanding' another's discourse" (Heidegger 1999, 10). He notes that hermeneutics thus acquired something it never had before, that is, a "formal" methodology. By Heidegger's account, Schleiermacher refashioned hermeneutics "as a discipline connected with grammar and rhetoric," and he brought it "into relation with dialectic" (Heidegger 1999, 10). Of course, Heidegger would have seen this development as an erosion of meaning, the loss of a "performance sense." He thinks that Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) made a serious error in adopting Schleiermacher's concept of hermeneutics. However, he acknowledges the value of Dilthey's "analysis of understanding as such" as well as his investigation of "the development of hermeneutics in the context of his research on the development of the human sciences" (Heidegger 1999, 11). Nonetheless, Heidegger is not satisfied that the more acceptable parts of Dilthey's work are all they might have been. He writes:

> But it is precisely here that a disastrous limitation in his position shows itself. The decisive epochs in the actual development of hermeneutics (Patristic period and Luther) remained hidden from him, since he always investigated hermeneutics as a theme only to the extent that it displayed a tendency to what he himself considered to be its essential dimension—a methodology for the hermeneutical human sciences. (Heidegger 1999, 11)

When Heidegger gets to work on developing his own distinctive version of "traditional" hermeneutics, he will seek to avoid limiting his vision in that way, and he will do so by sidestepping epistemological inquiry altogether and going directly to ontology.

Gadamer's History of the Problem of Hermeneutics

Part II of *Truth and Method* is subdivided into two sections, the first of which offers a *historical preparation* for what follows. Gadamer's historical preparation is, to all intents and purposes, a history of hermeneutics, which includes an account of "Heidegger's project of a hermeneutic phenomenology" (Gadamer, 2003, ix). Gadamer is clearly keen to show how his hermeneutics has been inspired by Heidegger's, but it is a curious

feature of that account that it tends to focus on the limited references to hermeneutics found in *Being and Time* rather than the detailed treatment of the topic offered in a work like *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity*. And yet, as a former student and assistant to Heidegger in the 1920's, Gadamer was familiar with Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity. However, Gadamer was sixty years old when he published *Truth and Method* and, as Jean Grondin points out, the situation at the time was very different from what it is today. Grondin explains that, in 1960,

> Heidegger seemed to have rejected his early philosophy (the dominant interpretation of those close to him, such as Karl Löwith, Max Muller, Walter Schulz and soon William Richardson and Otto Poggeler confirmed it), even renouncing the term "hermeneutics" to the advantage of a more poetic concept of being … As for the hermeneutics of facticity, it was not at all well known. Gadamer could not authorize it, when the youthful courses or manuscripts of which there was then no trace had not been published. (Grondin 2003, 71)

In those circumstances, Gadamer had little choice. If he hoped to show his contemporaries how Heidegger's hermeneutics had inspired his work, he would have to limit his use of sources to *Being and Time*. Grondin believes that the situation would be altogether different were Gadamer to write *Truth and Method* today. But there is no suggestion here that we need to entertain any counterfactuals: "We know today, in the light of the young Heidegger's manuscripts and published courses that Gadamer was inspired much less by *Being and Time* than by [Heidegger's] early hermeneutics of facticity" (Grondin 2003, 70).

Grondin is right about the continuities between Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity and Gadamer's hermeneutics of understanding, although given the passage of time since Gadamer first met Heidegger in Freiburg in 1923, it is to be expected that *Truth and Method* will also show the fruits of four decades of reading, teaching, and thinking, to borrow a suggestion from the "Translators' Preface" (Gadamer 2003, xi). The most significant development is, I think, Gadamer's new focus on a history of the *hermeneutic problem*. As we have already seen, Heidegger's focus was on the history of the concept of hermeneutics, whose performance dimension he was keen to identify. He did not suggest that there was a hermeneutic problem to be addressed or solved.

One line of continuity between Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity and Gadamer's hermeneutics of understanding is the use of expression concepts. Gadamer offers a brief sketch of the history of the concept of expression in an appendix to *Truth and Method*, noting word origins in both the Latin and German languages: *expressio*, *exprimere*, and *Ausdruck*. Gadamer's study of the concept of expression maps out a complex genealogy where Latin roots point to "the mental origin of speech and writing" and "older" German roots point back to "Neo-platonic coinage" and "the language of mysticism" (Gadamer 2003, 503). What this means, in effect, is that no thinker from antiquity up to the close of the eighteenth century is held to have considered expression to be "merely a sign that points back to something else, something within"; Gadamer thinks that all believed rather that "what is expressed is itself present in the expression—e.g., anger is present in angry furrows in the face" (Gadamer 2003, 504). But things were very different in the nineteenth century. As Gadamer explains, "The meaning of this theory of expression has obviously been wholly distorted by the subjectivizing and psychologizing process of the nineteenth century" (Gadamer 2003, 504). He goes on to explain that "the critique of the psychologization of the concept of expression runs through the whole of our present investigation and is at the basis of our critique both of 'the art of (Experience)' and of romantic hermeneutics" (Gadamer 2003, 504–505).

Gadamer does not make any reference to Heidegger in this *excursus* on the concept of expression, even though, as we have already seen, Heidegger championed the use of "expression concepts" in his early lecture on the different senses of "history." Gadamer's reasons for not referring to Heidegger's early lectures have already been discussed, so there is no need to find an explanation for this omission.

Although Gadamer does not name Heidegger as one of the many philosophers who used the concept of expression correctly, Heidegger's early lectures clearly demonstrate that he could justly claim to belong to that group. Gadamer's discussion of the concept of expression thus serves to position Heidegger in a new and unexpected lineage: the "ancient Neoplatonic tradition" (Gadamer 2003, 504). It is clear from Gadamer's text that he would position himself in that same lineage, although he might want to claim that he has developed the concept of expression beyond what it was in Heidegger's early lectures.

A second line of continuity between Heidegger's hermeneutics and Gadamer's hermeneutics of understanding is the incorporation of a "destructive" task into the history of hermeneutics. Heidegger offered at least two accounts of that task. We have already discussed the first one, namely, that it is an attempt to re-enact the "performance sense" of a concept. The second, arguably more developed account of "destruction" is presented in Section 6 of *Being and Time*. Jean Greisch identifies three motifs in this later account of "destruction": (1) the "destruction" is meant to be a form of genealogical research (i.e., a "nondeductive" form); (2) it has the *positive function* of preparing the conditions for the authentic and creative appropriation of the tradition; and (3) it has an additional negative and critical function. That is to say, it criticizes the current approach to the history of ontology (Greisch 1994, 98). Not surprisingly, given Gadamer's practice of discussing his Heideggerian legacy with reference to *Being and Time*, it is this second account that serves as a model for the "destructive" task that he undertakes in *Truth and Method*.

Jean Grondin has studied Gadamer's "'destructive' task" in some detail, although he has not discussed its features with reference to Heidegger's template. Grondin identifies a negative and critical function, in Gadamer's "destruction," as well as a shared understanding among Gadamer, Schleiermacher, and Dilthey as to what constitutes the "hermeneutic problem." (I discuss this problem in detail in Part Four, "Ricoeur's Story of Deregionalization and Radicalization"). As Grondin explains, Gadamer's "'destructive' task is directed against the hermeneutics of the nineteenth century, which are essentially those of Schleiermacher and Dilthey" (Grondin 2003, 55). He notes that Schleiermacher and Dilthey scholars often object that Gadamer's treatment of nineteenth-century hermeneutics is one-sided, that it ignores the ways in which elements of Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's hermeneutics "anticipated" Gadamer's own. Grondin does not accept that criticism. He argues that "Gadamer denounced Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's aphorisms essentially from a basis of solidarity," which he describes as a shared awareness of "the specificity of the hermeneutic problem" (Grondin 2003, 56). Grondin suggests that the only difficulty that Gadamer had with Schleiermacher and Dilthey was that they presented their thought in an inappropriate "methodological form" (Grondin 2003, 56). Gadamer's goal was simply to "destroy" that form of presentation.

If we examine Grondin's defence of Gadamer with reference to the three motifs of "destruction" that Heidegger names in Section 6 of *Being and Time*, we will see that Grondin has certainly identified an example, in *Truth and Method*, of the second motif of Heideggerian "destruction." Gadamer's recognition that certain elements of Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's hermeneutics anticipated his own effectively prepares the way for a creative appropriation of the Romantic side of the tradition, something, incidentally, that Heidegger would have considered utterly misguided. But the important point is that Gadamer's "destruction" has a clearly discernible *positive function*. It is tempting to claim that Gadamer's negative criticisms of Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's "methodological form" of presentation can be taken as an example of the third characteristic of a Heideggerian "destruction," but I think that that would be a mistake. As Greisch notes, the additional negative and critical function of "destruction" is meant to target *the current approach to the history of ontology* (Greisch 1994, 98). As it happens, Gadamer does appropriate the third motif of Heideggerian "destruction." There are several examples to choose from, but I shall take just one. Gadamer criticizes Dilthey for "reading history as a book: as one, moreover, intelligible down to the smallest letter" (Gadamer 2003, xxxv). He then goes on to complain

that, despite Dilthey's professed opposition to Hegel's philosophy of history, "Dilthey could not avoid letting history culminate in history of ideas" (Gadamer 2003, xxxv).

Gadamer's history of hermeneutics includes numerous genealogies of concepts, although he never claims that any of those concepts have been rendered fully intelligible. And it could be argued that the source of inspiration for Gadamer's genealogies is none other than the first motif of Heideggerian "destruction," that is nondeductive genealogical research. There are, then, very significant continuities between Heidegger's hermeneutics and those of Gadamer. But there is also at least one issue on which they diverge: where Heidegger disregarded nineteenth-century hermeneutics, Gadamer entered into debate with it. Gadamer then emerged from that debate having critically appropriated the "hermeneutic problem" that had been identified by Schleiermacher and then passed on to Dilthey. Thus Gadamer came to think of the history of hermeneutics as the history of the "hermeneutic problem."

Ricoeur's Story of Deregionalization and Radicalization

Ricoeur was not familiar with Heidegger's early work. He had heard nothing of Heidegger's attempts to show that many philosophers of the ancient and medieval worlds had their own hermeneutics and that the same was true of the church fathers and Luther. (As we have seen, Heidegger considered the latter's contribution to the history of hermeneutics to be decisive). So, when Ricoeur presented his history of hermeneutics in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, he did not feel obliged to justify what he was about to say regarding hermeneutics before Schleiermacher. He stated: "Before him, there was on the one hand a philology of classical texts, principally those of Greco-Latin antiquity, and on the other hand an exegesis of sacred texts, of the Old and New Testaments" (Ricoeur 1981, 45). Ricoeur presented Schleiermacher as someone who thought about the diversity of texts across those two domains as well as the huge range of "rules and recipes" for deciphering meaning, and then wondered whether it might not be possible to "extract a general problem from the activity of interpretation" (Ricoeur 1981, 45). Ricoeur thought that Schleiermacher's question was momentous. As to Schleiermacher's subsequent attempts to discern "this central and unitary problematic," Ricoeur announced: "Hermeneutics was born with the attempt to raise exegesis and philology to the level of a *Kunstlehre*, that is, a 'technology' which is not restricted to a mere collection of unconnected operations" (Ricoeur 1981, 45).

Ricoeur's and Heidegger's assessments of Schleiermacher's place in the history of hermeneutics could not be further apart. Ricoeur holds that in moving toward a "technology" of understanding, Schleiermacher became "the founder of modern hermeneutics" (Ricoeur 1981, 47), whereas Heidegger considered the same move grounds for maintaining that Schleiermacher's idea of hermeneutics was reductive, something to be ignored by a good hermeneutic philosopher (Heidegger 1999, 10). Ricoeur's assessment of Schleiermacher was closer to that of Gadamer. However, where Gadamer tried to "destroy" the "methodological form" of Schleiermacher's presentation, Ricoeur looked for evidence of at least one of two "preoccupations" that he believed had dominated the recent history of hermeneutics.

Those preoccupations were: (1) a progressive enlargement of the "aim of hermeneutics" whereby all regional hermeneutics are incorporated into a single general hermeneutics; Ricoeur described this as a "movement of *deregionalisation*" (Ricoeur 1981, 43–44) and (2) a related subordination of "the properly *epistemological* concerns of hermeneutics" (i.e., its efforts to become a science), "to *ontological* preoccupations, whereby *understanding* ceases to appear as a simple *mode of knowing* in order to become a *way of being* and a way of relating to beings and to being"; Ricoeur described this second movement as "a movement of *radicalisation*" (Ricoeur 1981, 44). He found evidence of a "movement of *deregionalisation*" in Schleiermacher, but no evidence of "a movement of *radicalisation*."

There are striking similarities between Ricoeur's and Gadamer's accounts of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, although Ricoeur's account is far less detailed. Both philosophers are attentive to the features

and developmental aspects of Schleiermacher's work; and both emphasize its inherent complexity. Indeed, Gadamer would have agreed with Ricoeur that Schleiermacher's program "carried a double mark." It was "*romantic* by its appeal to a living relation with the process of creation, *critical* by its wish to elaborate the universally valid rules of understanding" (Ricoeur 1981, 46). But there they would have parted company. Gadamer would not have accepted Ricoeur's intriguing suggestion: "Perhaps hermeneutics is always marked by this double filiation–Romantic and critical, critical and Romantic" (Ricoeur 1981, 46). As we have seen, this is not the way that Heidegger and Gadamer saw their own hermeneutics. Heidegger claimed to have disregarded Romantic hermeneutics altogether, and Gadamer rejected both its "methodological form" and its approach to history.

The content of Ricoeur's account of Dilthey's hermeneutics is also similar to that of Gadamer, but the tone is very different. As in the case of Ricoeur's treatment of Schleiermacher, there is no suggestion here that Ricoeur has taken on any kind of "destructive" task. All that he wants to do is find evidence of the aforementioned "preoccupations" of recent hermeneutics. According to Ricoeur, there was a text to be interpreted that had not yet been discovered in Schleiermacher's time: "history, considered as the great document of mankind, as the most fundamental *expression of life*" (Ricoeur 1981, 48). He maintains that it was thanks to the great German historians of the nineteenth century that this extraordinary text came to the attention of Dilthey, who, he says, became "above all the interpreter of this pact between hermeneutics and history" (Ricoeur 1981, 48). Ricoeur thinks that Dilthey was not alone in shifting his attention to the problem of "the historical connection," which supports the great classics of literature, philosophy, law, religion, etc. Nor was he out of step with the times when he sought the solution to that problem "in the reform of epistemology itself" (Ricoeur 1981, 48). Given the prevailing mood of hostility toward Hegelianism and a general fondness for experimental knowledge, Dilthey took the sensible course of attempting to provide "the human sciences with a methodology and an epistemology which would be as respectable as those of the sciences of nature" (Ricoeur 1981, 49).

Ricoeur views Dilthey's interest in a hermeneutics of history as evidence of the further enlargement of the "aim of hermeneutics." Schleiermacher had started the process by incorporating exegesis and philology into one general hermeneutics. Now Dilthey wanted to subsume this general hermeneutics into "the broader field of historical knowledge" (Ricoeur 1981, 48). The *deregionalization* of hermeneutics was certainly continuing apace. But had Dilthey positioned himself in a way that would allow him solve the problem posed by a general hermeneutics? As Schleiermacher had pointed out, a "general hermeneutics requires that the interpreter rise above the particular applications and discern the operations which are common to the two great branches of hermeneutics" (Ricoeur 1981, 45). Of course, that problem had just become more difficult with Dilthey's discovery that the texts of interest to exegetes and philologists were *historical* documents. In Ricoeur's judgment, Dilthey did not have the resources to solve this challenging "hermeneutic problem." One obstacle in Dilthey's path was the opposition that he himself had introduced between "the *explanation* of nature and the *understanding* of history" (Ricoeur 1981, 49). Ricoeur notes that this opposition was "heavy with consequences for hermeneutics," which found itself cut off from "naturalistic explanation and thrown back into the sphere of psychological intuition" (Ricoeur 1981, 49). Dilthey did all he could to find a solution to "the hermeneutic problem" using the resources of psychology, but, as we have seen, succeeding generations of hermeneutic philosophers were critical of his efforts.

Ricoeur holds that the progressive deregionalization of hermeneutics ultimately led to its radicalization. When Ricoeur talks about the "radicalization" of hermeneutics, he means that hermeneutics must now "dig beneath the epistemological enterprise itself, in order to uncover its properly ontological conditions" (Ricoeur 1981, 53). And this, he notes, is something that both Heidegger and Gadamer were keen to do. Ricoeur's attitude to Heideggerian and Gadamerian hermeneutics is complex. On the one hand, he admits to experiencing "the extraordinarily seductive power of [their] fundamental ontology" (Ricoeur 2007, 10) and he famously declares that "ontology is indeed the promised land for a philosophy" (Ricoeur 2007, 24)

like his own hermeneutics. On the other hand, he warns that "we must not expect that Heidegger or Gadamer will perfect the methodological problematic created by the exegesis of sacred or profane texts, by philology, psychology, the theory of history or the theory of culture" (Ricoeur 1981, 54). Why? Because they have raised a new question: "instead of asking 'how do we know?' it will be asked 'what is the mode of being of that being who exists only in understanding?'" (Ricoeur 1981, 54). Ricoeur will have to delay his plans for rejoining them until he finds a solution to the first, distinctly epistemological question.

Conclusion

As Gadamer noted in *Truth and Method*, the history of hermeneutics places its emphases quite differently, depending on whom one is following (Gadamer 2003, 173). This, I believe, is an important point. As we have seen, Heidegger's history of the concept of hermeneutics placed its emphases on passages in Plato, Aristotle, the church fathers, and Luther, among others, suggesting that that was where one could find exemplars of an "original" conception of hermeneutics. Heidegger's history of hermeneutics discovered nothing more than a "diluted" understanding of hermeneutics in Schleiermacher and Dilthey. In contrast, Gadamer's and Ricoeur's histories of hermeneutics placed little or no emphasis on the premodern period, focusing instead on the rise of the "hermeneutic problem" in Schleiermacher's work and the development of that problematic in works by Dilthey and Heidegger. Ricoeur added Gadamer to that list, recognizing that Gadamer was instrumental in the way he had received and perceived the problem in question.

But who were Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur following when they wrote their histories of hermeneutics? We know that Heidegger took inspiration from a long list of predecessors when it came to developing the concept of hermeneutics. However, it is not quite so easy to pinpoint the inspiration for his "destructive" history of hermeneutics. Charles R. Bambach argues that it was, in fact, Karl Barth's "crisis theology" that had inspired Heidegger's "destructive" alternative to the conventional view of historical research (Bambach 1995, 189–192). The situation is a lot clearer in the case of Gadamer. He revealed that he had followed Hegel when writing his history of hermeneutics, noting that his decision to do so had consequences for (1) the way he depicted the rise of hermeneutics; and (2) the way his history of hermeneutics ended. He was, he said, no longer able to view the rise of hermeneutics as Dilthey had viewed it; and he was more or less obliged to "pursue the development of the hermeneutical method in the modern period, which culminates in the rise of historical consciousness" (Gadamer 2003, 173). Of course, this meant that he had to disregard figures that Heidegger had considered significant, most notably Augustine. As to Ricoeur, he clearly followed Gadamer when narrating his history of hermeneutics. However, it is debatable whether that meant he was also a follower of Hegel's.[6]

Notes

1   I have borrowed the notion of "a conceptual story" from Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993), p. 3.
2   There is an interesting discussion on the collapse of historicism and what that meant for the understanding of hermeneutics in Charles R. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995).
3   As Jean Greisch notes, Heidegger's notion of intentional consciousness was a modified version of Husserl's. See, Jean Greisch, *L'Arbre de vie et l'arbre du savoir: Les racines phénoménologiques de l'herméneutique heideggerienne (1919–1923)* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2000), p. 104.
4   Martin Heidegger, GA 59, p. 44.

5 See Robert Bernasconi, "Repetition and Tradition", in Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren (eds.), *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in his Earliest Thought* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 124.

6 Ricoeur discusses the "hermeneutic route" in the philosophy of history in Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 293–342.

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