ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AS PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY:

AN HERMENEUTIC ACCOUNT

Thesis submitted by

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The world I think is not presentable as the empirical content of a concept—it is not a piece of what is called knowledge (a Kantian assertion). Then what constitutes the search for it (a romantic quest(ion))? (Cavell, 1989, p. 10)

[A]s long as our mind is influenced by a prejudice, we do not consider it a judgement. How then can we foreground it? It is impossible to make ourselves aware of a prejudice while it is constantly operating unnoticed, but only when it is, so to speak, provoked. The encounter with a traditionary text can provide this provocation. (Gadamer, 1989, p. 299)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABE Adult Basic Education

ALL Adult Language and Literacy

Inst *Institutio oratio,* Quintilian

NE *Nichomachean ethics*, Aristotle

PH *Philosophical hermeneutics*, Gadamer

Rhet *Rhetoric*, Aristotle

TM *Truth and method*, Gadamer

TP *Theory and practice,* Habermas

ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses itself to the task of (re)constituting Adult Basic Education (ABE) as a field of adult education. It argues that a fruitful way to (re)formulate the values, standards, commitments and 'internal goods' of ABE as a field is to construe it as inheriting the educational traditions and *telos* of practical philosophy.

The thesis starts from the assumption that ABE has already been seriously deformed by being thrust into the forefront of governmental strategies for meeting the challenges of a globalizing economy. However, rather than respond directly to this immediate policy context, the thesis responds by working towards the formulation of a deeper understanding and articulation of ABE as a field of adult education in and for itself.

To this purpose, the thesis reaches back behind modernist construals and practices of education to an older tradition of education oriented to governance of the *polis*—practical philosophy—a form of education designed to cultivate practical wisdom (*phronesis*), not knowledge (*episteme*) or vocational skill (*techne).* The thesis adduces Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic as a contemporary (re)appropriation of this ancient tradition of practical philosophy which dialogically attunes it to the 'post-modern times' in which ABE now finds itself.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis and its accomplishment has been countless years in the making. It owes its actuality to the work of many—witting and unwitting—persons, institutions and places. Alan Luke set the story in motion by inviting me to apply for a postgraduate scholarship at James Cook University. He then treated me with immense generosity when I spent a few months in Townsville formulating its parameters and provenance. From that point on, he tactfully allowed me the space and time to explore my topic and its territory, including its back regions, blind alleys and dead-ends. Construed as a process of cultivation, rather than cognitive mastery, such an exploration takes its own time.

When Alan took up a chair at University of Queensland, Malcolm Vick continued to allow me to immerse myself in the quest for understanding, intervening only when I appeared in danger of being seduced right over the horizon or when I begged for help. Finally, he tactfully 'called me back' to the more mundane task of 'writing-up' these forays into the finalized text of a Ph.D. This 'write-up' has entailed many agonizing decisions: whole lines of thought, investigation and subject-matter have had to be excised. I thank Malcolm who supported me through these distressing times with tact and concern. In fact he served as an exemplary manifestation of the very concerns of this essay—teaching as a tactful occasioning of new formulations, and therefore transformations, of one's *habitus*.

Others have been co-participants in the production of this thesis without their knowledge or direct participation. Four especially warrant comment: Jim Martin, Peter Moraitis, Raimond Gaita and Ian Hunter have all, without their knowledge, been constant imaginary companions and dialogic interlocutors throughout the writing of this thesis. I think of myself as excavating out a ground between their contrasting projects. They are my intellectual alter ego's or doppelganger's. Each marks an adjacent path or place that I wish to both acknowledge but resist. Thus, my self-assigned task has been to mark out a different line of thought, one that can distinguish itself from Jim's structuralism, Peter's notion of deliberative argumentation, Raimond's espousal of Platonic perfectionism and Ian's Foucauldian genealogy.

Jim Martin, a systemic functional linguist, undoubtedly the most abstract theorist I have ever encountered, is not even mentioned in this thesis, even though he is invisibly present on every single page. Implicitly I invoke Gadamer's notion of *Sprachlichkeit* as a counter to the social semiotics of systemic functional linguistics. Peter Moraitis and I have worked together almost our entire adult lives on how to interpret both academic and political discourse, their language games and forms of life to and for non-mainstream adult students. Again, Gadamer's dialogism allows the framing of second-chance adult education as not simply a one-sided initiation or apprenticeship into the academic discourse community, but as a more dialogic conversation between cultures, and frames political discourse as not only argumentation or forensic rhetoric but also as the epideictic formation and reaffirmation of the bonds of community.

As students of philosophy, Raimond Gaita and I used Ludwig Wittgenstein, Hannah Arendt and Simone Weil to cultivate a sensibility and mode of thought that could resist the sterility and reductivism of the analytic philosophy surrounding us. In this thesis I have adduced Aristotle's practical philosophy and the tradition of rhetoric as a more worldly and 'impure' alternative to that youthful, 'principled', Platonic critique. Finally, when younger Ian Hunter and I worked to formulate notions of 'theory' that were not hostage to dialectical Marxist claims to truth or structuralist claims to scientific knowledge. Although I do refer off-handedly to Ian a few times in this thesis, I do not pretend to have systematically engaged with his writings. However, his overall project, which is to formulate and enact an intellectual practice that is 'after representation', 'less critical' and 'unprincipled', is a path whose direction and instinct I share, whilst demurring from his Foucauldian formulations of that path.

It would not be untrue to say that in a sense this thesis is my effort to find a new and separate footing from which to re-enter these four life-long dialogues, dialogues that have defined my intellectual horizons, an effort that has demanded a temporary but prolonged withdrawal from all four conversations. Let this suffice to account for the seeming absence of these interlocutors from this thesis and its topics.

However, Jim Martin deserves a further mention: late in the write-up when I despaired at finding a coherent structure for unfolding the topics of the thesis, Jim intervened to insist that I should stop

glossing the thesis as my last text or last testament, but instead look to a life of writing after the thesis in which I could continue the search for formulations and articulations of the forms of life and language games I value. A week with him in Sydney at a conference on Vygotsky's notion of 'Scaffolding' also provided the break and outside stimulation I needed to reassemble the emotional and discursive resources to mount the final push. My son, Cody, who is studying narrative theory as a screen writer would call this moment of lowest despair, a moment which is then transformed into the final buoyant run to the denouement, 'the second turning-point'—apparently a standard Hollywood narrative cinema device!

Another unknowing agent of this thesis is Bob Morgan, (Director, Jumbunna CAISER, University of Technology, Sydney) who was so shocked at my aggressive and rationalistic style of arguing, that he felt compelled to explain how his people, Australian Aboriginal people, organized their speaking rights and turn-taking when engaged in negotiations designed to find reasonable solutions to practical (that is, paradoxical, aporetic and many-principled) situations. Unwittingly, he sowed a seed that has now come to first bud with this thesis. Two visits to Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, a higher education institution for indigenous adults located in Northern Territory, Australian, has only deepened my sense that there are other language games for enacting practical and social reason besides the emphatically argumentative and rationalistic forms of reason I had imbibed.

I then joined the staff at Batchelor Institute and have come to sense that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples still inhabit a *habitus* that contains forms of accommodation, negotiation and reason that are far more profound and productive than the monologic, universalist concept of Reason enacted by European traditions. So, in a sense, this thesis traces the process of my unlearning the dominant construction of Reason embedded in European philosophy and politics, and my opening up to the experience of a practice of social reason that is more attuned to difference and alterity. It may turn out in the long run that 'practical philosophy' and 'rhetoric' are simply stepping stones or vantage points within the European tradition from which to enter into a deeper hermeneutic dialogue with indigenous practices of governance and social reason. Time will tell.

I began this thesis while a staff member of Western Institute of TAFE (now Victoria University of Technology). Daryl Evans, my Head of Department, was always generous in his dealings with me and especially in granting me study leave to get this thesis under way. I would like to thank administration at Batchelor Institute who have also been especially helpful; the past Director, John Ingram, the Deputy Director, David McClay, and Head of School of Education, Ron Watt, generously granted me study leave to complete the final write-up.

Batchelor Institute library staff, in particular Jaclyn Miller and Joanne Anderson, assisted me in locating and ordering innumerable esoteric books and journal articles. Ironically, Joanne herself attended a summer school in San Francisco in which Gadamer, Ricoeur and hermeneutics were central topics. Suddenly, what for her must have previously seemed unintelligible, was transformed into sense, as we were both faced with writing on the same topics and issues. Many indigenous staff of Batchelor Institute have been generous to me with their welcome and understandings, especially Veronica Arbon, Robyn Ober, Donna Sullivan, Meg Friel, Linda Ford, Mary Liddy, and Rachel Hampton. Dorothy Morrison, my colleague in the Adult Education unit, generously joined me in long dialogues as I learnt to find my feet practically and intellectually in the complex and diverse worlds of 'Top End' indigenous peoples and their aspirations.

I have been privileged to teach and count as friends many Adult Education students at Batchelor Institute, especially Joe Lannigan, Barry Carleton, Michelle Warren, Jacqueline Craigie, Kathy Deveraux, Charlie Djordilla, Neenya Tesling, Jessie Simpson, James Angel and Doug Rosas.

Although it is invidious to name, I would like to mention colleagues and friends who have been important sources of energy and support: Ron Watt, David McClay, Michele Willsher, Michael Christie, Louise Quinn, Pat Beattie, Ailsa Purdon, Martha Kamara, Maree Klesch and Karen Gillespie. I am compelled to single out for special thanks two in particular: Christine Walton and David Morgan, who were responsible for the initial invitations to the Top End and who have continued to shared their deep knowledge and understanding of indigenous education. Their support, conversation and spare bedroom have been absolutely critical factors in bringing this thesis to fruition.

I would like to thank my family—Kellie, Drew, Cody, Alice and Geri—for putting up with the obsession and distractedness that is part and parcel of 'Ph.D.-ing'. I thank Pink Floyd and Erik Satie for masking the hum of my disk-drive and assuaging the desolation and loneliness of uncountable hours at the computer.

And last but not least: I dedicate the thesis to Geri (Geraldine Pancini) who was my first reader, the first to openly enjoy my phrasings and to encourage and criticize my early efforts to write. She—and the historic Apple 512k Mac—opened up to me an abandoned childhood ambition to take my own writing seriously. She also kept faith in our relationship and in my capacities through all the twists and turns and emotional ups and downs involved in such a long process.

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PREFACE

> A preface provides an author the opportunity to address the reader from the point of view of his authorship. Although etymologically a preface is a prefatory statement of the motivations and circumstances that surround the beginning of a project, there is a widespread practice of using the preface also to inform the reader about what is achieved in the end. A preface is thus at once a 'foreword' preceding the text and an 'afterword' following its completion; a curious combination of prologue and epilogue; a peculiar mix of promissory note and its redeemed cash value. Although a preface is placed first in the format, serialized by roman numerals so as to mark it off from the Arabic pagination of the main body of the text, it is written last. The writing of such a preface, binding beginning and end, becomes a burdensome task in the moment that the author becomes aware of the elusiveness of all beginnings and ends. Unable to surmount this elusiveness the author gravitates into a quandary as he deliberates on what is to be included and what is to be left out. (Scrag, 1989, p. vii)

A quarter of a century ago I purchased a book by an American philosopher whom I had earlier concluded was the only 'true' interpreter of Wittgenstein, the only commentator who 'really' understood Wittgenstein. This long-awaited text was a Harvard Ph.D. thesis that had taken 20 years to reach publication. I learnt recently that it was probably the most photocopied Ph.D. thesis in the history of analytic philosophy and had circulated widely in that format. Unfortunately I had not come across any of these photocopies, and had been privy to only the vaguest of rumours concerning the significance of this unpublished work.

In excited anticipation I tore the wrapper open and began to read. Two pages later, I threw it down overwhelmed by anger and disgust. It was to be many years before I revisited the writings of Stanley Cavell. Yet, time and again over recent years I have been drawn back to these very writings, always to the same uncanny ambivalence of repulsion and fascination.

THE RHETORICAL TASKS OF PREFACING

According to Quintilian, who speaks from within the *sensus communis* of the theoretical and practical tradition of the 'art' of rhetoric:

> the sole purpose of the exordium is to prepare our audience in such a way that they will be disposed to lend a ready ear to the rest of our speech. The majority of authors agree that this is best effected in three ways, by making the audience well-disposed, attentive and ready to receive instruction. (*Inst*, IV.1.5)

Yet, the task of cultivating the good-will and receptivity of an audience is especially difficult if one is intent on disrupting taken-for-granted protocols of listening and reading. In such a case the congeniality of the audience must be earned in face of an initial hostility and alienation, even 'anger and disgust'. Unfortunately, this thesis is intent on subverting the assumptions and conventions of the discourse of which it is part.

In this exordium or Preface I will work at distancing the tenor of this work from what, of course, in an institutional sense, it really is—a Ph.D. thesis. As a genre, the Ph.D. is defined by its centrality to modern academic disciplines as 'Fächer', which posit themselves as cultivating disinterested and true bodies of knowledge representing their respective referential fields or domains of reality. Yet, this preface works hard at voiding, avoiding and evading this condition of its own existence. It works at throwing away the institutional ladder it has deployed in order to reach a perch from which to sing its song.

In fact, although I have headed this first Part of the thesis, 'Clearing the ground', it may have been more apt to adduce a musical metaphor and to have titled it: 'Clearing the throat, finding a voice, establishing a key', because this thesis is endlessly prefaced by extensive preparations and prefacings heralding, deferring and displacing the actual moment of utterance. However, insofar as the task of this thesis is to teach a new and different mode of 'uptake', these prefacings are not simply neurotic or narcissistic efforts to forestall misunderstanding, but efforts to conjure a different ideal reader, to invite actual readers to take up a new stance towards the games of knowledge and truth.

THE PH.D. AND PRACTICAL DISCOURSE

The reason for the obscurity and tortuousness of this Preface in accomplishing its work is that the shift from a modernist discourse of representation with its 'knowledge' and its 'objects of knowledge' to a practical discourse of articulation with its 'interpretations' of practical life and their convergences, is not easy to attain nor to maintain. Because the dominant discourse is the discourse of representation, it is easy, especially when writing within the generic constraints and affordances of the Ph.D. genre, to lapse back into claims to superior knowledge; for the research Ph.D. genre evolved precisely to enact this modernist discourse of knowledge, not the practical discourse of interpretation. Thus, for this thesis, the question of style is not just a matter of textual surface, of adding a dimension of rhetorical persuasion or aesthetic frisson to a self-same underlying prose of concepts.

QUEERING ONE'S DISCOURSE

To impale the reader on the issue of the differing genres within the prose of ideas and of which reading protocols we as readers adduce to our readings, I will adduce a lengthy and notorious passage from Stanley Cavell, the very passage that occasioned my anger and disgust, a passage which was his calculated effort at queering his discourse and thereby instructing his reader's reading of him away from a cognitivist reading and towards a more practical, perhaps even existential protocol of reading.

This Preface also functions as an exorcism, as a frantic banging of lids and beating of drums, a cacophony intent on banishing once and for all the ghosts of representation secreted within the pores of my own discourse, not just in the reading protocols of my reader. And yet I know that this is a forlorn hope: we cannot so easily evade the fact that we are constituted by what Gadamer terms 'the effects of actual history'. Just as we cannot make words mean whatever we like, so too we cannot control which realities or meanings are at play in our discourse and practice. I cannot predetermine the tenor or fate of this text simply by prefacing it with protestations of 'good intention' or by insisting on 'calling it (by my) names'. And yet I find myself compelled to attempt this very pre-determination.

That the discourse of modern knowledge and the Ph.D. as a genre are mutually constitutive historical actualities is a fact, a fate. They encompass me, not me them. This I acknowledge: not with passive resignation, but as a historical reality and personal *habitus* to be continually re-worked, re-interpreted and resisted. In one sense the writing of this text is an extended Wittgensteinian therapeutic 'exercise' aimed at extirpating the metaphors of representation at work and at play within its author. This Preface is thus my impassioned (quixotic) attempts to forcibly, even violently, contribute to a re-figuring of both my own *habitus* and the conventions of the Ph.D. as a genre by contributing to the emergence and legitimation of a different tenor in academic discourse, a tenor that is different from the 'normal' (Rorty) academic mode of address.

ETHICS AND ANALYSIS

Recently I discovered that I was not alone in my response to the first two pages of Cavell's *The Claim of Reason*: apparently many readers had the same reaction. We had all experienced this passage as a calculated assault. In those days, like most of Cavell's readers, I was a student of analytic philosophy possessed by a Cartesian dream of rigor, by its ruthless exploration of essence and its obsession with necessary and sufficient conditions.[1] Yet, even though I threw myself into this game of analysis with a passion, there was another reality to which I attributed even more seriousness—the domain of the ethical. This was a domain of such seriousness and personal significance that I refused to allow it to mix with academic discourse. There was the domain of the *fach,* of theory with its commitment to the rigor of the universal and impersonal concept; and there was the domain of ethics with its commitment to personal authenticity. These two regions were so at odds and so incommensurable that I refused to study any courses in ethics, aesthetics or politics at university. The thought of sitting in a tutorial with strangers debating ethical or political issues filled me with horror. Serious

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[1]The feel of that style of philosophizing is re-captured for me in David Woods laconic remark:

> Much of what we think of as clarity and distinctness rests on topological hygiene, on good housekeeping: tidying spaces, mending fences, defining boundaries. If it were the business of philosophy to act as an under-labourer, and perhaps site manager, for the constructions of the sciences, it might be that the guidance provided by such underlying schemas would prove invaluable. But … . (Wood, 1990, xvi)

'practical' discourse was for friends, not for anyone who happened to turn up to a tutorial. I therefore only read and wrote in the fields of general philosophy and philosophy of language.

As a further illustration of how deeply internalised the split in my life between the theoretical and the practical then, was: Towards the end of my schooling I decided that religion was a matter of personal conviction, not propositional knowledge. I concluded that it was immoral to learn the answers to religious questions: they should come from the heart or not at all. They certainly should not be rote learnt from the catechism the night before. I therefore refused to 'study' for Religious Instruction exams with dramatic effects: I plummeted from the top of the class to the bottom and was hauled before the principal of the school to be rebuked. It was, if you like, my first effort to confront the public world with the higher truth of 'the self', my first conscientious objection. (Cavell would see it as perhaps no accident that I was devouring *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* that year.)

TWO ORDERS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

This clash between two orders of accountability was exacerbated by the culture of conviction cultivated by the student protest movement, the counter-culture and the New Left in the 1970s. Eventually I abandoned academic life. (For the record: the final straw was a shift in the paradigm from the analytical rigor of British Aristotelianism and Kantianism (think Ryle and Strawson) to the bizarre interweaving of logic, behaviourism and constructivist pragmatism of the Americans (think Quine). In fact I found the prose and reasoning of Quine so arbitrary and strategic, that is, so pragmatic, that I realized the philosophical culture had changed into something in which I could no longer find myself.)

Clearly, my habitation with these competing orders—an order of the objective and an order of the subjective, the domain of persons as end in themselves and the domain of persons as institutional instruments and roles, between culture and society, between the private world of creativity and freedom centred on 'the work of art', and the public world of 'the system' of convention, rules, obligation, norms, regulation, and law—was not a personal psychic idiosyncrasy, but my inhabiting of the social order of liberalism itself. This *habitus* was intensified by a schooling that created a 'doubled subject'. As someone being initiated into literate modes of colonial and cosmopolitan forms of life far beyond the ken of my immediate family and community, and as a boy in a boarding school conducted according to the disciplinary (Foucault), the sense of an alienation between the charged and meaningful world of the individual on the one hand and the mundane, arbitrary accommodations of institutions on the other, was absolutely palpable to me. Crudely: the only place you could be free was to invent a personal world in your own head and inhabit it. These worlds were to be found in the worlds of books. By entering the world of books you could escape the determinations of place and time anchored to the institutional body.

REPRISE

Twenty-five years later I find myself still worrying at the same issues, but now Cavell's prose looks differently to me. Now that I too am trying to knead my thoughts into the protean generic constraints of a Ph.D., I find myself 'understanding' what Cavell was worrying at all that time ago. Wittgenstein once said of his own work that his writings were probably only understandable by someone who had already had similar thoughts. Let's take 'similar thoughts' to mean 'similar worries' and say: I can now understand Cavell because or insofar as I now share what he was worried about back then.

So, what are these worries that Cavell had back then and that I now also experience? They are issues to do with mode of address in philosophical discourse. They are issues such as: is philosophical discourse merely academic discourse, the discourse of a *Fach*, or is it something different? And if (like Cavell or myself) you don't want to construe philosophical discourse as simply a discourse of cognition, a theoretical discourse—if you think it is also a practical discourse, a discourse of ethics, of politics, of responsibility, of living, a discourse that is claimed by and projects a claim that is 'more than' the expression of a doctrine or theory within a discipline within the academic division of labour that is the modern university—how should you write? How should you present yourself? How should you frame the authority of your discourse? In short, who do you think you are? And what do you think you are doing?

CAVELL'S OPENING PASSAGE

Let's look back to that passage that was so offensive to so many. Here is the first two paragraphs of Cavell's *The Claim of Reason*:

> If not at the beginning of Wittgenstein's late philosophy, since what starts philosophy is no more to be known at the outset than how to make an end to it; and if not at the opening of *Philosophical Investigations,* since its opening is not to be confused with the starting of the philosophy it expresses, and since the terms in which that opening might be understood can hardly be given along with the opening itself; and if we acknowledge from the commencement, anyway leave open at the opening, that the way this work is written is internal to what it teaches, which means that we cannot understand the manner (call it method) before we understand its work: and if we do not look to our history, since placing this book historically can hardly happen earlier than placing it philosophically; nor look to Wittgenstein's past, since then we are likely to suppose that the *Investigations* is written in criticism of the *Tractatus*, which is not so much wrong as empty, both because to know what constitutes its criticism would be to know what constitutes its philosophy, and because it is more to the present point to see how the *Investigations* is written in criticism of itself: then where and how are we to approach this text? How shall we let this book teach us, this or anything?
>
> I will say first, by way of introducing myself and saying why I insist, as I will throughout the following pages, upon the *Investigations* as a philosophical text, that I have wished to understand philosophy not as a set of problems but as a set of texts. This means to me that the contribution of a philosopher—anyway of a creative thinker—to the subject of philosophy is not to be understood as a contribution to, or of, a set of *given* problems, although both historians and non-historians of the subject are given to suppose otherwise.—And is the remark about texts and not problems itself to be taken as a philosophical text? It seems argumentative or empty enough, since obviously not all texts are philosophical ones, but only those that precisely contain problems of a certain sort!—The fact that the remark is short would be no bar to that status. Many philosophical texts are short, like the tattle tale told by a Cretan, or the story about the tree falling in the forest for no one to hear. Some philosophers are able to make about anything into a philosophical text, like a preacher improving upon the infant's first cry; while some people are not even able to start a quarrel with God. Some texts are as long as long books, but generally treated as though they are sets of given problems, something between conundrums and formal arguments, e.g., Hume's *Treatise*, which few seem actually to believe but which many feel compelled to try to outsmart; as if so *much* argument just oughtn't to stand unanswered; as if to contribute a text were a kind of defacement; as if argumentative victory *consisted* in spoils. Some philosophical texts are as short as short books, e.g., Descartes' *Meditations*, which so refines our essential options for philosophical belief that thinkers have seemed, since its appearance, and whether invited or not, compelled to reply to it; as if so *little* argument just oughtn't to stand unanswered. When its conclusions have seemed more or less disreputable its repliers have focussed on its 'methods', hoping to head the conclusions off, or outnumber them. But I think one feels the knack of the methods (call it the arrogance) to be missed, which is no doubt something that perpetuates fascination with this text; as though its repliers find it incredible that one could, truly and legitimately *use oneself* (clearly and distinctly) in arriving at conclusions so strange and so familiar. But in philosophy to find that position incredible may well amount to disbelieving that one could oneself contribute a philosophical text. Some philosophical texts are for practical purposes as unending as the writing of, for example Kant or Hegel, where the problem resides largely in mastering the text itself, hence in commentary; as though if one could believe *all* of it there would from then on be no isolating problems of belief left. (So Kierkegaard condemned the system; so Nietzsche condemned it). Here contribution consists in opting to be marginal (which is of course not the only way of *being* marginal). (You may think of these instances as beginning a budget of philosophical genres or paradigms. Then someone will think that I have been arrogantly neglectful of the genre of the academic paper, modest in its aims, content with its minor addition to a subject greater than itself. About the comparative greatness of the subject over its subjects I have no doubt. But I would be more than convinced of academic modesty had I not seen many who are daily surprised that, for example, Descartes or Pascal or Rousseau, or the spirit of religion or of rationalism or of romanticism, has survived the criticism fashioned in their essays on the subjects a few years back. I speak of professional lives, frightening matters.) (Cavell, 1979, pp. 3-5)

As you can imagine (if you survived the reading of it), this opening is deliberately crafted as a provocation to the tradition of analytic philosophy which at the time was smugly ensconced in English-speaking universities. It provoked the predictable response. 'Anyone writing like this is obviously a poseur, an amateur, someone displaced from a literature department; they are clearly not a philosopher within the modern progressive discipline of philosophy.[2] If this is meant to be serious academic

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[2] Different styles of prose embody different epistemological stances. In ancient poetics, Longinus nominated three prose styles: 'lofty, mean or lowly'... The lofty prose is a prose of either the sublime intent on ecstasy or

writing: where is the overview? where are the Topic Sentences? Does this Professor of Philosophy from Harvard really know what he is talking about?'

PROVOCATION, NOT PROPOSITIONS

At first blush, such a mode of writing is outrageous—it is common knowledge that that first sentence consists of two hundred and sixteen words—yet on closer examination it is absolutely faithful to its own understanding of what a philosophical text is. If we glance back to the dedication page of *The Claim of Reason*, we find a citation from Ralph Waldo Emerson:

> Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul.

'Provocation' not 'instruction': a discourse that does not so much try to tell the reader what to think, but one that makes them think, provokes them into thinking (their own thoughts). Dialogue: not as agreement or consensus but as mutual provocation. Discourse: not as excavating the same ontology but as provoking the reader into grasping their own subjectivity, their own responsibility, their own world. Obviously we have here a mode of address from the same family (of philosophical genres) as Socrates' dialectic or Kierkegaard's mode of indirect address, a form of address intent on provoking subjectivity rather than imposing system or dogma.

GENERIC CONSTRAINTS

I have often wondered at my 'cruelty' in subjecting the reader to this long and torturous passage from Cavell. This insistence I initially experienced more as a compulsion than as a rational or justified choice. My feelings fluctuated widely and wildly: sometimes taking the form of resentment ('Take that, you academically ensconced Ph.D. marker!'). Even so, I felt that citing the passage was not merely a matter of personal feeling or private revenge. My reluctance to cut the quote was vindicated by a recent reading of Amelie Oksenbergs Rorty's 'Experiments in Philosophic Genre: Descartes' *Meditations'* (Rorty, 1983). In this article Rorty explores the contrast between philosophy as a 'precision of argument' and philosophy as a 'rhetoric of persuasion'. She marks a distinction between academic philosophy written 'like scientific writing ... in the 'article' mode' and 'those of us who realize that any serious philosophic enterprise is, whether we like it or not, implicitly a moralizing one'. But these latter (which includes of course Cavell and myself):

> place ourselves in a delicate and ambiguous position. Though normally addicted to self-referential issues, we philosophers have avoided openly discussing our own problems of style and genre, taking evasive action to assure respectability by following pervasive fashions. And not without reason: To whom can we speak about the difficulties of stylistic choice, and in what voice. (Rorty, 1983, p. 547)

Need I say that Cavell's opening paragraphs precisely are intended to plunge the (philosophical) reader directly and inescapably into the question of genre, style and voice. And I have adduced *his* beginning as *my* beginning to also openly foreground these issues of style, voice and address, rather than evade them in the interests of respectability.

THE ANCIENT GENRE OF MEDITATION

Rorty interprets Descartes' *Meditations* as an appropriation of traditional meditation genres. She notes how Descartes re-works the genre in order to substitute an intellectual transformation for the older Stoic transformation of the self. But what interests me at this juncture is that there is a common narrative movement in meditations as a genre, whether they be what Rorty terms 'ascensional' or 'penitential'. Ascentional mediations draw on neo-Platonic metaphors regarding light and illumination and the gradual clarification of a mind that has 'forgotten' what it somehow already knows. Penitential meditations, by contrast, construe the reader as not merely confused or uncentred, but as 'fallen', as 'perverse'. Such a condition calls for more radical provocations on the part of the writer.

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exciting and inciting an audience to passionate action. It is a prose of emotional intensity marked by what the rhetoricians call amplification, 'the rhetorical piling up of iteration' (Clark, 1957, p. 105). By contrast the lowly style is plain, simple and unadorned and thus appropriate to the statement of facts and proof. Philosophical texts especially in analytic philosophy are written in the lowly style, in what we would call a prosaic prose, not in a poetic prose. If we were to classify Cavell's prose (and the aspirations of my own prose in this thesis) in terms of this classical typography of three styles, Cavell is clearly subverting the genre of modern philosophy by mobilizing an elevated style marked by intensification, amplification and iteration.

'When the reader-penitent is unaware of his fallen condition, he must first be brought to a state of despair'.

It is with this insight that I now understand my compulsion to include such a cruel quotation. Rather than simply an exercise in resentment, my use of this quote is a move in a traditional philosophic genre. It was this compulsion I was subject to. The quotation is intended to bring the reader to 'a state of despair'. It is the modern counterpart to ancient *ascepsis* as an essential hinge in the transformation of the self through philosophic practice.

TWO FORMS OF PENITENTIAL MEDITATION

However, Rorty says something further that is pertinent to the endless prefacing enacted in this thesis. She writes:

> [T]here are two versions of the penitential meditation. In the first, all the stages leading to the true self are transcended, the ladder is kicked away at the end. The new person bears no continuous relation to the old, not even to the self who undertook the penitential quest: everything about the past self, even his motives for seeking the Way, is suspect and must be abandoned. Even when such a penitential meditation is intellectual rather than passionate or spiritual, skeptical cleansing is only provisional. Once truth has been found, and skepticism reveals itself as self-destructive, skepticism can be abandoned. But in the second version of the penitential mode, all the stages of the penitential quest are continuously preserved, continuously reenacted. Even the mediating skeptical *ascepsis*, the cleansing of error, is always still required, even after the self is transformed, fully realized. (Rorty, 1983, p. 552)

The inability of the second mode of penitential meditation to throw away the ladder of epistemological skepticism and to get on with the task of picturing the true, perfectly captures my own compulsion to keep the question of textuality alive, my inability to pass beyond it to the 'self-certifying criterion' of modern philosophical discourse. It also accounts for my ambivalent nods in the direction of Derrida. Clearly he is lodged inextricably in this second version of penitential meditation: he spends his entire effort demonstrating that we cannot step off the ladder onto stable or common ground. We are forever 'in process', climbing the ladder of skeptical *différance*, never to arrive. Again, what can I say? I recognize myself hovering (stranded?) between these two versions, or uses, of skepticism: one, as a preliminary purging phase in a larger movement of thought; the second, as an unavoidable condition inf(l)ecting all human thought (and action).

THE LANGUAGE OF CAVELL

Now for some comments on the language of this passage from Cavell. Surely you could not have missed all the appositives (the 'as if's); all the bracketed asides and Cavell's own strange use of the dash at the beginnings of sentences; the sheer length of some of the sentences and the shortness of others; and the systematic ambiguity of the deictic in phrases such as 'this work', 'this book': is it our reading of Cavell or Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein? and so on. Here, we have a prose that straddles the boundary between philosophy and literature, between a discourse of reason and a discourse of life, between the grammar of writing and the grammar of speech. In writing of this order the difference between a reality existing prior to the writing (writing as *Nachbild*) and a reality being enacted (produced, provoked) by the writing itself (writing as *Vorbild*) seems to blur.

Notice also the liberal deployment of 'I'. There is nothing impersonal, no offer of a universal subject position for the reader to assume or take up here. Rather, the self of the text seems deliberately 'provocative' and challenging. Clearly, Cavell is insisting that we are not going to come away from reading his text with any 'clear and distinct' propositions or professional concepts. Right at the beginning he is giving us a reading lesson about how, or rather how not, to read his work. This reading lesson is not a matter of communicating facts about the reading process, nor a matter of specifying a theory of reading, but more a matter of forcing a mode of reading on us by blocking our familiar strategies of reading such as looking for the concepts or the causal relationships between the facts. Cavell disables our normal modern modes of reading, let's call it factual or cognitivist reading. It was this that provoked my refusal to continue reading twenty five years ago.

HOW TO READ

Instead of expounding or justifying a theory of reading he thematizes the very issue of 'how to approach or begin reading a book' by talking about how to read Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. But of course this is an allegory, an indirect way of instructing us how to read his own book,

The Claim of Reason. In both cases, 'the way this work is written is internal to what it teaches, which means that we cannot understand the manner (call it method) before we understand its work'. In other words, both texts are intent on teaching new modes of discourse, new ways of reading and writing, and thus new ways of being (who we are) by recalling (re-collecting, re-finding, remembering, reaffirming, rearticulating, revisioning, revising) what matters most to us (the contours of the world we live in). Both want to teach us, want us to learn, 'how to be' as much as 'how things are'. Both want to teach us that 'how things are' is a matter of 'how we are'. The world disclosed to us is internally related to our mode of Being-in-the-world, and this is not a matter of Consciousness. These matters are not amenable to straightforward deliberation or will power. We cannot change our modes of reading and writing just be trying. We have to be drawn, seduced, provoked, into the play of these reflective modes of literacy, usually by a teacher or writer.

But notice the careful staging of all this. The first paragraph does not have a single 'I' in it. It is all 'we', 'we', 'we':

> If not at the beginning of Wittgenstein's late philosophy, since what starts philosophy is no more to be known at the outset than how to make an end to it; and if not at the opening of *Philosophical Investigations,* since its opening is not to be confused with the starting of the philosophy it expresses, and since the terms in which that opening might be understood can hardly be given along with the opening itself; and if **we** acknowledge from the commencement, anyway leave open at the opening, that the way this work is written is internal to what it teaches, which means that **we** cannot understand the manner (call it method) before we understand its work: and if **we** do not look to our history, since placing this book historically can hardly happen earlier than placing it philosophically; nor look to Wittgenstein's past, since then **we** are likely to suppose that the *Investigations* is written in criticism of the *Tractatus*, which is not so much wrong as empty, both because to know what constitutes its criticism would be to know what constitutes its philosophy, and because it is more to the present point to see how the *Investigations* is written in criticism of itself: then where and how are **we** to approach this text? How shall **we** let this book teach **us**, this or anything?

We are seduced into a community of consensus, although we also feel as if we are being spun around too fast and getting dizzy. We suspect we are being bullied. Suddenly, in the second paragraph, Cavell dramatically shifts footing and takes up a new subject position: he backs off from speaking on our behalf, on behalf of a community and institutes a distance between himself and the community in general. He becomes an 'I'.

COMMUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Yet notice the irony in the way he uses 'I' four times to 'take shots' at academic discourse:

> About the comparative greatness of the subject over its subjects **I** have no doubt. But **I** would be more than convinced of academic modesty had **I** not seen many who are daily surprised that, for example, Descartes or Pascal or Rousseau, or the spirit of religion or of rationalism or of romanticism, has survived the criticism fashioned in their essays on the subjects a few years back. **I** speak of professional lives, frightening matters.

Again, provocation! In the very act of insisting that the community of philosophy is prior to the individual philosopher, even to Wittgenstein, he uses the first person! He could have written:

> Undoubtedly a subject is greater than its subjects.

Instead he writes:

> About the comparative greatness of the subject over its subjects **I have no doubt**.

Using Halliday's (1985) linguistic categories, it is clear that the normal unmarked word order of this sentence has been reversed to place the 'I have no doubt' in the NEW position at the end of the sentence. The focus of the sentence is thus on *his* assessment, *his* judgement, *his* playing 'critical subject' over against the impersonal and anonymous *Fach* of philosophy. What the one hand gives, the other takes back! In the act of acknowledging the priority and authority of the discipline (objectivity, the universal), he simultaneously makes it clear that it is he, *Cavell*, who is saying this; it is he, *Cavell*, who makes this judgment. He is playing with us! What does he really think? He is toying with us! What do we think? He is just being provocative! But: is it or isn't it? Is the community of philosophical discourse prior to its subjects or not? What do you think? What do *you* think?—Gotcha! This is a prose intent on provoking its reader into thought, not just in the sense of entering into a discourse community but even more in the sense of taking up a new stance towards oneself and one's ways of

discoursing. It is a prose of discomfort, a prose that sets out to disturb and disrupt 'where you're at', rather than seduce (persuade, reason) you seamlessly into a new view.

DISCIPLINING THE READER

Notice that this form of address clearly transgresses both disciplinary boundaries and the border between academic discourse and non-academic discourse. Whether students (such as myself) can deploy such a prose or discourse—a post-epistemological form of discourse, a discourse that disrupts the pretensions of cognitivist discourse and its claims to expertise, a discourse that is at once provocative yet reasoning, playful yet responsible, a discourse that listens to the other in the self and the self in the other—in their Ph.D.s (outside literature departments) without being failed, is problematic. Notice how difficult it is to read the grammar of some of these sentences—most of Cavell's and some of mine—like that last one. Notice how the passage is sprinkled with commands: 'Call it method'; 'Call it arrogance'; 'Notice …'. Again, these are highly involving and dialogic. They are ways of provoking, not just persuading. (Notice that three sentences in this paragraph (four if we include this one as well) are imperatives, commands, beginning with 'Notice'.)) What sort of method is this sort of telling, a telling that uses commands instead of description and reason. What sort of discipline is such an overt discipline!

WRITING AND INSTITUTION

Notice how (but also notice how you noticed the 'Notice …' this time) Cavell's writing is a writing that moves to the rhythms of speech. Its grammar is as sinuous, as subtle and as extended as the grammar of speech (as analysed by Halliday (1985)). It is a writing that seems not to care about its overall (global, generic) shape, a prose that simply follows the logic of the local, that moves forward by injecting a new spin on the preceding thought. There seems to be no clear linear direction nor transparent hierarchy of principles or levels. The clauses seem to tumble over one another, interrupt one another, compete with one another.

It is as if this writing is no longer answerable to an institutional setting or the constraints codified in the structures of academic genres. It is as if it has escaped from the ordinary institutional imperatives of academic discourse. There is no clear demarcation between language and meta-language, between the world of objects and the interpretations of those objects, between things and discourse. The order of things and the order of discourse are construed as mutually constitutive. There is no clear distinction between the order of concepts and the order of facts, between the order of principles and the order of instances, between the order of universals and the order of particulars, between the order of ideas and the order of examples, between the order of meanings and the order of events, between the order of reality and the order of discourse, between the order of assertion and the order of commentary, between the order of discourse and the order of meta-discourse, between the order of content and the order of logic, or between essence and form.

PHILOSOPHY AS A KIND OF WRITING

Whereas cognitivist writing is strictly organized in terms of 'relationships of content' (Halliday's (1985) external conjunction), and adversarial writing is organized in terms of 'reasons for saying' (Halliday's (1985) internal conjunction), this mode of writing (whose? Wittgenstein's? Cavell's? mine?) is looser. It is a discourse that constructs its present and future as growing reflectively out of its past. It is a discourse that does not so much try to discover the new as re-appropriate the past as a resource for making meaning in the present. It does not move on to new topics as an opening up of new worlds but as new ways of making meaning out of its own resources, new ways of weaving the resources of its existing habitat and *habitus*. The emphasis is on adjusting and reworking earlier meanings whether they are the meanings of ego or meanings of alter. The focus is on trying to unpack, to clarify, to articulate, to reactivate, to re-gloss communal meanings. There is no claim to finality or mastery, but rather a claim to awakening which is at the same time a claim to participation. Cavell himself constantly problematizes and thematizes his own prose and its mode of address. He is textually self-conscious. For him philosophy is a mode of address. For him philosophy is a mode of address that turns you, tropes you, that makes you think. Philosophy is a kind of writing, a writing that disrupts the normalizing communicative dimension of language as communicating a taken-for-granted content, grammar, or world. Philosophy wants to disrupt, defamiliarize that world.

PHILOSOPHY AS ERGON

If philosophy is discourse, a work, that works on the reader, puts the reader to work, makes the reader work, then it cannot aspire to the modern notion of prose as the transparent communication (of facts, concepts or ideas). In a recent text, Cavell has himself thematized the mode of address of philosophical texts under the headings of 'sociability' and 'geniality' in order to open up the possibility of a writer wishing to queer their text and refuse to communicate:

> My use of 'sociality' is meant to problematize the idea of a work's 'audience', to suggest that, perhaps most definitively for romantic writing, the quest for audience is exactly as questionable as that for expression: it is no *given* set (assembly, class) of hearers or readers that is sought, or fantasized. 'Geniality' I mean to problematize the idea of a work's 'intention', or an author's taking of the reader into his or her confidence: author and reader will be like-minded if they are congeners, generated together, of one another.… A further region of 'sociality' and 'geniality' invites (unlike 'audience' or 'intention') the issue of a text's unsociability or ungeniality, its power to repel, its unapproachability marked as its reproachfulness. (Cavell, 1989, p 12)

Now we can begin to 'get a bead on' what Cavell is 'up to' in those first two paragraphs of *The Claim of Reason*: he is deliberately repelling, resisting, disarming, disabling a certain mode of reading, reproaching those who construe the reading and writing of philosophy that way; resisting, denying, declining, evading that sort of discourse, that sort of philosophy, that sort of thinking, that sort of life, that way of being with your self, with your life and with others, of living in that sort of world, of being that sort of person. Those like myself who were unthinkingly immersed in that life and world, the world of academic philosophy, felt baffled, hurt, rejected, angry.

POLICING THE SUBJECT

But: is this mode of writing riding for a fall? Is it deluding itself? Is it dependent on the very institutional conditions it pretends to evade? Is Bourdieu right in insisting that:

> In the beginning is the *illusio*, adherence to the game, the belief of who ever is caught in the game, the interest for the game, interest *in* the game, the founding of value, *investment* in both the economic and psychoanalytic sense. The institution is inseparable from the founding of the game, which as such is arbitrary, and from the constitution of the disposition to be taken in by the game, whereby we lose sight of the arbitrariness of its founding and, in the same stroke, recognize the necessity of the institution. *Esse est interesse*: Being is being in, it is belonging and being possessed, in short participating, taking part, according importance, interest. (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 1)

Can you write like Cavell only when you are (already) a professor at Harvard? Bourdieu, Fish (1998) and Hunter all construe this sort of prose as misrecognising its embeddedness within the *Fach* of modern academic philosophy which is in turn located within that cognitive division of labour which is the modern university. I disagree; and this thesis will follow Gadamer in retrieving an older mode of discourse—practical philosophy—that underpins the disciplines of social science, the humanities and the arts, and even all social discourse and action. The Gadamerian claim for the universality of hermeneutics is at once a claim for the universality of practical philosophy and *phronesis*.

TERRAIN AND MAP

I too have been evading a mode of address that conforms with the requirements of an academic *Fach,* a prose ordered by the logical development of a central line of argument within a stable disciplinary frame. I find myself repeatedly setting off down favoured discursive paths. Yet despite my persistence, these paths will not form themselves into a linear route or highway. I feel like Wittgenstein's philosopher who comes to know a forest by continually venturing into it but always by a different path. When you do this, you develop a feel or sense of a terrain, but a sense that is below the threshold of analytic or logical articulation. It is as if knowledge of the territory is a familiarity founded on longevity and intimacy of use, not formal training into analytic modes of representation and discourse.

And, in my case, this is in fact true: I am indeed writing about matters I have not been formally or academically trained into, but they are topics I find myself compelled to revisit over and over for practical nourishment, refreshment and guidance. On these visits I typically read the textual terrain of philosophy by allowing myself to be drawn from one passage or phrasing to another as if my attention or eye is being drawn by the brightness of a flower here or the grandness of a tree root there. A reading of ex-stasis; a reading of submission, a flowing with the text. A reading in search of what?—the flash of a metaphor or phrase. Elbow's believing game; Gadamer's *Spiel*. Definitely not the de-

tached distance of the spectator or the academic carefully and consciously noting and discursively formulating their field notes.

READING AS PRACTICAL REFLECTION

Reading as spiritual sustenance; reading as a gentle submission to the 'forceless force of ideas' (Habermas). Reading as the nurturing of a *Sache*; reading as trying to gradually find that you have forged 'natural' connections between disparate regions of meaning. Reading as the gentle interleaving of disparate discourses in mutually illuminating ways, ways that do not violently impose one on the other as meta- or master discourse, a weaving that seems to arise from and 'present' (*darstellen*) a constellation or force field, a common ground that is not purely personal nor merely conceptual, a common ground, that is *there* (*Dasein*) in our practices, a common ground that (now that we can sense it, perhaps even formulate it) allows our practices to be more themselves. Thus, a reading that is both a finding and a forging, a reading that is both a discovery and a fashioning, a reading that discloses the lifeworld of our practices and thereby enables us to reinvent these practices. Reading as reflection on *praxis*, as thinking towards *praxis*, thinking over *praxis*, thinking back across *praxis*, thinking as *nachdenken*. Thinking as reminiscence, as re-visioning, as revising, as going back over what has happened and what was said, re-encountering the contours, the terrain of possibilities and possible paths, the pervading otherness and absence inhabiting the event, its other possibilities and potentialities, its constraints and affordances, its dead-ends and its growth points. Reading as professional meditation, as ethical recollection. But not: reading as academic discourse.

The effect of such modes of reading is that ideas, as it were, can 'well up'; they are 'ready to hand'; part of a *habitus*: part of a life-world. I can speak fragments of coherent abstract discourse. Having immersed myself in a *copia* of philosophical discourse, I do not run dry of ideas. In this sense I am like a Renaissance rhetorician. But, like all Renaissance men of letters, I lack method, system or logic. My discourse is governed by an assemblage of commonplace *topoi* and tropes that 'get me by', that do the job, that allow me 'to go on' (Wittgenstein), that keep the conversation going (Rorty). Bacon, Descartes and Ramus would, rightly, dis(ap)prove its lack of rigor and clarity, its placid accommodation to the exigencies and contours of terrain and audience, its avoidance of the hard questions, its evasion of the duty to bulldoze these paths and their horizons into a single deductive highway built on unshakable foundations. In short, its refusal, or evasion, of the canons of modernity.

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

Instead of Habermas' 'philosophy with a practical intent', I am suggesting a '*praxis* with philosophical intent'. Whereas Habermas imagines the relations between philosophy and *praxis* through the Kantian metaphor of the relation between the apriori and the empirical, in which the Kantian apriori determines either constitutively or regulatively, I am returning to the traditional Aristotelian sense of practical philosophy as a cultivation of the *sensus communis*, as a conversation that discloses what is common, what is between us, in which we see ourselves as forming a community of practice and speech. We don't bring philosophy or theory to *praxis*. Rather, in our practicing we find ourselves reaching for theory to make sense of our practice, a *praxis* that always outreaches ourselves and our understanding, that is in its most important moments always other than us.

Later, I will adduce Gadamer's insistence that our insertion in practice (or discourse or life) is more like being thrown into and caught up in a game, a game that is not of our own choosing or making, a game in which we do not know or decide the rules but in which we can only make our moves and try to change the rules as responses to what happens, a game in which we cannot go back and start again[3], thus a historical game constituted by events and effects that cannot be undone or reversed. I find this a more fruitful image of *praxis* and the driven-ness of our reaching for theory or philosophy as a way of trying to make sense of what we are caught up in.

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[3] Toulmin (1992, p. 175) notes that this:

> idea of 'starting again with a clean slate' has been as recurrent preoccupation of modern European thinkers as the quest for certainty itself. The belief that any new construction is truly *rational* only if it demolishes all that was there before and starts from scratch, has played a particular part in the intellectual and political history of France. … The most spectacular illustration of this is the French Revolution.

THEORY

But this image also makes clear why we are continually tempted by a theoreticist or cognitivist notion of theory, by a theory offering to reach beyond our situatedness and institute order and discipline for *praxis*. Hence the Kantian project of modernity. Theory as concepts for ordering (putting in order, giving orders). Theory as 'boss man'. Theory as telling practitioners what we really can or should be, what things are (called), how we should experience things, how things are, who we are, and what we are doing. Theory as legislator. Theory as ruler. Theory as 'the Subject'. Theory as and for 'the State'.

This Kantian rendering of theory will be an important locus around which this thesis will circle. It will feature as a marker, a horizon, a project signifying an inescapable temptation within practice. I will be arguing that it is precisely this modernist Kantian account of reason that must be deconstructed and replaced with a more modest, more localized and more 'in process' rendering of reason as a measure of the value or truth of practices and discourse. This Kantian moment of legislation is akin to the Gorgian moment in Plato in which Socrates demarcates between the selfless purity of his own truth-seeking philosophical discourse compared with the interested, manipulative rhetorical discourse of Gorgias. Both constitute attacks on the finitude of vernacular practices, understandings and discourses. Both posit a purer domain of reality which can be used as 'measures of accountability' in order to bring reason, order and clarity to the disorder, ambiguity and obscurity of customary ways which subsist as ontological social practices, as sensibilities and *habitus*.

Will's (1988) development of the concept of governance so that it is not confined to what he calls 'deductive governance', which is narrowly focussed on abstract written or symbolic representations of norms and practices is helpful at this point. Will supplements the rationalism and textualism of this deductive governance with a more contextual reflexivity situated at the moment of application or use, which he calls 'ampliative governance'. Although he uses the phrase 'governance of norms', Will insists that it is imperative not to confuse what he calls 'norms' with their textual or symbolic representations. His use of the term 'norm' is intended to embody the same range and 'thickness' as such terms as 'rule' in Wittgenstein's language games, 'internal good' in MacIntyre's 'practices', 'custom' in Hegel, or '*habitus*' in Bourdieu. Will also adduces Dewey's treatment of 'habit' (including custom) in *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922) and Kuhn's notion of 'paradigms' as terms of a comparable order. So, even though a 'norm' is what serves as a guide or standard of thought and action, Will is concerned to demonstrate that norms are practical human realities that cannot be reduced to their textual, linguistic or symbolic representations, and that the governance of norms as a practice extends deep into everyday *praxis*, far beyond the self-conscious and explicitly deliberative discourse of the Kantian tribunal of 'reason' in which norms are subjected to even more abstract norms.

PHILOSOPHY IS UNFORGETTABLE

Although philosophy may repudiate rhetoric and opinion (*endoxa*) as untruth, this act of rejection is itself an act that is never finalized but instead one of eternal vigilance (and I would suggest perversely that this vigil is now maintained by that wide-awake reader, Derrida). The true philosopher in modernity is the philosopher who attends to this Gorgian moment revealing it as a moment that cannot be completed, a ladder that cannot be thrown away. Philosophy is condemned to discursively articulate itself as both rhetoric and language. But for all this, Derrida does not repudiate philosophy itself, as Foucault and some of his followers have tried: Derrida is not a positivist. We will 'forget Foucault' long before we 'forget philosophy'. But of course even Foucault could not forget philosophy, no matter how far he fled. 'Final Foucault' is in fact Foucault's coming home to philosophy, to philosophy as a practice of liberty. We can never be *after logos*. We can never rid ourselves of the aspirations of philosophy, but nor can they be directly enacted as both Plato and Kant seemed to have suggested. I write 'seemed' because later we will note Gadamer's claim that there is another Plato besides this metaphysical Plato. There is also Plato the author of dialogues that in their very form undercut claims to metaphysical truth. Similarly, many recent philosophers are interpreting Kant's third critique, *Critique of Judgment*, as his belated attempt to formulate a bridge to mediate between the world of the transcendental and the world of the empirical that were so severely and emphatically separated in his two earlier critiques.

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY: BACK TO THE ROUGH GROUND

The point is to deconstruct the binarisms of metaphysics, not to occupy either pole; to refuse universalizing theory, but also to refuse the monadic intuitions of situated particularity—to mobilize a different 'mixture' of truth-telling; to enact a voice that is neither solely prophetic, solely scientific,

solely bureaucratic, solely procedural, or solely reflective, a voice that reworks all of these into a more practical moment; a voice that attempts to be commensurate and responsibly worldly, without abandoning a horizon of values; a voice that is commensurate with Wittgenstein's observation on the desire for transcendence:

> we have got onto slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!' (Wittgenstein, 1963, para. 107).

Practical philosophy is the discipline whose historical charter is the cultivation of this rough ground, the terrain on which the written texts of legislators intersect with the reflective interpretations arising out of the situated *habitus* of practitioners. My hope is to produce a text that walks by depicting literacy practices that walk; I am too old to dream of flying any more. But surely we can walk with dignity, justice, solidarity and virtue. Walking does not only have value or meaning as the fore-runner, beginning of, precursor for, or fallen substitute for—running … or flying.

MUNDANE TRANSCENDENCE: PRAXIS OR THE STATE

Ian Hunter (1994) would insist that my text (or practice) is 'unwarranted' because these different forms of truth-telling are located within different and incommensurable 'departments of life'. Hunter, like Fish, is a high modernist, not as might at first seem, a postmodernist. Both deploy skeptical arguments to erect high boundaries between the different institutional domains of contemporary social life. The difference is that Hunter allows a mundane universal governance to 'governmentality'. Hunter's boundaries are penetrable from the side of governmentality—but not from the side of critique or cultivation. For Hunter, the State seems to occupy a worldly horizon of transcendence, if we could put it in such a paradoxical way. Certainly for Hunter, the State is not simply yet another local region of practices or institutions; it occupies a privileged position. Why? Well, not because of a originary 'social contract', nor does it seem to be because it possesses an empirical monopoly on power and violence.

Committed to assigning a historically contingent and conjunctural existence to 'the State', what can Hunter possibly say about why it possesses this privileged position, about why it should be obeyed, about why it should be able to decide education policy. In fact, what we find at this point in Hunter is a peculiar ambivalence regarding the status and authority of 'governmentality'. On the one hand, he insists its emergence is a historically contingent event occasioned by the religious wars of the seventeenth century and that an understanding emerged to institute a new form of the State that did not implicate transcendental or religious values or forms of reasoning. It was a State committed to the mundane values of life. Notice that this is not the 'neutral state of liberalism' which rejects all notions of the good, but the police state, a state committed to the value of wealth, prosperity, peace and security.

THE PARADOX OF BOUNDARIES

But now comes the paradox: why should we be bound by this historically contingent form of the State? Hunter might reply: because, empirically, these are our practices. But he wants to go further and say: because we can't think outside this form; because we can't be different; and, even on occasion, because we *shouldn't* think or act outside this form or constellation of practices and discourses. Now, there is always a problem with setting limits. Every child knows that a limit institutes a temptation to put your toe across the line. 'You can't think that!' 'Can't think what?' 'You can't think that critics engaged in self-cultivation should be allowed or able to criticize policies and practices of the bureau'. 'Right! Thanks for spelling out what is not thinkable. It obviously is thinkable and does make sense. So, you must really be saying: Don't (you shouldn't) think it.'

Hunter knows that transcendental arguments don't work. So, why try to hold us to some 'understanding' or 'agreement' about how to interpret the State. Of course, Hunter wants to say: 'Because they are simply and empirically the practices we have, and to attempt to leap beyond them is dangerous'. But my reply is that we are not confined to our present practices: we possess well-established reflective language games for evaluating, re-authorizing, rejecting and changing practices; critique is a key practice for examining, evaluating and changing practices of discourse or of institutionality.[4] Practi-

[4] For an exemplary articulation and recognition of contemporary cultural and social movements from a perspective that, like Hunter, draws on Wittgenstein and Foucault, see Tully (1995, 1999).

cal philosophy is precisely this practice of reflective governance of the interpretation, application and reformulation of norms. Practical philosophy is precisely a concern with the governance of norms when they are problematic and cannot be simply deductively followed or applied. Practical philosophy as the cultivation of practical wisdom, *phronesis*, is precisely concerned with the communal reflective formulation of normative orders and their articulation with the variety of circumstances and situations. Practical philosophy is grounded in the recognition that any symbolic formulation of a norm, especially in written language, is confined to an abstract generality in its formulation such that its interpretation and application, even its understanding, depends on a more situated mediating judgment.

AGAINST THEORY

However, what is exemplary about both Hunter and Fish is their attempt to lower the philosophical stakes, to substitute *phronesis* for frenzy, to substitute mundane, practical, and specific forms of reasoning for the constant escalation by humanism into a semi-hysterical and wholly predictable binary between instrumental reason and transcendental reason. As Foucault declared in:

> a document written and read by Foucault at a press conference in June, 1981 on the plight of the Vietnamese boat people: 'We must refuse the division of labor that is often proposed to us: between individuals who become indignant and speak out; and governments which reflect and act.' (Miller, 1993, p. 453)

By invoking the tradition of practical philosophy, I too wish to reject this liberal binary between individual and governmentality. The issue is whether instituting a more mundane, 'less critical' genre of discourse about education inevitably leads to a conservative valorization of the status quo. If administrative *praxis* does contain its own mode of being then, does the lowering of the temperature by Fish and Hunter in fact mean repressing or abandoning other modes of being, other values, other social goods? And where are they themselves standing in making these suggestions? Are they caught in a performative contradiction of some sort?

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin concludes her *Wittgenstein and Justice* with this reflection on the relationship between accepting the conventionality of our practices and how we should view change:

> Thus, when Wittgenstein says that our forms of life must be accepted, that is not the same as saying that our lives as we lead them must be accepted, that our ways of theorizing about them must be accepted. Rather it suggests, as Cavell says, 'that criticism of our lives is not to be prosecuted in philosophical theory, but continued in the confrontation of our lives with their necessities'. It is not that we cannot change our concepts or our habits or our institutions; but that not every change is possible, and philosophizing will not change them. If they are to change, we must change them in our actions, in our lives; and ultimately that means that we cannot change them in isolation. (Pitkin, 1972, p. 340)

Thus, one of the tasks of this thesis will be to try to forge a voice that is worldly yet does not disavow, deny or repress the desire, need or grounds for change, a voice that acknowledges the contingency and conventionality of our practices and discourses but does not resign itself to this present, thereby ascribing inevitability and necessity to the present. Being realistic does not mean being fatalistic or passive.

AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS

I am acutely conscious of the way this text must conform to the conventions and standards of academic scholarship, that it can only be responsible to its occasion by 'meeting' these standards—if possible. Yet I am also acutely sensible to the fact that this text does not describe or prescribe nor enact any new classroom procedures for ABE. Many of my colleagues would see it as a self-indulgent 'wank'; a text that is more an act of selfish masturbation than healthy communicative intercourse with a readership. Ah! there's the rub: the readership … Just who *is* the reader of this text? Perhaps it really is only me! Perhaps the examiners of this thesis are just third parties, voyeurs, looking over my shoulder—not the imagined readership at all. Perhaps this really is just a therapeutic text, an exercise in banishing, discharging the demons, ghosts and obsessions accumulated over years of teaching. Perhaps this text is just a way of unblocking congealed arteries and re-establishing the flow of good *phronesis* in my own practice. A retreat, a re-tread.

Of course, for ideas to function as reflection, as maxims, as resources for coping and making sense of events, as touchstones for formulating practices or actions, as horizons for orienting evaluations and assessments, as provocations to thinking—all this is one thing. But none of this adds up to a canonic

academic Ph.D. text. A modern Ph.D. demands a central metanarrative depicting the growth of knowledge by expounding and justifying a technical metadiscourse (call it the logical form(ul)ation of concepts). So, although continually tempted by the sublime mirage of an a-modernist (pre- or post-modern) Ph.D., a text that systematically avoids positing an Archimedian point of view, that evades the logocentrism of 'the transparent word', the 'pure word' or 'the final word', I hereby acknowledge and pledge that I will address 'the claims of reason': the claims of coherence, consistency, evidence, and unity—just like Cavell!

PREFACING BY STEALTH

This thesis is, thus, my effort to 'let be' deeper horizons of answerability for our own *praxis* and discourse and for our students; horizons that are more elusive, not as readily inscribed in the form of institutional rules or boundaries. Already, I hope, you begin to sense the work of my text, the company it aspires (pretends) to keep, the words it fingers and looks to polish for reuse, the conceptual cloth it hopes to weave, the modes of reading it invokes and invites. And so, having begun with the notorious opening paragraphs of a contemporary philosophical text prefacing itself, let's retrieve an even more famous Prefacing of a philosophical text as a way of adducing the conventions and expectations of a preface and at the same time meditating on its status in philosophical prose. Here is the first paragraph of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in which, drawing on his rigorous training in rhetoric, he defines at once the tasks and superfluousness of prefaces:

> An explanation, as it customarily precedes a book in a preface—about the purpose the author had in mind in writing it, or about the motivations and the relationships that the author sees his work entertaining to earlier or contemporary treatments of the same topic—such an explanation seems not only superfluous for a philosophical text but by the very nature of the matter even inappropriate and counterpurposeful. For the manner and the content of what could conveniently be said about philosophy in a preface—like a historical *indication* of the tendency, standpoint, the general argument and results, or like a connection between the conflicting claims and assurances about the truth—, these things cannot be valid given the way philosophical truth is to be depicted. (Hegel, 1910, p. 1)

Yet, just as Hegel is condemned to write precisely what he insists is superfluous, namely, to foreshadow the general topic, purpose, point, standpoint and relationship to other views and texts within the same domain, so too I hope I have hereby (indirectly and perversely) fulfilled these generic requirements of prefacing.

PART ONE CLEARING THE GROUND

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a reflection on a bruising personal encounter with the systems steering imperatives and administrative formats of the modern nation state. As a member of the teams that designed both the Victorian Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA) and the National Competency Framework for Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy (McCormack, 1991a, 1991b), I lived for some time with the tension between trying to establish relationships between different educational contexts in all their hermeneutic specificity within an emerging field of education, Adult Basic Education (ABE) on the one hand, and the demand from modernist governmentality for codifications of taxonomies, thresholds and criteria designed to construe contexts as merely instances or tokens of generic types and forms of development in a form suitable for quantitative reporting, on the other (McCormack,1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1995, 1996; Sanguinetti, 1998). This thesis is a protest at the implied stance that the infinite specificity of different particular contexts, classrooms, and students can be sloughed off in a process of abstraction whereby the essence of the work of education is distilled into grids of universal descriptors or numerals. This is an essentialism that believes that particularities are simply an accidental, peripheral husk enclosing but not contaminating or intruding into an essential kernel which can be both extracted and distilled into a pure essence.

It is this institutional imperative that insists on reducing the object of ABE pedagogy from a substantively embodied engagement with language and situation as a reflective articulation of lived social practices and forms of life to a more measurable 'language and literacy competence'. Translated into linguistic terms, these imperatives of the nation-state are congruent with the theoreticist *ethos* of modern mainstream linguistics which posits a deep structure of norms and rules behind the everyday phenomenon of language. Behind *parole* is *langue*; behind performance is competence; behind utterances lie propositions; behind sentences lies grammar; behind texts lie genres; behind tokens lie types.

NOMINALIST ESCAPE INTO LOCALISM

One response to this brutal universalist essentialism has been a range of postmodern nominalisms which insist that there are no universals and assert the uniqueness of each and every case. On this view, meaning is always already *emic* and only available to insiders or participants. It is a view that localizes meaning by locating it either 'inside' the individual or 'inside' very local pragmatic contexts or cultures as separate, self-contained and autonomous. However, as a response to the procrustean essentialism of the State, this form of postmodern contextualism encourages a politics of dispersal and difference that, by refusing to take responsibility for the communication and commensurability between different sites, provides the State with ready-made excuses for intervening with its reductivist mediation between competing local contexts. My view is that the terms of negotiation between sites within a field will either be emergent from the situated practitioners and theorists of that field of social practice or they will be imposed from 'outside' or 'above'.

My assumption is that social practices and forms of life must somehow find a language that can function as a mediation and medium of negotiation between different contexts. Either the field itself forges this medium or the modern State will impose one. (Of course, an unregulated market might allow a less discursively articulated, more disseminated and pluralistic framing, but this would be to retreat to a liberalism in which substance is even more privatized, where generality is purely instrumental and where systems steering is exercised almost exclusively through such non-discursive media as the laws of supply and demand).

GOVERNANCE OF PRACTICES

Having professionally experienced the destructiveness of public attempts to govern the 'practical' realities of ABE educational endeavors by means of abstract 'theoretical' grids embodied in competency standards documents, I have become absolutely convinced that 'practical fields', what MacIntyre calls 'practices', are inevitably damaged and hollowed out by subjection to the procedural forms of planning, governance and accountability presently adopted by modern governments. For MacIntyre, a practice is defined as:

> a coherent and complex form of socially established human activity through which goods internal to the form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence

> which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence and human conceptions of ends and goods involved are systematically extended. (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 175)

One reason I was especially sensitive to this issue of the intersection of the generalizing stance of governmental institutions with its focus on 'external goods' with the more ontologically situated stance of practitioners and their self-governance of 'internal goods' is that the philosophical concerns of my youth centred on this very issue of the relations between particularity and generality. In fact I wrote a minor thesis on Plato's theory of universals. These aporias congregating around the dialectic between universal and particular were thematised right at the very beginnings of abstract thinking, and in fact form the grounds for Aristotle's demarcation of practical philosophy (as a cultivation of *phronesis*) from theoretical philosophy (as a cultivation of *sophia* and *episteme*).

I am not suggesting that ABE as a field not be accountable to other fields or larger polities or systems of governmentality. However, I am suggesting that the theoreticist and technicist caste of these forms of regulation, accountability and governance undermines the mode of being of the field itself as a shared *habitus* and *sensus communis*. In this thesis I make no concrete suggestions about how the practical and substantive mode of being of a field of education can be brought into an understanding with the technical and proceduralist mode of being of the corporate management processes of modern governments. Because ABE as a nascent field of education has already been deformed almost beyond recognition as a consequence of being thrust into the front-line of governmental strategies for dealing with and disguising the problems of unemployment, before it had time to formulate its 'internal goods', the pressing task for this thesis is simply to re-assert the practical essence of ABE, to position ABE as part of the tradition of practical philosophy.

FORMULATING ABE AS A PRACTICE

If ABE is not construed as a theoretical discipline bringing about theoretical changes in its students by teaching theoretical bodies of knowledge that are transmitted and tested by theoretical texts, we need to find a new way of formulating what ABE is and what it is engaged in. The task of this thesis is to contribute to the formulation of an account of 'what ABE is' as a practical reality, as a field that is grounded in practice, acts practically, knows practically, and produces practical changes in ABE students. However, shifting our sense of ABE from a theoretico-technicist framing to a practical framing is not easy. Retrieving this practical framing means reworking our sense of what practice is, of what theory is, of how theory and practice intersect and of the ontology of social and human life.

In this thesis, I am taking Aristotle's lead in delineating a form of practical education that is not the learning of underlying theoretical norms, rules or concepts, nor the mastery of a set of technical procedures, but rather an education intended to cultivate a *habitus* supporting *phronesis*, practical wisdom. Aristotle called this form of education, practical philosophy, and Gadamer calls it philosophical hermeneutic. Aristotle distinguished between the stability and universality of scientific knowledge which was concerned with eternal and divine matters on the one hand, and the need for innovation and improvisation, for judgement and prudence, when dealing with human realities in all their variety and difference of circumstance on the other. The disciplines in which this concern for the inscrutability of the specific has been important is in those disciplines concerned with human affairs, Aristotle's domain of 'the practical', *praxis*, and the realm of *phronesis*: jurisprudence, politics, rhetoric, ethics. Aristotle contrasts these disciplines of *praxis* with the disciplines of *episteme* (science) on the one hand and the disciplines of *techne* (practical arts) on the other. *Episteme* is the science of underlying essences, principles and laws determining things. *Techne* is the deployment of resources as means in order to make something or bring something about. Thus, *praxis* is defined in opposition to both *episteme* and *techne*.

Aristotle's response to Plato's positing of 'the form of The Good' as an object of theory was to articulate a more worldly domain of 'the practical' standing over against Plato's realm of knowledge, a this-worldly domain which is subject to ambiguity, the deceptions of appearance, conflicting perspectives and overdetermination, a domain that cannot be mastered by knowledge and its concepts but only by the judgments of *phronesis*. In this way Aristotle formulates a concept of practical knowing different from theoretical knowing. According to Aristotle, this practical knowing or wisdom, *phronesis*, is an attunement to the conflicted realities of the specific situation, not the deductive subsumption of the situation as an instance of an abstract concept or class.

ABE AND *THEORIA*

Construing ABE as itself a practical domain of *phronesis* also means that a theory of ABE must take up a different self-understanding of its own mode of being from the Kantian construal of theory as basically a mode of legislation concerning what is or what should be. There are three roles opened up to theory in this situation: as critique, as utopia and as articulation. Theory will function as critique in the effort to repel disabling theoretical and institutional colonizations of ABE. Theory will also invoke a normative horizon, but as a mode of remembrance, as the rhetorical genre of epideictic, not as a mode of Kantian legislation. Finally, theory as articulation will become more 'expressive' as an effort to capture in language the meanings, attunements, and discernments embodied in situated practice.

In sum, this thesis is a meditation on the mode of being of hermeneutic reflection as a mode of practical discourse and its relationship to human being. I want to suggest that ABE is—should be—a place where this hermeneutic reflection occurs. I want to suggest that ABE is a place where adults can 'work on' their fundamental orientations to things in general by interpreting the otherness of written text and thereby bring both the text and themselves to language and reflection, to the reflection of language and the language of reflection. In this encounter between different ways of wording the world, students must stretch their own language and understandings in order to interpret what the text is saying, or more precisely in order to make it make sense. Thus students both make the strange familiar by making the familiar strange and make the familiar strange by making the strange familiar. The relationship between understanding 'where the text is coming from' and 'where you yourself are coming from' is dialectical and speculative. Where you yourself are coming from—the familiar—is just as strange, just as 'out of mind', just as 'beyond your ken', as is a text from another culture or another language or another field of discourse or another genre of discourse from those we inhabit. Thus, a text reflects a student's Being back to them but only as result of an exercise of interpretation that changes that Being.

Thus, on this interpretation, ABE is not just being apprenticed into an academic discipline or field of knowledge, nor into a generalized academic discourse. Students are coming to understand, learning to comport themselves differently in relation to forms of discourse, interpretations of values, orientations in their narratives, practices of interchange by engaging in practices of interpretation. I will call this new comportment: hermeneutic reflection.

SECTION 1: DEFINING THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE

WHY BEGIN WITH HABERMAS?

In an effort to find a theoretical footing to express and articulate my response to this engagement with the governmental processes of the modern state, I initially turned to Habermas and Foucault. However, although I do make use of Habermas' early formulation of the basic issues addressed in this thesis, I did not share his drive to identify a form of discourse that is fully transparent and thus resistant to systematic distortion. I can understand that someone who had been a member of the Hitler Youth and who only discovered after the fact the unspeakable evils committed by the regime he had supported, would be obsessed with finding a procedure to ensure he would never again be the victim of this sort of systematic deception. However, I myself am more concerned to protect the particularities and contingencies, the variety of circumstances, of actual situations and their discourses from the clumsy interventions of governments than with instituting a fail-safe tribunal for testing the validity of argumentative claims and discourse.

HABERMAS' TRIBUNALISM

Habermas' critique, in my view, ultimately reverts to the side of theoreticism. The more fundamental distinction for my purposes is the divide between those traditions that bring social practices before an external disinterested tribunal of reason or normativity and those that locate the terms of accountability within the community of practice itself. Habermas is clearly in the former camp. I am not arguing that the procedural practices of formal institutions should be abandoned, however I do insist that the terms of interchange between these two modes of social practice are unbalanced. Habermas himself refers to this imbalance as the 'colonization of the life world by sub-systems'.

The Enlightenment view of history is that history consists of epochs where in earlier epochs (traditional or pre-modern times) humans were subject to tradition, but humanity has now managed to

throw off a reliance on the prejudices of tradition through the development of universal and formal (and therefore neutral, impartial, objective) methods for testing the validity of propositions and values. According to this view, we live in times where tradition has lost its claim on us. Modernity means social and personal life beyond the claims of tradition. It means rejecting or ignoring what is 'handed over to us' in favor of 'boot-strapping' ourselves.

HABERMAS' 'DISCOURSE' IS THEORETICIST

Habermas' notion of 'discourse' as justification of validity claims, whether the theoretical claims of truth or the practical claims of justice is a classic instantiation of this modern notion of reason. Notice that even though Habermas does not consign aesthetics and ethics to the back region of emotivism and he does acknowledge that they possess their own modes of rationality, reflexivity and argumentation, in general he construes matters of taste and the good as too localized and too situated in specific traditions and cultures to play a part in the generic proceduralist domain of science and the moral domain justice. In this way Habermas tends to set aside the 'thick' issues of substance concerning the good and the good life within particularist forms of life and cultural tradition as matters of taste, conscience and judgment, whilst himself foregrounding a common core of 'thin' questions of formal procedural justice. Justice is thus a level of reality that is below (or above) the empirical diversity of persons, practices, stations of life, cultures, traditions and languages. This is a plane of reality on which it is conceivable that everyone could reach agreement thereby realizing Rousseau's 'general will' or Kant's rational will. Habermas calls this plane, discourse or communicative action.

Habermas' unhappiness with modernity is that its institutionalization of this plane of rationality is one-sided. It has only instituted cognitive, instrumentalist and strategic variants of rational procedure, not yet practical/communicative/moral categories of rationality. The bourgeois public domain was a failed precursor or pointer to the actuality of discourse. Although I am happy with Habermas' way of phrasing the issue—system versus life-world—I do not agree with him in thinking the solution lies in the emergence of discursive tribunals of validity that are answerable to all the stake-holders involved in a particular decision and its consequences. This to me seems to subject the social world to an even more tyrannical codification and auditing. The articulation of a *sensus communis* need not take the form of a tribunal of validity.

FOUCAULT AND HIS ENGLISH-SPEAKING RECEPTION

I was more attuned to the theoretical assays of Foucault who was not so concerned with formulating a final and systematic position, but more with embarking on forays into the obscurities of social life and its institutional apparatuses. Yet, despite the pleasures and rewards of reading most of Foucault's oeuvre, I remained unhappy with the way his theorizing was typically interpreted and deployed in the English-speaking world. Although Foucault himself insisted that his methods were intended to problematize the historical *a priori* and thereby reveal the contingency of that which seemed to be necessary or universal, in fact he was often taken up by 'recovering' 1970's student radicals as an attack on the deluded utopianism of their youth and as a demonstration of the follies of attempting to exceed the limits of the historical *a priori*. Thus, the problematization of Kant was taken as problematising social reason itself. Hunter (1994) was a key Australian educational exponent of this appropriation of Foucault. He employed a Foucauldian analysis to insinuate that there should be no underlying values or principles at work in education apart from those instituted by the empirical apparatus of the absolutist 'police state' and its successor policy-making bureaucracies.

Whilst I share Hunter's efforts to formulate a more ontological sense of what education is 'after representation' (Hunter, 1984), and I even share his concept of an 'unprincipled education' (Hunter, 1994), I do not share his nihilist conclusion that an unprincipled education means eschewing ethical and political forms of discourse altogether and confining oneself to the imperatives, vocabularies or terms of reference of the apparatus of contemporary governmentality in deference to its own integral forms of ethical and political rationality and accountability.

RHETORIC AND PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY AS 'UNPRINCIPLED'

My strategy has been to take the notion of 'unprincipled education' in a different direction, in the direction of re-newing the older traditions of rhetoric and practical philosophy in that both these traditions also reject the search for principles. Rhetoric displaces the principles (*arché*) of demonstrative or syllogistic 'proof' by its insistence that there is always two sides (*partes*) to a question or matter at issue (*causa*) and always something to be said for the other view; and by its practice of teaching stu-

dents to argue *in utramque partem*, that is for both sides of any issue, a practice that was considered to be sophistic and corrupt by 'principled' educators and theorists such as Plato and Hobbes.

Similarly, practical philosophy displaces the 'principles' of knowledge (*epistemé*) and theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) by its insistence on the human priority of practical wisdom (*phronesis*), which is a *habitus*-based capacity or comportment to judge situations and decide what to do, a capacity that is grounded in a history of experience with a range of cases rather than in the theoretical or practical mastery of a rule or norm. Although acknowledging that there is a common principle that 'we must act under the right rule', Aristotle (NE, II, 6, 1106a25-30) insists that particular cases 'do not fall under any art or precept' so 'agents themselves must in each case consider what is appropriate to the occasion'. This attunement that ensures that we respond and act 'at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motives, and in the right way' is *phronesis*, practical wisdom. *Phronesis* is thus a form of knowing that cannot be taught or learnt directly by mastering a body of knowledge or a procedural system of norms or rules. For the tradition of practical philosophy, it is *phronesis* that underpins moral and political action.

For me, it was Gadamer who opened up this possibility of retrieving and appropriating the traditions of rhetoric, hermeneutics and practical philosophy as forms of education that counter-balance the 'principles' of universalization and proceduralization at work in contemporary governmental policy-making, which is why he is the guiding presence shaping the thought and direction of this thesis. Gadamer reworks traditional and Romantic textual hermeneutics as an ontological hermeneutics that appropriates and re-articulates the traditions of practical philosophy and rhetoric for contemporary times. In particular, he offers a way of reformulating the relations between particulars and universals that does not devalue or subvert the significance and specificity of the particular whilst at the same time framing the particular as open to interchange and engagement with wider horizons, not closed in on itself. Unfortunately, within Australian educational circles the traditional arts of rhetoric, practical philosophy or hermeneutics are not commonly acknowledged as relevant contexts, horizons or backgrounds for theorizing 'adult language and literacy education'.

Thus, as an exercise in theory, this thesis is both a critique of the procedural rationality of Kantian reason, and an effort to re-connect with and thus come into the inheritance of richer practices of education—rhetoric, practical philosophy and hermeneutics. This thesis is, thus, my effort to project deeper horizons of answerability for the *praxis* and discourse of ABE and for its students, horizons that are more elusive and not as readily inscribed in the form of institutional rules or boundaries as conscious norms or procedures because they subsist in the *habitus* of the field. Whereas Hunter thinks that the opposite of Kantian principles is to be 'unprincipled', I think it is a matter of reframing the 'mode of being' of principles so that they extend into a different stratum of human being as customs, habits, experience, and practices—not only as procedures of governmental accountability. In Will's (1988) terms, this is a matter of supplementing the deductive governance of norms by the State with the ampliative governance of situated practitioners.

SECTION 2: PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY VERSUS SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

As a point of entry into the issues of the contrast between these older traditions of education and the discourses of modern approaches, I will draw on Habermas' delineation of the contrast between practical philosophy and modern constructions of action in his early efforts to formulate the terms and trajectory of his own intellectual project and life task. I use Habermas in this way because although he tends to move across this terrain in a different direction, I share with him the terrain itself and find his initial formulation of the contending parties and issues illuminating.

THE TWO VIEWS OF SOCIOPOLITICAL LIFE

In the article, 'The Classical Doctrine of Politics in relation to Social Philosophy', Habermas (*TP*, 1974) lays out the terrain on which his life's work is to be waged: the intersection of the classical articulation of politics as an art of *phronesis* and the modern specification of politics as an exercise of political knowledge and technical procedures based on this scientifically valid knowledge. According to the classical tradition, politics is a region of contingency that is radically unmasterable and unknowable, so that politics itself can never be more than the exercise of an art of judgment, an art of civic friendship and an art of rhetoric. The modern view of politics, by contrast, claims to found and ground the social and political order in a knowable and masterable natural order—the State, society

or the economy. Habermas' project, through all its twists and turns, keeps an unerring eye on finding a way to 'synthesize' (in Hegel's sense) these two approaches to social and political life.

In this thesis, I am not concerned to trace the details of Habermas' theories, but simply to use his initial formulation of the contrast between the classical and modern paradigms of political action and knowledge as a point of entry into the articulation of the classical sense of practical philosophy. So, even though this thesis finally focuses on Gadamer's retrieval of the tradition of practical philosophy in his philosophical hermeneutics, I find Habermas' initial laying out of the problem more accessible and fruitful than Gadamer's. This is because Gadamer's formulation of the issue demands familiarity with the traditions of German aesthetics, philosophy and philology.

ARISTOTLE: IS HE IRRETRIEVABLE?

Habermas opens 'The Classical Doctrine of Politics in relation to Social Philosophy' by acknowledging the long influential and unbroken tradition of practical philosophy from before Aristotle right up to the nineteenth century, yet insists that this tradition is now anachronistic and 'hopelessly old-fashioned to us':

> In Aristotle's opus the *Politics* is part of the practical philosophy. Its tradition reaches even into the nineteenth century, till it is finally broken off conclusively by the critique of historicism. And its course dries up even more completely, the more its currents are diverted into the channels of the specific sciences. Thus, since the end of the eighteenth century, the newly emerging social sciences and the disciplines of jurisprudence have drawn off the waters of classical politics. This process of separation from the body of practical philosophy has ended, for the time being, with the establishment of political science on the model of the modern experimental sciences, having little more than the name in common with the old politics. (*TP*, p. 41)

The confidence with which Habermas asserts that the classical sense of politics has been surpassed by modern 'political science' such that there is 'little more than the name in common' now reads—nearly forty years later—as symptomatic of a naïve, even dogmatic, modernism. Since the time of writing (1963) the world has been witness to: the student uprisings of 1968, the collapse of Eastern bloc communism, the winding back of the Fabian welfare state associated with western European social democracies, an upsurge of economic rationalism and unregulated globalism, a revival of identity politics both as nationalism or ethnicism, and the destruction of stable conditions of work and of the guild-based unions that governed fields of skilled work practices. As a consequence, at the turn of the millennium, Habermas' confident assumption that the modern science of social life has replaced the ancient art of politics has lost its self-evidence. Whether theorized as postmodernism (Lyotard) reflexive modernity (Beck) or as post-modernity (Bauman), the times no longer present themselves as easily masterable by the technologies of the social sciences. The social sciences are now as likely to be construed as part of the problem as part of the solution. It is no longer clear whether the 'unfinished project of Enlightenment' is something that should even be attempted, let alone how! Those called 'posties' by Habermas would say not. They would argue that the Enlightenment and modernity is a brutal regime that should not be supported.

ETHOS, ETHNOS AND NOMOS

However, even though Habermas' contrast between the classical sense of politics as *praxis* and the modern sense of politics as scientific administration may have lost its truth as a progressive narrative of the replacement of one paradigm by another, it retains its truth as an exposition, a laying out, of the competing positions.

According to Habermas there are three respects in which 'the old politics has become alien'. The first difference concerns the relationship between politics and ethics. According to the classical picture, there was no radical break between the *ethos* of the individual, the ethics of their actions, and the *ethos* of the social order and its constitutional order (*nomos*). The institutional order is not a region that exists separately from the *habitus* and customs of the community, nor does the morality of personal action exist independently of a reference to these substantive practices and customs:

> Aristotle saw no opposition between the constitution formulated in the *nomoi* and the *ethos* of civil life: conversely the ethical character of action was not separable from custom and law. (*TP*, p. 42)

The quality of life of the individual and the quality of life of the *polis* are interdependent:

> Only the *politeia* makes the citizen capable of the good life; and he is altogether *zoon politikon*, in the sense that he is dependent on the *polis*, for the realization of his human nature. (*TP*, p. 42)

By contrast with this classical sense of a continuity and mutual conditioning between the individual and the community, modern liberalism is based on the radical discontinuity of the ethical as pertaining to the individual and the political as pertaining to the institutional order governing the relationships between individuals:

> In Kant … the ethical conduct of the individual who is free only inwardly is clearly distinguished from legality, so the two in turn are separated from politics, which is accorded a most dubious role as the technical expertise in a utilitarian doctrine of prudence. (*TP*, p. 42)

Interestingly we can see here how the term 'politics' as in 'playing politics' comes to share in the opprobrium of 'rhetoric' as 'mere rhetoric' in that both come to be perceived as transactions in power that do not base themselves on universal and disinterested claims to knowledge and principle. They also come to be seen as standing in a purely instrumental relationship with the person engaging in them. Thus politics and rhetoric both come to be perceived as exercises in *poiesis*—not *praxis*—in that the agent of *poiesis* already possesses a clear picture of the outcome or goal they are trying to bring about and of the means needed to bring about that outcome. On this modern view, the activities of rhetoric or politics stand in a purely instrumental and external relation to these goals and do not enter into any formative relations with the agent or their sense of things. Politics and rhetoric as the exercise of *phronesis*—prudence—thus become a cynical, manipulative and Machiavellian calculation of means to an end.

ACTION AND HABITUS

It is precisely this modernist denial of the continuity between the comportment of individuals and the *sensus communis* of the community, that Gadamer rejects by insisting that we are always already located in a tradition as appropriators. Bourdieu's *habitus* and Giddens' theory of structuration are two comparable efforts to mend this rupture in the mutual determination between the *habitus* of the individual and the *habitus* of the community. In this way they refuse the modernist imperative to assign agency and causality to only one or other party. Individuals are neither 'social dupes' nor free self-realizing agents; the community is neither a determinate system of social norms nor a region of radical contingency. Instead of a one-way determination between individual and community, there is a circle of influence. Nor is the community as 'in-between' a transparent medium of social intercourse.

This topic of *sensus communis* is taken up in chapter 3 of this thesis which examines Kant's modernist reconstruction of taste, judgment and *sensus communis* as aesthetic categories housed in a distinct domain or faculty sealed off from the two other 'mainstream' domains of knowledge and practical legislation, which correspond with the faculties of Intellect (*Verstand*) and Reason (*Verstandung*) respectively. This hiving off of sensibility, taste, emotions and particularity into a domain separate from mainstream knowledge and social *praxis* institutes a separation between the humanities and the human sciences that, according to Gadamer, elides the dependence of the human sciences on the prior cultivation of sensibility and *sensus communis*.

PRAXIS VERSUS TECHNE

The second difference between the classical account of politics and the modern approach, according to Habermas, is that the classical account distinguishes between two forms of practice—*praxis* and *techne*—and insists that politics is the domain of *praxis* only:

> The old doctrine of politics referred exclusively to *praxis*, in the narrow sense of the Greeks. This had nothing to do with *techne*, the skillful production of artifacts and the expert mastery of objectified tasks. (*TP*, p. 42)

Praxis is action, whether deeds or words, based on the cognitive capacities of *phronesis*, the art of acting, not on *techne*, an art of making. As a region in which equals interact and respond to one another, each move in the unfolding narrative of political life is an event that throws up a new situation, a situation that bears only resemblances and analogies to earlier situations. Acting in these emergent situations cannot therefore be a matter of simply transferring a pre-formulated rule or procedure. Insofar as *praxis* is the actions of deed and word of participants in this unfolding narrative of move and counter-move, claim and response, it is an outcome of the *phronesis* of the actor and grounded in their *hexis*, their background orientation and sensibility. Thus the state of the *polis* is dependent on

the quality of the *hexis* of its citizens, and so forming the *ethos* of the *polis*, the city, is continuous with forming the *ethos*, the practical virtues, of the citizens:

> In the final instance, politics was always directed toward the formation and cultivation of character; it proceeded pedagogically not technically. (*TP*, p. 42)

In classical times, this pedagogy of the *polis* was transacted as the oratory of the court, the assembly and other occasions of judgment, deliberation or celebration. Life-long learning was inherent in the public occasions and life of the community. The *techne* of this pedagogy, this *Bildung*, of the political community was rhetoric. *Praxis* insofar as it was a matter of public speaking, especially the right word at the right time (*kairos*), was construed as the province of the art of rhetoric. By contrast, modernity is largely predicated on a suspicion of rhetoric and its dubious ways with words—eloquence—and is committed to replacing it with a sober discourse based on scientific principles:

> For Hobbes … the maxim promulgated by Bacon, of *scientia propter potentiam*, is self-evident: mankind owes its greatest advances to technology, and above all to the political technique for the correct establishment of the state. (*TP*, p. 42)

PRAXIS AND EPISTEME

The third and final respect adduced by Habermas in contrasting the classical sense of politics as an exercise of *praxis* and the modern specification of politics as a scientific deployment of political techniques in controlling society, is their contrasting views of what sorts of knowledge are possible and appropriate in politics. For Aristotle and the Sophists whose understandings he was retrieving, there was an impassible discontinuity between the capacities of *episteme* and the ontological and epistemic properties of the realm of *praxis*.

> Aristotle emphasizes that politics, and practical philosophy in general, cannot be compared in its claim to knowledge with a rigorous science, with the apodictic *episteme*. For its subject matter, the Just and the Excellent, in its context of a variable and contingent *praxis*, lacks ontological constancy as well as logical necessity. The capacity of practical philosophy is *phronesis*, a prudent understanding of the situation, and on this the tradition of classical politics has continued to base itself, by way of the *prudentia* of Cicero, down to Burke's 'prudence'. (*TP*, p. 42)

For the classical tradition, the complexity, unpredictability, ambiguity, overdetermination and dependence of events and situations on the responses and reactions of those involved meant that there could be no predictive science of the events of politics. Thus, reaching a common understanding of what happened, of what is happening, of what might happen, or of what to do, is not a matter of each participant withdrawing into their study to consult or construct theorems of *scientia civilis* or political science, but a matter of engaging in public dialogue in which speakers try to persuade others to come to a common understanding of the situation.

By contrast, the modern exercise of the science of politics is framed, not as a scene of persuasion, but as a matter of crafting policy on the basis of a scientific knowledge of society. Modern politics is oriented to the formation of institutions separate from the rhetorical shaping of the comportment of citizens:

> Hobbes … wishes to make politics serve to secure knowledge of the essential nature of justice itself, namely of the laws and compacts. This assertion already complies with the ideal of knowledge originating in Hobbes' time, the ideal of the new science, which implies that we only know an object to the extent that we ourselves can produce it. (*TP*, p. 42)

This sense that politics can be framed as the exercise of a scientific knowledge concerned with designing the social order, finds its correlative conception in the notion of education as an object of scientifically-based policy. This construal of education focuses attention on the institutional policy framework of education in terms of its planning documents, reporting functions and so on, and elides or backgrounds the actual dialogic and rhetorical processes within the classroom through which difference is negotiated and acknowledged. The actual *praxis* of education is thereby construed as 'implementation'. In recent times the imposition of Competency Based Training (CBT) and Outcomes Based Training on vocational education and training has enacted this shift of attention from the conversations of education as a narrative of unpredictable rhetoric intent on forming a consensual community to a focus to the policies and formats for documenting the goals, genres and outcomes of education as a calculable output of human capital.

HABERMAS' ATTEMPT TO SYNTHESIZE

Having outlined these three differences between the classical approach to politics embodied in practical philosophy and the modern approach articulated by Hobbes, Habermas formulates his own project as an attempt to take advantage of the certainty provided by modern scientific knowledge whilst simultaneously redeeming the attributes of *phronesis* as a form of knowledge: 'How can the promise of social philosophy, to furnish an analysis of the interrelationships of social life, be redeemed without relinquishing the practical orientation of classical politics?' (*TP*, p. 44).

However, Habermas' subsequent intellectual career turns more and more towards a search for a tribunal of practical reason, 'the promise of social philosophy', which can secure humanity from the radical deception and delusion, the systematic misunderstanding resulting from the pathologies of ideology, that he suffered as a youth. Thus, on balance, the certainties of science have in fact weighed more heavily on Habermas' later thinking than the dignities, *pathos* and storied contingency of situated *praxis*.

This Cartesian-like quest for certainty is not something I share. I am more concerned with protecting diversity, difference, and particularity than testing them in the tribunal of reason. Thus, the question shaping the task of this thesis is: how to retrieve for the work of adult education, in particular ABE, an inheritance that precedes its subjection and disciplining by the legal and administrative apparatuses of modern 'social philosophy'? Instead of Habermas' project of formulating a social science that includes the capacities of *phronesis*, my project is to re-institute and re-value the capacities of *phronesis* exercised in the interchanges of teacher and student, in opposition to a social science that is fundamentally and inevitably mortgaged to a conception of education as a matter of administrative policy. McCarthy (1993) captures this difference between a hermeneutic focus on coming to a situated understanding as opposed to a theoreticist concern for universal, context-free formulations:

> The interest behind hermeneutics is not an interest in bringing a certain object domain under theoretical control or submitting it to a critique of ideology; it is an interest in coming to an understanding through dialogue—with others in my own culture, with alien cultures, with the past—about common concerns of human life. The social inquirer is not, as may be mistakenly supposed, a neutral observer, explainer, predictor, not is she a sovereign critic who may safely assume her own cognitive or moral superiority. She is, however virtually, always also a partner in dialogue, a participant, even when observing or criticizing. (McCarthy, 1993, p. 128)

COLONIZATION OF THE LIFE-WORLD

It was Gadamer who convinced me that this hermeneutic task was not a utopian or deluded exercise and that the classical sense of *praxis* is still relevant and potentially empowering as a perspective. So, in a sense I am embracing Habermas' phrase 'the colonization of the life-world by social systems' even more emphatically than Habermas himself, because I have relinquished his desire for a universal forum in which the rationality of particular universal norms are established. I do not reject the quest for universality out of hand, in fact hermeneutics is defined by its encounter with the other, nor do I reject the role of the universal as a utopian perspective for criticizing the present—I go into these matters more fully later—but I do reject an analytic search for universality that attempts to avoid the long hermeneutic march of *phronesis* through a 'case by case' engagement with particulars.

TWO FORMS OF PRACTICE: *PRAXIS* AND *POIESIS*

It is this issue of the intersection of two competing ways of construing the governance or bringing of reason to social life which lies at the heart of this thesis. The *praxis* paradigm arises out of the invention of the *polis* defined in terms of equality by ancient Greece as an arena in which men engaged in *praxis*, acts of speech and deed, aimed at forming a common view of the matters at issue. The analytic paradigm, termed *poiesis* by ancient Greeks, by contrast, consists of the imposition of procedures and activities that will achieve a pre-determined outcome. *Praxis* is committed to the cultivation and acknowledgement of the judgment of participants insofar as *praxis* is a matter of the discernment and weighting of the circumstances, properties, precedents and potentialities of a situation by the exercise of practical wisdom, *phronesis*. *Poiesis*, by contrast, already possesses a clear sense of the situation and the intended outcome and is thus concerned to implement strategies that will impress its forms on the material to produce those outcomes.

Praxis is the words and deeds of those freely participating in public life, and *phronesis* is the comportmental insight and judgment underwriting engagement in *praxis*. This means that *phronesis* is not a form of knowledge or skill that can be directly taught: it is 'a feel for the game', what Bourdieu

terms *le sens practique*. *Techne*, by contrast, operates as a more stable scheme and possesses a clear sense of both its end, as object, goal or state of affairs, and its means, the procedures for achieving these outcomes.

Historically the dialectic between these two forms of action, *praxis* and *poiesis*, and their generative forms of knowing, *phronesis* and *techne*, have taken many forms. A defining feature of modernity is its commitment to replacing the instabilities and uncertainties of *praxis* and *phronesis* in social life with the predictability and calculability of *poiesis* and *techne*. Yet even for modernists such as Giddens, the continual disembedding and re-embedding of analytic abstractions takes on a more 'phrenetic' and ephemeral flavor. In the shift from modernity to reflexive modernity (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994), the procedures of reason and rationalization no longer connote a reassuring aura of calm or permanence. In fact, the improvised and ad hoc character of contemporary administration heightens the pervasive sense of both 'risk' and 'irony' that characterizes reflexive modernity. Even *poiesis* is now situated with one eye on 'the whole' within which it is designed to function, a situation that is constantly contested and changing. To this extent we could say that even technical knowledge and technology are increasingly hermeneutic, context-sensitive and *praxis*-like.

BACK BEHIND HABERMAS TO GADAMER

This thesis, of course, is more concerned with education than with 'political action' and more with Gadamer than Habermas, yet the fact that I begin with political theory is not an arbitrary decision. The critical difference between the classical sense of politics and the modern sense of politics is that the former is pedagogic whereas the latter is essentially instrumental and procedural. Whereas in the classical conception education and politics are intertwined, in the modern conception education is consigned to a sub-system designated and designed to produce human capital. Like the classical approach, I am interested to reestablish a connection between education as a concern for the formation of individuals and politics as a concern for the formation of the *polis*, the city or community.

Likewise, the decision to begin this thesis with Habermas rather than Gadamer is no arbitrary choice. Habermas is more widely read in the English-speaking academic world and, ironically, his appropriation and critique of Gadamer's *magnum opus* was translated into English and widely read before *TM* itself. What is more, the initial translation of *TM* was unreliable and misleading and it was not until the re-translation in 1989 that an acceptable English text was available. Thus, even though Gadamer exerted a powerful presence in German philosophy and in the German human sciences generally, in the English-speaking world, despite being the first major Continental philosopher to visit American universities and thereby pave the way for regular visits by French philosophers such as Ricoeur, Derrida and Foucault, Gadamer remained a less-read scholar than other exponents of the continental philosophic tradition. In short, for an English-speaking readership, Habermas is the more familiar figure and thus a more accommodating point of entry into the Gadamerian oeuvre.

However, in my view Habermas defines practical reason and communicative action too narrowly by framing them as concerned with the validity of a universal normative order on the model of Kant's tribunal of reason, thereby separating them off from the situated, contexted and contested judgments and rhetorical interchanges of *phronesis*. It is precisely the latter, a concern for the quality of *praxis* and *sensus communis*, that I am concerned to foreground and re-value.

MODERNITY AS TRADITIONAL

Unlike Habermas who, as we have seen, construes the classical sense of *praxis* as 'hopelessly old-fashioned to us', Gadamer insists that the classical sense of *praxis* and the *habitus* cultivated by the study of rhetoric to support this practical wisdom, *phronesis*, has not been surpassed by the emergence of modernity. For Gadamer, modernity does not signify an impassible moment of discontinuity or epistemological break in the tradition, rather it is a moment of self-misunderstanding and elision. For Gadamer, modernity is both radically new yet also inescapably in dialogue with tradition even if only in its efforts to reconstruct itself beyond tradition.

For Gadamer, it is a sign of the finitude of the Enlightenment, of its own prejudice and limited insight into itself, that it would think that it can begin again with a 'clean slate' and escape the formative 'prejudices' of the past by reliance on the self-evidence of 'method'. Because he does not acknowledge an unsurpassable rupture between ancient and modern times, Gadamer insists that we are still subject to the effects of ancient traditions, their texts and their practices. The traditions of practical philosophy as a cultivation of *phronesis* and *praxis* and the tradition of *ars rhetorica* in which the contours of cultural content (*topoi*) on the one hand, and the demands, opportunities, re-

sponsibilities and strategies of speaking, on the other, are systematically studied, have been largely denied and eroded over the last two or more centuries.

RETRIEVING *PRAXIS*

Gadamer's project is to re-assert the cognitive import of art and *phronesis*, and thereby reinstate the significance of sensibility, *doxa*, and the uniqueness of the individual in face of the imperialism of modern science and universality. With the increasing problematization of scientistic and positivist assumptions, both practical philosophy and rhetoric are increasingly invoked as horizons for thinking about the present and deliberating about the future. This is their function in this thesis. I am not suggesting that either tradition be imposed as a regulative framework on ABE education, but that they be the horizons in terms of which we reflect on and evaluate what transpires in ABE both as a field of educational governance and within its classrooms.

And so it is Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic, not Habermas' reconstructive science that this thesis draws on as resource in working towards a formulation of ABE as a region of adult education which nurtures the background comportment of individuals (virtue) and of the community (*sensus communis*) thereby underwriting the quality of *phronesis* and *praxis*.

FOUR MOTIFS IN GADAMER

There are four motifs in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic that I am keen to appropriate: first, hermeneutic as comprised by three essential moments —understanding, interpretation and application; secondly, hermeneutic experience as a dialogic encounter with alien texts that challenge, speak to and disclose the finitude of the horizons of one's life-world; thirdly, the art of rhetoric as a cultivation of the *habitus* and comportment underpinning *phronesis* and *praxis*; and fourly, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as an appropriation of Aristotelian practical philosophy for modern (postmodern) times in which interchanges with the alien, the other, the different characterize the social and political life-worlds in which we live out our lives.

FIRST MOTIF: THE THREE MOMENTS OF HERMENEUTIC UNDERSTANDING

One aspect of literacy that is widely acknowledged is what we might informally label 'the basics'. This is the fact that to read or write written text depends on being able to decode or encode sounds, words and sentences. In the popular mind, this is still the essence of literacy, and the cycles of moral panic over standards in education regularly issue strident calls for a return to 'the basics', to 'phonics' or to 'grammar' and 'parts of speech'. However, right from the earliest times of interpreting texts such as legal documents or other texts at issue in a court case, it has been recognized that a dependence on 'the basics' alone will not disclose the meaning of a text. Even when every aspect of a text has been accurately decoded, there will remain problems about what it means, problems of obscurity, ambiguity or contradiction. These problems demand a different angle of approach which has traditionally been known as interpretation or hermeneutics. Interpretation concentrates on other avenues of divining 'what the text means' apart from decoding 'what the words mean'. A text needs to be interpreted. These strategies of interpretation were regularized as early as Cicero, and have been used throughout the rhetorical tradition right up through Augustine, the Protestant Reformers, the Renaissance humanists, to Schleiermacher.

INTERPRETATION

Interpretation means that the meaning of a text or utterance may still unavailable naturally or intuitively even after decoding. Understanding in this case relies on interpretation. The paradigm of the dependence of understanding on prior interpretation is cross-cultural communication. In cross-cultural communication, there can be systematic misunderstanding that requires sustained interpretative attention even to bring to awareness. Insofar as reading and writing operate in a region of potentially systematic misunderstanding, the basics are not on their own sufficient; interpretation is also needed to mediate the incommensurate discourses at work. Fundamentally, interpretation is translation between incommensurable languages and forms of life. This concept of interpretation came to the fore most emphatically in nineteenth century textual and historical hermeneutics, with the historicist insistence on the discontinuity between the text and the reader because the text functions as an utterance, event or speech-act in its own historical context. In this way, understanding a text could no longer be taken as a straightforward task of decoding 'the basics', rather understanding itself now

depended on a work of interpretation bent on interpreting the times of the text in order to retrieve a sense of the original context and the underlying intention of the author.

APPLICATION

However, whilst not retreating from the need for interpretation, Gadamer adds a third 'moment' to understanding—application. Taking his lead from the hermeneutic practices of the law and of preaching, Gadamer insists that understanding does not consist simply in excavating the 'author's intention' nor even 'the author's unconscious', but in bringing the text into dialogic contact with the context of the reader's present situation. This interpretation of the text in terms of its application to the present situation will in turn open up new facets of the original text. New dimensions of meaning will be added to the original text. Thus, in Gadamer's view a text is not a finalized or closed structure that achieved its fullness of meaning at the moment of authorship, but rather an unfinalized historical being that accumulates more meaning as a result of new interpretations and applications.

This emphasis on application is what distinguishes Gadamer from many other hermeneutic approaches. As we shall see, this concern with the specificities of the context of reception is also a critical theme in rhetoric, jurisprudence and ethics. In the law it is framed as the rule of equity, in rhetoric it is a concern with *circumstancia*, and in ethics it is a matter of *phronesis*. Thus, historically, the motif of application is a concern for the variability of circumstances and situations, in contrast to a fundamentalist subjection of the particular to the rigid rule of a law or text. In Will's (1988) terms, application is a concern with the ampliative aspects of the governance of norms in opposition to a replicative or deductivist approach. In this way a literate life, a live lived by reference to texts does not mean a rigid fundamentalist 'living by the book'. Instead it means a considered reflective discernment of what a text has to say, what it means, what it could mean, in this situation here now.

SECOND MOTIF: HERMENEUTIC EXPERIENCE AS SELF-UNDERSTANDING

The second motif that is important for appropriating Gadamer to the context of ABE is his claim that hermeneutic experience is a dialogic encounter with alien texts that challenges, changes and discloses the finitude of the horizons of one's current life-world. What this means is that the practice of reading and writing is not a matter of learning things about the text, but also a matter of shifts in self-understanding. Education as a narrative of experience means encountering texts and utterances that reveal one's limits, that show up contradictions or limiting prejudices in one's current understandings, attitudes and comportment. Hermeneutic experience means that the text reads us as much as we read the text. Reading is not the encounter between a subject and an object, but the dialogic encounter between two worlds. The task of reading thus becomes bringing these two worlds into some sort of coherent relationship that does justice (*equitaes*) to the peculiarities of both worlds. Reading is in this way also a matter of the exercise of *phronesis*, not a matter of subsuming one world into another.

Hermeneutic experience is the extended work of coming to terms with a text, the constant projection of what it means followed by the inevitable discovery that one has still misunderstood. The fact that the reader or listener can only project a meaning in terms of their current horizons of meaning (termed *Befindenkeit* ['pre-structuring'] by Heidegger and *Vorurteil* ['prejudice'] by Gadamer) is what is called the 'hermeneutic circle'. This circle is not viewed by either Heidegger or Gadamer as a vicious circle in which subjects are prisoner to their life-world. On their view, this is how we live and know. All experience and learning is a matter of negation, a matter of learning that what we thought we knew is not so. Learning is unlearning. Learning is a movement from limiting prejudices to less limiting prejudices, not a movement from ignorance or initial prejudice to transparent knowledge of an object. This motif of the hermeneutic circle as an ontological structure through which our life-world is shaped and reshaped means that insofar as the classroom is a scene of hermeneutic experience, it is a scene of transformation of the ontological *habitus* or comportment underpinning student understanding and interpretation of things.

THIRD MOTIF: RHETORIC AS THE PEDAGOGY OF PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

The third motif I appropriate from Gadamer is one that he does not explicitly thematize in *TM* itself, even though in another sense it pervades the entire text. This is his sense that the art of rhetoric is the educational locus for the cultivation of the *habitus* and comportment underpinning *phronesis* and *praxis*. Ancient rhetoric was an *ars* taught to the ruling class to inculcate the comportment, knowledge and skills needed to be an 'orator', a public speaker participating in the power plays of public discourse. Although it is now almost invisible, rhetoric possessed a highly articulated and theorized

technicality that was reflected and acted on for over two millennia. Modern understandings of literacy which are not much more than one hundred years old, three hundred years at most (if one traces literacy back to the Cartesian and Ramist notions of textuality as the transparent conduit of pre-linguistic 'ideas') pales into insignificance. And in fact, modern literacy is the unwitting continuation of the practices and exercises of *Grammatica*, the other language study which was propaedeutic to *ars Rhetorica* in the traditional curriculum.

Whereas the notion of literacy usually foregrounds the receptive face of literacy, reading, especially reading 'the literal meaning' of the text, rhetoric focused on the productive face, speaking and writing. However, to speak means minimally, first, knowing what to say and secondly, how to say it. Knowing what to say is matter of *inventio* which is a matter of learning the commonplaces (*locus communis, topoi*) of a field of concern. *Topoi* are the headings, the terms around which discussions and disputes, differences and mediations, cluster. *Topoi* are the issues of contention that organize the discourse of a field. Notice that *topoi* are not names of objects or entities. 'Topics' are what discourse organize itself around and in terms of. Knowing what to say is a matter of knowing what could be said, what might be said, what has been said, a matter of knowing what is open to being said and what is closed.

The other capacity a speaker needs, besides *inventio*, is to know how to organize and phrase what they intend to say. In ancient rhetoric this task of 'wording meaning' is theorized and practiced under the headings of *Compositio*, *Elocutio* and *Ornatus*. *Compositio* is concerned with the organization of the speech as a textual performance and is concerned with the unfolding of the speech in its activity stages, minimally opening (*exordium*), claim (narrative), reasoning (*argumentum*) and closing (*peroration*). *Elocutio* is concerned with the choice of words to persuasively 'color' the matter at issue so that the point of view (*partes*) being argued gains credibility. *Ornatus* is concerned with the appropriateness of one's text in the situation in light of the particular situation, audience, power relations, perceptions, agendas and so on.

Persuasion aimed at convincing an audience or reader must engage their 'prejudices' across the whole gamut of dimensions—intellectual, emotional, social, interpersonal and moral. The orator must make their interpretation of the situation feel compelling and right. This attention to the rhetorical effects of language and its arrangements is often not attended to in contemporary courses of literacy which define written prose as a transparent conduit of 'information', and consign any attention to the sonorous properties of language to literary studies. This leaves the organization of phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs to a barren and formalistic 'parts of speech' grammar that neglects the crucial rhetorical dimensions of composition. In this way, vital dimensions of public language as a rhythm of sound orchestrating and staging a persuasive rhythm of meanings is neglected.

FOURTH MOTIF: FROM RHETORIC TO HERMENEUTIC

The fourth and final motif I wish to appropriate from Gadamer is his framing of philosophical hermeneutic as consonant with post-modern times in which interchanges with the alien, the other, the different, the paradoxical, the *aporetic*, the *atopic* are definitive of the social and political life-worlds in which we live out our lives.

According to Gadamer, when there is a strong cultural imperative to re-establish contact with founding or classic texts, hermeneutics and the task of reading as a re-collection of a lost or faded heritage and identity of the community comes to the fore and displaces the perspective of rhetoric. In such a situation, there is a fundamental shift from the agentism of rhetoric to the more receptive stance of hermeneutic. He points to many examples of hermeneutic as a work of retrieval—the readings of Homeric literature in the fourth century BC, twelfth century translations of Greek texts, especially Aristotle, the Renaissance revival of Ciceronian rhetoric and ancient literary texts, the Reformation revival of the Bible as a vernacular text, the nineteenth century revival of folk literature, and finally, the Heideggerian retrieval of pre-metaphysical readings of ancient Greek philosophy.

However, he insists that whereas the Renaissance humanists could still consider themselves to be living within the same horizon as ancient masters such as Cicero and Quintilian, this possibility is no longer available to us:

> The [hermeneutic] problem clearly does not arise as long as one is involved directly in taking up and continuing a specific intellectual tradition. It does not arise, for instance, with the Renaissance humanists, who rediscovered classical antiquity and tried to be the successors of the ancient authors, imitating them, indeed, openly competing with them, rather than merely 'understanding' them. The hermeneutic problem only emerges clearly when there is no powerful tradition present

> to absorb one's own attitude into itself and when one is aware of confronting an alien tradition to which he has never belonged or one he no longer unquestioningly accepts. (*PH*, p. 46)

This is why for us hermeneutics tends to take precedence over rhetoric, or rather rhetoric must become hermeneutic. The traditions of practical philosophy and rhetoric are now alien and strange to us. To retrieve them and learn from them is a matter of appropriation, not just understanding (as it was for the Renaissance humanist) nor just interpretation (as it was for nineteenth century philologists). To reach back to these traditions as resources entails a radical unlearning. The primary exemplars of this radical unlearning are Heidegger's destruction of metaphysics and Derrida's deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence. Gadamer does not take as radical a stance as either Heidegger or Derrida, but he does insist that the meaning of these traditions cannot be released as resources for the present by mere repetition or imitation. This is why any retrieval must take the form of an hermeneutic because hermeneutic is precisely an attitude of faithfulness to the otherness of the text, speaker or tradition one is coming to understand.

CHAPTER 2 FRAMING THE CONTEXT

SECTION 1: REFLEXIVITY OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL LIFE

In this Section I bring ABE into dialogue with the social-theoretical discourses of modernity/post-modernity. In this way I hope to point to a convergence between the themes of contemporary social theorists and the ancient theory of practical philosophy: both construe social life as more *praxis*, than *poiesis*.

NOT SUBSUMPTION BY SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

But, in adducing social theory, I do not subsume ABE into social theory so that ABE is simply another particular sub-domain to be brought under the governance of sociological concepts. I am not wanting to produce a 'sociology of ABE' by construing ABE as simply an effect or instance of a social reality captured by the one and only master-discourse of the discipline of sociology. Thus I am not enframing ABE as an instance of sociological categories nor as a field determined by sociological conditions. This would be to presume on the 'truth' of socio-theoretical categories, their universality, and their application to ABE. Instead, I construe social-theoretic theories as dialogic interlocutors that ABE can listen to (interpret) and explore ('try on') as analogies, as metaphors, as ways of acting and understanding that can assist us shape our own actions and understanding of our situation. In short, this excursus is a dialogue, a conversation between ABE and social theory, not a subsumption into or submission to a master discourse.

NOT SELF-SUFFICIENT MONAD

On the other hand, nor am I wanting to protect ABE from its sociohistorical context or from the larger social, cultural, economic or institutional forces, events or practices circulating in the present conjuncture. This section is not just a background or orienting 'Life and Times of ABE' before moving on to the real task of specifying the autonomous, finalized, self-contained 'essence of ABE', an essence that can only be captured within a 'theory of ABE'. I do not think ABE has its own self-defining identity standing over against its surrounding sociohistorical contexts. ABE is largely constructed out of (construals of) the same 'stuff' as other fields of *praxis*.

So, rather than frame ABE as, on the one hand, a self-sufficient '*Ding'* or 'Field' or, on the other, as transparent medium of its determining conditions, I want instead to frame ABE as a more agentive, more contingent engagement with the constellation of (discursive, institutional, power, physical and economic) realities circulating in present times. ABE is neither a passive effect nor self-sufficient agent in relation to the other realities it mediates and transacts with. ABE is neither a transparent individual whose particularity is sucked out of it by its subsumption into the universal discourse of social theory, nor a particular that frames itself as the Subject and as the source of its own history, actions, events and meanings and self-interpretations.

ABE AS BOTH AGENT AND VICTIM

I want to frame ABE as ambiguously located within both heterogeneity and autonomy, like any other modern reality. I want to locate ABE as a modern project, as a project committed to autonomy and self-determination yet subjected to the reality of community and coordination with other groupings and projects, a project riven by the dualities of agency and system, internal and external, essence and context, self-sufficiency and dependence, identity and otherness.

What I am especially interested in is the way social theory is reworking its founding concepts in order to come to terms with the new realities we live in, with, for and against. Or better: the new realities we live; the new worlds we live in; the new lives we lead. These realities are both inside us and outside us. We recognize ourselves in the other and the other in ourselves. Irrespective of truth or falsity, I am interested in the twists and turns of contemporary social theory as it tries to read the times (*Zeitdiagnosis*). I want to adduce social theory as a field that is attempting to rework its concepts and its self-understandings in order to address the new realities it finds itself in. Or: the new realities it finds itself to be.

ADDRESSING THE NEW TIMES

I am thus interested in social theory as a locus of reflection and concept formation attuned to the dissolution of its object 'society' and its efforts to reformulate its categories to articulate the new constellation in which it (we) find itself (ourselves). I want to adduce this practical reflection within social theory as exemplary for ABE, as a model of the sort of reflexivity and reformulation we must undertake to re-specify ABE so it too addresses these new times. So, instead of adducing social theory as in possession of a master discourse or transcendental vocabulary or set of concepts that can be 'applied' to ABE, I am construing it as a field that is also itself 'in process', a field that is 'on the way' to articulating its world. Social theory is not already in possession of its world; it has not mastered its world—it is not 'the Subject'.

I invoke social theory precisely because it *is* de-centring itself and attempting to learn a new relationship with its world. As classical social theory in the world of 'organized modernity', social theory did construe itself as (potentially) master of its world, as the master interpreter unearthing the constitutive conditions of modernity and as master legislator formulating the regulative norms for organizing the conditions of order (formulated as efficiency, justice and happiness) of modernity. But because social theory is the discourse 'of' modernity, not just 'about' modernity, the sea-changes in modernity have also ruptured the self-understanding and discourse of social theory.

ADJACENT FIELDS

Insofar as I am deploying the world of social theory as a paradigm or exemplar to provide ABE with a model, an analogy, for shaping its own world (not as a theoretical model, or metaphor, 'of' ABE), I could have adduced many other 'worlds', 'practices' (MacIntyre) or discourse communities. As a discourse community, ABE could with equal profit look to many other adjacent discourse communities for instruction about how to articulate its world. The emergence and articulation—discursively, institutionally and practically—of other exemplary fields of 'organized modernity': public schooling, public health, mass universities and trade unions which face similar challenges. Perhaps even more illuminating would be the more recently formed discourse communities of 'disorganized modernity' such as: mediation studies, community development studies, environmental studies, and human rights.

Especially illuminating would be the adjacent academic fields of: anthropology, linguistics, literary studies. Even more exemplary would be: school English, composition studies, cultural studies, feminism, post-colonialism, subaltern studies, indigenous studies and queer studies. These latter fields are what we might term 'sister fields': they are positioned in the same ambiguous relationship to modernity. They are all concerned with 'the other' of modernity (the pre-modern, the vernacular, the illiterate, women, non-European cultures, indigenous cultures, the sexually deviant), 'others' whose incorporation into modernity will finally 'end' (as in 'bring to an end' i.e. block or stop (e.g. post-modernism); or as in 'bring to completion' (e.g. Habermas) the project of modernity. Again, to make a crude statement, we could say: These groupings have stuck in the gullet of modernity; they have not been digestible; they are poisoning and disorienting the organism of modernity itself.

FROM ALL TO ABE

Under the label of Adult Language and Literacy (ALL), ABE quite explicitly defined itself as a missionary outpost of modernity. What I will argue is that ABE has articulated itself within the horizon of what Wagner (1994) terms 'organized modernity' and that this paradigm must now be refigured. Crudely, I will suggest that ABE has (at great self-cost) struggled to attach itself to the disappearing train of 'organized modernity', instead of focussing on participating in the conflictful formulation of the emergence of the new world of 'reflexive modernity'. My underlying thesis is that the world towards which we are moving is more congruent with the world of *praxis* than with the world of *poiesis*, and that an education in an ABE formulated in terms of hermeneutic practical philosophy and *phronesis* is more apt and fruitful than a training into the procedural norms and genres of modernity.

In bringing ABE and social theory into dialogue, I will use the formulations of Beck and Giddens as representative of social theory. This does not imply any claim to their truth or superiority to other competing formulations. I have used them simply because they are 'at hand'. The themes I draw out of them can be found in a wide range of other social theorists working to formulate the difference between classic modernity and the times in which we now live.

REFLEXIVE MODERNIZATION

First, I will draw on Beck's notion of reflexive modernization as an horizon for framing ABE in relation to the epochal transitions we are witness to. I suggest that this opposition between simple industrial modernity and reflexive modernity provides an illuminating metaphor for framing the difference between Adult Language and Literacy (ALL) and ABE. ALL is a training into a generic decoding semiotic adapted to industrial modernity; ABE is a dialogic playing of and with a hermeneutics of construing self and other, self and situation, a hermeneutics attuned to the individualized *habitus* demanded by reflexive modernization.

ALL is socialization into the given roles of a stable social structure, whereas ABE provides adults with the tools, the comportment, the 'equipment', needed in a world in which they are forced to constantly reinvent themselves and both cope with and contribute to the reinvention of the institutions and practices of modernity itself. To continue with Beck's metaphor: ALL is the industrial disciplining of social life, ABE is the reflexive disciplining of discipline, a discipline disciplining itself; and to the extent that it is individuals as well as institutions that are engaged in this meta-disciplining, ABE is self-disciplining, the self-monitoring of disciplined action by the self. ALL is learning to follow given rules; ABE is learning to re-learn (i.e. to reformulate, re-invent) rules, learning the meta-rules for ruling the rules—i.e. learning to change the game. ALL is subsumption into preformulated norms; ABE is reflective appropriation of norms. (Notice the parallel with Will's contrast between the deductive and ampliative dimensions of governance.)

SIMPLE MODERNITY AS PROCEDURALIZATION

Beck argues that simple modernity, industrial society, is undergoing an epochal transformation into an more radical form of modernity, reflexive modernity. Simple modernity can be defined as the proceduralization of social and economic life. Proceduralization is the process of problematising and thus foregrounding and thematizing *the how* of things, in place of the story of things. Rather than focusing on the meaning of things, modernity focuses on how to make them happen. The synthetic meaning of narrating is displaced by the analytic chaining of causally effect-ing procedures (rule-governed action). Proceduralization isolates domains of activity and analyses these domains into component acts or events in order to establish normative routines (procedures) that bring about their outcome with necessity.

We could think of proceduralization as directing the 'light of reason' on everyday life in the sense that it attempts to align the components of an activity into a chain of causality that necessarily issues in a conclusion. This chain of causal/logical order is also broken up into steps that display the internal movement from one link to the next. This means that it is transparent to a surveilling intelligence (whether inside the actor or in a supervisor) whether the activity sequence is being followed or deviated from. The proceduralization of simple modernity displaces action based on attunement with the object and context of situated action (*habitus*) and replaces it with action as the implementation and self-monitoring of explicit rules.

REFLEXIVE MODERNITY: THE SIDE-EFFECT SPEAKS UP

The shift from industrial modernity to reflexive modernity is, according to Giddens, a process of radicalization in which industrial modernity is itself reflexively taken apart (disembedded) and put back together in a new way (re-embedding) in the same way that industrial modernity disembedded the practices of traditional societies and re-embedded them in factories, armies, hospitals, schooling and so on. The norms and routines of industrialism are being shown up as just as 'irrational' in their inefficiencies and the suffering they cause as the customs, magic and superstition they displaced. Modernity itself now needs to be 'modernized'.

Reflexive modernity emerges when industrial society presses so insistently and intrusively on its environment and contextual parameters that its own activities change the very environment and context in which it operates. 'The part' thus impacts on and re-works 'the whole', to use the terms of hermeneutics. This means that rules and routine activities that within industrial society could be taken for granted, become problematic in reflexive modernity; the relationships between action and outcome, action and meaning lose their stability. 'Doing the right thing' in the sense of following the rule or norm, i.e. doing more of the same, now has unintended consequences that displace the intended goal.

LABORATORY AND REAL WORLD

Industrial society was defined by the institution of strong boundaries between fields of activity thereby separating internalities from externalities, the field of activity from the context or environment of that activity, and objects of attention from irrelevant distractions. This process of abstraction and isolation through strong boundaries was symbolized by the boundary between laboratory and world. In theory, industrial society is meant to unveil the hidden structures and causalities of reality in the sanitized purity of the laboratory before exporting the new technologies to the real world. These boundaries have now broken down. The security of laboratory has been supplanted by the synergies of application. The world itself has now become the laboratory: the earth itself has been and still is 'the laboratory' for the effects of nuclear physics, organic chemistry and world climate change. The boundary between laboratory and 'the outside world', between the context of discovery and the context of application, is now permeable. In short, the externalities and side effects are now projecting themselves back into the field itself as more important than the original purpose—either as environmental side-effects, as critical public opinion or as emergent countervailing social movements. For example, what is intended to have meaning at the level of self-esteem and eroticism, turns into a medical nightmare: I am thinking of silicone breast implants. We can sum up this process whereby the side-effect becomes the main effect in a slogan modeled on 'the empire strikes back': the context of application strikes back.

REFLEXIVITY

Common to all these cases is the idea that what was marginal, external, peripheral, irrelevant, 'someone else's business', 'something we are still working on', 'what we are going to do research on next', now strikes back as the dominant issue. Beck defines this dominance of the side-effect as 'reflexivity', and he insists that it exists whether anyone knows about it or has mobilized social power around it or not. Reflexivity is an ontological shift in the relationship between action and consequence, a shift that means that an action can no longer insulate itself from the full range of its effects. Reflexivity is a consequentialism that is forced to acknowledge *all* the effects, especially side-effects, of its activities. Not only that, reflexivity is a consequentialism that must acknowledge that it does not know *beforehand* which effects will turn out to be side-effects and which dominant effects. That is, reflexivity means that the upshot of the interaction between activity and context of action is so contingent, unpredictable and contingent, so open to interpretation, that what will count as 'the upshot' will be a matter of discussion and will almost certainly not be what was intended. Even though an agent may compliantly enact the schematic structures of an actional or discursive genre, the upshot kicks against the grain.

REFLEXIVITY: FROM PROCEDURAL *POIESIS* TO SITUATED *PRAXIS*

What we have here is a shift in the meaning of action. But, as we have already noticed, it is a shift from *poiesis* to *praxis*, from *techne* to *phronesis*—a shift that concurs with the recovery of practical philosophy as a framing of reflection and interpretation. Whereas industrial society is based on the notion of action as an instrumental relation between a goal and the rationally validated selection of means to bring about that goal, in reflexive modernity, action is a matter of steering a course of action through a shifting constellations of intersecting fields of force.

Instrumental action depended on being able to separate the field of action from the intrusion of contextual 'noise', thereby allowing the identification of independent variables and causal dependencies as points of leverage for (efficient and effective) acting. The paradigm of simple modernity was the total institution or disciplinary institution such as the laboratory, the army, the factory, the prison or hospital, the nation state, all institutions that institute a strong boundary between inside and outside and thus simplify 'the inside' for classification, surveillance and routinization.

Reflexive modernization, by contrast, manifests an increase in contingency and therefore loss of predictability such that we become attentive to the 'riskiness' of action, not its routinized predictability. Action now is risky, unpredictable, and chancy. Action in reflexive modernization is as much a matter of 'damage control', improvisation and *post factum* spin-doctoring as it is a matter of following pre-scripted routines. In reflexive modernity, the side-effect turns back on an activity and (re)defines its meaning. Exponents of simple modernity are always taken by surprise and always affronted by having something that is 'not important' brought into the discussion. Agents of simple modernity are always protesting: 'we are just trying to go about our lawful business of mining and helping Australia compete on the international market; sacred sites are not our business' or 'we just want a reporting mechanism that will tell us and the taxpayers how effectively you educators are achieving your out-

comes; we are not wanting to transform the curriculum or the meaning of education' or 'we just want to improve the highway system; we are not trying to destroy communities, increase pollution, create more asthma or lower the brain function of children through lead poisoning', and so on.

THE MARGINS FIGHT BACK

However, in reflexive modernity, there is always some small voice downstream from the place of action yelling that the action is impacting detrimentally on their life; but now they are yelling so loud they can no longer be ignored. There have always been side-effects, externalities, to industrial activities but in the past they could always be confined to 'the other'—and kept quiet or 'out of sight'. Now they are both highly vocal and highly visible. They are grist to the mill of such reflexive systems as the legal system, the educational system, the medical system, the industrial system, the media and so on. Bad news is now 'good news' in the sense that it is important and powerful.

In reflexive modernity, 'the other' is now answering back and in ways that are unpredictable and not easily silenced. This is a function of a range of shifts: in the mode of communication, the emergence of social movements, the increasing fragility of contexts, an increased contingency in the synergy of competing and coexisting activities which intersect in unpredictable ways and ways that will be perceived or responded to unpredictably. In reflexive modernity, action shifts from being a 'making', a causal bringing about of an envisaged outcome, to a participation in a communal space of speech and action over which no-one has mastery, a space in which all action and speech is in a dialogue of effect and interpretation of effect. Action is now more like participating in a game (of unpredictable outcomes and indeterminate rules) than following a validated book of rules. Action in reflexive modernity is increasingly a matter of practical judgment (*phronesis*) and a matter of persuasion (rhetoric).

LIVING WITH CONTINGENCY

If industrial modernity was a commitment to mastering the diversity and contingency of nature and social life and 'calculating the incalculable' through institutions of knowledge, prediction and control, reflexive modernity is the acknowledgement that the insurance principle has failed, that social life consists of weaves of action, reaction, and effect that are unforeseeable, unpredictable and uncontainable. Contingency and singularity are what we have to live with. The particular can no longer be simply subsumed and disciplined as an instance of a generic type. Social reality is now too complex to master.

We now have to live in a more 'pathe-tic', 'luck-filled', 'event-ful' reality; a world not governed by or governable by formulable norms or laws; a world of *parole* seemingly answerable to no discernable or formulable *langue*; a world only characterizable in terms of the contingent chaining of cause and effect formulated as 'the butterfly effect'. We must 'learn to live with contingency' (Bauman, 1991). This theme of the priority of contingency over necessity, plurality over universality, difference over identity, otherness over sameness, *an-arche* (event) over *arché* (*nomos*) is clearly the defining motif of postmodernism.

FROM WORK TO ACTION

In my view, we can gloss the shift from industrial modernity to reflexive modernity as a shift from work (*poiesis*) to action (*praxis*), rather than as a shift to reflexivity as interpreted by Beck and Giddens (see Lasch,1994). That is, more and more our activities are drawn into the pluralist domain of action and its continuously competing and changing claiming and chaining of speech and event, from their prior location in the monologic rule-governed domains of logically engineered systems of labour or instrumental action. There are two dimensions to this shift from the regularity of industrial modernity to the contingency of reflexive modernity.

One is the relationship between the universal and the particular, the concept and the instance, the type and the token, the context of discovery and the context of application. Let's call this the problem of universals thereby deliberately invoking medieval debates over how to relate the specificity of particulars and situations with the demands of the universalizing institution of the Church. This scene of tension between the uniqueness of the specific case and the generality of the norm that tore at the heart of medieval canon law is mirrored in present attempts by education to marry an acknowledgement of the specificity of the context with universalized systems of reporting and assessment. However, as the exposition of Aristotle's concept of equity and the *topoi* of rhetoric will demonstrate, a sensitivity to the aporias of abstract universal norms (especially when written), and the exigencies

and circumstances of situated action was precisely the defining motif of practical philosophy and its deployment of the practical wisdom of the *phronemos* as a guide to action.

ACTION AND OUTCOME

The other dimension of this shift from the regularity of industrial modernity to the contingency of reflexive modernity besides 'the problem of universals' is the relationship between courses of action and the predictability of their upshots. Here the issue is about just how rule-governed and predictable the relationship is between: act and outcome, cause and effect, process and product, code and meaning, convention and conduct. Industrial modernity was based on the assumption that the world is lawful or can be made lawful. The 'event-fulness' of life must be rendered lawful. We either discover the underlying law and necessary relationships governing a field of reality through science; or we institute lawful relations on the manifold of experience by imposing schemas and norms on the an-archic diversity of experience. It is this problem of reducing the chaining of events to the predictability of rules or laws that Arendt (1956) especially emphasized in her recovery of the notion of *praxis*.

Clearly, post-modernity or reflexive modernity is losing the technical character of industrialism as a machine for producing 'goods' (*poiesis*) and is taking on more of the political caste of *praxis*, as a discursive arena for distributing and redressing 'bads'. Rhetoric and practical judgement, *phronesis*, seem more immediately apt capacities in such a world, than the capacities to implement codifications or procedures, abstractions enacted elsewhere. Reflexive modernity demands a more situated and reflective appropriation of norms and practices (ABE), not merely the implementation of preformulated norms (ALL). Thus the argument for a recovery of practical philosophy is also based on its congruence with the situation in which we find ourselves. In this way, we reflexively deploy the central motif of practical philosophy—appropriateness—to the question of its own deployment!

Thus theoretical paradigms should also be judged in terms of their 'accommodation' with the circumstances. The efforts of social theory to effect 'the hermeneutic turn' and 'the practical turn' are exemplary for theorizing in ABE. On this ground I suggest that the hermeneutic *habitus* of practical philosophy is more attuned to the forms of discourse, deliberation and action facing citizens and humankind generally within reflexive modernity than a schooling into the rationalist or cognitivist *ethos* of the scientific method. Furthermore the disciplines that have over the last hundred years conceived themselves as academic bodies of knowledge should reconceive themselves as practically engaged within and responsible to the wider social process and *sensus communis*.

INDIVIDUALIZATION: REFLEXIVE MONITORING

Modernity, according to Beck, is 'detraditionalization' which means that the natural order recedes and individuals are forced to make choices in all spheres of everyday life. Self-monitoring, or reflexivity, must replace monitoring by traditional conventions:

> [I]n reflexive modernization, structural change forces agency to be free from structure, forces individuals to free themselves from the normative expectations of the institutions of simple modernity and to engage in reflexive monitoring of such structures as well as self-monitoring in the construction of their own identities. (Lash, 1994, p. 200).

Within reflexive modernization, the individual is forced to take on a new mode of conducting and arranging life, one that is no longer a matter of following norms, enacting roles, or 'doing what comes naturally'. People are forced to become individuals as:

> actor, designer, juggler, and stage director of his or her own biography, identity, social networks, commitments and convictions. … To use Sartre's terms, people are condemned to individualization. … 'Individualization' therefore means that the standard biography becomes a chosen biography, a 'do-it-yourself biography', or as Giddens says, a 'reflexive biography'. (Beck, 1994, p. 14)

Beck is careful to point out that this process of individualization should not be taken as a 'revival of bourgeois individuals' nor as emancipation. Rather, it is largely an involuntary process in which one is compelled by force of circumstance to become reflexive, forced to become an individual responsible for one's life, its construction and construals.

FASHIONING A LIFE

According to Beck, individualization is a process whereby the resources for enacting and construing the social world are displaced in their mode of being and come within the purview of the awareness

and control of individuals. That is, the individual becomes a site of cognitive reflection and reflexive monitoring. This individualization contrasts with the de-individualized individual of simple industrial modernity who mainly engaged in 'behaviours' determined by institutional norms, procedures and roles.

According to Beck (1994, p. 13), individualization does not mean 'atomization, isolation, loneliness, the end of all kinds of society, or unconnectedness'. Rather, individualization means:

> the disembedding and … reembedding of industrial ways of life by new ones, in which individuals must produce, stage, and cobble together their biographies. (Beck, 1994, p. 13)

What Beck is pointing to here is the sense that one can no longer live out a predetermined career or vocation in which responsibility for one's life is diffused across a wider community and reality. Rather, one's life is now in one's own hands. Or rather, it is not in anyone else's hands: 'If you won't look after No 1, no-one else will'. This contrasts with a traditional notion of the deserts and duties of social place and its fate. However, this cognitive- and subject-oriented notion of reflexivity is a view that I hope to moderate in the course of this thesis, by moving human being into a more ontological region.

SECTION 2: ABE AS THE CULTIVATION OF PRACTICAL REFLECTION

The basic claim of this thesis is that ABE should be construed as the cultivation of a reflective mode of life generally. This contrasts with two other definitions. One construes ABE as a concern for the language and literacy competence of adults. The second construes ABE as cultivating competence for specific spheres of life such as the workplace, the academy, the community or the private domain.

A field of education (such as Adult Basic Education) is not a stable, objective, 'fixed' field of objects, practices, institutions or causalities. Rather, it is a constellation, a conjuncture, of competing agendas, vocabularies, discourses and practices. So, insofar as this thesis sets itself the task of articulating 'the field' of ABE, this is not to be construed as a matter of uncovering a hidden essence or syntax, but a matter of reformulating, reinterpreting, the discourses already at work in that field so they find themselves weaving common ground instead of fighting over turf, so that they find themselves engaged in a productive conversation instead of pursuing competing solipsistic and monologic research programs intent on validating their own paradigms.

ALL OR ABE

Unfortunately, at the level of official policy, ABE is increasingly framed as 'Adult Language and Literacy' or 'Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy' and as oriented to the cultivation of the oral English language competence of NESB adults and the written English competence of native English-speakers who failed to master written English during their initial schooling. This emphasis on the English language as the object of instruction arises out of a conjuncture of motives (which will not be investigated any further in this thesis) which include: the moral panic attending the emergence of a new medium of communication—electronic text; the need to 'blame the victims' for high unemployment rates; the containment of cultural and linguistic diversity within an anglophonic hegemony; a governmental policy to mark(et) Australia as a player in the global economy (which was why John Dawkins, the then Minister of Education, nominated '*Australian* English' as the true object of language and literacy education in Australia); the continuing emergence of English as a global *lingua franca*; and efforts to integrate a Commonwealth administration divided between language education for migrants and that for non-migrants.

In fact, it could be argued that during the time of the writing of this thesis, say 1993-8, its object of interpretation, ABE as a field, has been dismantled and dispersed by the competitive market of VET (Vocational Education and Training). In this sense, this thesis could have been framed either as a valedictory, farewelling the past, or in the forensic mode of assigning blame for the death of ABE. However I have perversely insisted on continuing to speak of ABE in the present tense. I adopt this utopian mode of address, because just as no text can assure its own truth, neither can any text assure its own uptake or performativity. Only the unpredictable event-uality of the future will determine whether the stance taken in this thesis is a manifestation of unrealistic utopianism or a contribution to the re-emergence of a renewed future for ABE.

CRITICIZING GOVERNMENT POLICY

Even the positivity of the recent governmental present is not itself a stable essence or conjuncture. Thus Hunter's (1994) efforts to discipline us all into eschewing 'principle' because any discourse framed outside the present governmental apparatus entails appealing to a Kantian transcendental tribunal of reason, doesn't wash with me. Kant does not have a monopoly on the construal of 'principles'. Principles do not have to be other-worldly and radically discontinuous with the empirical institutions and *habitus* informing us. Similarly, there are other ways of coming to terms with our embeddedness in the contingencies of history and *habitus*, than Hunter's efforts to install himself and the limits of discourse within an unqualified acceptance of the positivity and limits of the governmental present in all its contingency.

Principled criticism of the present need not entail a positing of some other-worldly tribunal of reason. The problem with the way Hunter frames practical ethics is that he has (unwittingly) acquiesced in the way Kant has disconnected the normative and the empirical from one another by locating the former in a radically pure realm of morality severed from all connection with the messy contingency and particularity of history and action. All that Hunter has done is relocate practical discourse within the 'the empirical' and ascetically eschew invocations of 'the normative'. However, the historic task of practical philosophy and *phronesis* has been precisely to find ethical responses and interventions in a world not amenable to the deductive application of abstract norms.

So, it is in this sense that I write as if ABE still had a future; as if it could still exist; as if it could be 'born again', with deeper insight into who its friends and enemies are, not just more insight into its 'conditions of existence'; a future not as the positing of a hidden *telos* to history; but as an imaginary 'place' from which to criticize the governmental present.

TOWARDS A MORE SUBSTANTIVE CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE

An assumption grounding this thesis is that ABE has regressed to the concept of ALL, 'adult English language and literacy', because its practitioner-theorists were unable in the short time available to them to articulate a more substantive concept of language education and to formulate what it is that is cultivated by participation in this more substantive language education. There is/should be more to ABE than learning techniques for encoding or decoding rules or facts from English written text. However, in working towards this more substantive account of ABE, I have been forced to venture far beyond the usual range of research or scholarship considered to be relevant contexts for articulating ABE in Australia. Yet, the intertexts I adduce—Rhetoric, Practical Philosophy and Hermeneutics—are not considered extravagant or unusual for ABE's sister fields in USA, the Basic Writing movement or the tradition of Freshman English, which are both articulated under the umbrella of Composition Studies. In Australia, by contrast, there have been moves to consolidate an academic discipline called 'Applied Linguistics' with the charter of theorizing and evaluating the practices of language and literacy education. My work situates itself in radical opposition to this effort.

My argument is that rather than look to the education of children for analogy or contrast as in the paradigm of andragogy, our educational tradition already possesses a substantive paradigm for framing ABE as an education of adults—practical philosophy. I deploy practical philosophy as a metaphor for specifying the lineaments of a general adult education for those groupings in the population whose initial schooling was a failure—for whatever reason. This means that like exponents of theories of andragogy, I argue for a difference between adults and children, but I do not frame this difference by drawing on progressivist theories of learning or progressivist construals of the nature of adulthood. Instead I re-call that older pre-progressivist tradition of rhetoric and practical philosophy as a discourse concerned with the ethical, political, religious and juridical comportment and decisions of citizens of the *polis* or republic. Practical philosophy is not a concern with metaphysical doctrine or claims to truth, but philosophy as a concern for cultivating a reflectively responsible communal way of living—practical philosophy as the cultivation of practical wisdom and a *sensus communis*.

ABE AS CULTIVATION OF PRACTICAL REFLECTIVENESS

Thus, the fundamental project of this thesis is to explore and articulate the implications of defining ABE as the exercise and cultivation of a practical reflectiveness that cannot be captured or prescribed by theoretical knowledge. This search for a definition of ABE that evades the modernist concept of a theoretically determinable domain has sent me back to older traditions of framing human life, knowledges and education—Rhetoric, Aesthetics, Philosophy and Hermeneutics. One of the principal strategies of this thesis is an effort to reinvest the present within itself, in all its fullness, by reinvest-

ing it in continuity, even the continuity of criticism, with a past it has disowned, disavowed and forgotten. My claim is that only by reappropriating its own story and past can it then assume a more realistic and modest recognition of the finitude and contingency of its own historico-ontological origins, and thus begin to reappropriate a sense of itself as something more than the scientistic and governmental framing of the academic field of 'Adult Language and Literacy'. Hence, my strategy of invoking that long, almost forgotten, tradition of language and literacy pedagogy embodied in rhetoric, a tradition which in 'the West' stretches across twenty-two hundred years from 4 BC to the end of the Eighteenth Century.

In fact, if I were to characterize the overall strategy of this thesis it would be to say that it hopes to temper the internal contradictions of ABE by re-calling a time before, and therefore the potential for a time after, the split between representation and articulation, the split between a structuralist linguistics which construes language as a system of signs and a natural use of language in the ontology of practical life, and finally, the modernist split that assigns knowledge and content to an a-linguistic deep structure of cognitive concepts, and the surface of the text to a rhetoric and poetics of stylistic devices and effects.

HISTORICITY

This notion of 'a time before' or 'a time after' as times of wholeness should not be taken too literally. In fact the concept of a time of wholeness should be interpreted as a discursive figure, as the institution or reinstitution of a horizon of interpretation, of an *arché* or principle for understanding and judging the present. 'Re-call' is of course ambiguous between 'bring to mind' and 'bring back in reality'. We can recall things by taking another look at them or calling them to mind; but we can also recall things by calling them back, by bringing them back into play, by recalling them to the field of play. By espousing Gadamer's ontological hermeneutic, I am deliberating trading on this polysemy. I am hoping that recalling in the sense of 'bringing to mind' will lead to recalling in the sense 'bringing back in reality' in the sense that we will realize that we had never really left the tradition of rhetoric, but had only forgotten (in our minds), our embeddedness on the traditions and practices of rhetoric.

ABE will come into a different and deeper understanding of itself if it (re)establishes a relationship with those traditions it is heir to, if it comes into the inheritance of this history as its 'own' history, a history that reaches back centuries behind the modernist practices of 'personal meaning', 'critical literacy' or 'functional literacy'. This is why I insist on invoking the older traditions of rhetoric and philosophy, not just the modern traditions of 'English' or its progeny: Cultural Studies, ESL or ALL (Adult Language and Literacy).

HERMENEUTIC REFLECTION AS TRANSFORMATIVE

I want to suggest that ABE is a place of hermeneutic reflection as a contemporary expression of *studium liberales*. On this interpretation, ABE is not just being apprenticed into a language such as English, nor being apprenticed into the uses of language in different social contexts. ABE is not simply focussed on *Grammatica*: learning the English language or the written code of the English language. Nor is it only concerned with a diminished notion of rhetoric as social appropriateness or propriety: learning through imitation and practice how to say the 'right thing' for the occasion and thus how to fit in. Instead, it is more concerned with ancient rhetoric in the sense of construing occasions of discourse as dialogic in that there is always something to be said for the opposing view, and with contemporary Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics as a learning to read, interpret and appropriate the otherness inhabiting 'textuality'. Thus, by engaging systematically in practices of interpretation, students come to understand by learning to comport themselves differently in relation to forms of discourse, interpretations of values, orientations in their narratives, practices of dialogue.

It should be noted that I am using the term 'text' as a metaphor for this reconstitution of the object of understanding as an outcome of the work of interpretation. Just as a written text can be alien because it is in a foreign language or is ambiguous or contradictory in some way, and therefore demands interpretive work to settle on its meaning, so too everyday experience can take on this sense of alienation and thus also demand interpretation. Whatever requires interpretation is text. Insofar as a speech, action or any experience is subject to or demands interpretation, it too becomes text and an object of hermeneutic. Text is thus that which calls for interpretation in order to be understood. Hermeneutic is the art of interpretation. In principle, anything can become an occasion for hermeneutic interpretation, anything can become or appear to us as textualised, as needing interpretation, as the scene of hermeneutic work.

TEXT—MORE THAN CODE

However, even though I define 'text' as the object of interpretation and do not confine 'textuality' to the medium of written language, in fact written language is an exemplary medium for disclosing the need, the strategies and the operations of interpretation. Written language and cross-cultural communication are the two key paradigms of textuality we possess. Written text is an incomparable medium or surface on which to display and 'fix' (in the photographic sense of capture in a stabilized image) our interpretations. I am not suggesting that the act of decoding written language mobilizes interpretation. In fact hermeneutics as a work of interpretation on obscurities of meaning comes into effect only when the activity of decoding has reached its limits and exhausted its potential. Hermeneutics, as an art of interpretation, is concerned with precisely that which is beyond the reach of literacy as an art of decoding. However, what I am suggesting is that a key way to learn to be hermeneutically reflective, to comport oneself with hermeneutic reflexivity, is through engaging in practices of textual interpretation.

TEXT AS POTENTIAL SPEECH

Because Gadamer construes the essence of language as speech in the play of our world, he insists that 'texts' are not mute objects of analysis, but potential voices to be put into play in our dialogues with one another:

> The understanding of a text has not begun at all as long as the text remains mute. But a text can begin to speak. ... When it does begin to speak, however, it does not simply speak its word, always the same, in lifeless rigidity, but gives ever new answers to the person who questions it and poses ever new questions to him who answers it. To understand a text is to come to understand oneself in a kind of dialogue. (*PH*, p. 57)

Thus, Gadamer assimilates written language ('text') to spoken language ('speech', *Sprache*) in that both find their essence in dialogue (*Gesprache*). This means that reading cannot just be a matter of knowing what the author of a written text meant nor of extracting information or facts from a text:

> [A] text yields understanding only when what is said in the text begins to find expression in the interpreter's own language. Interpretation belongs to the essential unity of understanding. One must take up into himself what is said in such a fashion that it speaks and finds an answer in the words of his own language. (*PH*, p. 57)

Thus, for Gadamer understanding is inseparable from interpretation (putting it into 'our' words) and both are inseparable from application (letting it change our language and self-understanding). And this all happens in the dialogic to and fro transacted between the reader and the text. This is the event of understanding, which is not just an event of understanding the text but a (re)fashioning of self. Reading, for Gadamer, is thus hearing ourselves called into a dialogue and letting ourselves be caught up in the play of that dialogue so that we come out transformed. In this way we allow the traditions we are heir to renew themselves in us and us in them.

WRITING AS RESPONSE

Similarly, insofar as the activity of writing is not simply the enactment of the steps or stages in a conventionalized social activity or textual structure, but participation and intervention in an ongoing discussion or conversation, it too must go through hermeneutic cycles of interpretation (of the question, self, situation, interlocutors). This is because writing is never simply a matter of expressing (giving vent to, blurting out) a personal opinion as a self-defining proposition. Writing, like all discourse, is always a response to a question and to the history and topography of other competing responses to that question.

So, writing is always an attempt to formulate the question (the matter at issue, the 'in-between', the *Sache*[5]) and the way others have (mis)formulated it. Thus, writing is not simply a matter of express-

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[5] To my knowledge Gadamer always expounds his notion of *Sache* which is absolutely central to his project, in terms of Roman rhetoric:

> … the concept of the thing (*Sache*) reflects more than the Roman legal concept of *res*. The meaning of the German word *Sache* is permeated above all by what is called *causa*, that is, the disputed 'matter' under consideration. Originally, it was the thing that was placed in the middle between the disputing

ing an already formed meaning by encoding or inscribing it in an act of communication so that it can then be decoded by a reader. Writing is participating in a conversation regarding the world aimed at coming to agree on that world, that is, coming to live in one world, even though that world is always shadowed by otherness and will always be interpreted differently. This forging of more shared understandings is enacted through learning one another's languages, vocabularies, and language games.

The scenes of reading and writing are thus what we could call 'critical sites' for learning interpretation and appropriation (seeing and saying things in a different way) even in their very efforts to be merely sites of reproductive understanding. Understanding is interpretation and application. The power of reading and writing lies in their power to read and write on the soul not just their power to read and write the social. In a rhetorical culture, these two are not separate regions: the pedagogy of the *polis* and the pedagogy of the individual are one. They are the work of a rhetorical *praxis*.

SACHE: THE PLAY OF DIALOGUE

Gadamer's notion of understanding as also interpretation and application both offer us a way to negotiate our way between the objectivism of representational discourse on the one hand and the subjectivist solipsism of progressivism or the relativism of poststructuralism, on the other. With the notion of *Sache*, Gadamer tries to find a way between an objectivist metaphysic of truth and the subjectivism of post-metaphysic. His construal of Language as the *Spiel* of *die Sache*, of language as the play of what is at issue de-emphasizes the agency and consciousness of the Subject.

> When one enters into dialogue with another person and then is carried along further by the dialogue, it is no longer the will of the individual person, holding itself back or exposing itself, that is determinative. Rather, the law of the subject matter is at issue in the dialogue and elicits statement and counterstatement and in the end plays them into each other. (*PH*, p. 66)

> parties because a decision still had to be rendered regarding it. In this context, objectivity means precisely opposition to partiality, that is the misuse of the law for partial purposes. (*PH*, p. 71)

Hoy has interpreted this elusive notion of *Sache*, thus:

> The word *Sache* is difficult to translate because in English we might use words like 'subject matter,' 'topic,' 'substance,' 'thing,' 'object,' or 'phenomenon' to capture Gadamer's idea that the *Sache* is what a dialogue is *about*. This stress on *aboutness* makes Gadamer sound more like a realist than Habermas, whose insistence on truth as reaching agreement is explicitly opposed to philosophical semantics and its analysis of truth as reference to reality. (Hoy & McCarthy, p. 189)

He admits that this is a slightly misleading way of stating the difference, but defends this way of phrasing the difference because it underlines the fact that Gadamer's position is not:

> a subjectivistic one, and that intersubjective agreement, although important, is not the foundation of his theory. Although he believes that interpretations are always bound to a particular context, he does not think that we can interpret things any way we want. Interpretations are always guided by the *Sache*, and thus by a sense that there are right and wrong ways to say things that ought to be said. (Hoy & McCarthy, p. 189)

However, even though Gadamer is a realist by insisting that discourse must be answerable to *Sache*, unlike postmodernists, he does not construe this as a matter that is stateable in finalized propositions:

> interpretation is always open-ended, that no interpretation is ever final (even ideally), and that new interpretation is always needed. On his account, understanding is always *application*. This claim means that understanding grows out of a particular context, and as the context changes (perhaps even as a result of the new self-understanding brought about by the new interpretation), the need for re-interpretation arises.
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> So for Gadamer even though the *Sache* guides the interpretation, the *Sache* is not eternal, but is itself evolving with the history of interpretation. … The *Sache* is not some external reality that exists independently of the process of interpretation. Interpreting is not picturing, and we should not think that insofar as we believe that we understand the *Sache* better, we need to believe that we are working toward a grasp of it as it really is *an sich* or in-itself. The ideal of a complete or final representation of all the features of any particular *Sache* is an illusion, if only because the idea of completely representing all the features of anything does not really make sense. (Hoy & McCarthy, p. 190)

The *Sache* of a situation exists, but the bringing to expression, the articulation of a *Sache* is never completable. There is always a further horizon.

For Gadamer, it is not the play of the signifier that plays us, as Poststructuralists insist, nor the objectivity of the signified, as realists insist. For, ultimately, the very distinction between signified and signifier is abstract and misleading. Language is fully itself and fully at work when it is unselfconsciously at play:

> …it must be emphasized that language has its true being only in dialogue, in coming to an understanding. …Coming to an understanding is not a mere action, a purposeful activity, a setting up of signs through which I transmit my will to others, Coming to an understanding, as such, rather, does not need any tools, in the proper sense of the word. It is a life process in which a community of life is lived out. To that extent, coming to an understanding through conversation is no different from the understanding that occurs between animals. But human language must be thought of as a special and unique life process since, in linguistic communication, 'world' is disclosed. Reaching an understanding in language places a subject-matter before those communicating like a disputed object set between them. Thus the world is the common ground, trodden by none and recognized by all, uniting all who talk to one another. (*TM*, p. 446)

ABE AS INTERPRETATION

One way of phrasing the overall claim of this thesis would be to say that this process of interpretation, of reflection, or re-wording, is the heart of literacy and that ABE is a pedagogy and site which styles, encourages, facilitates it. The only reason that written text figures in ABE classrooms is that it is a convenient medium for 'fixing' understandings so they can be displayed and scrutinized; and that it mediates understandings from other times and places, other cultures and brings them into our classroom and allows them to participate, to become voices, in the classroom conversation.

Thus literacy, on this account, is focused on the understandings mediated by and by means of written text, not on learning the forms of written text or extracting the content of written text. And on this account, most of the literacy in a classroom will be oral. The coming to different understandings with one another about things will be mainly transacted in speech and the inner speech of thinking. Even the activity of writing is on this account a matter of listening to what one has written and redrafting to make it 'sound right'.

INTERPRETATION IS ONTOLOGICAL

However, the practice of interpretation has ontological effects. As Gadamer insists, interpreting is not a matter of decoding, nor even of intuiting an author's subjectivity, but of projecting our own sense of the world on to the text as if it were the world of the text we are reading. Reading then becomes an unfolding hermeneutic spiral of projection and adjustment as we the reader try to bring these two worlds into alignment. But the only way we can do this is by transforming our own being-in-the-world. Thus we use the text to extend our own language and extend our own understandings which in turn allows us to understand the text better. But to do this is also to transform our *habitus*, our comportment, our resources for experiencing and understanding the world and ourselves. In the words of Linge:

> a text speaks differently as its meaning finds concretization in a new hermeneutical situation and the interpreter for his part finds his own horizons altered by his appropriation of what the text says. (*PH*, p. xix)

To put it summarily: engaging in interpretation transforms our *Dasein*, a *Dasein* we can never escape but only transform. Thus, I want to argue that ABE is 're-cognition' in the sense that one is reconstructing, reworking, re-molding, a world one already inhabits. Interpretation is the creative (re)appropriation of one's *Dasein*.

Foucault argues in *The Order of Things* (1973) that the human sciences, for which the linguistic sciences are paradigmatic, are constituted by a transcendental-empirical couple. However, as we will see, Gadamer finds this cognitivist subject-object metaphor fundamentally misleading for portraying our primordial way of being in language or modes of human being. We will similarly reject this metaphor as a way of portraying what is transpiring in ABE classrooms. ABE classrooms are not places where students learn a meta-theory of language, its rules or uses and how to apply this theory. The 'meta-linguistic' categories of the *artes grammatica et rhetorica* are more properly thought of as reflective heuristic concepts than as theoretical concepts.

'RISING TO THE UNIVERSAL'

Rather than invoke the vertical metaphor of a rule and its application or a universal and its subsumption of an instance as our metaphor or 'picture' of 'rising to the universal', I instead insist on a more horizontal picture of 'rising to the universal' as moving 'from case to case'. Thus, I picture ABE classrooms as places where students come to understand new realities (or, old realities in new ways), new worlds (or, old worlds in new ways), by trying to bring these matters to language and thereby coming to understand themselves and their own world in a new way. ABE classrooms are places of hybridity, places where the familiar and the strange meet. 'This interplay of the familiar and the strange, the alien, this in-between is the true locus of hermeneutics' (*TM*, p. 295).

Hence, I want to suggest that ABE education is coming into contact with, engaging in, substantive cultural traditions carried/cultivated by languages and their history of texts and literacy practices. ABE as hermeneutic reflection consists of mediating and meditating on, entering into a dialogue with, these conflicting linguistic traditions, thereby expanding our own horizons and sympathies. This movement of expansion towards the universal is a process that takes time (an infinity of time); it is a process of education. It is not something that we can simply jump to. We cannot magically take up the 'universal subject-position of tolerance or justice' nor the 'universal subject-position of the ethnographer or philologist or linguist'. We can of course be trained for or into these subject-positions as roles, but how they affect, modify and interact with our other more substantive and less deliberative comportments, commitments and languages is another matter.

HABITUS AS GROUND

It is precisely this second region, the region of primordial prejudices, of *habitus*, of orientation, of fore-structure, that a Gadamerian perspective on ABE foregrounds. For it is this latter region, the region of disposition and *habitus* that supplies the grounds for 'sense making', the primordial resources for making sense of things. In the opening sections of *TM* Gadamer excavates, re-calls, a genealogy for himself by re-tracing, re-calling, re-inscribing, a constellation of humanist concepts that normatively context and ontologically underpin the later emergence of the human sciences including himself.

I take Gadamer to be demonstrating, perhaps even unwittingly, that the conceptual and aesthetic capacities at work in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are prosaically grounded in the contingent rhetorical training of grammar schools. Thus, the skill and intelligence ('the creative genius') of students in the Humanities is not so much a matter of innate or domestically acquired attributes, but a matter of apprenticeship and training in a pedagogic tradition of rhetoric stretching back over two thousand years. Just as the knowledge and skills ('the inventiveness') of modern scientists is a function of explicit apprenticeship into a scientific paradigm (Kuhn), not some sort of natural developmental emergence of insight into the inner workings of nature (Piaget), so too with the humanities and social sciences. The capacities within these domains are also acquired as a *habitus* inculcated through apprenticeship into an ancient tradition of rhetorical training.

PART TWO HERMENEUTICS AS PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER 3 CLAIMING GADAMER

FINDING AN INTERLOCUTOR

When I began work on this thesis I assumed, as noted earlier, that the principal theorists I would use as interlocutors in order to frame its theoretical parameters would be Habermas and Foucault. Yet, to my surprise I found Gadamer addressing, even claiming me, in a much deeper and more radical way than either Habermas or Foucault. And this despite the fact that they were clearly the more 'sexy' thinkers, thinkers who emphatically address the diagnosis of the present (*Zeitdiagnosis*) with its issues of social change, and political and social justice. And certainly in the English-speaking world of language and literacy, Foucault and Habermas carry far more credibility, cache and cultural capital than Gadamer could ever muster.

In the world of language and literacy theorizing, Gadamer is virtually non-existent, nor does he initially 'present' as relevant. He is a philologist (which is not even a recognized or institutionalized discipline in the English-speaking academy), not a social theorist, so how can he help frame up language and literacy 'as social process'? He is a classicist and a conservative, so how can he address the economic and social injustice of the world of work in which language and literacy education is positioned? He writes principally about Greek philosophers and nineteenth century Romantic aesthetics, so how can he possibly address the postmodern conjuncture of popular culture and everyday institutional communicative texts featuring in adult literacy classrooms? He has written no ethics and no politics, so how can he help formulate norms, principles or judgments to frame our interventions and responses to the present?

And yet for me, reading Gadamer has been a truly hermeneutic experience. Coming to an better understanding with Gadamer has meant 'coming to a better understanding of myself, and coming to understand myself better has meant coming to understand myself otherwise, that is, differently.[6] Let's face it. It has been a matter of seduction, of being drawn to him almost against my will. Why would a leftist, someone shaped by the radical politics of the 60s, engage Gadamer in an effort to theorize the field of adult literacy, a field that is patently been drawn into an epochal upheaval in social processes, a field that has been positioned as a crucial tool in the corporatist and/or economic rationalist reinvention of the *habitus* of a globally oriented workforce and a localized residual 'community'. Surely the vocabulary we need to engage events of this order is not a theory of philosophical hermeneutics, but a theory of society as a play of power or a theory of social evolution as a this-worldly process of social learning or a theory of the present as (post)modernity such as we find in Habermas, Bourdieu or Foucault.

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[6] The shuffle between 'coming to an understanding *with*' and 'coming to an understanding *of*' is deliberate and key to Gadamer's position. His claim is that the process of learning (coming to an understanding of) is essentially dialogic (coming to an understanding with) and that all dialogue (coming to an understanding with) is always about some matter, something that is at issue (coming to an understanding of). As we will see, this metaphor of dialogue, conversation (*Gesprache*) is his gloss on the notion of the hermeneutic circle.

One further clarification: As a hermeneut who claims that all claims are interpretations and therefore partial not absolute, Gadamer would not make essentialist claims such as I seem to have in writing in the previous paragraph 'the process of learning (coming to an understanding of) *is essentially* dialogic'. However I also wish to evade essentialism so it is crucial (essential?) that these phrasings be construed as construals, as non-essentialist. To say 'the process of learning *is essentially* …' is just an emphatic way of saying '*I would strongly urge you to try construing* the process of learning as …'. That is, 'is essentially' is a request or command on my part that has been re-grammar-ed as a statement about reality—a process Halliday calls grammatical metaphor. An interpersonal modulation has been phrased as an ideational modality. This natural tendency of academic prose to project its interpersonal modulation onto its content has been extensively documented and theorized by M A K Halliday. So, when I say 'is' or 'essentially', these are operating within a larger hermeneutic framing. They denote emphatic construals/claims as opposed to tentative or weak construals/claims, not absolute claims.

READING AS PATHOS

So, why? Well, all I can say is that this has not been a matter of choice, more a matter of something happening to me. As Gadamer insists understanding is more an event in which you let something happen to you (a *pathos*) than an action in which you consciously and deliberately do something or bring about some (already-planned-in-your-head) outcome or product (*poiesis*). I bought *TM* a decade ago because I wanted to understand the German notion of *Bildung* and read the first few sections on the Renaissance Humanist tradition and *Bildung*. I found them obscure and elusive, but even worse the text then seemed to veer off into a long detailed exposition of romantic aesthetic theories about works of art. Now! this was a real problem for me. To be blunt I have never managed to overcome the sense that art is fundamentally a surface for inscribing social and cultural distinction.

Like Bourdieu, I come from a rural background riddled with suspicion of urban cultural domains as frivolous, not 'down to earth', 'with their head in the clouds', 'up themselves', 'putting on airs', pretentious and so on. Culture was simply 'posh people' passing themselves off as superior or better than everyone else. Thus as a child I imbibed a suspicion and cynicism towards both high culture and low culture. Both were essentially matters of appearance not substance, matters of illusion not truth, marks of belonging not exercises of competence. In my world, life was a matter of the substantive and productive labor and work of artisans (*poiesis*), not the substanceless display of aristocratic or bohemian culture.

I could make no headway with Gadamer. And yet… And yet… I didn't forget him.

I had a few more 'goes' at reading him. Each time I would have flashes that momentarily made sense (of him, of me). Gradually I realized I was as it were unconsciously using him to grapple with the deepest prejudices I came into the inheritance of through my upbringing and education: English empiricism. But of course this horizon only clarified as I was able to view it/myself from the horizon of Gadamer's German idealism and Heideggerian ontology. As I found myself more able to be taken over by Gadamer's world, by his *Sache*, by his history of Being and understanding, I found myself more able to sense and, sometimes, in that liminal state between sleep and wakefulness, to even formulate a new sense of being-in-the-world, one that is not a matter of an individual cognitive mastery of the world, but a matter of participating in something larger than one's own mind. This 'something larger' has been articulated in many ways—Objective Spirit, tradition, moral culture, the humanities; in this thesis I am calling it practical philosophy and *sensus communis*.

READING WITHOUT 'THE SUBJECT'

Reading Gadamer has been a matter of self-forgetfulness, of entering into thoughts where it is unclear who is the author or subject of those thoughts, unclear who is thinking who or what. Was I thinking Gadamer's thoughts? Was he thinking mine? Were both of us being thought by 'something larger than us'? Was Gadamer interpolating me or had he too been interpolated? I began to understand what Gadamer meant, or rather what Heidegger meant and Gadamer after him, by saying that communication even in such solitary modes as reading was not so much a transfer of information between two subjectivities, but more a mutual participation in some common reality, some *Sache*, that is larger than either reader or author. I began to understand what Gadamer meant by insisting that a work of art (that is, for my purposes here, a pedagogic text, a work of learning) is not something that we subjectively or cognitively process thereby changing an inner private world of sensibility or cognition. No! reading of this order is a matter of entering into a larger ontological world, of lending our weight, of helping to articulate, rework, make real, and transform 'a reality that is larger than us and between us'. Such reading does not just accumulate new knowledge, skills or attributes (competencies), it changes the reader and it changes the ontological actuality of the text itself insofar as a text comes to actuality in its readings. As it were both the object and the subject are changed.

My reading of Gadamer has not been a case of a stable self-identical subject, myself, encountering or mastering a new domain of facts and forging a body of knowledge or representation by devising schemata (principles, norms, or law-like concepts) to account for the structural relationships governing the entities within that field—which is of course Kant's image of modern scientific knowledge and learning. On this model of learning as knowing, a transcendental subject schematizes an encountered manifold of new data, and either escries within it or imposes on it an order of concepts. However, unlike this transcendental ego which is distanced and detached, 'punctual and disengaged' as Charles Taylor would put it, I was not an already stable self-transparent subject that could coolly 'attend to' or 'process' the cognitive information signified by Gadamer's sentences. Yet nor was I

simply a passive surface on which Gadamer's message could be inscribed. Instead, like any student, I was a meeting place, a conjuncture, of the alien and the familiar, the old and the new.

READING AS ONTOLOGICAL

According to Gadamer, a written text exists in its readings. A written text's mode of being is to be read. It is an entity that is open to being shaped by being read. A written text is a mode of being that wants to have more meaning added to it by being interpreted by readers in their efforts to understand it. As it were, a written text is intent on reproducing itself over and over in the minds and lives, the practices and institutions, of its potential readers, with each new manifestation, each new reading adding to the substance or reality of the book. A written text exists not as a self-contained and self-sufficient object or inward-looking monad but as a presentation of an alien world that can only be brought to relevance by the reader.

But just as a written text in itself is unfinalized, so too is the reader. When I am reading Gadamer it is not as if I already know what I think or who I am. Reading Gadamer is a way of learning what I think and who I am. I, the reader, do not already possess an autonomous and transparent self-consciousness. I the reader am not a subject. I am certainly not an absolute subject for which nothing is alien, nothing opaque. So, it is not as if I can impose my views or stamp my mastery, my will, on Gadamer. For I don't have views or a stamp or a will, at least not in the sense that I can wield them. I do have them but they are too inchoate to me, too ill-defined, too elusive to deploy in any self-possessed way. They are 'more Being than consciousness'—to use perhaps the most famous phrase in the Gadamer repertoire. The resources I have as equipment, as tools, as reference points, as guide lines, as vocabularies, as discourses, as horizons, for reading are not within my conscious grasp. They are not, in Heidegger's terms, 'present to hand' (*Vorhanden*). They do exist (otherwise I couldn't make any sense of Gadamer at all) but only as what Heidegger characterizes as 'ready to use', (*Zuhanden*), as resources not topics.

That is, my world, my language, my self, is not something that I am master of. It is something that precedes me, something that is called out in front of me. It is a horizon that moves ahead of me; a light within whose rays a world becomes visible. But I do not determine the horizon or limit of my world: I control neither the switch nor the focus of the light manifesting my world. It is only within these ontological limits that I exist at all as a consciousness. Their being is the condition of my consciousness. Or better: they are my being. So, even though in an abstract sense we can say: I can read Gadamer any way I like. Let's call this relativism or reader response theory, in fact I will only be able to read him in ways that comport with my Being. I am not master of my own readings. But nor is Gadamer mastering me. Rather, by uncovering the world of Gadamer I am uncovering my own 'different yet same' world, the world of ABE.

READING AS FUSION OF HORIZONS

Gradually the two 'worlds' have come together: what Gadamer is talking about, his *Sache*, in his work on works of art, is the same *Sache* I am talking about in my work on ABE. Gadamer's *Sache* and mine have gradually moved into proximity, approaching one another, which Gadamer calls the fusion of horizons. ('Fusion' is an English term with perhaps too strong a connotation of identity. To evade this connotation, let's just say: they 'approach' one another, they 'illuminate' one another, they 'stand in the same light', they 'stand in common ground', they are 'subject to the same force fields' or 'stand within the same constellation':

> Understanding does not simply amount to consensual convergence or an effort 'to repeat something after the other', but rather implies a willingness to enter the border zone or interstices between self and other, thus placing oneself before the open 'court' of dialogue and mutual questioning. (Dallmayr, 1996, p. 47)

This coming into proximity is what Gadamer calls understanding, and it is something real, something ontological. Something has transpired that makes a difference. Maybe it is not as dramatic as a baby being born or an organization restructured or a star being born or the development of new technology, but it is a real event. A tradition, a language, a way of life, a world, a culture has recreated itself, brought itself to life again, re-packaged itself, re-invented itself, made itself over *in me*. (Let the shift to the vocabulary of marketing in 're-packaging' and 'reinventing' also be symbolic of this 'make-over' in that these are certainly not the words of Gadamer's world of German high culture).

But this 'make-over' has not been a result of imposition or the repression of some already existing self within me. This make-over has been the bringing to form, the bringing to language, the bringing to consciousness, the bringing to this very writing, of me and my thoughts. Gadamer would call this *Bildung*. Although brought up deep within the territory of Anglo empiricism, I had always sensed its limits and tried to *aufgehoben* it, tried to move beyond it.

READING AS PURSUIT OF INTIMATIONS

Many times I have pushed up against the limits of my upbringing and education and have half known that the negation of empiricism lay with continental philosophy, with the Hs (Hegel, Heidegger, Husserl). For at least ten years after my undergraduate years I kept dipping into Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*, even though I could only assimilate it as a collection of provocative fragments and distinctions, not as a coherent system. But I could sense that behind it lay another philosophical world, the world of German idealist philosophy. I did not realize until very recently that Arendt's work spoke not so much out of the German philosophical tradition generally, but even more specifically out of the early lectures of Heidegger on Aristotle which were also attended by Gadamer. Similarly, it was only more recently that I encountered Charles Taylor's '3 H's' (Herder, Humboldt and Hegel) in relation to theories of language.

So, the world Gadamer was opening up to me was not totally alien. It was a world I had dreamt of, but not one I had been able to formulate. The tools of my philosophical training, the resources and vocabularies, the dogmas and distinctions available to me, kept me from his world, though I sensed, even desired, its existence. And yet of course it was precisely this difference between Gadamer and myself together with my sense that he was speaking to the limits of my world and my present capacity to formulate matters, even the gap between my sense of my world and the capacity of my present vocabularies to formulate that world—it was precisely these differences that provide the friction that is the condition of attuning our worlds so they turn in unison or synchronization. That is, it is this frustration, this friction of misunderstanding that provides the purchase or springboard from which to attempt continually to project a whole—'what Gadamer is saying'—as I read. But each projection of a whole then turns back and reshapes the ensuing reading. 'To understand a text is to come to understand oneself in a kind of dialogue' (*PH*, p. 57). This play between projecting a whole and the dis-confirmation of the detail is the renowned 'hermeneutic circle'—which has been known to rhetoric from time out of hand.

UNDERSTANDING AS SELF-UNDERSTANDING

My present world and my current ability to formulate this world are what Gadamer terms '*Vorurteil*'. This word is usually translated into English as 'prejudices' but the German lacks the pejorative connotation implied in the English. So sometimes it is translated as 'pre-judgment' or 'pre-judice' to rid it of this overtone of irrationality or dogmatism. All reading is approached with pre-judgment, which simply means that we are always already in a world and that this world already contains the matter we are setting out to read. To quote Weinsheimer:

> All understanding is self-understanding. … Understanding is projection, and what it projects are expectations that precede the text. They 'jump the gun', as it were, because they anticipate a meaning for the whole before arriving at it. What the interpreter projects in advance is what he understands already—that is, before beginning. He tries out a meaning already familiar to him and proposes it as a possibility. This projected meaning is his own possibility in that he has projected it; it is part of the world in which he already knows his way around, and it is something that he can and does understand. What he projects, then, is himself, his own possibility for understanding. But the meaning so projected is also projected as the text's possibility, something that the text could mean; and if it does he will have understood it. That is, if the interpreter merely waits passively for meaning without anticipating it, none will appear. (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 166)

There is no absolutely 'new' in the sense of an absolutely pristine encounter between two worlds or two subjectivities that have had no prior notion of each other's existence, that have not figured in some way in one another's worlds. Or another way of saying the same thing: we cannot divest ourselves of our prior commitments, expectations, assumptions such that we encounter things as pure object standing over against a transparent subject. In short, the Cartesian experiment of doubt in order to unearth an Archimedian point of transparency, a point outside all worlds, is self-refuting. As Gadamer puts it: even the Enlightenment is a *Vorurteil*, a pre-judgment. 'The fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice, which denies tradition its power' (*TM*, p. 270).

According to both Heidegger and Gadamer, we always have some notion, some orientation and some expectation towards the new—even if it is just that it is uncanny and to be feared. We always come to a situation having been in other situations, we come to readings with other readings behind us. To put it colloquially, we enter any new experience with 'baggage from the past'. And thus coming to understand is as much a matter of exploring the way that our past has shaped and structured, enabled and constrained, what transpires in the experience of reading or in reading as experience. For as Gadamer insists, reading is an experience and experience is at bottom: negation. Experience is that which shows up the limits, the inadequacies, of our current ways of thinking and of being by opening up new avenues of thinking and being. This has been the role Gadamer has played in my own life these last few years: he has helped me to understand my self and my world otherwise.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCING GADAMER

There are many different horizons against which Gadamer's work can be placed and interpreted. Four horizons spring immediately to mind.

FOUR APPROACHES TO GADAMER

He can be construed in relation to the history of hermeneutics as in Grondin (1994). In this narrative Gadamer is read as initiating an ontological turn 'after' Heidegger to hermeneutics in opposition to the historicist hermeneutics of Dilthey and Schleiermacher. In Section 3 of Chapter 6, I sketch a history of hermeneutics as a context for understanding the emergence of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic.

Secondly, he can be portrayed as a key figure in contemporary debates over the standing of philosophy as in Bernstein (1983) and Warnke (1987). In this setting *TM* is framed as a formative text and defining moment in the emergence of both 'the hermeneutic turn' and 'the linguistic turn' in contemporary philosophy, turns that span both Anglo-American philosophy and Continental philosophy. In Part 3 of the thesis, in which I am concerned to forge a more practically oriented concept of '*theoria*' I first trace the traditional philosophical notion of *theoria* as metaphysic, I glance fleetingly at the range of twentieth century philosophies working to 'put philosophy in its place' as a more situated practice.

Thirdly, Gadamer has written extensively on aesthetics and literature, an angle that has been exploited by Bruns (1992) in formulating a poetic in which 'poetry is an event that takes place at the limits of intelligibility defined by the remembrance of language' and in which the forms of language 'no longer annihilate the corporeality of language in order to achieve the purity or transparency of the sign' (Bruns, 1997, p. 7). I have not found the space within this thesis to deal with this issue, which has meant that I have also avoided dealing with Part 3 of *TM* titled 'The ontological shift of hermeneutics guided by language' in which Gadamer formulates his understanding of the belonging of human being to language as situated events of hermeneutic understanding. Although this claim is critical to a full appreciation of Gadamer's position and is also the point at which he is accused of 'linguistic idealism' by critical theorists (Kölgar, 1996), by concentrating on Gadamer as appropriating practical philosophy, I can avoid detailing his claim that 'that which can be understood is language' (*TM*, p. 475).

It would be the work of an entire other thesis to articulate Gadamer's understanding of the speculative relation of Being as self-presenting, language as dialogue and human being as historically effected consciousness, and to contrast this with both traditional realist accounts of language and contemporary semiotic or structuralist accounts. It would also entail examining closely the relationships between Marxist or Nietzschian 'hermeneutics of suspicion' in which language functions as mask or veil and Gadamer's difficult claim that 'being is *language*—i.e., *self-presentation*' (*TM*, p. 487). Furthermore bringing these competing accounts of language as the manifestation of Being into conversation with one another would require specifying the 'kehre' taken by Heidegger in moving from *Dasein* to 'the work of art' as the clearing in which Being presents itself. Instead of pretending to have undertaken this task, I have confined my claims to the domain of 'practices' and avoided claims concerning the 'linguisticality' (*Sprachelichkeit*) of Being.

Fourthly and finally, as a trained philologist Gadamer has spent his entire adult life producing works of scholarship on ancient Greek philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle. I do not, except, incidently, adduce Gadamer in his capacities as a philological scholar, except in the sense that his entire

oeuvre as a practice of hermeneutics interpreting traditions still at work in us as they are figured, 'presented', in eminent texts, is inherently philological.

GADAMER AS TEACHER OF PRACTICAL WISDOM

However, because my main concern is to bring out Gadamer's usefulness for re-thinking education, especially the education of adults in ABE, I will first present him, not as hermeneut, philosopher, aesthete or philologist, but as teacher, as pedagogue. I present him as also engaged in a practice of cultivating adult students to enter into a deeper understanding and responsibility for their world.

I will then expound the opening Section of *TM* in which Gadamer situates himself as inheriting the traditions of humanism, in particular the traditions of rhetoric and practical philosophy. And just as Gadamer frames himself as resuming the tasks of Renaissance humanism which was in turn a re-sumption of the ancient tradition of Ciceronian practical philosophy or *scientia civilis*, so too I want to position both the adult pedagogy of Gadamer's philosophy classes and the adult pedagogy of ABE as taking part in the conversations of this tradition of *praxis*.

As we have noted, practical philosophy is not aimed at constructing the theoretical tools or concepts for mastering an object domain, but at the collaborative and communal activity of formulating and reformulating the understandings and dispositions, the *sensus communis* and *ethos* that can inform and motivate just and responsible lives, decisions and practices. *Theoria* as practical philosophy is a governance of ethical and political action exercised through the power of speech and sensibility, in place of the threat of violence or the dominion of regulation. Practical philosophy is a cultivation of *habitus*, a forming of *hexis* and *ethos* through the articulation and images of language and 'experience', not a formulation of general concepts for representing and mastering a domain of reality. In short, practical philosophy is a course of study intended to cultivate practical wisdom, *phronesis*. My suggestion is that Gadamer's practice as a teacher (his *ergon*), not just his content (his *logos*), can assist in (re)forming our understandings what it means to say that ABE can come into the inheritance of this tradition of practical philosophy.

GADAMER AS PEDAGOGUE

The one thing that Gadamer's students seem to agree on is that his pedagogic practice stands in radical contrast to the teaching practices of many other university lecturers.

Dallmayr describes how on his first trip to meet Gadamer at Heidelberg University during the height of student protest against the Vietnam war, the university was occupied by students, and all classes and seminars had been cancelled except Gadamer's. He comments:

> As a teacher, Gadamer appeared to me then (and still does) as the personification of the Socratic spirit: a spirit relentlessly committed to lively conversation in which all fixed positions are dissolved or transformed—though a conversation that is not aimless chatter but dedicated to the common search for a 'truth' that is never allowed to congeal into a finished doctrine. (Dallmayr, 1990, p. 90)

P. Christopher Smith recalls his first encounter with Gadamer in comparable terms, also invoking Gadamer's Socratic comportment and *ethos*:

> In the fall of 1961 I came to Heidelberg with a grant from the German Academy Exchange Service for what I thought was to be a year of study under Karl Löwith. Löwith was on leave, however, and Gadamer, largely unknown outside Germany at that time, graciously offered to take me under his wing in Löwith's absence. I soon realized what a stroke of good fortune this was, for once in Gadamer's hands, I experienced his unique Socratic ability to find and elicit intellectual strengths in beginners in philosophy of which they themselves had had hitherto not an inkling—combined, of course, with his equally Socratic talent for first disabusing students of the intellectual phantoms filling their heads. (Smith, 1997, p. 509)

Unlike most other scholars in the German *Geisteswissenshaften*, Gadamer did not read his lectures to demonstrate, communicate or validate his encyclopedic scholarly knowledge; nor did he insist on communicating his philosophical 'truth' to students in the passionate 'existential' discourse of the young Heidegger. Rather, he is portrayed as a teacher who, like Socrates, could formulate good questions, who listened intently and who cultivated the game of conversation.

Gadamer did not write his lectures before delivering them, but instead spontaneously improvised his talks anew each time, thereby attuning himself to ontological play of language and to the *ethos* of the occasion and audience. In short, Gadamer does seem to exemplify his own reflective articulation of philosophical hermeneutics: he was a hermeneutic rhetorician or rhetorical hermeneutic cultivating the play of dialogue in living spontaneous speech thereby renewing the language and its tradition as a *sensus communis*. In this sense he clearly continues and inherits the agenda of practical philosophy as a pedagogy of both individual and city.

GADAMER—TEACHER OF HERMENEUTIC PRAXIS

Gadamer himself has commented on the fact that his articulation of philosophical hermeneutics is simply his attempt to formulate his own actual practices of interpretation as a reader and as a teacher:

> In fact, the rise of my 'hermeneutical philosophy' must be traced back to nothing more pretentious than my effort to be theoretically accountable for the style of my studies and my teaching. Practice came first.
>
> … What I taught above all was hermeneutic *praxis*. Hermeneutics is above all a practice, the art of understanding and of making something understood to someone else. It is the heart of all education that wants to teach how to philosophize. In it what one has to exercise above all is the ear, the sensitivity for perceiving prior determinations, anticipations, and imprints that reside in concepts. (Gadamer, 1997, p. 17)

The term 'ear' in this passage clearly adduces the same cultivated ontological attunement as the other terms collected by Gadamer as signatures of practical philosophy: *phronesis*, *kairos*, 'the mean', tact, taste, sense, judgment, *sensus communis*.

Gadamer was primarily a teacher. The philosophical formulation of this practice came later—*after* the more pressing demands of his students and administrative duties. *TM,* his magnum opus, was written 'over vacations' (Gadamer, 1997, p. 16) in response to requests from his students and colleagues for a more sustained theoretical articulation of his practice and its relations with other philosophies of understanding, interpretation and reflection over a ten year period. He was sixty when it was finally published.

HERMENEUTICS AS ONTOLOGICAL DIALOGUE

As someone highly trained in both classical philology and in philosophy, Gadamer was perhaps 'fore-structured' to experience classical texts as a site of both understanding of the other (the philological dimension of interpretation) and of self-understanding (the philosophical dimension of application). The genius of Gadamer is to construe this experience, this practice, ontologically as a dialogic encounter with the substance underpinning one's own historically situated life and *habitus*:

> Only when I learned from Heidegger how to bring historical thinking into the recovering of our own questions, did this make the old questions of the tradition understandable and so alive that they became our own questions. What I am describing here I would today call the fundamental experience in hermeneutics. (Gadamer, 1997, p. 8)
>
> [T]he more or less conscious leitmotif of all my studies was: In becoming aware of the otherness of the Greeks to be at the same time loyal to them, to discover truths in their being-other that have perhaps been covered over but that perhaps were still today operative and unmastered. (Gadamer, 1997, pp. 10-11)

Finding and formulating a footing that does equal justice to these two worlds, the world of the text and the world of the practically situated interpreter, by engaging them in an unending dialogue that catches both up in change and actualization, in a work of *Bildung*, is clearly the life-work of Gadamer, the life-work of a humanist educator.

PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTIC AS PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

It would seem that the sense of his own project as a hermeneutic retrieval of practical philosophy came to slowly Gadamer. It was particularly his debates with Habermas that brought this 'practical turn' to the fore:

> My studies since *TM* have also taken me in another quite different direction: into practical philosophy and the problems of the social sciences. (Gadamer, 1997, p. 55).

However, it was not principally the critique of Habermas that forced Gadamer to relate his textually-based hermeneutic studies more to social life and its governance. Responses by scholars of rhetoric, especially Klaus Dockhorn,[7] to the first edition of *TM* also provoked him to a deeper study of the role of rhetoric in the history of hermeneutics and humanism. Rhetoric and practical philosophy became Gadamer's counterfoil to Habermas' critical social science:

> Habermas' critique and my countercritique first made me aware of the critical dimension into which I entered when I went beyond the realm of the text and interpretation and had attempted to move in the direction of the linguisticality of all understanding. This prompted me again and again to go more deeply into rhetoric and the role that rhetoric has had in the history of hermeneutics, a role which relates to a far greater degree to the form of existence of society as such. (Gadamer, 1997, p. 55)

Thus, although especially prominent in the structure of *TM* itself, practical philosophy or rhetoric come to the fore in Gadamer's writings *after TM*. In the essays collected in *Reason in the Age of Science* (1981), he formulated the lines of continuity between practical philosophy and philosophical hermeneutics and in two key articles collected in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time* (1997) he adumbrated the lines of continuity between ancient rhetoric and modern hermeneutics including his own. This post-*TM* shift in horizon was also a result of the way his own work was taken up by Habermas as an element in formulating his renewal of practical philosophy as 'emancipatory discourse'. In a sense one of the tasks facing Gadamer post-*TM* was to distinguish his own notion of dialogue which is more closely related to both the traditions of rhetoric and the dialogism of Socrates from Habermas' reconstruction of dialogue as a decontextualized discourse bent on evaluating the validity of abstract norms. Thus Habermas' Kantian turn forced Gadamer to recover more decisively the traditions of practical philosophy and rhetoric as the ground of 'social reason'.

Already, in *TM*, Gadamer had positioned the retrieval of Aristotle's account of *phronesis* and its significance for the concept of 'application'—'The Recovery of the Fundamental Hermeneutic Problem'—as the central pivot or fulcrum on which the entire text of *TM* turned, situated as it was at the centre-point of the second Part or mid-panel of a triptych-like three-part text. Aristotle's account of *phronesis* was thus the exemplary text/event that Gadamer recalls and interprets with his 'inner ear' in order to hear and formulate what it has to say to us in our present situation. Yet, it seems that it was still not clear to Gadamer himself at this point that philosophical hermeneutic is in fact his rendering of what Aristotle's practical philosophy means now, his application of practical philosophy. Even though in retrospect the entire text of *TM* can in one sense be interpreted as a work articulating what *phronesis* and practical philosophy mean today, Gadamer seems to have at first interpreted Aristotle's practical philosopher as simply an exemplar or paradigm foreshadowing his own philosophical hermeneutic, rather than as a full-blooded fusion of horizons.

SECTION 2: APPROACHING *TM*

In order to foreground Gadamer's relationship to the tradition of practical philosophy, I will concentrate on a section of *TM* that is not often discussed—the opening section! It is odd that this opening section is repeatedly ignored by commentators (e.g. Bernstein, 1983; Warnke, 1987). The reason for this neglect is that these commentators insist on situating *TM* in contemporary debates over the 'end of philosophy' or over the interpretative character of the social sciences, rather than as a reflection on Gadamer's own hermeneutic practice as a teacher cultivating the *habitus* of his students as they interpret and come to an understanding with their socio-cultural inheritance. *TM* is interpreted as marshalling proofs for an epistemological thesis whereas in actuality it assembles experiences for releasing and cultivating the reader's 'always already' habitation within the tradition of humanism and practical philosophy.

THE THREE 'OBJECTS' OF *TM*

The structure of *TM* as a text is not accidental. Part 1 focuses on Art, Part 2 focuses on socio-historical texts (the texts interpreted by the *Geisteswissenshaften*) and Part 3 on Language. In a sentence: Gadamer insists that in each case we are not just a spectator or 'subject', but are 'always al-

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[7] I have been unable to access any of Dockhorn's work, but Gadamer refers to him in his reflections on *TM*, and Nancy Struever writes in a footnote that 'Helmut Schanze informs me that Dockhorn's review was the stimulus for major rhetoricizing revisions in the second edition of *TM*.' (1997, p.228)

ready in the game' and under the sway of '*Sache*' as a play of meanings. All three—Art, socio-historical texts, language—are regions in which we are always already players responding to the ontological play of Being.

In all three contexts—aesthetics, the philological humanities and social sciences including law and religion, and all human forms of life enacted as language games—Gadamer is working to undermine a subject-object framing of the structure of the situation and reconstrue it ontologically as a situation of hermeneutic experience in which the subject is always already 'prejudiced' and attuned to some realities rather than others, yet is not so determined that they cannot be 'struck' by the situation so that they come to appreciate different and other dimensions and realities. In a sense we could say that Gadamer splits the difference between the structuralists who on the one hand posit a deep grammar determining the perceptions, appreciations and actions of humans, and the humanists who insist that humans are conscious subjects, agents and authors of their actions and lives. Thus, although Gadamer is intent on retrieving the long tradition of humanism, he does not assign individuals primary agency and creativity.

In fact many of his pronouncements are decidedly anti-humanist; for example, Gadamer does not consider that:

> history belongs to us; we belong to it …. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. (*TM*, p. 276)

What Gadamer means by this striking anti-humanist metaphor, almost as striking as Foucault's claim that 'one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea' in the final sentence of *The Order of Things* (1973, p. 387), is that we are and will always be shaped by our belonging to a sociocultural *habitus* in ways that both condition our consciousness and always outrun it. These shifting 'prejudices' form the condition, limits and horizon of both our being and our consciousness. For Gadamer we are 'more Being than consciousness'.

However, it is important to understand the mode of operation of *TM*. *TM* is not a work of representation, it is a work of remembrance, disclosure and concretization. It is a work that is intended to work on the reader and their belonging to forms of life and language deriving from ancient Greek, Roman and Hebrew traditions. Gadamer fashions his hermeneutic mode of knowing by re-working three nineteenth century traditions defining German idealism: the post-Kantian self-understanding of aesthetics; the emergence of historical understanding as historicism; and the notion of language as a totality formulated by Humboldt. These three traditions are construed by Gadamer as emergent continuations, appropriations, concretizations of older traditions. These three objects—(aesthetic) texts, culture and language—are all relevant to ABE. The mode of being of these three 'objects' and (the mode of being of) their corresponding mode of knowing are directly at play in ABE. ABE is concerned with the domain of **texts** as sites of self-understanding, the domain of **culture** as historical insertion in traditions, and the domain of **language** as the principal element or medium in which human being has its being. Gadamer's claim is that these three domains are in fact located within a single ontological region, a region addressed by language, the language of poetry and the language of practical dialogue. It is the latter only that I attend to in this thesis.

TM AND PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

In *TM*, the tradition of practical philosophy is represented explicitly at only two points in the text and then as ideals, as yard-sticks or utopian 'places' from which to measure the state of play in the movement of German philosophical thought: initially, as the ontological *habitus* and practical form of life of Renaissance humanism before the shift for which T. S. Eliot famously coined the term 'dissociation of sensibility' set in; and secondly, as Aristotle's account of *phronesis* and equity as an eminent text articulating the notion of 'application'. Thus, Humanism is adduced in the opening section and Aristotle in the central panel. (Incidentally, Augustine and his 'inner word' is the principal figure in the final panel/Part, but as I have explained I leave that aside for the purposes of this work). Between these two ideal points, *TM* narrates the modernist fall of 'Substance' into 'the Subject' as manifest in German idealist philosophy and *Geisteswissenshaften*, a fall that is finally 'turned' by Heidegger's ontological substitution of *Dasein* for Subject as the fundamental 'mode of being' of Human Being.

The opening section on 'Guiding Concepts of Humanism' will be the only *TM* passage I need to expound in order to bring out Gadamer's connection with practical philosophy as a form of education intent on cultivating the *habitus* of citizens so that they can govern the *ethos* and norms of the *polis*.

Rather than pretend to summarize the entire text of *TM* in a way that is inevitably too abstracted, too theoretical and too abbreviated to evince its full powers of suggestion and cultivation, I would rather trace the movement of one limited passage and try to demonstrate its power to articulate experience. Moreover, I have found, like Weinsheimer (1985), that it is almost impossible to condense or summarize Gadamer, all one can do is paraphrase him. But the paraphrase takes as many words as the original. Thus, it has taken me over thirty pages to 'deal with' thirty pages of *TM*.

DETOURING PAST AESTHETICS AND HISTORICAL STUDIES

By focusing on the opening section of *TM* only, a section in which Gadamer retrieves key terms from Renaissance humanism (*vide* Ciceronian practical philosophy) as a preparatory context, as 'guiding concepts' (*Leitbegriffe*), against which he can later unfold his tale of loss and recovery, of self-estrangement and home-coming concerning German Idealist philosophy, I can focus on only two points in his narrative—the opening and its ending, Renaissance humanism and Heidegger's turn to the practical. This means I can avoid expounding the long intervening sequence narrated in the later sections of Part 1 where Gadamer traces the consequences of Kant's subjectification of aesthetics and responds with his own construal of aesthetics as participation in an ontological game, and the early sections of Part 2 in which he traces the emergence of understanding as historical knowledge (*Geisteswissenshaften*) within German scholarship before Heidegger eventually overturns the tradition and re-establishes the primacy of the ontological.

These narratives of aestheticism and historical knowledge are not directly germane to my particular 'take' on Gadamer nor to formulating his relationship with the traditions of practical philosophy, so I leave them aside. I have already explained above why I avoid dealing in detail with the motif in *TM* concerning 'the work of art'. By neglecting to expound Gadamer's relationship with the traditions of German philological hermeneutics—from Luther and Flacius through the Pietists and Enlightenment to Schleiermacher and Dilthey—I am not denying the significance of the literary practices that developed out of the conjuncture of Protestantism, the printing press and the development of silent reading. This emphatic 'culture of the book' clearly shapes our present sense of what reading is, of what art and its reception is, and of what 'text' and its interpretation and analysis can be. Yet for my present purposes it is more important to reach back behind this tradition to the more ancient and more ontological traditions of rhetoric and humanism as realizations of practical philosophy.

HEIDEGGER AND ARISTOTLE

The 'ontological turn' enacted by Heidegger is for Gadamer not unconnected from the earlier Renaissance humanist retrieval of Aristotle's practical philosophy. In fact, the ontological turn by Heidegger 'repeats' the earlier turn in that both perform a hermeneutic turn to Aristotle and practical philosophy. This connection between Heidegger and Aristotle is no accident in that Gadamer learnt to interpret and understand Aristotle hermeneutically by attending Heidegger's early lectures on Aristotle's ethics and rhetoric.

The first Heidegger lectures attended by Gadamer were the 1923 lectures in which Heidegger expounded Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Aristotle's account of practical philosophy:

> [T]he first seminar in which I participated, in 1923, when Heidegger was still in Freiberg, [was] on the Sixth Book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. At that time, '*phronesis*', the virtue of 'practical reason', that '*allo eidos gnoseos*,' that 'other form of cognition,' was for me truly a magical word. (Gadamer, 1997, p. 9)

This interpretive work of Heidegger's was eventually to find its public realization in *Being and Time* but in a vocabulary that erased its origins in Aristotle's practical philosophy. But for Gadamer it was the seminar, not the book, that served as a touchstone or paradigm for his own concept of hermeneutic experience and practice as a dialogic listening and interpretation that brings a text and its world back to life. In fact Gadamer has always insisted that *Being and Time* did not do justice to the power, depth and fruitfulness of these early lectures. Unfortunately they have only recently been published in German and have yet to be translated into English.

THE FALL FROM *SENSUS COMMUNIS*

In the opening pages of *TM* Gadamer uses the concepts of humanism to depict 'a time before the fall' of the humanist tradition into the self-estranged consciousness of aesthetic and historicist subjectivity. According to Gadamer, what was previously united within humanism as a form of life fell

apart into three separate departments of life: the life of art and its experience, the life of *Geisteswissenshaften* scholarship and the quotidian life-world of the social and political community at large.

Gadamer rejects this separation of the worlds of art and scholarship into esoteric regions distinct from the practical life of the community. The aesthetic is the region of meaning in which meaning is enacted in dimensions other than propositions: in emotions, feelings, pleasures, moods, sensations, and so on. The aesthetic is what a computer lacks. It had two faces: one is a concern with works of art while the other focuses on epiphanies of meaning however occasioned, whether by works of art or by natural scenes or social events. Gadamer's claim is that these modes of meaning are events of truth—there is more to truth than the truth of propositions. Truth is the disclosing of the world in which we live by rendering it into meaning.

Truth happens in experiences far from the theorems, proofs and evidence of scientific knowledge (*episteme*). Typically, this region of art, its production and consumption and the epiphanies of experience it occasions are construed as functioning within a private and personal world of the mind or sensibility of the individual defined in abstraction from their intrication in a common social world and *sensus communis*. Insofar as this thesis is committed to arguing that this self-understanding is a misrecognition and that the aesthetic is grounded in an ontological belonging to a *habitus*, it is important to trace the emergence of this self-(mis)understanding.

Gadamer also insists that the human sciences (social sciences, humanistic scholarship, jurisprudence, and theology) and their scholarly academic form of life are misconceived as academic disciplines developing a body of knowledge, like the natural sciences. Rather, according to Gadamer, they are engagements with 'matters' (*Sache*) that always already inform both the student/scholar and the community at large. This means that engagement in the human sciences or humanities is as much a matter of cultivating a comportment and self-understanding as it is a matter of coming to know propositions, facts, theories or concepts.

The human sciences or humanities are in fact continuations (without recognition) of the traditions of rhetoric and practical philosophy cultivated by the Renaissance humanists. Thus the human sciences or humanities are grounded in humanism which is in turn grounded in rhetoric and practical philosophy as artful reflections, stylizations and practices of dialogue and debate aimed at cultivating a *sensus communis* through the power of persuasive speech. I too wish to construe ABE as inheriting this tradition, this genealogy.

FALLING INTO ABSTRACTION

Drawing on Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*, Gadamer argues that the emergence of modernist notions of text, culture and language as autonomous realities (separate from one another and from other orders of reality) is a misrecognition, that these modernist notions misunderstand their own conditions of existence. What he argues is that these three traditions have been forced to construct themselves as either theoreticist representations of the underlying generative rules or structures (structuralist accounts of literary texts; anthropological and historicist excavations of the hidden rules determining cultures; and linguistic studies of the rules governing language) or on the other hand as romantic invocations of intuition (artistic genius, essentialist expressivism, empathic insight).

But because he is drawing on a hermeneutic notion of understanding rather than a cognitivist notion of knowledge, Gadamer is careful not to deploy a representational schema in rejecting these traditions. He does not try to 'disprove' these self-constructions by showing that they have misrepresented an objective reality, rather he shows that they have misunderstand their own mode of being and consciousness. This is a mode of argument open to a hermeneutic of finitude because such a view does not posit either a subject transparent to itself nor a transparent objective reality. A hermeneutic of finitude such as Gadamer's leaves space for misrecognition (of self, others, of one's worlds) because on his view historical being always exceeds consciousness. Thus understanding (consciousness) never encompasses being.

As a detour it is worth making it clear that this gap between consciousness and being is, for Gadamer, not to be closed by a science of being such as Marxism, Psychoanalysis or Structuralism. The *whole point* of Gadamer's *TM* is that science as the domain of method does not escape the finitude of the rest of life. Metaphysics is over, but nor can science become the new metaphysics, the new ground of absolute discourse. For Gadamer, science is just as fallible as other modes of knowing. (But this of course is the fate of all human being. This will also be Gadamer's fate; my fate; and your fate. Our reality exceeds our ability to put it into words.) There is no science for reaching behind the

veils of ideology and disclosing the underlying ontology that generate the realm of illusion and the imaginary. Gadamer thus rejects Habermas' notion of 'ideology critique'.

NOMINALISM

However, Gadamer is not a nominalist who simply reverses the relative ontological or epistemological priority of universals and particulars. He is not simply reasserting the priority or significance of the particular, the reader or pragmatics over against the abstract, the universal, the semantic. Gadamer is not a nominalistic or nomadic poststructuralist or romantic arguing that (the particularity of, the hacceity of) the particular always escapes the grasp of the universal. He is not simply reversing the poles. (Neither for that matter is Derrida—Derrida is not Lyotard or Adorno. But that is another story. Derrida does not give the presence of the particular priority over the absence of the abstract: he argues that presence is always out of reach, even with particulars).

Gadamer is not rejecting abstract legislation by postulating a mystical intuition or intimacy with the particular; rather he is insisting that both legislation and understanding are more similar to one another than they realize, that they are in fact always already implicated in one another. Insofar as either insist on going their own way, they are misrecognising themselves, their own conditions of existence and losing touch with their truth.

Gadamer insists that the construal of things into two separate modes of existence as either object or subject is to misrepresent the practical ontological actuality of human being and its belonging to forms of life as traditions of practice. This ontological order of mutual dialectical constitution is the order of human being. It is this order that is the special province of the humanities and the human sciences as practical modes of being and knowing. It is my claim that this order of the *sensus communis* (as text, culture and language) is also the special province of ABE as a pedagogic cultivation of a domain of being and knowing. What is of especial importance from our point of view is that Gadamer argues that this ontological order of being is practical not theoretical, and that this *praxis* is a practice of cultural pedagogy (of *Bildung* as *sensus communis*) enacted within the medium of language via the rhetorical construction and hermeneutic interpretation of texts.

THE HUMAN SCIENCES AS CULTIVATION

Gadamer repositions the human sciences as practices, as pedagogic practices concerned with the apprenticing of students into their traditions in such a way that they enter into an event-ful historical *Bildung*. Exactly what it means to say such a thing in the context of ABE is the overall burden of this thesis. Exactly what it means to say: 'ABE is a pedagogy of *Bildung* enabling adults to 'rise to the universal', is the sought after finalization of this entire thesis.

Hopefully I can show that 'rising to the universal' does not mean: mastering the rules or conventions of a field of social practice (structuralism); mastering the cognitive or theoretical schemas of a body of knowledge (theoreticism); or tapping the well-springs of meaning or desire surging through one (romanticism). Insofar as modernity has construed its modes of knowing and learning in terms of these polar paradigms, Gadamer argues it fundamentally misrecognises itself. Similarly I wish to argue that insofar as ABE construes its modes of knowing and learning in terms of these paradigms it also fundamentally misrecognises itself.

TM AS A WORK OF MEMORY

TM is itself an extended journey of listening to these traditions and coming to a deeper awareness and acknowledgement of how they both form us and speak to us.

It is divided into three Parts, titled:

> Part 1: The question of truth as it emerges in the experience of art
>
> Part 2: The extension of the question of truth to understanding in the human sciences, and
>
> Part 3: The ontological shift of hermeneutics guided by language.

In fact, for Gadamer's practice to be congruent with his claims, I think we c/should read the three Parts of *TM* as a progressive process of de-differentiation in which the mis-recognized specificity of aesthetics is re-inserted back into the larger domain of the human sciences (as its universal or home) and in which the mis-recognized domain of the human sciences is in turn re-inserted in the larger

philosophic domain of *logos* (as its universal and home). Then philosophy itself is re-inserted back in its home as the play of language as speech and dialogue—the *Spiel* of *Sprache*. This framing of the particular within a larger whole illuminates both—the particular and the whole. This interpretive movement from the finitude of the particular to the universal, rather than a reliance on deductions from universal concepts or criteria to their instances, is a feature of Gadamer's way of working—as well as a claim about Being and our experience of Being. This movement back and forth between particular and universal or between part and whole is also of course the renowned hermeneutic circle.

TM is thus a work of memory intent on reversing the splitting-off and forgetting occasioned by the event of instituting private culture (Hegel's subjective Spirit) as a region distinct from public culture, and public culture (Hegel's objective Spirit) as distinct from philosophic culture (Hegel's absolute Spirit). Whereas Habermas acquiesces in the separateness of these different validity domains while trying to reconcile them before an overarching procedural tribunal of communicative reason, Gadamer construes them as layered 'horizons of understanding', horizons that shape and speak to our present contexts of practice.

PRAXIS, NOT *TECHNE*

But having skewed our understanding of what is learnt (when we do learn) away from the know-that of propositional knowledge, we must be careful not to reduce it to the know-how (the methods, techniques or procedures) of technical action. 'The truth that comes to speech' in texts is neither a knowledge of propositions nor a matter of technique, it is a truth that speaks to us of things other than just academic discourse or professional competence. Through engaging with text or studying the humanities and social sciences we learn things other than, more than, factual or procedural knowledge. But what kind of other knowledge? What kind of knowledge and what kind of truth? As this entire thesis, like *TM* itself, is given over to an effort to disclose a tenable and persuasive answer to this question, I will not pre-empt that effort, except to say, in Gadamer's words, that:

> Even though I shall demonstrate how much there is of event effective in all understanding, and how little the traditions in which we stand are weakened by modern historical consciousness, it is not my intention to make prescriptions for the sciences or the conduct of life, but to try to correct false thinking about what they are. (*TM*, p. xxiii)

That is, what we learn from Gadamer and his *TM* is not so much a body of theory or knowledge, or set of concepts. Rather, what we learn is that beyond these we are embedded in traditions, and that even these academic forms of knowing are themselves matters of tradition—matters of tradition and interpretation, not just matters of epistemological claims and validity criteria. But in order to even begin to rid ourselves of the false picture of contemporary learning, including academic learning, that holds us in its grip, we must first make the long detour through modes of being and knowing beyond academic discourse. Only then can we return to academic discourse, the discourse of knowledge, with new eyes and a new vocabulary. *TM* is that journey, or one sketch of that journey, one path through that country 'beyond knowledge'. There are, of course, other paths, other narratives that might also enact a comparable enlightenment—Foucault's practice of archeology and genealogy comes to mind.

'THE GUIDING CONCEPTS OF HUMANISM'

Part 1 of *TM* is subdivided into two Sections.

The first Section is labeled: **Transcending the aesthetic dimension**, the second: **The ontology of the work of art and its hermeneutic significance**.

I will deal with the second section first in order to set it aside. This second Section is concerned to show how our experience of (pedagogic) texts, texts we learn from, is not only a matter of acquiring new cognitive representations. Our engagement with pedagogic texts changes our very being, the very being of the texts themselves and the traditions they carry and enact. Our readings and responses to pedagogic texts re-work the meanings enacted in and through those texts, just as they re-work who we are by catching us up in the play and movement of statement and counter-statement of their larger game, the game of tradition. So, for Gadamer, dealing with texts is neither a matter of a free modernist subject experiencing them as sublime aesthetic rapture nor a matter of taming them by subjecting them to a conceptual or critical analytic. Rather, texts play with us, seduce us into games and realities that we cannot master, games that outrun us, games that began before us and will continue after us. This, then, is a first approximation of what is at stake in Section 2 of Part 1.

We can now return to concentrate on **Section 1: Transcending the aesthetic dimension**. In this Section, Gadamer tries to show that the history of modernity is a history of a misguided differentiation or separation of aesthetic texts and practices from other theoretical, particularly cognitive, uses of texts. This separation has entailed the separation of texts and textual practices into two streams, one dealing with reality, facts and truth, the other with fiction, emotion and pleasure. One construes Being as objects located in a common public reality, the other construes Being as subjective experience located within a private mental or fictive domain.

It is worth noting that this differentiation is inscribed in the very labeling and shelving of library books insofar as the Dewey system separates Literature (800s) off from academic disciplines of inquiry or practical arts and vocations. This distinction is also inscribed in educational systems (in a number of ways that need not be explored here) to mark off two streams of academic study: on the one hand, linguistically-mediated humanities and arts and on the other, experimental or research-based disciplines of natural science.

DEDIFFERENTIATING THE AESTHETIC

So, in order to appropriate Gadamer for our purposes, let's say that Section 1 is concerned to show how the arts and humanities insofar as they deal with artistic and literary texts have been reduced from a substantive engagement in communal sociocultural practices and realities to a privatized focus on personal experience. '**Transcending the aesthetic dimension**' means that there is more to the experience of (constructing and consuming) literary or cultural texts than personal experience, personal meaning or personal pleasure. Meaning is not of a different order from ontology. Gadamer will recount a narrative in which culture (*Bildung*) was dislodged from participation in public common matter (*res publica*) and became a matter of privatized personal expression and meaning-making. Or rather this is the modernist self-construal of this shift. In fact, Gadamer's overall intention is to demonstrate that this way of framing the narrative is partial and misleading to the extent that it enacts and rationalizes the very practices that separate aesthetic experience off from mainstream academic and vocational experience.

However, for Gadamer, this history of the emergent literary and artistic practices of modernity cannot be reduced to a matter of objective empirical study. Part 2 of *TM* is an investigation and rejection of precisely this style of objectivist historicism. For Gadamer, all understanding takes place within a practico-normative horizon, within a practical/ethical context of action and judgment. For Gadamer, even though we now live in hermeneutic times, times in which 'we have lost that naive innocence with which traditional concepts were made to serve one's own thinking' (*TM*, p. xxiv), the past still continues to be instructive and, as tradition, forms the normative horizon we must listen to and attempt to put into words here now.

So, it is no accident that Gadamer begins *TM* by disclosing a normative horizon against which to read the modernist fall into subjectivity. Thus the first Sub-section is titled: **The significance of the humanist tradition for the human sciences**. In this subsection, Gadamer lays out the categories and practices of Renaissance humanism as a normative context against which to read the second subsection which is titled: **The subjectivization of aesthetics through the Kantian critique,** and which deals with Kant's third critique and the way it differentiates reflective judgment, taste, sense and beauty off into a region of human experience different from the (mainstream) domains of empirical knowledge (dealt with in his first Critique) or social morality (dealt with in his second Critique). It is this Kantian subjectification that is taken up and continued in the Romantic history of the concept and practices of personal experience (*Erlebnis*).

THE HUMANIST TRADITION AS HORIZON

Gadamer's first task is to sketch the public culture of Renaissance humanism as it is realized in their language and the terms they used to reflect on and formulate their public culture, or rather to figure their culture as public. This will provide a normative horizon against which to read the preservation and reduction of the concept of cultivation (for our purposes, adult basic education) during the modern era such that the cultivation/education of adults has split into the two spheres of liberalism, the sphere of subjectivity and the sphere of public concern, a split that leaves the humanities mired in subjectivity and even more importantly leaves the human sciences unsure how to construe themselves. According to Gadamer, historical tradition should be 'conceived not as an object of historical knowledge or of philosophical conception, but as an effective moment of one's own being'. (*TM*, p. xxxv) Thus studying the humanist tradition is a moment in the emergence of our own ways of know-

ing and being. It is an occasion through which we can experience our own finitude and our own indebtedness to tradition.

Here is how Gadamer characterizes his own mode of reading Plato and Aristotle:

> I ask that the reader take what follows as an attempt to read the classic Greek thinkers the other way round as it were [from recent scholarship]—that is, not from the perspective of the assumed superiority of modernity, which believes itself beyond the ancient philosophers because it possesses an infinitely refined logic, but instead with the conviction that philosophy is a human experience that remains the same and that characterizes the human being as such, and that there is no progress in it, but only participation. That these things still hold, even for a civilization like ours that is molded by science, sounds hard to believe, but to me it seems true nonetheless. (Gadamer, 1986, p. 6)

Thus, coming into an understanding of the humanist tradition, according to Gadamer, is coming into an understanding of ourselves in that their texts call out to us, interpellate us, speak to us, call for our allegiance and for acknowledgement of their authority, and enact a *Sache* we can participate in. They speak to our deeper sense of things:

> Indeed the reader experiences reading *TM* as an odyssey through the alien terrain of past understandings of understanding; and like the *Odyssey*, this intellectual journey home requires scenes of discovery—most especially, the reader's recognition that the understandings of others belong somehow to one's own understanding, not only of the past but of oneself. (Eden, 1997, pp. 4-5)

Weinsheimer comments on *TM*'s method of development thus:

> This manner of proceeding is less method than *anamnesis*—disforgetting, or remembering what was forgotten. It does not begin with self-consciousness but proceeds toward it through the medium of history. The conceptual language of philosophy does not consist in mere tools, neutral in their import, but rather it has a historical life of its own which the philosopher ignores at the price of naivety. ... Listening to such a word as *Bildung* and being guided by it are ways of listening to history, and history in turn is requisite to self-critical philosophy. It is as if the philosopher must lose the self in history in order to gain it; and that, as Gadamer shows, belongs to what *Bildung* itself is. (Weinsheimer, 1985, pp. 68-9)

However, there is another way we can address the question of the status these humanist categories have for Gadamer.

DEFINING THE RULES OF THE GAME

A key strategy Gadamer deploys in order to undermine the aesthetic approach to art and its self-understanding is to read art as play, as *Spiel*. That is, rather than construe art as representation (which inevitably leads to epistemological issues about what or how it represents or signifies), Gadamer frames art as activity, as a rule-governed activity through which people and their being-in-the-world is disclosed. If we transpose this metaphor to *TM*, we can say that by adducing the discourse of humanism, Gadamer is instituting the guide rails, the limits, the rules of the game that will govern and therefore constitute his own work. *TM* is not an work of infinite speculation that says everything; nor is it a work of representation that methodically specifies the conditions of existence of a set of things, texts or practices; rather, it is an attempt to stage an interplay, a dialogue, an intertextual play of voices and masks between our past and our present that can disclose who we are, what games we play, what games we feel 'at home in' or 'feel ourselves in', and how we appear (to others and ourselves) when we do play them—as self-conscious fumblers, or absorbed participants.

The humanist categories Gadamer invokes are, then, guide-rails that institute the terms to which *TM* is answerable, the terms it is governed by and which it hopes to justify, not directly by appeal to even further criteria—that would be to fall back on the determinate concepts of modernity—but through truth as 'the event of truth'. Thus, the humanist categories are not so much the 'criteria of judgment' of Kant's tribunal of reason, but the historically contingent ground-rules needed to set the voices of *TM* into play with each other as voices all answerable and addressing, vying with one another, to give voice to the same *Sache*. And insofar as the key point Gadamer makes about play is that the movement of the game is determined by the play, its rules and its state of play, not by the psychological intentions or subjectivity of the players, we can construe *TM* as a field on which a *Sache* is finding expression though the moves and counter-moves at play in the game of truth. *TM* is thus a place in which the *Sache* can disclose itself by bringing itself to *Sprache*, by finding words for itself, by figuring itself and its movement as text. Not as a text expounding a single proposition, nor as a text of apriori deduction, but as a textual play of dialogic voices.

So, let's take Gadamer's invocation of humanism, not as a metaphysical move, nor as an empiricist move, but as a hermeneutic move, as a delineation of which language game he is about to play, as a contingent initial gesturing at 'the whole' in terms of which the rest of his text should be read. This background, Gadamer is saying, is the prior knowledge, the horizon, at work and at issue (being worked over), in his text. *TM* is a work of re-presentation that re-appropriates a tradition of discourse and being for our time. Our task is to enter into the spirit of the game and to discover how true we can be to ourselves whilst engaged in this game. Does his game help us come into ourselves, or does it alienate us from ourselves and others?

One final word: It might seem that this long preparation for reading a short passage of 30 pages in a work which is 579 pages long, is at once extravagant and unnecessary. However, recall the extensive and careful, even brutal, preparation of the reader by Cavell. When a text proposes not simply a proposition but wishes to provoke the work of cultivation in, for and by the reader, it is vital to prepare the reader to 'receive' the text in the manner it is offered. Unpacking what the Greeks termed the *ergon* of the text as distinct from its *logos;* what Luther's hermeneutic colleague, Flacius, called the *scopus* of the Bible, 'the purpose and intention of the text as a whole' (Gadamer, 1997, p. 52), as a gospel of grace and glad tidings, is vital.

TM also is intended as a work of cultivation, as *Bildung* for the reader and the *sensus communis* generally. Unlike Foucault who ties the efficacy, the *ergon*, of 'un-writerly text' to its role within an apparatus or *dispositif*, of governmentality, Gadamer intends his text to work more directly on the ontology or *habitus* of the reader. *TM* is intended, not simply as an intelligent work of historical scholarship, but as a poetic text, as a 'self-presentation of being' in all its finitude, partiality and concealment as well as in its disclosure of being, because 'that which can be understood is language'.

BILDUNG AND BOURDIEU

Gadamer begins the passage we will read with the observation:

> The concept of self-formation, education, or cultivation (*Bildung*), which became supremely important at the time [of Herder], was perhaps the greatest idea of the eighteenth century, and it is this concept which is the atmosphere breathed by the human sciences of the nineteenth century, even if they are unable to offer any epistemological justification for it. (*TM*, p. 9)

And for Gadamer himself *Bildung* will be the master term he listens to and interprets for our times. *TM* is a text of *Bildung* in three senses of 'of': it is a book 'about' *Bildung*; it is *Bildung's* book in the sense of 'giving voice to' *Bildung*; and it is a book mimetically cultivating *Bildung* in the reader.

To demonstrate that Gadamer is not the only theorist committed to construing his writings as *ergon*, I will now introduce Bourdieu who, because he is an ontologically oriented thinker, also intends his writings to 'work on the reader'.

Neither Gadamer nor Bourdieu can, without self-contradiction, write a straightforward unselfconsciously theoreticist text. For neither believe that social knowledge is simply a matter of theoretical knowledge or can be represented in theoretical ways. Just as Bourdieu wishes his texts to be construed as text about *habitus*, texts issuing out of the fullness of an acquired *habitus* and texts that inculcate in the reader this very same *habitus*, so too Gadamer's text is exemplary in this philosophical sense of exemplifying the very comportment it claims knowledge and understanding to be. Both are working to figure a mode of knowledge that is a form of comportment arising out of a history of experience and apprenticeship into a tradition or field. Both deploy the figure of 'the game' (*Spiel, illusio*) to describe the ontological comportment between self and situation in a way that leaves behind the subject/object polarity of Cartesianism, the subjection to rules of self-legislating Kantianism and Structuralism (neo-Kantian, because, as Ricoeur pointed out, it posits legislation without a transcendental self). To be consistent, both Bourdieu and Gadamer must write texts that disclose their comportment and attunement with an ontological reality, texts that bring the reader into the presence of this ontological reality, texts that seduce the reader into the play of this ontological reality.

THEORY AS *HABITUS*

Roger Brubaker has written illuminatingly about this issue in 'Social Theory as *Habitus*' (Brubaker, 1993). He reads Bourdieu as inviting us to 'substitute a dispositional for a logocentric understanding of theory—to *treat theory as habitus*' (Brubaker, 1993, p. 212, italics in original). Brubaker notes

that his own early interpretations of Bourdieu missed the way Bourdieu was trying to engage in a different relationship with his readers:

> When I first encountered Bourdieu's work, I collected a dozen or so definitions—or what I took to be definitions—of '*habitus*' in an attempt to pin down its precise meaning. Only later did I realize that the attempt was not only vain but misdirected, that Bourdieu was not in fact defining, but rather was characterizing the concept of *habitus* in a variety of ways in order to communicate a certain theoretical stance or posture, to designate—and inculcate—a certain sociological disposition, a certain way of looking at the world. (Brubaker, 1993, p. 217)

He also notes a rhetorical element in Bourdieu:

> Because sociology must routinely contend with false but powerfully entrenched beliefs, it may be necessary to exaggerate or ironize or polemicize in order to 'arouse the reader from his doxic slumber'; it may be necessary to 'employ symbolic violence against symbolic violence' in order to 'break the circle of belief'. (Brubaker, 1993, p. 217)

He then points to the fact that Bourdieu in fact intends his writings to (in)form the *habitus* of the reader:

> Bourdieu's texts are not simply an objectified trace of his way of thinking and seeing; they are among the instruments deployed as part of a practical strategy that aims at altering our way of thinking and seeing. Products of his intellectual *habitus*, they are intended to have an effect on ours. Hence Bourdieu's elaborate attempts to control, through a variety of editorial, syntactical, and rhetorical devices, the manner in which we read. A purely theoretical reading fails to capture this practical, strategic dimension of Bourdieu's writing. It fails to recognize that Bourdieu deploys concepts and propositions not simply in order to state things about the world, but in order to do things to our vision of it; that his texts have—and are intended to have—not only locutionary meaning and illocutionary force but perlocutionary consequences; that their fundamental aim is transform our mode of sociological vision. (Brubaker, 1993, p. 218)

Here is a passage from Bourdieu's introductory remarks to his seminar at the *Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales* in October 1997 that addresses the sort of pedagogy that is appropriate to a pedagogy focused on practical philosophy as a *habitus* supporting practical judgment.

> One can acquire the fundamental principles of a practice—and scientific practice is no exception—only by practicing it at the side of a sort of guide or trainer, who assures and reassures, who sets an example and makes corrections by specifying, in a particular situation, precepts directly applicable to a particular case … The teaching of a *métier* … requires a pedagogy quite different from that required for the teaching of a body of knowledge. As one can easily see in societies without writing or schools (but this remains true in societies with schools and even in these schools), numerous modes of thought and action—and often the most vital—are transmitted from practice to practice, through practical modes of transmission, based on direct and lasting contact between the one who learns and the one who teaches ('do as I do') … A very large part of the *métier* of the scientist is acquired through thoroughly practical modes of acquisition.… The sociologist who seeks to transmit a scientific *habitus* is more like a highly trained sports trainer than a professor.… He talks little in terms of principles and general concepts.… He proceeds via practical indications, very similar in this respect to the trainer who mimes a movement ('in your place, I would do this') or by 'corrections' made to the practices as they are being undertaken, and conceived in a practical spirit ('I wouldn't ask that question, at least not in that form'). (Brubaker, 1993, footnote, p. 9).

So, to conclude this long preamble, I too will begin where *TM* begins—with Renaissance humanism as recollected by Vico—and then later return to Aristotle himself in Chapter 5 of this thesis. This will enable me to retrieve and revalue terms such as 'tact', '*sensus communis*', 'sensibility', 'taste', 'judgment', 'imagination' as humanist terms, before turning to uncover their origins in the more ancient practices of *phronesis*, equity and rhetoric.

CHAPTER 4 FORMING THE HORIZON

Having established how we should 'take' Gadamer's philological investigations into the history of some of the key terms of humanism, we now move on to the actual terms he selects as 'guiding concepts' for **TM** as a whole. So, without any further epistemological scruples, let's play the game, Gadamer's game. Let's not be spoil-sports who secretly hold part of themselves skeptically in reserve in order to protect themselves against the possibility of change, failure, ridicule or embarrassment. Let's set aside doubts and throw ourselves into the game, trust it and see what comes out of it. Let's let truth work itself out as event and give ourselves up to its workings.

BILDUNG

So, what is *Bildung*? In a sense the answer to this question is the task of the text of **TM** in its entirety, not just a single section within it. *Bildung* is 'the whole' in terms of which everything else in the text is placed and delineated, in order that it itself become visible and re-inscribed in that very process. **TM** is thus a text which interprets the tradition of *Bildung*, by reconfiguring it for the new situation. Gadamer does this by retrieving and exploiting latent potential residing in that tradition as contemporary resources.

Bildung is, of course, the master term of nineteenth century German education and culture. It is the word used for both education and culture and configures each in terms of the other. But this tradition is corrupted. It was this mandarin culture that *willingly* succumbed to Nazism. It is the reactionary culture of German mandarins who deployed culture as an ideological thematic for rejecting the realities of modernity and the 'mass culture' of the twentieth century by immersing and immuring itself in a culture of subjectivity, a culture of personal aesthetic experience and esoteric scholarship whilst distancing itself from the actual sociocultural, especially political, condition of their country.

Habermas cites Fritz K. Ringer's study of the decline of the German mandarins between the years 1890 and 1930 and comments:

> In the sheltered inwardness enjoyed by these Mandarins, the neo-humanist educational ideal was deformed into the intellectually elitist, apolitical, conformist self-conception of an internally autonomous institution that remained far removed from practice while intensively conducting research. (Habermas, 1987, p. 13)

Portrayed here is a world of academia that has lost touch with the common world outside its walls.

The task Gadamer sets himself is to retrieve *Bildung* from this corrupted tradition and re-construe it as an educative process that is not confined to the inner mental or psychological development of scholars or intellectuals, but as a process that is more social, more historical and more ontological.

But Gadamer's text is not intended to simply communicate to us a assemblage of factual information or conceptual material. Rather, it is intended that it reinvest we readers in this tradition by revealing the limits of our present insertion and engagement with that tradition and disclosing the affinity—the comportment and commitments we always already have and are—with this tradition.

> But the German word that Gadamer employs (*Zugehorigkeit*) is ... better translated as 'belongingness.' As Gadamer sees it, we belong to a tradition before it belongs to us: tradition, through its sedimentations, has a power which is constantly determining what we are in the process of becoming. We are always already 'thrown' into a tradition. (Bernstein, 1983, p. 142)

So, although a work of scholarship, Gadamer intends that the force, the effect, of **TM** exceed mere scholarship. He desires that it be 'a clearing for the event of truth' for the reader. He intends it to provoke our sense of belonging to the tradition of *Bildung* and the *Bildung* of tradition. For our work of understanding tradition is the tradition of understanding at work on itself.

Bildung is the way that a tradition works itself out, as a matter of actual history, not simply a matter of the closed development of a system, or the logical working out of a conceptual apparatus. *Bildung* is the trace and recapitulation of the contingent events and conjunctures of history. Our present efforts at understanding the past will make new sense of the past, will make the past new, will renew

the past, by both surpassing it and preserving it. *Bildung* is how criticism of tradition, moving into the new, reveals our 'belongingness' to tradition and renders tradition new again. This activity of critical understanding is not best characterised as the activity of a subject—whether subject as author or subject as reader. To quote Bernstein again:

> It is true, of course, that understanding requires effort and care, imagination and perceptiveness, but this is directed to the pathos of opening ourselves to what we seek to understand—of allowing it to 'speak to us'. ... But we do not do this by bracketing or forgetting all our prejudgments and prejudices. On the contrary, it is only because of the play of these prejudgments that we are enabled to understand the 'things themselves'. ... We are always understanding and interpreting in light of our anticipatory prejudgments and prejudices, which are themselves changing in the course of history. This is why Gadamer tells us that to understand is always to understand differently. (Bernstein, 1983, pp. 137-8)

So, let us begin yet again: what does Gadamer say about *Bildung* and how does he go about saying it?

TACT

Textually, the context in which Gadamer raises the matter of *Bildung* is as a way of accounting for the mode of knowledge implied in Helmholz's characterisation of the human sciences as a form of 'tact'. Gadamer writes:

> By 'tact' we understand a special sensitivity and sensitiveness to situations and how to behave in them, for which knowledge from general principles does not suffice. Hence an essential part of tact is that it is tacit and unformulable.... [However] the tact which functions in the human sciences is not simply a feeling and unconscious, but is at the same time a mode of knowing and a mode of being. (*TM*, p. 16)

The tact or attunement on which the human sciences (*Geisteswissenshaften*) is based is *Bildung*. This tact is both a sense or sensibility, a knack and also a consciousness or awareness. It is the meeting point between natural sense and acquired knowledge, between the immediacy of awareness and the mediatedness of deliberation. This attunement to works of art and to history is not a mere matter of academic study, rather it is 'a receptivity to the "otherness" of the work of art or the past' (*TM*, p. 17).

Bildung does not mean only attunement or apprenticeship into a specific field of practice, which Gadamer terms the cultivation of given talent, although to come into a vocation as into oneself is *Bildung*. *Bildung* is not simply the extension of the range or repertoire of one's skills or competence, one's 'know how' or comportment. Rather:

> [i]n *Bildung*, by contrast, that by which and through which one is formed becomes completely one's own.... in acquired *Bildung* nothing disappears, but everything is preserved. (*TM*, p. 11)

Bildung is thus a coming into one's inheritance, a coming into one's own, a taking on of one's being, a 'becoming of who we are':

> *[Bildung]* evokes the ancient mystical tradition according to which man carries in his soul the image of God, after whom he is fashioned, and which man must cultivate in himself. (*TM*, p. 11)

Thus *Bildung* is not just the cultivation or acquisition of some randomly chosen form of knowing or being, rather it is the cultivation of a form of life that is as it were one's special essence, one's secret fate. *Bildung* is as it were 'finding oneself', or as Gadamer sometimes frames it, 'coming home'.

Let me at once acknowledge that the ten pages in which Gadamer traces the emergent history of the term *Bildung* and its meanings are extremely dense and elusive, perhaps even more elusive than the meditations on language, light and beauty which constitutes the final section of *TM*. I have read these pages over at least twenty times and still only dimly sense the fundamental movement, the logic, of the passage. So rather than try to simply expound these pages in the sense of trying to reconstruct the authoritas mentis, the author's mind—what Gadamer meant—I am perforce condemned to conform to Gadamer's notion of reading as a dialogue in which the prejudices of the reader are the essential grounds for the encounter with the text, so that it is the re-working of these prejudices which is the essential point and outcome of reading. In other words, the meaning of the process of reading is not the mastery of the text or the recovery of the original meaning, but the way it figures as a provocation, pretext, context, guide-rail, exemplar, form, universal, in the forming, the laying out for view, the disclosing, of the finitude of the reader and the reformulation of the pre-judices and horizons of

the reader. On this account, reading is fundamentally, not a matter of the transfer of information or data (information), but a matter of the *Bildung* of the reader, a medium in which the reader can extend their horizons, can 'rise to the universal', can re-shape themselves by keeping their inner eye on the image (the *Bild*) of the big picture as they listen to the wording of the text with their 'inner ear'.

'SEEING THE BIG PICTURE'

Bildung is 'rising to the universal'. In English this is sometimes called 'seeing the big picture'. I will use this phrase because I believe it perfectly captures the Kantian/Hegelian concept of 'rising to the universal'. *Bildung* means seeing the big(ger) picture and learning to live one's life in light of it. Of course there is not just one big picture, but rather a series of bigger picture without a last final biggest picture. To believe in *the final* big picture is the preserve of Hegel. For Gadamer, there is always a bigger picture. The absolute picture is a mirage, a regulative ideal—to use Kantian vocabulary. In a later chapter, I will explain Gadamer's notion of utopia as a trope of an imaginary horizon that engenders critique, but which should not itself be mistaken for an end or goal of action or history. In this sense 'the big picture' is a movement towards Arendt's 'enlarged thinking', but as it were the 'place' or horizon from which this sense of 'we' is coming is an imaginary and utopian place, not some universal metaphysical ground.)

So although we will continue to use the phrase 'the big picture' we will understand this to be phenomenologically framed from within the horizon of a more localized picture of the agent. Thus, from the point of view of the person, there is always a horizon beyond the horizon currently determining their present world-picture.

'BETTERING YOURSELF'

But *Bildung* is not just a matter of learning new things, it is a matter of re-forming your life, of turning your life around, so that your life and actions conform to this new world, this bigger picture and its imperatives. In Aboriginal English and working class registers, this is called 'bettering yourself'. Attuning yourself to this big picture and its demands:

> requires sacrificing particularity for the sake of the universal. But negatively put, sacrificing particularity means the restraint of desire and hence freedom from the object of desire and freedom for its objectivity. (*TM*, p. 12)

Bildung means: not 'seeing things' only in terms of your own personal desires or needs. It means 'seeing things', that is interpreting a situation, in terms of what things mean and matter for others. It means: seeing your role or place within a larger unfolding of activities, events and institutions.

> Whoever abandons himself to his particularity is *ungebildet* ('unformed')—e.g., if someone gives way to his anger without measure or sense of proportion. Hegel shows that basically such a man is lacking in the power of abstraction. He cannot turn his gaze from himself towards something universal, from which his own particular being is determined in measure and proportion. (*TM*, p. 12)

To see the big picture, 'the universal', and to act in light of it means that you have to do 'what the situation demands' rather than 'what you personally want to do'. You do what the situation calls for rather than what you feel like doing. In this way, you let the 'objective' demands of the situation govern and shape your engagement rather than your own subjective needs. Later in this thesis we will take note of the 'technologies of the self' developed by Hellenistic philosophies; already in this account of *Bildung* as rising to the universal we can hear the echoes of Stoic practices to discipline and put our self-oriented desires in perspective—'put them in their place'—by imagining ourselves as citizens of the world or cosmos, so that we do not take our own desires and passions so seriously or allow ourselves to be enslaved by them.

WORK

When this assigning of primacy to the objective situation and its demands, seeing the big picture, is focused on forming a product, it is what Hegel calls work. In work the demands of the situation are governed by what is necessary to produce a specific object (or 'work').

> Work is restrained desire. In forming the object—working consciousness raises itself above the immediacy of its existence to universality; or, as Hegel puts it, by forming the thing it forms itself. The self-awareness of working consciousness contains all the elements that make up practical *Bildung*: the distancing from the immediacy of desire, of personal need and private interest, and the exacting demand of a universal. (*TM*, p. 13)

Work means disciplining oneself not to simply do what one feels like when one feels like it; work means enacting the rationality demanded by the outcome. Work means being able to set aside one's own desires, needs or interests and act in terms of the demands of the situation.

KANT'S RATIONAL WILL

However, this alienation or distanciation from one's initial and spontaneous picture of things to the big picture must not be construed as a Kantian shift from one order, the realm of empirical contingent partiality and sensibility, to a higher order or universal realm of impersonal objectivity and concepts. As noted earlier, rather than this dualism between distinct orders, it is better to construe matters in terms of a series of widening horizons or a series of steps in a ladder. What we are faced with here is a matter of degree, not a matter of objective polarity. Kant has taken the notion of 'the big picture' too literally. Kant believes that there is one and only one big picture and that to be the big picture it must be no-one's picture, and that it must be completely pure and impersonal, absolutely procedural and devoid of any particularized desire, needs or interests—a perfectly abstract universal.

For Kant, the demands of the situation are a matter of impersonal and impartial duty—not a matter of seeing the situation from some larger or different point of view. Duty is beyond point of view, beyond all points of view. By contrast, Gadamer, following Hegel insists that understanding is always coming to an understanding *with*. Thus, the bigger picture is a matter of coming to see things from the point of view of other actual or possible points of view.

PRACTICAL BILDUNG *AS* HABITUS

Attuning oneself to the demands of the situation does not mean that one abandons one's sense of belonging to a particular community or identity and loses oneself forever in a procedurally defined order of impersonal duty. Instead, the abandonment of oneself to the demands of the situation means that one gradually acquires a new sense of self.

> What seemed denied him in the selflessness of serving, inasmuch as he subjected himself to a frame of mind that was alien to him, becomes part of him inasmuch as he is working consciousness. As such he finds in himself his own frame of mind, and it is quite right to say of work that it forms. (*TM*, p. 13)

Practical *Bildung* is the process whereby we take on the *habitus* of a field, a communal region of knowing and being, of speech and action, by joining in the (language) games of that field and learning the resources of that field. To 'see the big picture' is not a matter of simply looking; it is a matter of being apprenticed into the tools, the concepts, the technologies, that disclose that field. 'Coming to see the bigger picture' is a matter of a dialogue between two horizons, two vocabularies, and as it were fusing those horizons, translating the vocabularies onto one another.

It is also a matter of mastering the craft, the media, the institutions, the genres of that field: these are technical matters, matters of technique, *techne*. Seeing the big picture is not just a cognitive matter, it is a matter of 'knowing your way around' the world of the big picture and knowing how to act in that world. And knowing how to act is, of course, a matter of tact, a matter of judgement, a matter of attunement, a matter of *phronesis*.

KNOWING AS FORGETTING

Thus, 'seeing the big picture' ('rising to the universal') is more a matter of learning to keep the big picture in mind rather than being struck by the look of something. But keeping something in mind is not just a matter of keeping it 'before your mind'. Remembering something is not simply a matter of not forgetting it by keeping some image before your mind. Knowing something is not always and only a matter of presence-to-mind. It was one of the central burdens of Heidegger's *Being and Time* to insist that knowledge or understanding first and foremost takes the form of 'the ready-to-hand', the attunements and tacit know-how we can call on, or more accurately, that the situation itself calls out of us. So, to keep something in mind is not a matter of not forgetting it, it is a matter of what psychologists call 'automating it', of losing consciousness of it because it has become an intuitive and unconscious fluency.

But forgetting serves a further important function. As Gadamer notes:

> Only by forgetting does the mind have the possibility of total renewal, the capacity to see everything with fresh eyes, so that what is long familiar fuses with the new into a many leveled unity. (*TM*, p. 16)

'Seeing the big picture' is a matter of allowing oneself to be apprenticed into what I would call the 'criteria of judgment' of the field—the investments, the values, the forms of assessment, the ideals, the goods. MacIntyre calls them 'the internal goods' of a practice (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 175). 'Seeing the big picture' is a matter of learning to play the game, the language games constituting that form of life. And of course, famously, language games rest ultimately on shared judgements (Wittgenstein)—that is, shared criteria of judgement and appraisals. In short, a shared *habitus*. 'Seeing the big picture' means coming into possession of a *habitus* that elaborates one's previous picture or *habitus*.

SEEING THE SMALLER PICTURE

Of course to be phenomenologically accurate here, we should say that in fact one does not 'see' the big(ger) picture at all. Rather, it is taking up the standpoint of the bigger picture that enables one to 'see' the smaller picture, to see that one's preceding picture is small and limited. One will only see the bigger picture by taking on an even bigger picture. Perhaps we could say that the horizon in which one stands is 'sensed' whereas the horizon one is *aufgehoben* is 'seen'. Thus, the objectification is always of the *previous* world-picture in the very process of its overcoming. In this movement of rising to the universal, we glimpse the horizon that has held us, both held us in its thrall and held us up. 'Held us up' in both senses: held us up from moving forward but also held us up from falling.

So, to say that seeing the big(ger) picture means coming into possession of a *habitus* that recontextualizes one's previous picture or *habitus*, means that one's previous *habitus* is not simply abandoned or dissolved. Rather, it is potentially objectified and named in the act of surpassing it. Thus, what we can name is never expressive of the ground on which we stand in order to name. We always know more than we can say. This 'more' is the ontological *Bildung* beckoning us to come into our belonging, not just the infinite play of textual difference, or the march History.

SPIRIT AS 'BETTERING ONESELF'

This process of allowing the world to make demands on us is the movement of what Hegel calls Spirit. Spirit is a process that comes to itself by finding itself in the other. Spirit is the process of recognizing oneself in the alien, becoming at home in it. Spirit means coming to see the bigger picture and finding oneself in it. 'To recognize one's own in the alien, to become at home in it, is the basic movement of spirit, whose being consists only in returning to itself from what is other' (*TM*, p. 14).

Thus, Gadamer characterizes *Bildung* ('bettering oneself') as:

> keeping oneself open to what is other—to other, more universal points of view. It embraces a sense of proportion and distance in relation to itself, and hence consists in rising above itself to universality. To distance oneself from oneself and from one's private purposes means to look at these things in the way others see them. (*TM*, p. 17)

However, this movement from the local to the universal, from the specific to the generic, is more a matter of attunement and understanding than a matter of cognitive schemas or deductive reasoning.

> This universality is by no means a universality of the concept or understanding. This is not a case of a particular being determined by a universal; nothing is proved conclusively. The universal viewpoints to which the cultivated man (*gebilt*) keeps himself open are not a fixed applicable yardstick, but are present to him only as the viewpoints of possible others. (*TM*, p. 17)

Theoretical *Bildung*, according to Gadamer who at this point again adduces Hegel:

> consists in learning to affirm what is different from oneself and to find universal viewpoints from which one can grasp the thing, 'the objective thing in its freedom,' without selfish interest. That is why acquiring *Bildung* always involves the development of theoretical interests. (*TM*, p. 14)

HUMANISM

Having introduced the concept of *Bildung* as a horizon framing the entire text of **TM**, Gadamer now invokes the classical traditions of rhetoric and humanism as carriers of what might be termed the tradition of practical philosophy. He frames humanism as a tradition bent on formulating a mode of

knowledge and being that is different from or not reducible to 'school' knowledge. This humanist tradition:

> waged battle against the 'school,' i.e., scholastic science, and supported an ideal of human wisdom that was not achieved in the 'school'—an antithesis which in fact is found at the beginning of philosophy'. (*TM*, p. 18)

This humanist tradition and its concern for a practical wisdom which was manifest in a range of forms—a concern with *eloquentia*, with talking well (*eu legein*), with tact (Helmholz), with social sympathy (Adam Smith, Shaftesbury), with *sensus communis* (Roman law, Vico)—is usually associated with a concern for rhetoric as opposed to philosophy, and the practical ideal of *phronesis* as opposed to the theoretical ideal of *sophia*.

It is important to keep in mind that Gadamer is not primarily focused on reconstructing the original text or its context, its original meaning. Rather, he is focused on releasing its meaning and what it has to say—its truth—into our present conversation. His focus is on instituting a language game in which humanism can speak to us and we can really hear what it has to say. In this way he is more concerned with how the past can be instructive. This is a philosophical hermeneutic approach to history which treats the past as if it were present. It is an approach that both interrogates texts of the past and allows them to interrogate us.

By invoking Italian Renaissance humanism, English Platonism and Scottish common sense philosophy, Gadamer is invoking a pre-aesthetic understanding and practice of liberal education, a practical conjuncture of Aristotelian moral philosophy and the humanist re-investment in lingual (grammatical and rhetorical) studies of classical Latin and Greek (and Hebrew) texts. Gadamer's intention here is to invoke an understanding of *Bildung*, of educational growth, that is more public and more civic than the post-Kantian construal of either the punctual subject of science, or the punctual subject of morality, let alone the privatized subject of aesthetics.

TRADITIONAL RHETORIC AND HERMENEUTIC RHETORIC

Gadamer is not trying to skew modern education back to a Renaissance rhetoric in which we can simply imbibe classical norms through the memorizing and imitation of exemplary models. Construing education as a matter of reproducing or internalizing (*imitatio*) norms or forms inevitably represses the ethical issues focussed on question of difference, alienation, symbolic violence and assimilation. Systemic Functionalist Genre Theorists such as Martin (1990) or Christie (1990) and Ian Hunter's Wittgensteinian-Foucauldian call for a renewal of the rhetorical curriculum (Musprat & Freebody, 1997) are all arguably susceptible to this charge insofar as they pretend to retrieve an innocent non-hermeneutic rhetoric.

Gadamer's remembering of rhetoric, by contrast, invokes a hermeneutic rhetoric, a rhetoric that acknowledges the fragmentation of tradition and the fact of otherness and rupture. Gadamer insists that the very distinction between the traditional rhetorical education and a contemporary hermeneutic education rests on the difference between the unquestioned sense of belief and trust based on continuity in the case of rhetoric by contrast with the underlying sense of alienation, loss and rupture in the case of hermeneutic. Gadamer points out that whereas rhetoric is the dominant mode of language pedagogy when a new culture is establishing itself, hermeneutics emerges when a 'late' culture is trying to maintain contact with its past:

> Historically, it is worthy of note that while rhetoric belongs to the earliest Greek philosophy, hermeneutics came to power in the Romantic era as a consequence of the modern dissolution of firm bonds with tradition. Of course, hermeneutics occurs in earlier times and forms, but even in these it represents an effort to grasp something vanishing and hold it up in the light of consciousness. Therefore it occurs only in later stages of cultural evolution, like in later Jewish religion, Alexandrian philology, Christianity as inheriting the Jewish gospel, or Lutheran theology as refuting an old tradition of Christian dogmatics. The history-embracing and history-preserving element runs deep in hermeneutics, in sharp contrast to sociological interest in reflection as basically a means of emancipation from authority and tradition. (*PH*, p. 21)

REPRODUCTIVE RHETORIC AND PRODUCTIVE HERMENEUTICS

Rhetoric tends towards a positive training into the genres and forms of social life. Hermeneutics, by contrast, problematizes the present by framing it in relation to a cultural horizon of, the classics, Dreamtime. This means that the vernacular life-world is answerable to a normative horizon that is not seamlessly embodied in the present and its practices. Hermeneutics is thus an effort to re-awaken

this cultural tradition, to keep it alive, to make it new, alive and relevant to present times. In a hermeneutic culture, the present is opened out onto a normative horizon, not closed in on itself as a finalized present.

What is most important is that Gadamer shows how this must not, cannot, be a matter of antiquarian scholarship or conservative repetitive traditionalism. Rather, hermeneutics means that these vanishing texts, ideas, values, traditions, can only live on if they are interpreted. That is, if they are: reworked, said in other words, made other, translated. Thus both the lifeworld and cultural realm are 'made new again' by becoming other to themselves, being transformed, in their encounter with one another. Pedagogy as hermeneutics is the staging of this encounter.

In 'On the Problem of Self-Understanding' (*PH*) Gadamer contrasts the context calling for hermeneutics as opposed to contexts calling for rhetoric. He writes:

> The [hermeneutic] problem clearly does not arise as long as one is involved directly in taking up and continuing a specific intellectual tradition. It does not arise, for instance, with the Renaissance humanists, who rediscovered classical antiquity and tried to be the successors of the ancient authors, imitating them, indeed, openly competing with them, rather than merely 'understanding' them. The hermeneutic problem only emerges clearly when there is no powerful tradition present to absorb one's own attitude into itself and when one is aware of confronting an alien tradition to which he has never belonged or one he no longer unquestioningly accepts. (*PH*, p. 46)

Of course the 'merely 'understanding' them' in this passage is intended ironically, precisely because the whole burden of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is to argue that interpretation does have ontological effects in that understanding is a dimension of *Dasein*. Precisely to the extent that Gadamer has reworked romantic hermeneutics from its self-construal as a 'mere' transformation of consciousness to an ontological event, he has to that same extent shifted the meaning of hermeneutics closer to rhetoric, to humanist rhetoric as the appropriation of a comportment attuned to a *Sache* and its discourse community.

Even so, the primary sense of the hermeneutic age is a sense of alienation, of distance and puzzlement. Socrates is a figure of hermeneutic. Hermeneutic is essentially philosophical, even though pitting itself against the *critica* of modernist methodology. Hermeneutic does not mean a naive return to the classics, or an abandonment of dialectic, method or reason. Hermeneutic is the mode of being of tradition after the loss of tradition.

VICO AND THE RHETORICAL TRADITION OF *SENSUS COMMUNIS*

The second 'guiding concept' that Gadamer adduces to excavate the humanist tradition is the concept of *sensus communis*. He begins with Vico as a key vehicle and exemplum of the humanist valorization of *sensus communis* because of his immersion in the traditions of rhetoric and Aristotelian *praxis*. He opens by insisting that:

> it is important to remember the humanistic tradition, and to ask what is to be learned from it with respect to the human sciences' mode of knowledge. (*TM*, p. 19)

In responding to Descartes and Jansenism, Vico defended humanism by appealing to 'the *sensus communis*, common sense and to the humanistic ideal of *eloquentia'* (*TM*, p. 19). Gadamer notes that 'Vico's defense of humanism derives from the Jesuit pedagogical system and is directed as much against Jansenism as against Descartes' (*TM*, p. 19). By returning to the ancient Roman tradition and ideal of '*sensus communis*, common sense, and the humanist ideal of *eloquentia*—elements already present in the classical concept of wisdom' (*TM*, p. 19), Vico is working to mediate two opposing poles: the Cartesian cognitivist espousal of Method on the one hand, and the Jansenist embrace of an irrational faith before a dark hidden god on the other. He is attempting to draw both back to a more communal, more public, more pedagogic rhetorical tradition, one that foregrounds the *phronesis* of the practically wise man over the *sophia* of the scholar. Here Vico is insisting on a Roman practical and political ideal of life in opposition to the Greek ideal of the theoretical life.

The ideal of life embedded in the humanist rhetorical tradition is centred on *sensus communis*, a sense of the community, a feel for the community, 'a sense that founds community':

> According to Vico, what gives the human will its direction is not the abstract universality of reason but the concrete universality represented by the community of a group, a people, a nation, or the whole human race. Hence developing this communal sense is of decisive importance for living. (*TM*, p. 21)

A training in this *sensus communis* is not a matter of learning knowledge based on argument or *critica*, but more a matter of forming images for the imagination and for the forming of its memory. This is the old *topica* which is 'the art of finding arguments and serves to develop the sense of what is convincing, which works instinctively and *ex tempore*, and for that very reason cannot be replaced by science' (*TM*, p. 21). *Sensus communis* is a sense of what is right and of the common good that is acquired through living in the community and is determined by its structures and aims. It is a disposition, an habitual Being (*hexis*).

According to both Gadamer and Vico, rhetoric is not separated off from the ideals of truth or wisdom. Despite the Sophists and the Ramists, rhetoric is not merely an amoral technology (*techne)* of persuasion or power; it is an activity grounded in an attunement to and cultivation of the *sensus communis*, a sense of community. The knowledge of the orator is not that of the theoretical scholar, but that of the wise man, even that of 'the idiota, the layman, who assumes a totally new role between the scholar and the wise man' (*TM*, p. 20). This knowledge of the humanist is not based on the abstract universality of reasoning but on a more concrete immersion in concrete situations and circumstances.

Training in rhetoric is a training in attunement to what an audience or community finds convincing and compelling. It is also a training that cultivates this attunement as a 'sense', as a tacit instinct as it were, that can function spontaneously, 'instinctively and ex tempore'. Just as in a recreational game, being able to respond to the state of play instinctively, naturally, is a function of extensive training focused, not on abstract principles, but on concrete situations in their infinite variety, this too is the goal of rhetoric and its *copia*—to have something to say, to have a move to make no matter what situation turns up. This feel of a player for the state of play is not based on logical reasoning, but on an experiential attunement based on previous (real and imagined) immersion in similar circumstances and situations.

This contrast between the conscious deliberateness of school learning and the tacit fluency and naturalness of the humanist is only one feature of the difference between scholastic methodic learning and the tradition of practical philosophy (*praxis*). Beneath this difference is the fact that:

> practical knowledge, *phronesis*, is another kind of knowledge [from theoretical knowledge]. Primarily, this means that it is directed towards the concrete situation. Thus, it must grasp the 'circumstances' in their infinite variety. (*TM*, p. 21)

But, as we have been insisting, this form of knowledge takes the form of an attunement, a habituated attunement, rather than the cognitive possession of a body of knowledge.

> The Aristotelian distinction [between practical and theoretical knowledge] refers to something other than the distinction between knowing on the basis of universal principles and on the basis of the concrete. Nor does he mean only the capacity to subsume the individual case under a universal category—what we call 'judgment.' Rather, there is a positive ethical motif involved that merges into the Roman Stoic doctrine of the *sensus communis*. The grasp and moral control of the concrete situation require subsuming what is given under the universal—that is, the goal that one is pursuing so that the right thing may result. Hence, it presupposes a direction of the will—i.e., moral being (*hexis*). That is why Aristotle considers *phronesis* an 'intellectual virtue.' He sees it not only as a capacity (*dunamis*), but as a determination of moral being which cannot exist without the totality of the 'ethical virtues,' which in turn cannot exist without it. (*TM*, pp. 21-2)

The difference between theoretical and practical knowledge is thus not just a matter of a difference in object, theory being concerned with universals while practice is concerned with particulars. There is another difference as well which is the medium in which they reside, as it were.

Gadamer summarizes his use of Vico thus:

> Vico's return to the Roman concept of *sensus communis*, and his defense of humanist rhetoric against modern science, is of special interest to us, for here we are introduced to an element of truth in the human sciences that was no longer recognizable when they conceptualized themselves in the nineteenth century. Vico lived in an unbroken tradition of rhetorical and humanist culture, and had only to reassert anew its ageless claim. … We, on the contrary, must laboriously make our way back into this tradition by first showing the difficulties that result from the application of the modern concept of method to the human sciences. (*TM*, pp. 23-4)

PHRONESIS AS ETHICAL ATTUNEMENT

Practical wisdom is not just a matter of cognition, even though it is an 'intellectual virtue'; instead, it is a matter of moral being, *hexis*. This *habitus* (moral being, *hexis*) on which practical knowledges such as rhetoric and oratory are based is not just a matter of natural talent, but is a matter of *ethos*, of attunement to the *ethos* and ends of the community and 'the right thing'.

> For Vico ... the *sensus communis* is the sense of what is right and of the common good that is to be found in all men; moreover, it is a sense that is acquired through living in the community and is determined by its structures and aims. (*TM*, p. 22)

But it is not only the attributes of classical rhetoric and oratory that manifest practical knowledge. Even though Vico lived on the other side of the boundary dividing what are called traditional from modern societies and subsisted 'in an unbroken tradition of rhetorical and humanist culture' that 'goes right back to antiquity', in fact of course, it is Gadamer's claim to argue that 'Vico's appeal to the *sensus communis* belongs, as we have seen, in a wider context that goes right back to antiquity and whose continued effect into the present day is our theme' (*TM*, p. 23).

For despite the self-posited 'rupture' founding modernity, it is precisely Gadamer's intent to insist that this rupture is not as radical as modernists would like to think. Admittedly it does occasion the shift from rhetoric to hermeneutics, but it does not rupture the historical reliance of the modern human sciences on the *habitus* derived from training in the tradition of rhetoric.

In fact if we were to sum Gadamer in a sentence, it would be something like: the reading and writing skills, together with the insight and discernment, possessed by the modern humanities scholar are based on their apprenticeship into an attenuated and impoverished but unbroken tradition of rhetorical training and its attunement to the *sensus communis*. As Gadamer himself writes:

> There is something immediately evident about grounding philological and historical studies and the ways the human sciences work on this concept of *sensus communis*. For their object, the moral and historical existence of humanity, as it takes shape in our words and deeds, is itself decisively determined by the *sensus communis*. ... The sense of the community mediates its own positive knowledge. (*TM*, p. 23)

In short, the capacities of the modern humanities or social science scholar are not just a matter of mastery of theoretical concepts or techniques, but more fundamentally depend on a *habitus* grounded in a subterranean tradition of rhetoric and practical philosophy.

So, even though the humanities and social sciences may construe themselves as academic disciplines concerned to represent an object domain, in fact attunement to this domain is not a matter of mastering techniques for applying abstract concepts, but a matter of being inducted into a 'sense' that as it were operates just below the threshold of conscious control. Thus, the cognitive capacities of these scholars and intellectuals is not a matter of genius or human nature, it is a matter of training, a training located in their past, in fact in their secondary schooling (the German *gymnasium*, English grammar school or French *Ecole*). In this sense, Gadamer concurs with Bourdieu, even though he does not pursue the social imperatives or motives for distinction. Both trace the attributes of the humanist back to their induction into a tradition that cultivates a concern for and attunement to 'the moral and historical existence of humanity as it takes shape in our words and deeds'. *Bildung* is acquired, learnt, through training.

And it is no accident that it is precisely this laborious training in and through seemingly repetitive and imitative reading and writing tasks, located in the secondary school, that ABE students lack. If Gadamer is right, it is difficult to make up for this lack of grounding in rhetoric. Rhetoric is the classic path to attunement to the 'ethos' of the community, what we call the ethical and the Greeks called *ethos*, as a *sensus communis* that reaches beyond the family or local community.

So, if interpreting a text is a matter of allowing one's tact, one's attunement, to throw up a key that unlocks the logic of the text, I would say that the hermeneutic secret that unlocks Gadamer's ***TM*** is: the significance of rhetoric and the fact that the hermeneutics of reading is founded on training in the skills of writing, rhetoric. Not vice versa. The sensibility of the polymath German scholar of the nineteenth century *Geisteswissenshaften* was grounded in the 'sense-less' composition exercises of his secondary school training, not his intellect or genius, his personal 'meaning making'. Or better, his 'intellect or genius' was an acquired effect of training in an ancient tradition, not a natural biological attribute, nor an exercise of impersonal method.

However, because the tradition of rhetoric was becoming so impoverished by it confinement to a rhetoric of style (*elocutio*) during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these scholars were themselves unable to sense this. As Gadamer notes,

> Vico's return to the Roman concept of the *sensus communis*, and his defense of humanist rhetoric against modern science, is of special interest to us, for here we are introduced to an element of truth in the human sciences that was no longer recognizable when they conceptualized themselves in the nineteenth century. (*TM*, p. 23)

Gadamer traces a shifting ambivalent attenuation of the tradition of *sensus communis* through Shaftesbury's notion of wit and humor ('virtues of the heart more than of the head ... limited to the social intercourse between friends' (*TM*, p. 24-5); to the Scottish school of common sense ('the senses serve to direct us in the common affairs of life, where our reasoning faculty would leave us in the dark' (*TM*, p. 25), to the French tradition of *Le bon sens* (quoting Bergson: 'while our other senses relate us to things, 'good sense' governs our relations to persons; it is less a gift than the constant task of 'renewed adaptation to new situations,' a work of adapting general principles to reality, through which justice is realized, a 'tactfulness in practical truth,' a 'rightness of judgment, that stems from correctness of the soul' (*TM*, p. 26); and finally, to German Pietism, especially Oetinger ('where we find *sensus communis* translated simply as 'heart'.... 'The *sensus communis* is concerned only with this that all men see daily before them, things that hold an entire society together' (*TM*, p. 27).

Despite the gradual attenuation of the social and political dimension of the *sensus communis* and its gradual re-framing as a psychological or cognitive faculty, it still retained its ontological grounding in social practice and custom, in *Sittlichkeit*.

> The *sensus communis* is an element of social and moral being. Even when this concept was associated with a polemical attack on metaphysics (as in Pietism and Scottish philosophy), it still retained its original critical function. By contrast, Kant's version of this idea in his Critique of Judgement has a quite different emphasis. There is no longer any systematic place for the concept's basic moral sense. As we know, he developed his moral philosophy in explicit opposition to the doctrine of 'moral feeling' that had been worked out in English philosophy. Thus he totally excluded the concept of *sensus communis* from moral philosophy. (*TM*, p. 32)

For the *sensus communis* of the social and political domain, Kant substitutes the universality of the categorical imperative, which rests on a self-legislating will, not a cultivated moral sensibility or *hexis*. In this way Kant cuts morality loose from pedagogy, from the classical training in *sensus communis* embodied in the tradition of rhetoric. And, as we will discover, he consigns *sensus communis*, along with notions of sensibility, feeling and taste to the domain of aesthetics, thereby banishing *sensus communis* from both the domain of knowledge and the domain of social morality and justice. This entire ontological dimension of 'human being' is now compelled to live out an attenuated existence in the name of aesthetics.

JUDGMENT

The third concept, after *Bildung* and *sensus communis*, that Gadamer uses as a guide for disclosing the significance of the humanist tradition for the later nineteenth and twentieth century developments of the human sciences as academic disciplines, is judgement. (The final concept will be taste, which even more than judgment, will lead us into the heart of Kant's architectonic and the subjectivization of aesthetics.)

What Gadamer emphasizes in this section on Judgment is that with Kant the notion of *sensus communis* undergoes a radical subjectification or de-socialization. Before Kant, judgment rested on, spoke out of, one's embeddedness in community:

> The word 'judgment' was introduced in the eighteenth century in order to convey the concept of *judicium*, which was considered to be a basic intellectual virtue. The difference between a fool and a sensible man is that the former lacks judgment—i.e., he is not able to subsume correctly and hence cannot apply correctly what he has learned and knows. (*TM*, p. 31)

Thus, judgement was a stable disposition or *hexis*: one was a 'man of judgment'. Judgment is concerned with appraisal of particulars and bringing them into some relationship with universals, but it is important not to gloss this appraisal as simply a matter of 'seeing' the universal in the particular in the sense of simply classifying the particular as a token of a type or as an instance of kind. These fairly straightforward situations of classification do not really call for the exercise of judgment. It is

with 'messy' cases that judgment comes into its own. It is the particular in all its over-determined hybridity and particularity that calls for judgment.

Judging a particular situation in all its complexity and uniqueness is not reducible to unproblematically or slavishly following an algorithm or procedure, or applying a concept or scheme. In fact, dealing with individual cases or situations is never simply a matter of unthinkingly applying a rule. Thus:

> Judgment requires a principle to guide its application. In order to follow this principle another faculty of judgment would be needed, as Kant shrewdly noted. So it cannot be taught in the abstract but only practiced from case to case, and is therefore more an ability like the senses. It is something that cannot be learned, because no demonstration from concepts can guide the application of rules. (*TM*, p. 31)

Thus, even though the outcome of judgment is the subsumption of a particular under a concept as universal, as Kant senses, the principles (criteria) governing this operation cannot, without infinite regress, themselves be abstract concepts, rules or schema or criteria.

DETERMINANT AND REFLECTIVE JUDGMENT

To capture this issue, Kant distinguished between determinant judgments and reflective judgments.

> Judgement in general is the faculty of thinking the particular as contained under the universal. If the universal (the rule, principle, or law) is given, then the judgement which subsumes the particular under it is determinant .... If, however, only the particular is given and the universal has to be found, then the judgement is simply reflective. (Kant, 1911, p. 18)

Determinant judgments do fairly straightforwardly subsume a particular under a universal concept, rule or yardstick. Reflective judgments, on the other hand, engage with the particularity of the case in all its specificity and specialness, and work towards a judgment about the situation overall. In such cases, bringing a case within the ambit of a universal is the final upshot of the activity of judging, not an automated and immediate operation of mind. This final subsumption under a universal is mediated by judgment, a judgment that arises out of the mobilization of a sense of judgment, a sensibility and work of *habitus* that is communally generated and validated.

Gadamer contrasts this socially grounded, communal generality of judgment with the abstract 'universality' of Kant's faculty of judgment. For the former, judgment is not so much a faculty as a moral demand placed on us by our investment in community. Gadamer articulates the subtle relation between judgment, common sense, community and *res publica* within the humanist tradition by punning (in German):

> Everyone has enough 'sense of the common' *(gemeinen Sinn)*—i.e., judgment—that he can be expected to show a 'sense of the community' (*Gemeinsinn*), genuine moral and civic solidarity, but that means judgment of right and wrong, and a concern for the 'common good'. (*TM*, p. 32)

Engaging in a community of judgment is not a private matter; it is a participation in a community, in a *sensus communis*. Judgment is a concern for the common good.

By contrast, Kant's account of judgment cuts judgment off from practical discourse, from the moral or political concerns of the community, not merely by reconstruing it as the exercise of a universally distributed faculty of mind, but also by consigning it to the non-cognitive domain of sense—aesthetics. In § 40 'Taste as a kind of *sensus communis*', he insists that public values such as 'truth', 'propriety', and 'justice' cannot exist in the ambit of sense:

> The name of sense is often given to judgement where what attracts attention is not so much its reflective act as merely its result. So we speak of a sense of truth, of a sense of propriety, or of justice, etc. And yet, of course, we know, or at least ought to know, that a sense cannot be the true abode of these concepts, not to speak of its being competent, even in the slightest degree, to pronounce universal rules. On the contrary we recognize that a representation of this kind, be it of truth, propriety, beauty, or justice, could never enter our thoughts were we not able to raise ourselves above the level of the senses to that of higher faculties of cognition. (Kant, 1911, pp. 150-151)

Thus, according to Kant, truth, propriety and justice can only be captured by the universal rules of a faculty of mind, not from 'a sense of things' arising out of participation in a community. For Kant, the empirical generality of a community of sensibility can ground a common sense for aesthetic

judgments only, not the more important cognitive judgments of understanding or the moral judgments of practical reason.

SENSUS COMMUNIS OR COMMON SENSE

Kant continues the passage I have just quoted by addressing the instability in the meaning of 'common sense' between a sense of community (*sensus communis*) and a minimal, taken-for-granted, 'vulgar', knowledge (possessed by everyone):

> *Common human understanding* which as mere sound (not yet cultivated) understanding, is looked upon as the least we can expect from any one claiming the name of man, has therefore the doubtful honour of having the name of common sense *(sensus communis)* bestowed upon it; and bestowed, too, in an acceptation of the word *common* (not merely in our own language, where it actually has a double meaning, but also in many others) which makes it amount to what is *vulgar*—what is everywhere to be met with—a quality which by no means confers credit or distinction upon its possessor. (Kant, 1911, p. 151)

And yet, having rhetorically ridiculed *sensus communis* because it can be interpreted as human understanding which is common in the sense of a vulgar, i.e. 'common' and an uncultivated reliance on the senses, Kant (surely shocked by his own 'below the belt' swipe) then admirably summarizes the humanist understanding of *sensus communis*.

It deserves extensive citing, as it captures an entire tradition at precisely the moment it will be forced into the background, or even more radically, underground in face of the onslaught by the very culture of Kant himself:

> However, by the name *sensus communis* is to be understood the idea of a *public* sense, i.e., a critical faculty which in its reflective act takes account *(a priori)* of the mode of representation of everyone else, in order, as it were, to weigh its judgment with the collective reason of mankind, and thereby avoid the illusion arising from subjective and personal conditions which could readily be taken for objective, an illusion that would exert a prejudicial influence upon its judgment. This is accomplished by weighing the judgment, not so much with actual, as rather with the merely possible, judgments of others, and putting ourselves in the position of everyone else, as a result of a mere abstraction from the limitations which contingently affect our own estimate....
>
> While the following maxims of common human understanding do not properly come in here as constituent parts of the critique of taste, they may still serve to elucidate its fundamental propositions. They are these: (1) to think for oneself; (2) to think from the standpoint of everyone else; (3) always think consistently. The first is the maxim of unprejudiced thought, the second that of enlarged thought, the third that of consistent thought. (Kant, 1911, pp. 151-2)

Clearly this remarkable passage is the touchstone for Arendt's (1958, 1982) attempt to stitch the concept of judgment back into a notion of *sensus communis* in order to found a new sense of politics based on the tradition of civic humanism, an effort that has in turn led to Habermas' elaboration of the notion of communicative reason.

In her early formulations of her concept of 'representative thinking' as that mode of thinking that can speak to and for a plurality without positing a theoretical universality, we can hear Kant's words:

> Political thought is representative. I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent, that is represent them. This process of representation does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else and hence look upon the world from a different perspective; this is a question neither of empathy, as though I tried to be or feel like somebody else, nor of counting noses and joining a majority, but of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not. The more peoples' standpoints I have present in my mind while pondering a given issue and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for an 'enlarged mentality' that enables me to judge; as such, it was discovered by Kant—in the first part of his Critique of Judgement—who, however, did not recognize the political and moral implications of his discovery. (Arendt, 1967, p. 115)

This concept of 'representative thinking' posits a form of discourse or dialogue that is aimed at producing common action but which relies, not on an universal tribunal of reason, but instead on a public community of taste, a *sensus communis*.

SENSUS COMMUNIS *AS AESTHETIC*

However, having so clearly summing the humanist tradition, Kant then positions it as his 'Other Position', as the other party or point of view, by reframing this exposition of *sensus communis* as a whimsical detour or digression. And so he continues:

> I resume the thread of the discussion interrupted by the above digression, and I say that taste can with more justice be called a *sensus communis* than can sound understanding, and that the aesthetic, rather than the intellectual, judgment can bear the name of a public sense... (Kant, 1911, p. 153)

In short although he first sketches the possibility of a community of human understanding—later taken up by Arendt and Habermas—Kant finally resiles from the impurity of mixing the realm of principles and the realm of sensibilities. In this way, he consigns judgment and sense to the domain of aesthetics, thus severing the exercise of *habitus* from the exercise of knowledge or public morality. However, it is precisely this divide that Gadamer is intent on unpicking in Part 1 of ***TM***: he is determined to reinstate both art and taste as forms of knowing and being—as occasions for the disclosure of truth.

As many commentators including Gadamer have noted, Kant despite his best intentions cannot avoid repeatedly adducing the pedagogic role of the development of sense, judgment and habitual taste regarding examples and particulars for the domains of knowledge and social justice (see especially Munzel, 1999). Yet he continues to insist that judgment and taste do not cross the threshold separating the purity of the cognitive and transcendental from the merely empirical. In my terms, I would construe this as the continual return of the repressed. Insofar as Kant denies the pedagogy of rhetoric and practical philosophy as the ground of *sensus communis*, and substitutes natural faculties for the historical apprenticeship into a communal *habitus*, it is inevitable that he will have to continually deflect the issue of cultivation and training.

Of course it is precisely this issue of the role of explicit universals (rules, competency standards, performance criteria) that is driving this thesis. One of the pivots upon which it swings is trying to acknowledge that ABE can be grounded in the explicit pedagogy of rhetoric whilst at the same time denying the rationalist pretensions of both structuralist linguistics and the competency based training movement with their belief that they can capture human competence within a grid of rules or norms. This is why I am drawn to the tradition of practical philosophy as manifest in Gadamer: it attends to the individuality of the particular, but not in a way that rejects universals altogether. And certainly not in a way that denies the role of generality in learning. Thus practical philosophy whilst insisting on the individuality of the particular does not cut it off from any intrinsic connection with universality. Practical philosophy is not a radical nominalism that denies universality altogether, but it does insist, to use the Kantian vocabulary, that thinking and acting more often than not can or should involve reflective judgment, not simply determinant judgment. This Kantian contrast of course also recalls Will's (1988) contrast between the deductivist and ampliative governance of norms cited in the Preface.

This issue of the role of judgment as appraisal of contextualized and individualized particulars, rather than the straightforward placing of something against a yardstick is a topic that will be revisited when expounding Aristotle's concept of practical philosophy as a cultivation of the capacity—*phronesis* or practical wisdom—that enables appraisal of particulars.

TASTE

We now move on to explore how *sensus communis*, the social ground of judgment, becomes consigned to a domain of taste, which is the final heading under which Gadamer expounds the tradition of humanism as the historical underpinning of the human sciences.

Gadamer begins the section on Taste by pointing out that he is not only tracing a narrowing of the concept of the sense of community (*sensus communis*) to taste, but also a narrowing of the concept of taste itself. He insists that:

> the long history of this idea before Kant made it the basis of his Critique of Judgment shows that the concept of taste was originally more a moral than an aesthetic idea. It describes an ideal of genuine humanity against the dogmatism of the 'school.' It was only later that the idea was limited to 'the aesthetic.' (*TM*, p. 35)

Gadamer also argues that the distinction between reflective and determinate judgments is not absolute, because even in the case of:

> the exercise of pure theoretical and practical reason ... aesthetic judgment is involved. Kant indirectly admits this inasmuch as he acknowledges the value of examples for sharpening the judgment. (*TM*, p. 39)

Gadamer continues to examine the role of aesthetic judgment and its object, particulars, in all reason, by shifting his attention to exemplars.

EXEMPLARS AND CASES

Gadamer begins with the assertion that 'the case which functions as example of a rule is in fact something different from just a case of the rule. Hence to do real justice to it—even if merely in technical or practical judgment—always includes an aesthetic element' (*TM*, p. 39). In this sense we only experience a rule or universal *in* its exemplars, and so to that extent the experience of the particular, the aesthetic, is inherent in thinking. In this sense the distinction between determinant and reflective judgment by Kant is abstract and misleading—reflective judgment is always implicated. The universal is always being re-worked, reinterpreted, in light of its exemplars.

At this point Gadamer introduces the notion of 'the individual case' and develops it in a direction that will link up with his later articulation of Aristotle's *phronesis* (in *TM*, Part 2). I quote this important passage at length:

> The individual case on which judgment works is never simply a case; it is not exhausted by being a particular example of a universal law or concept. Rather, it is always an 'individual case,' and it is significant that we call it a special case, because the rule does not comprehend it. Every judgment about something intended in its concrete individuality (e.g., the judgment required in a situation that calls for action) is—a judgment about a special case. That means nothing less than that judging the case involves not merely applying the universal principle according to which it is judged, but co-determining, supplementing, and correcting that principle. From this it ultimately follows that all moral decisions require taste—which does not mean that this most individual balancing of decision is the only thing that governs them, but it is an indispensable element. It is truly an achievement of undemonstrated tact to hit the target and to discipline the application of the universal, the moral law (Kant), in a way that reason itself cannot. Thus taste is not the ground but the supreme consummation of moral judgment. The man who finds that what is bad goes against his taste has the greatest certainty in accepting the good and rejecting the bad—as great as the certainty of that most vital of our senses, which chooses or rejects food. (*TM*, pp. 39-40)

Thus, Gadamer as it were, turns the tables on Kant to assert the place of taste (*habitus*) in moral life, not just the region of art and design. He concludes his insistence that aesthetic judgment features constitutively in moral judgment with a grand backward glance that takes in even 'the ethics of measure in Pythagoreans and Plato' and 'the ethics of the mean (*mesotes*)' developed by Aristotle:

> Thus the emergence of the concept of taste in the seventeenth century, the social and socially cohesive function of which we have indicated above, has connections with moral philosophy that go back to antiquity. (*TM*, p. 40)

However, Gadamer is not just trying to win an argument with Kant.

TRUTH AS EVENT

Kant is an event in the actual history of the tradition, in the forming of the *Sache*, the *Habitus*. So, refuting him does not erase or negate the actuality of his historical effects nor the movements in the tradition that he gives voice and shape to. Refuting him does not demonstrate that Kant is untrue against some timeless yardstick of reason. Gadamer is not playing a Kantian game on Kant. Nor should we.

The value, the potential truth or effect, truth as effect, of engaging with Kant is that we here-now sense the way that Kant has both illuminated and distorted our *Sache*, our *Habitus*, our tradition, our being. By purifying ethics, social morality, of all taste and judgment, by encouraging the hope that cases would fall neatly and untendentiously under the rule of universals, Kant severed the Humanities from the Sciences. From this moment forward the former will deal with artistic sensibility while the latter deal in knowledge. 'But is it right to reserve the concept of truth for conceptual knowledge? Must we not also acknowledge the work of art possesses truth'? (*TM*, p. 42)

And so, we have circled right back to Gadamer's original question, the question that frames *TM* as a whole: 'But what kind of knowledge and what kind of truth?' (*TM*, p. xxi) However, now we have a more substantive sense of what kind of knowledge and what kind of truth. We now realize that it is a kind of knowledge that is embodied in sensibility, taste, tact, reflective judgment and in the *sensus communis*. Clearly it is not the sort of conceptual knowledge dear to modern epistemology.

HABITUS AS GROUND

What Gadamer will now try to show is that we should interpret Kant's aesthetic as demonstrating that aesthetic truth is different from theoretical truth but in fact ultimately more fundamental in that it underpins theoretical truth itself. The domain of sense, of *habitus*, is not an inferior domain of knowledge produced by a different faculty, but is the ontological ground on which theoretical knowledge itself is founded. Sense is not a fuzzy representation of the same objects that are represented clearly in cognition, nor are they concerned with two separate domains of object (Plato, Kant); rather, sense is our ontological thrown-ness into *Sache selbst*, and theoretical knowledge is a re-working of this sense into representation.

To quickly foreshadow Gadamer's claims, we can say that he tries to demonstrate that the domain of taste, of judgment, of *sensus communis*, of tact, is re(dis)covered by Heidegger's ontologizing of understanding as *Dasein*, following the detour through the dead-ends of Romantic *Erlebnis* and scientific historicism. *Dasein* is a region of being and knowing that exists as a pre-theoretical *habitus*, a *habitus* that is hermeneutic, not based on taken-for-granted intuition.

THREE MORALS

However, for the purposes of this thesis, what I want to take away from this exposition and commentary on the opening passages of *TM* is three things.

First, this reading allows us to understand more emphatically the way Gadamer construes his own discourse as *ergon*, as intent on releasing resources within the tradition. His discourse is intended to reveal how Gadamer himself has been formed by tradition and he hopes his text will itself contribute to the further forming of that tradition in his readers. Thus Gadamer does not intend his text to be a straightforwardly theoretical text, a text that simply proves its points logically or theoretically. He intends it to 'call out' to something in the reader, to open up to the reader the way in which they are already claimed by the *Sache* Gadamer is giving voice to, so that they experience and acknowledge their 'belongingness' to this tradition, a tradition that lives like an iceberg, just below the surface of consciousness and theoretical formulation. We are 'more Being than consciousness'.

Below this threshold of consciousness, we are taste, judgment, *sensus communis*, tact, aesthetics. Our being is a matter of possessing a 'sense' of things, a sense of specific things in their own right, which we construe in relation to universals. Practical life is not simply the application of theory. Rather, practical theory, the human sciences, is a strenuous dialogue between the specificity of situations and the universality of reflection as two poles of practical life. This section has focused on reading and writing as a sense of community that is embodied, formed and disclosed in a sense of judgment and taste. It prepares the ground for asserting that learning to read and write is an induction into a sense of community and its *habitus*, a concern for its well-being. Thus, ABE is not acquiring technical skills or theoretical concepts; it is being apprenticed into a tradition of moral and practical sensibility, a *sensus communis*, a *habitus*.

The second moral I wish to draw from this examination of the early sections of ***TM*** is a justification of my own practices of reading and rendering Gadamer. I have allowed Gadamer to affect/effect my very being, my sense of things, my *habitus*, my feel for life and community as such. Using a text to (re-)attune one's sense of things, using it as a work of art, as an event of truth, is a slower, more subterranean, mode of reading than a theoreticist reading that focuses on truth as representation. Entering into the game of a text and allowing it to do its work at this more subterranean region within us, takes time and attentive patience.

The third and final moral I draw from these early sections of Gadamer's *TM* is that we can glimpse, peeping out from behind the *sensus communis* and the community of taste and judgment, the pedagogic tradition of rhetoric. From my perspective, the hermeneutic secret driving Gadamer's work is that it is rhetoric that has *'Bildung*-ed' the West. Philosophy and theology or science may be the crowning glories, but the under-work, the propaedeutic work has always already done by a training in rhetoric as a site of practical philosophy.

Rhetoric is the *techne*, the *artes*, underpinning practical philosophy as the cultivation of *sensus communis*. The 'historical apriori', to use Foucault's term, of the West rests on, is grounded/founded on, the institutionalized pedagogic practices of rhetoric, not on an untutored human nature of faculties or genius of great individuals and their doctrines or actions. The *longue dureé* of the West as an order of civilization is an effect of cultivation by and through rhetoric. Rhetoric conditions the sensibility and *habitus* out of which more visible achievements of culture and history emerged. Rhetoric is/was the dung-heap, the manure, of the West. At this point, I really only want to insist that although he does not himself say it, and perhaps even does not himself fully realize it, Gadamer is in fact tracing the history of a pedagogic apparatus and its effects. He senses this but it is partly obscured for him, because his historical methodology is a philology focused on 'eminent texts' and their meanings, not a genealogy focused on the history of 'formations' (Elias) or '*dispositifs'* (Foucault). As noted in the last chapter, this became clear to Gadamer himself in the wake of *TM*.

And so I bring this 'close reading' of a short section of *TM* as representative of the density and resonances embodied in it, to a close. I should make clear that although it has taken many pages, I have in fact selected out only one strand from the overwhelming density of historical and intellectual *Sache* in this section. This section is 'exemplary' in that (in accord with Kant's reflective judgment) the reader can garner a substantive 'feel for *TM* as a whole' and in the way that (unlike Kant's determinant concepts or rules which apply deductively) its topics are 'particular cases' that whilst exemplifying its overall theme also reinterpret that overall theme.

PART THREE: ABE AS '*THEORIA*'

As an exercise in hermeneutic experience, this thesis summons the forgotten practices of three traditions of *theoria*[8]—hermeneutics, rhetoric and practical philosophy—as figures on which ABE has formed itself and can continue to (re)form(ulate) itself. In this central part of the thesis I 'perform' this recollective form of *theoria*, a thinking intent on (re)collecting and enriching our sense of where we come from, who we are and what we are doing. This articulation of *theoria* will comprise a threefold movement: first, the destruction of an ideological, and therefore blocking, construal of what *theoria* is; secondly, the recovery of an older and more ontological understanding of *theoria*; and finally, the appropriation of *theoria* as a practice of education or cultivation (*Bildung*) of the *habitus* (*phronesis*) embodying the discernment that guides our participation in forms of life.

This Part, ABE as *Theoria*, is thus in search of a theoretical comportment that is both ontological and congruent with the human reality of *praxis*, rhetoric and hermeneutic experience. Gadamer characterizes the style of *theoria* we need thus:

> Practical philosophy is not a knowing of rules for human-social *praxis* in the sense that grammatical or rhetorical technical doctrines are a knowing of rules. It is much rather a reflection upon human-social *praxis*, and as such, in the final analysis, is 'general' and 'theoretical'. … Practical science is thus really a 'general' knowledge, but obviously a knowledge which one would refer to less as a productive wisdom than as criticism. (Gadamer, 1997, p. 275).

Let the fact that this statement is radically elusive, paradoxical, verging even on the self-contradictory, stand as a sign of how difficult it is to form an 'image' of *theoria* that evades the hegemonic concept. This Part will assume that philosophy is both emblematic of concepts of '*theoria*' and that it is the place where the nature of *theoria* is reflectively wrestled with. Thus an exploration of philosophy in particular can serve as a vehicle for the formulation of a notion of *theoria* generally.

TOWARDS A WORLDLY *THEORIA*

Historically, *theoria* is positioned as standing over against everyday practice. In traditional philosophy, *theoria* is defined as a participation in *logos* or reason, a participation which stands in opposition to the participation in *doxa*, appearance and superstitions of everyday ontological human being. Equally, in modern construals, theory is formulated as a distanciation that enables the construction of abstract representations of a field of reality that obeys the procedures of scientific method. Whether as metaphysical 'participation' in *logos*, as Idealist 'constructions' by a Subject and its ideas, or as objectivist 'representations' of a natural object-domain, the dominant concept of theory is posited as standing over against the deficiencies of the epistemological resources and practices of everyday human being. And yet during the twentieth century this claim to epistemological superiority of abstract theory has come under sustained attack, in both its guises: as claims to scientific truth or claims to philosophical insight.

In retrospect, twentieth century philosophy could be characterised as 'against theory', as a series of attempts to overcome the distance between abstract theory and embodied practice or life-world. The efforts of philosophers from many different national traditions to overcome the contradiction between theory and practice have come together under the heading of the various 'post's: post-metaphysical, post-positivism, postmodernism, post-structuralism, post-modernity. This reworking of the relationship of theory and practice is often framed under the *topos* of 'the end of philosophy' or 'the end of theory'. At issue are such 'left Hegelian' questions as: how is philosophy to be brought to an end? Or, how is philosophy to be transformed to achieve its end? Has philosophy anything left to

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[8] **A note on terminology**: Because it is almost impossible to frame discourse about these matters without begging the question in the initial choice of vocabulary—itself a telling example of the hermeneutic circle and of the inevitability of background assumptions—and because this pre-structuring cannot be evaded by instituting a new, neutral or innocent vocabulary—Descartes' gambit—I am faced with an aporia. We are always 'in movement' over the 'in-between terrain' formed by the dialectic between specific and general, particular and universal, part and whole. We can never begin cleanly from first principles and then deduce the rest of our thoughts as a system, even though it is precisely this 'logical' fiction that is embedded in theoretical texts and their ideal of systematic theory. My solution is to deploy the term '*theoria*' as a generic, more 'original' term of art to encompass the whole range of forms taken by theory as a practice in Western culture.

say or should it be 'forgotten'? Should it be simply abandoned (Rorty), re-construed (Heidegger), deconstructed (Derrida), reconstructed (Habermas, Putnam, Taylor) or subsumed into a more ontological substrate (Marxism, Foucault, Gadamer)?

In European philosophy we can trace a narrative from Nietzsche's category of 'life' to Dilthey's concept of *Lebensfilosofie* to Husserl's notion of 'life-world' to Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*, to Schultz's notion of 'typicality' to Foucault's notion of 'discourse', to Habermas' notion of 'communicative action' and Gadamer's notion of 'hermeneutic experience'. Such a list is not in any way intended to be exhaustive. It should be supplemented by the French tradition of Bergson, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Castoriadis, Lyotard, and many others. It also needs supplementation from the Marxist and critical theory tradition of Lukács, the Frankfurt school, Lefebvre, Gramsci, Althusser and so on. However, even taking into account these additions, I think that it would not be inaccurate to characterize the *overall ethos* of twentieth century philosophy—or if not *ethos* then certainly the *common problematic*—as a focus on the relationship between validated knowledge and the situatedness of social agents. This problematic could be called the topic of 'overcoming the contradiction between theory and practice'. In fact, of course we could trace this theme back to Kant and Hegel who both prioritized practical Reason over theoretical Reason.

Each of these twentieth century philosophies works to situate *theoria* itself 'inside' the world of practice. These efforts to de-transcendentalize and decentre philosophy are neatly formulated in the introduction to a recent collection of selections from major twentieth century philosophers assembled around the topic of 'the end of philosophy':

> It is no longer possible to deny the influence of the unconscious on the conscious, the role of the preconceptual and nonconceptual in the conceptual, the presence of the irrational—the economy of desire, the will to power—at the very core of the rational. Nor is it possible to ignore the intrinsically social character of 'structures of consciousness', the historical and cultural variability of categories of thought and principles of action, their interdependence with the changing forms of social and material reproduction. And it is equally evident that 'mind' will be misconceived if it is opposed to 'body,' as will theory if it is opposed to practice: the subject of knowledge is essentially embodied and practically engaged with the world; and the products of our thought bear ineradicable traces of our purposes and projects, passions and interests. In short, the epistemological and moral subject has been definitively decentred and the conception of reason linked to it irrevocably desublimated. Subjectivity and intentionality are not prior to but a function of forms of life and systems of language; they do not 'constitute' the world but are themselves elements of a linguistically disclosed world. (Baynes, 1987, p. 4)

In Anglo-American philosophy, we discover the same thematic.

In one sense, English-speaking philosophy had always defined itself in opposition to the abstract 'idea(l)s' of Continental Philosophy. However, this opposition constantly verged on a crude positivism which simply substituted the objectivism of natural science for the 'ideas' of Rationalism and Idealism. In England, we can trace an underlying empiricism stretching right back to at least the seventeenth century, that includes Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Hume and the Scottish common sense tradition. There are the efforts of Russell and early Wittgenstein's logical atomism to underwrite everyday language with a logically perfect language. This turn to language then took the form of 'ordinary language philosophy' represented by Austin and Ryle, and the later Wittgenstein's deconstruction of the notion of a logically pure language and its logical simples through his articulation of the notions of 'form of life' and 'language game'. In American philosophy we have a history stretching from Emerson and Thoreau through the pragmatism of Pierce, James, and Dewey to Quine, Davidson, Rorty and Cavell.

Like the continental tradition, we could frame both the English and American traditions as concerned with bringing philosophy and theory in general into a proximity with 'the ordinary'. Thus, Cavell (1989) and Taylor (1989) both characterize much Anglo-American philosophy as efforts to recognize the inherent dignity of 'the ordinary' by contrast with philosophy's traditional contemplative, masculinist and elitist denigration of everyday life and its experiences.

THE TYRANNIES OF REASON: THE BLINDNESS OF RULES

However, the aporias congregating around the *topos* of 'the end of philosophy' are not only epistemological—concerned with matters of truth or validity; they are also questions of ethics and politics—matters of justice, dignity and recognition.

One of the defining experiences separating post-modernity from modernity is the emphatic sense that 'theory' has turned out to be a tyrannical, cruel and even a mindless—not mindful—exercise in discipline. Whereas 'theory' promised to bring Reason into the world, in actuality it seems fated to impose a partisan tyranny in the name of rationality and truth. This sense that, when acted on, theoretical claims to rationality inevitably 'rationalize' both the destruction of local realities and rationalities and impose hegemonic social systems is captured in Habermas' phrase 'the colonization of the life-world'. Whether in the guise of Plato's philosopher-kings, the expertise of modern social science or the historical mission of a Marxist dictatorship of the proletariat, 'theory' has revealed itself to entail an essential and fatal moment of arbitrary power. Weber captured the tragic aspect of the implementation of theory in his metaphor of 'the iron cage of reason' governed by 'experts without sensibility'. These *aporias* of theory as practice were also captured in Horkheimer and Adorno's 'dialectic of Enlightenment'. Similarly, Foucault figures the situatedness of theory in apparatuses of power in his concepts of 'knowledge/power' and 'regimes of truth'.

In fact, insofar as Reason is enacted institutionally through bureaucratic or administrative systems it continually, perhaps inevitably, finds itself unable to respond to the exigencies of the particular situation or case with a discerning equity or accommodation of interpretation. Taylor beautifully captures this (Kantian) claim to universality embodied in modern administration:

> To be a rational agent is to act for reasons. By their very nature, reasons are of general application. Something can't be a reason for me now, without being a reason for all agents in a relevantly similar predicament. So the truly rational agent acts on principles, reasons which are understood to be general in their application. (Taylor, 1989, p. 363)

Yet this tradition of framing reason in terms of subjection to universal rules or procedures has, from the very beginning, been mediated and supplemented by the rhetorical, hermeneutic and practical philosophy traditions concerned with *phronesis*, equity, circumstance and accommodation as crucial rectifications of the inherent irrationality and rigidity of norms when formulated as universal rules. Without this counterbalancing attention to particularity, the procedures of reason have always stood accused of an inherent and fundamental dogmatism.

FORMULATING A NEW *THEORIA*

We need a new sense of *theoria* and of the 'claims of reason' as a practice of reflection, a new sense of *theoria* in which theory does not make Kantian claims to either constitutive or regulative normativity. Post-metaphysical philosophy, the work of those marked by, unable or unwilling to forget the 'worldly' ideological and dogmatic entanglements of reason, is thus essentially 'post-theoretical'. For 'posties', overcoming the contradiction between theory and practice can never again be a matter of practically implementing the truths of a better theory. Formulating a better theory is not the solution.

At this point, it might be tempting to try to end theory or philosophy as such. However, this is a self-contradictory enterprise. Theory cannot be ended except by theory. In fact theory is inexhaustible. What we can do, though, is try to modulate *theoria* into another key, as it were, a key that is less foundational, less Kantian, less representational. With this more practical, more hermeneutic rendering—which I try to establish—*theoria* is a 'standing-outside-oneself' and a 'rising to the universal' consequent on participation in an 'event of truth' resulting from dialogue with the other. *Theoria* is an enlargement of one's world by a listening to the other of one's (understanding of one's) world. *Theoria* is allowing oneself to participate in the play of dialogue. *Theoria* is learning to acknowledge the reality of others as other and acknowledging that what one thinks, feels, wants, is limited and does not do justice to the full richness of the reality of the situations one is in, so one must learn to stop and listen to others and learn to interpret what they are saying and what they mean in order to 'rectify' one's own understandings and interpretations. In this sense *theoria* enjoins a similar message to Sophism: there is always another side to things.

ABE AS PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

My interest in framing ABE as practical philosophy is not, of course, to transform ABE into a study of academic philosophical doctrines, but to frame the mode of being of ABE classrooms, their practices and their discourse. I want to invoke Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic in which he reframes the art of hermeneutic (traditionally confined to the scholarly interpretation of texts) as a philosophical dimension to all human life, not just the art of reading written text. Philosophical hermeneutics reconstrues all understanding as, as it were, an exercise in reading. Reality, our lives, everything—has to be read, and reread—but read in Gadamer's sense of 'turned back into living speech'. Experience itself is the reading and rereading of prior experience. Just as rhetoric must now

take the form of hermeneutics, so too philosophy and so too all human life in 'the city' of multiculturalism, colonization, immigration and Diaspora; all must take on an inescapably hermeneutic hue. Understanding is interpretation: in Taylor's phrase 'human being is a self-interpreting animal'.

I am interested in construing the conversations of the ABE classroom as philosophical in this sense—as people articulating and reconstituting their Being, their worlds, through their dialogic engagement with the traditions and social practices that constitute them. Like Gadamer, I want to argue that this practice of communal reflection and interpretation is tied to the formation of *sensus communis* which still survives as a counter-cultural counter-point, as an alternative tradition, to the dominance of a scientistic 'regime of truth' constituting and construing modern 'society' as an object of rationalization. Habermas would formulate this effort as a retrieval or defense of the 'life-world', of everyday language, against colonization by the sub-systems of administration and the economy.

It is this counter-culture, this cultural and educational tradition, that I wish Adult Basic Education to inherit. This thesis is an effort to assist ABE to come into the inheritance of this tradition, to construe itself as inheriting the practices, horizons and values of the arts of language that stand at the service of the 'polis' as a communal pedagogy, not merely to serve the imperatives of the State and its objects of administration, 'society' or 'the economy'. Thus the 'distanciation' (Ricoeur) inherent in the practice of *theoria* should not be interpreted as a withdrawal from a common world into a higher cognitive domain, but as a reflection of and within that common world.

I am thus trying to articulate a notion of *theoria* that is 'beyond' or 'beside' or 'below' knowledge and representation, so that ABE as *theoria* can be construed as instancing, modeling and cultivating a practice of life, a life of reflective practice, rather than a life construed in opposition to practice. So, although I insist that ABE 'is' *theoria*, I do not construe this *theoria* as a matter of abstract concepts, universal propositions, laws or procedures: *theoria* is not *episteme*. To institute a relationship between ALBE and *theoria* does not mean that ABE should become a setting for 'teaching philosophy' as an academic discipline. This would be to assume that *theoria* is a subject or *fach* with its own body of knowledge, canonical texts and traditions of interpretation, into which students would be inducted in the same way they are inducted into other bodies of knowledge or interpretative traditions. But *theoria* is not confined to the practices of Platonic *episteme* or modernist academic knowledge. There are other traditions of *theoria*.

CHAPTER 5

Chapter 5: *Theoria* as philosophy consists of two sections. **Section One** lays out the classical metaphysical or cognitivist framing of theory and of philosophy. According to this view, theory is a representation of the underlying order and rationality of an object domain. To 'apply' such a theory then demands that it be imposed on the actions of those engaged in or with that domain. According to this account of *theoria*, theory is integrally engaged in the work of reason by discerning the underlying rationality and lawful order of things.

Section Two tries to lend the metaphor 'ABE is *theoria*' an initial plausibility by exploring the ancient schools of philosophy as exemplars of a practice of theory. The primary concern of these ancient schools of philosophy was to teach a practical art of living, not an academic or scientific discipline of knowledge. Thus, knowledge or cognition per se was not the primary metaphysical or moral issue governing the *telos* of philosophy or *theoria*. This historic dissociation of *theoria*, truth and reason from the pursuit of knowledge at least opens up a potential for constructing, or rather retrieving, a notion of *theoria* and reflectiveness not subservient to a cognitivist pursuit of knowledge as representation. Thus, I use Hadot's retrieval of ancient philosophy as a practical art of living in order to deconstruct metaphysical construals of philosophy and the *bios theoretikos* as a discourse of knowledge.

This retrieval of philosophy or *theoria* as a practical comportment arising out of the exercise of an '*artes*' allows theory to be construed as a practical form of life constituted by an ensemble of language games standing 'within' practical forms of life, rather than 'standing over against' them as a 'meta' insight or investigation into their determining structure. It thus reconstrues theory outside the 'subject-object' paradigm. This reconstruction of theory as ontological not epistemological, as a practical form of life centred on how to live a human life, not the production of a body of knowledge, is a critical first step in developing a sense of *theoria* and philosophy as something relevant to ABE. However, on its own this step still does not bring *theoria* closely enough into proximity with the *bios practikos*, the domain of *praxis* as a participation in the polis. Simply re-establishing philosophy as

an ontological practice of ethics rather than an epistemological practice of knowledge, does not of itself clarify its relationship with the domain of *praxis*.

CHAPTER 6

So, the ensuing chapter, **Chapter 6: Practical philosophy as *theoria*** takes the further step of formulating an account of *theoria* which spans both 'care of the soul' (*sophia*) and 'care of the city' (*praxis*). This practice of *theoria* is what is historically termed 'practical philosophy', a form of reflection regarding the world of *praxis* originating in the Sophists and Socrates, displayed in Plato's dialogues, and theoretically articulated in Aristotle's *Ethics, Politics* and *Rhetoric* (and perhaps even in his *Poetics*).

The second part of Chapter 6 is devoted to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as a contemporary realization and resumption of practical philosophy. Gadamer takes Aristotle's articulation of *phronesis*, practical wisdom, as paradigmatic for all human understanding, and insists that the attempts of metaphysics and natural science to evade the need for practical discernment is self-deluding. According to Gadamer, all human being contains a moment of hermeneutic experience in which one must venture beyond the safety of a technical application of a principle or universal. *Praxis* is always more than the application of theoretical principles. Moreover, practical wisdom (*phronesis*) in a world that does not live unselfconsciously within a traditional culture necessarily takes the form of an encounter between incommensurable worlds. This is what Gadamer means by 'hermeneutic experience'.

In this way, I hope to formulate a sense of *theoria* as governance which is interpretative rather than legislative (Bauman, 1987), formative rather than representational, practical rather than theoretical, reflective rather than technical, dialogic rather than monologic, situated rather than universal.

POLYVALENCE: ANSWERING TO MANY VALUES

The upshot of these investigations of practical philosophy and of philosophical hermeneutic as practical philosophy will be the formulation of *theoria* as a dimension of life 'at issue' in practical forms of life centred on caring for different regions of life: care of the city (*praxis*, rhetoric), care of the concrete and individual (*phronesis*, the art of *aequitas*, aesthetics and Kant's reflective judgment), care of the abstract and universal (*arche*s, *episteme*), and care of otherness (hermeneutics). Hopefully this will allow the formulation of a concept and practice of *theoria* as governance that is non-dogmatic, non-tyrannical, and non-colonizing. On this account, theory is not in a 'meta' relationship with other forms of life. Of course there is discourse and conversation between competing forms of life, but these interchanges are more like Rorty's 'abnormal discourse' (Rorty, 1980), a discourse for which there are no settled criteria of validity. It is a discourse that is truly hermeneutic, in which the drawing together of horizons is never a matter of subsumption or assimilation, but always a matter of self-formation (*Bildung*).

Another way of formulating the relationships between these different forms of life and their objects of care would be to construe them as inflections or modes of attending to different facets or profiles, different dimensions or aspects, of practical life. On this reading, all social life, *Dasein*, is a conjuncture of souls, the city, abstraction, particularity and otherness. So, rather than formulating these practices of caring as self-enclosing Wittgensteinian 'forms of life' or 'language games' (Lyotard's gambit), we can formulate them as complementary crystallizations of different facets of practical life. In this way although incommensurable, they mutually correct one another's blindnesses as it were.

This gesture of inclusiveness and complementarity is employed by Hadot who argues that the competing schools of ancient philosophy, despite their incompatibilities and differences, ultimately supplement and complement one another:

> It is precisely this plurality of ancient schools that is precious. It allows us to compare the consequences of all the various possible fundamental attitudes of reason, and offers a privileged field of experimentation. … This is not, by the way, a matter of choosing one or the other of these traditions to the exclusion of the others. Epicureanism and Stoicism, for example, correspond to two opposite but inseparable poles of our inner life: the demands of our moral conscience, and the flourishing of our joy in existing. (Hadot, 1995, p. 273)

Likewise, the argument of this thesis is that rhetoric, *theoria*, practical philosophy and hermeneutics correspond to 'opposite but inseparable poles' of human being and so it is not a matter of choosing

between them but a matter of 'thinking' the terrain (Wittgenstein's bush) at once separating and connecting them.

Thus, despite Lyotard's (1988) insistence on paralogic, *dissensus* and the *différend*, I want to insist that bringing incommensurable worlds into proximity is a matter of practical philosophy, a matter of *phronesis*, equity, tact, judgment and finding the mean. Hermeneutic *theoria* is this coming to an understanding (not 'agreement', Habermas' project) with others, and according to Gadamer, if we want to insist on positing reason as an ontological reality, then it is this dialogic meeting of incommensurables in search of common ground that comprises reason itself at work. Philosophy as the bringing into language of reason is thus transacted in our everyday worldly discussions, dialogues and rhetorical attempts to find persuasive reasons: it is not confined to the methodic texts of the philosophical scholar or social scientist.

Finally, if *theoria* is a matter of trying to 'see the big picture', of trying to trace the connections between things so that they form a larger whole, then re-tracing of the history of *theoria* must not be construed as an objective historicist representation of a finalized past of facts concerning the history of ideas. Rather, we are always 'in media res', we are always already underway as part of that history. To retrace that history is to work on the fundamental metaphors and figures shaping our own thought and Being here now. Insofar as our tradition is constituted by competing traditions, so too we ourselves are formed as an internally contested *habitus*. To get clear about 'the whole' of our tradition is to get clear about the whole of ourselves. Charles Taylor (1989, p. 4) phrases this in terms of assigning priorities to the competing and incommensurable 'strong evaluations' embodied in our culture and its ways of acting and discoursing. Thus *theoria* is a matter of telling the story of one's culture in such a way as to demonstrate that one has been claimed more by one value while acknowledging the value of other values. The task of this Part is thus an effort to remember (re-member; re-assemble the members or limbs), to re-assert the place and import(ance) of *theoria* as a reflection on and around *praxis* in the overall scheme of things. The overall question orienting its work is: can we frame a notion of *theoria* that is a reflection on and of *praxis*, not a subsumption or colonization of *praxis*? The name assigned by Aristotle to this mode of *theoria* is: practical philosophy.

CHAPTER 5 *THEORIA* AS PHILOSOPHY

In this chapter I first fend off the construal of *theoria* as metaphysical or contemplative. I then try to rearticulate a concept of *theoria* as a practice, as a comportment and way of life (*bios*). As Gadamer notes, this ancient sense of theory as a mode of *praxis* has been almost elided by the more recent 'contradiction' between theory and practice arising from the oppositions between scientific knowledge and its application, and between scientific knowledge and everyday (ideological) practice.

SECTION 1: PHILOSOPHY AS METAPHYSICS

Undoubtedly the dominant tradition of *theoria* in Western culture is metaphysics. Metaphysics was the sense that humans can, through the exercise of thinking, come into the presence of the underlying order of the cosmos. The Greeks called this bringing of the order of reality, *cosmos*, into the world of human beings, contemplation or *logos*. However, *logos* is polysemous in that it points to both the expression of the inherent order of things and also to the practice of reasoned speech, speech supported by reasoning.

The history of *theoria* is staged between these two poles: the pole of monologic contemplation and, after Galileo, scientific mastery of reality as cosmos (metaphysics) on the one hand, and the pole of the dialogic *praxis* of human realities as life-world (dialectic, *praxis*, rhetoric) on the other. The monologic metaphysical tradition with its commitment to an *episteme* of reality beyond the flux of opinion and appearances of social life is unquestionably hegemonic, yet the other tradition, a tradition committed to denying that the *bios theoretikos* can transcend the life-world with all its frailties, ambiguities and finitude, has continued as a strong counter-culture. Because both these traditions are, as it were, constitutive, we can say that we inherit an unstable, unfinished, dialectical, or rather dialogic, understanding and practice of *theoria*. *Theoria* is, despite the assertions of the contemplative pole, not a single and self-contained *techne* with a clearly defined purpose or task, but exists as different, dispersed, competing paradigms and versions.

PHILOSOPHY AS A HIGHER MODE OF KNOWLEDGE

The primary source of our 'picture' of *theoria* derives from Plato who framed *theoria* as a knowledge of the principles underpinning things. *Theoria* is the *episteme* of the ultimate *arches*. The standard account of Plato is as a response to Socrates who demanded definitions of the key terms of practical life such as justice, piety, rhetoric, and love. By interrogating experts or professionals (generals, diplomats, rhetoricians) who claimed to know and live faithfully in the comportment of these forms of life, Socrates demonstrated that in actuality they did not know what these realities were, or at least could not say, that is, could not put them into words, without contradicting themselves. According to the standard account, Plato responded to this 'What is?' question of Socrates' by positing an *eidos*, a form that subsisted in an otherworldly, metaphysical region. The differences, mutability, fluidity, dissemination, contingency and indeterminacy of the everyday world thus no longer threatened the stable reality of the One around which and in which the things of this world participated. In this way, Plato inserted a stable ground of Being underneath (or above) the contingency of the world of Becoming in which human life is lived. Thus was *episteme* separated off from *doxa*, reality from appearance. And thus was the expertise of the philosopher-kings of Plato's Republic formed and validated.

Bios theoretikos was in this way articulated by Plato precisely in opposition to the plurality, semblance, and contingency of *doxa* and the domain of *praxis*. Theory, according to Plato, operated on objects defined by their transparency, ownmost integrity and stability, whereas *bios praktikos* functioned in a domain characterised by unpredictable changes and transformations, an *agon* of competing perspectives and interests, and a blurring of the boundaries between faithful disclosure and mimetic semblance. As a generalization, it would not be inaccurate to suggest that this metaphor of *bios theoretikos* and its relationship to the world of *praxis* is still the dominant picture or 'prejudice' (Gadamer) determining Western theory. This metaphor of *theoria* as a 'rising to the universal' embodied in a journey from the vernacular language and understandings of a *sensus communis* into a more rigorous conceptual language and order is unquestionably still the dominant sense of education as *theoria*. So, this is the 'picture' (*Bild)* that forms the implicit background from which we set out in

efforts to formulate a theory of theory, to think what thinking is, to find a philosophy of philosophy. This picture is the tradition in which we find ourselves 'thrown'—'more Being than consciousness'. It is thus not a picture we can simply wish away.

This picture of theory as a higher sight which discovers more stable structures than are available to the *hoi poloi* who are trapped in the conflicting phenomena, illusions and delusions of everyday *doxa* can be traced through the entire career of *theoria* in Western discourse. It structures Descartes' delineation of a method of thinking distinguished by its clarity and distinctness from the over-determinations, ambiguities and under-determinations of everyday language and discourse, thereby re-instituting the boundary between the *doxa* of everyday life and the domain of theory. In the twentieth century, Husserl re-asserted the primacy of this division between a domain of meaning as a region of transparency open to the phenomenological gaze of the philosopher and the mediated domain of the symbolic where the sliding of signifiers produces a world of playfulness, indeterminacy, and infinity, a world, Derrida's world, in which things may not mean what they say or say what they mean.

At the same time that Husserl was formulating an eidetic order that could provide an unshakable ground for the truth of the phenomenologist, early Wittgenstein was bringing to completion Russell's project of formulating a 'logically perfect language', a language which necessarily meant what it said and said what it meant, a language that fended off all ambiguity, ideological distortion, or polysemy by being grounded in 'logical simples'. In these efforts, both Husserl and early Wittgenstein brought to fruition that underlying thematic of *theoria* as a catching sight of the underlying order of reality embodied in the terms 'nous' and 'insight'.

KANT AND PRACTICAL REASON

Kant occupies an anomalous position in this hegemonic picture of reason and *theoria*. On the one hand, he rejected philosophy as a region of knowledge by reconstructing it as procedure, as a matter of 'forms' or 'categories' that are 'practical' rather than 'theoretical'. But his construal of 'practical' is so abstract, decontextualized and dematerialized that it excludes the entire domain of comportment, habits, customs, attitudes, emotions, sensibilities, 'spiritual exercises' such as rhetoric amplifications, intensifications of imagination, and attending to 'rules' and their applications. Thus, paradoxically rather than reestablishing philosophy as a practical art of living, Kant re-instituted philosophy as a meta-practice standing in the very same legislative relationship to practice as scholastic theory and natural science.

This reconstruction of reason as a tribunal, a court before which the 'rules of living' must justify themselves 'formally' rather than 'in use' (like *phronesis* or equity), undermined the reality of *praxis* and *sensus communis*. In this way, Kant is still committed to constituting the relationship between theory and practice as one of legislation and justification, not *in situ* discernment or judgment. Practice has to justify itself before the tribunal of practical reason. This institution of a practical reason in lieu of *phronesis* did not change the basically legislative role of *theoria* in relation to practical life. In this sense Kant simply modulated Plato's two-world metaphor from a contemplative key to a practical key. Only later, in his third Critique, when he explores the notions of taste, *sensus communis*, and judgment can one sense possible (but un-followed through) second thoughts on this Platonism by Kant.

The Kantian construal of the relationship between reason as a legislative evaluation of the form of practical forms of life is also the dominant metaphor governing Habermas' articulation of the relationships between philosophy as reason and the diversity of life-worlds and forms of life enacted by cultures as 'arts of living' a good life. Although Habermas began by formulating his project in Aristotelian terms (as documented in the Introduction to this thesis), or later in terms of Pierce's notion of an 'ideal speech community', more and more he has come to formulate his project in Kantian terms. But, in place of Kant's conformity with a rule, Habermas substitutes conformity with a procedure or genre. Justification of *praxis* is a matter of conforming with a form of discourse, not a form of intention. But in both cases the form must be formulated as a rule, a norm, as a principle. In this way, Kant and Habermas remain Platonists committed to the formulation of principles (*arches*) grounding, founding practical life. It is this Platonist or Kantian tradition that is dubbed 'deductivist' by Will in opposition to his more expansive concept of ampliative governance.

In tracing this Platonist line I have selected a few indicative figures only, yet insofar as they point to an underlying orientation, disposition or *habitus* I do not feel obliged to trace a detailed inter-textual trail of influence. Adducing the continuity in the way that *theoria* is framed from philosophical epoch

to epoch is sufficient to make my point about the theoreticist assumptions in our taken-for-granted concept of *theoria*. We have already noted how contemporary philosophy can be characterised as an assemblage of repeated attempts to disrupt, subvert or displace this theoreticist concept of *theoria*. Post-Hegelian philosophers have generally worked at formulating an unprincipled philosophy that rejects the universalism, essentialism and foundationalism of the Platonic account of *theoria*.

But there is a further source of inspiration that can provide support for our efforts to formulate a notion of *theoria* as practical philosophy, a source that is just as ancient as Platonism. This is the ancient sense of philosophy and *theoria* as an art of living, rather than as a contemplation of eternal objects.

SECTION 2: PHILOSOPHY AS AN ART OF LIVING

In everyday culture, it is no accident that 'being philosophical' has strong Stoic overtones: being philosophical means learning to lower your expectations, learning not to be disappointed when things don't work out. In short, being philosophical means *amore fati*, accepting your fate. This linguistic usage points to the central role of Stoicism in our tradition, a centrality that is not acknowledged by emphasizing philosophy as a cognitive endeavor or as an academic discipline.

This non-metaphysical construal of the *bios theoretikos* is embodied in the approach to *theoria* articulated in Cynicism, Skepticism, Stoicism and Epicureanism. According to this construal, *theoria* is not a matter of metaphysical insight into the original *logos* determining the order of things. *Theoria* is not a task of 'insight' producing *episteme*, knowledge. According to these traditions, philosophy is a withdrawal from the *bios practikos* as a region of *agon*, dispute, semblance, uncertainty, pain, suffering, and disappointment into a region characterised by peace, contentment, and equanimity. The life-world of these philosophies is defined in terms of ridding the self of stress, anxiety, desire, frustration, not by means of the discovery of a final ground of knowledge, but by a refusal of knowledge. *Theoria* is therapy, a healing of dis-ease. The wisdom, *sophia*, that philosophy was in search of was thus not defined as a matter of knowledge, but as a matter of ethical comportment. 'Wisdom, then, was a way of life which brought peace of mind (*ataraxia*), inner freedom (*autarkeia*), and a cosmic consciousness' (Hadot, 1995, p. 265).

According to the normative Platonic picture of *theoria*, the project of knowledge and projects of therapeutic practice can seem far removed from each other, but this was not how ancient Greek philosophers themselves understood this relationship. To us they may seem far apart because 'we' cannot help framing the concept of knowledge as representation, and therapy as a reflective reinterpretation and realignment emotions and feelings.

KNOWLEDGE AS *MIMESIS*

However, even for Plato knowledge is a matter of mimesis, not just representation:

> For surely, Adeimantus, the man whose mind is truly fixed on eternal realities has no leisure to turn his eyes downwards upon the petty affairs of men, and so engaging in strife with them to be filled with envy and hate, but fixes his gaze upon the things of the eternal and unchanging order, and seeing that they neither wrong nor are wronged by one another, but all abide in harmony as reason bids, he will endeavor to imitate them and, as far as may be, to fashion himself in their likeness and assimilate himself to them. Or do you think it possible not to imitate the things to which anyone attaches himself with admiration? (Plato, 1941, 500B-C)

Knowledge, *episteme*, is a matter of forming oneself, of developing a comportment that is attuned to the contours of a region of Being by mimetically identifying with the energies of that region. One learns to know something by becoming it. Knowing means being able to project oneself into the *dynamus* of the other. To be a good hunter means being able to put oneself in the place of the hunted by thinking, desiring and being the hunted. Knowing is not a matter of tracing the causal relations between 'dead' or inert objects and facts. Knowing is a matter of getting a feel for the motives and strategies of beings engaged in filling the absences and lacks of their own being or *bios*—pursuing their desires and *telos*. Thus knowing is not a speculative gaze on a world of material objects, but a mimetic entry into the *Umwelt*, the life-world, and sensibility of beings engaged in their own self-sufficient *bios*.

This 'getting to know' the other by entering into their life-world is not a matter of objective spectatorship nor a matter of empathic intuition into the psyche of the other, rather it is a matter of letting

oneself be caught up in the play of the game, being drawn into the language games they play. As Gadamer and Habermas both note, *theoria* was a term referring to a representative sent by Greek cities to the public celebrations of other cities; and that it meant 'looking on' in such a way as to abandon oneself up to the sacred event. When transferred to the activities of philosophy *theoria* means that:

> when the philosopher views the immortal order, he cannot help bringing himself into accord with the proportions of the cosmos and reproducing them internally. He manifests these proportions, which he sees in the motions of nature and the harmonic series of music, within himself; he forms himself through mimesis. Through the soul's likening itself to the ordered motion of the *cosmos*, theory enters the conduct of life. In *ethos* theory molds life to its form and is reflected in the conduct of those who subject themselves to its discipline. (Habermas, 1971, pp. 301-2)

However, the contemporary scholar most committed to the retrieval of 'philosophy as a way of life' is undoubtedly Pierre Hadot.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

In *Spiritual Exercise*, Hadot documents the forms of 'exercise', the methodic practices, employed by the ancient schools of philosophy designed to enact (over and over) 'a transformation in our vision of the world' and a 'metamorphosis of our personality' so that the individual 'raises himself up to the life of the objective Spirit; that is to say, he re-places himself within the perspective of the Whole ("Become eternal by transcending yourself")' (Hadot, 1995, p. 82). Hadot insists that this transformation is not adequately categorized as intellectual or conceptual or cognitive, and so he uses the term 'spiritual' for these practices. He cites the Stoics who:

> declared explicitly that philosophy, for them, was an 'exercise.' In their view, philosophy did not consist in teaching an abstract theory—much less in the exegesis of texts—but rather in the art of living. It is a concrete attitude and determinate life-style, which engages the whole of existence. The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being. It is a progress which causes us to *be* more fully, and makes us better. It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from the inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom.
>
> In the view of all philosophical schools, mankind's principal cause of suffering, disorder, and unconsciousness were the passions: that is, unregulated desires and exaggerated fears. People were prevented from truly living, it was taught, because they are dominated by worries. Philosophy thus appears, in the first place as a therapeutic of the passions … Each school had its own therapeutic method, but all of them linked their therapeutics to a profound transformation of the individual's mode of seeing and being. (Hadot, 1995, pp. 82-3)

The list of techniques and practices ('exercises') constituting the body of these schools of philosophy varied in their details, but possessed an overlapping commonality. As an indicative sketch, Hadot cites practices such as:

> research (*zetsis*), thorough investigation (*skepsis*), reading (*anagnosis*), listening (*akroasis*), attention (*prosoche*), self-mastery (*enkrateia*) and indifference to indifferent things, … meditations (*meletai*), therapies of the passions, remembrance of good things. (Hadot, 1995, p. 84)

Hadot arranges these practices under four headings: attention, meditation, intellectual virtues of reading, listening, research and investigation and finally the more active exercises of self-mastery, accomplishment of duties and indifference to indifferent things.

The details of these practices I will leave aside except to note that many of them draw on the arts of rhetoric and hermeneutic, either as techniques of focalization and distillation, on the one hand or techniques of elaboration, intensification and amplification on the other. Given that a central concern of these philosophies was to keep a rule or point of view 'at hand' or 'in mind' and a facility in mentally bringing it to bear, applying it, to life's possible situations, one would expect the resources of rhetoric to be deployed—just as they were in the hermeneutic interpretation and application of other eminent texts, such as Homer, the Bible or the *Corpus Juris Civilis*. Insofar as the resources of rhetoric revolve around the aporias of bringing the universal and 'ideal' into proximity with the situational and practical, they are perfectly adapted to serving as resources for the cultivation and application of ethical *archés*.

THE DIALOGUE OF THE SOUL

However, the connection of philosophy as a practical ethico-therapeutic art of living to rhetoric and dialectic is even deeper. This reorientation of an individual from their taken-for-granted horizon to a radically different horizon that reassigns the values, significances and meanings of life by placing things in a different, un-common sense perspective is a matter of persuasion, an *agon*. Coming to see things differently is not a 'one-shot' event, it is a life-long cultivation ('exercise') by an individual aimed at the 'complete transformation of his representation of the world, his inner climate, and his outer behavior' (Hadot, 1995, p. 86). In this sense, these spiritual exercises are a matter of the self trying to persuade the self. They are essentially dialogic even when a matter of meditation which is the self dialoguing with the self.

> The intimate connection between dialogue with others and dialogue with oneself is profoundly significant. Only he who is capable of a genuine encounter with the other is capable of an authentic encounter with himself, and the converse is equally true. Dialogue can be genuine only within the framework of presence to others and to oneself. From this perspective, every spiritual exercise is a dialogue, insofar as it is an exercise of authentic presence, to oneself and to others. (Hadot, 1995, p. 91)

This passage in which thinking—the dialogue of the soul—is brought into proximity with 'dialogue with others', puts us in mind of Gadamer's defining of 'coming to understand' as 'coming to an understanding with'.

This wrenching of *logos* away from the specularist intuition of *nous* towards dialogic interchange of speech is critical to deconstructing the cognitivism and theoreticism inevitably adduced by phrases such as 'coming to see things differently' for a visually oriented, specular metaphysical tradition in which the theorist stands disinterestedly over against a domain of objects. For the ancient schools of philosophy, and for Gadamer, by contrast, coming to see things differently is not a matter of grasping a proposition, but a matter of engaging in the twisting and turnings of a genuine dialogue that addresses the attachments, elisions, and metaphors structuring the perspective of the reader/ listener. Thus coming to a different understanding is not a matter of coming to accept the validity of a proposition or theory, but a matter of engaging in an agonistic dialogue which mobilizes the hermeneutic circle in order to re-work one's prejudices, one's Being.

THE TWO PLATOS

This explains why Plato wrote dialogues, not textbooks, even though he is considered to be the arch-source of metaphysics in which philosophy is defined as a matter of the cognitive apprehension of the truth. In reality, there are—at least—two Platos: the Plato of metaphysical 'ideas' and Plato the writer of dialogues. Both Gadamer and Hadot concentrate their efforts on retrieving this latter, less visible, Plato.

Gadamer insists that Plato is no Platonist. He argues that Plato presents his understanding of *theoria* more faithfully in his choice of genre than in the actual content or doctrines expounded in those dialogues. Gadamer's 'other Plato' uses the written dialogue in order to convince citizens that they need philosophy, need to (re)form themselves and their understandings, for their social *praxis*. However, according to Gadamer, Plato's use of Socrates in his dialogues presents philosophy not as a doctrine or theory but as a form of human existence.

Gadamer traces this alternative account of *theoria*, not to the manifest content of Plato's *Dialogues*, but to their literary form as dialogues. In fact, Gadamer insists that it is his own life-long abiding with the dialogic texts of Plato that underpins his concept of hermeneutic experience as dialogic and dialectical (rather than analytic or conceptual), as participation in the *praxis* and speech of the 'in-between' (rather than a monologic tracing of a path of logical or dialectical unfolding of concepts), as letting oneself be taken up into the passion and *pathos* of the play of *praxis* as dwelling within and tending to a *sensus communis* as it engages with the otherness and difference of post-modernity and post-metaphysical times (rather than the imposition of a normative order found outside the *doxa* of the *polis*).

UTOPIA AS GENRE OF CRITICISM

Gadamer not only emphasizes Plato's choice of the genre of dialogue to present his conception of *theoria* but he also interprets Plato's use of the genre of Utopia in *The Republic*. He argues that *The Republic* is not intended to provide a blueprint or goal for action but a presentation of the grounds of

critique. ‘Its purpose is to bring something to light and not to provide an actual design for an improved order in real life.’ (Gadamer, cited in Zuchert, 1996, p. 79)

The genre of Utopia is as old as the history of writing as a way of presenting the normative as a ground of critique or a call to reflection. At first blush it might seem that Utopia is an attempt to prescribe a blue-print demanding to be brought to achievement. In this way Utopia is projected as a representation of the future demanding implementation. In this way Utopia is modeled on the technical instrumental concept of action as consisting of three phases: formulating a representation of the end-state desired; formulating a plan and implementing that plan. (A fourth phase is often added: evaluating the outcome). But as Gadamer points out, this is to fundamentally misunderstand the delicacy of the relationship between the normative order presented in the utopia and the concrete reality of life:

> Utopia too contains an indirect relationship with the authentic notion of practice. Here it is utterly clear: utopia is a dialectical notion. Utopia is not the projection of aims for action. Rather the characteristic element of utopia is that it does not lead precisely to the moment of action, the ‘setting of one's hand to a job here and now.’ An utopia is defined by the fact that (as I once had occasion to call it) it is a form of suggestiveness from afar. It is not primarily a project of action but a critique of the present. (Gadamer, 1981, pp. 79-80)

What Gadamer is insisting on here is that the genre of Utopia is not a prescription telling us what to do. It is rather providing us with suggestions 'from afar' so that we can come to realize what to do, come to see things more clearly. Utopia is not a sketch of a possible or achievable future. It is a yardstick against which we can measure what we are doing. It presents a measure for criticizing ourselves, for reminding ourselves of dangers, but it is not a possible safe, conflict-free future to aim at. The target of *praxis* is what to do here now, not how to bring about a world in some distant future. In this way the traditional genre of Utopia is careful not to undermine the integrity of the practical and the primacy of *phronesis*, practical wisdom.

Bubner (1981) also emphatically asserts the delicacy of the relationship between theory and practice. First he insists that a philosophy of practice must take account of the peculiar structure of its object.

> Anything which has to do with practice never meets up to the same standards of perfection and exactness with which the purely theoretical sciences operate. Everything practical implies, that is to say, a problem of *concreteness* which ultimately defies theoretical analysis. Theories offer only generalities. Action, however, takes place here and now. Anyone who does not see this fails to do justice to his object and substitutes for practice a theoretical construct or an ideal projection.
>
> Thus, if practice is to become an object for theory, then theory must be on its guard lest it unthinkingly encroach on the domain of practice. It is a fundamental *methodological* maxim for philosophy to respect the peculiar structure of all practical objects. That means, however, maintaining the boundary between theory and practice. A theory of the practical does justice to its task only if it remains conscious that it is a theory, on the far side of which a practice begins which is to be protected against manipulation or replacement by a theory. (Bubner, 1981, pp. 203-4)

I have quoted this passage at length because it states so forcefully the weakness of concrete practice before the colonizing discourse of theory. And just as theory must 'guard against unthinkingly encroaching on the domain of practice', so according to Gadamer must our understanding of Utopia. Utopia must also 'maintain the boundary between theory and practice'. In its ancient usage, according to Gadamer, this was well understood because there was a strong tradition of Practical Philosophy. It is with the eclipse of this tradition that misunderstandings of the modality of Utopia appear. Is it a fictional representation of a (potential) reality, or a real representation of a fiction? Gadamer insists we reach back behind this aporia of representation to an understanding of Utopia which construes it as a presentation of the normative but in such a way (as a form of ‘suggestiveness') that it primarily critiques the present, not projects a goal for action. In terms of this understanding of Utopia, as a form of discourse that is careful not to displace or undermine the responsibility and autonomy of situated *phronesis*, the discourse of ABE is Utopian.

It might seem that this treatment of Utopia is a little beside the point insofar as it is a minor genre, not often deployed these days. But this is to miss the point. In a sense any presentation of the normative is utopian. Any presentation of 'the good' or of 'the good life' or of 'the good society'; all can only be represented as an utopia. When we come to expound competency-based training and its implementation, it will become clear that its exponents can't distinguish between wishing and willing, and even further, they attempt to force practical educators to elide the distinction. They try to force onto educators an Utopia, not as a guide for reflection and critique, but as a guide for action. And they seek to evade the task of concretization, which is the defining task of practice as *phronesis*. In CBT, there is no attempt to think the generic case together with the local context, nor has there been any

effort to assemble a 'body of precedents' in all their concreteness, so that 'the practical meaning of Utopia can be filled in'. One finds that even the published case studies of successful 'implementation' are Utopian publicity pieces, exercises of ‘spin’, not serious attempts to think the universal together with the particular and thereby engage in *praxis* in all its complexity, contradictions, its under- and over-determinations and unforeseeable surprises, its ups and downs. Not even 'plain English' can evade the fact that:

> Everything practical implies...a problem of *concreteness* which ultimately defies theoretical analysis. (Bubner, 1981, p. 203)

HABERMAS

Thus—and here is the sting—Gadamer elaborates this understanding of Utopia in the context of a critique of Habermas' theory of the ideal speech situation, posited by Habermas as a communicative context free of all distortions, interestedness and ideology, a context in which all participants (and this includes everyone affected in the slightest way by any decision arising out of the scene of action or communication) subject themselves to the force of the best argument and that only. Habermas projects this as a horizon potentially inherent in any communication, and certainly in any communication where the participants are trying to reach an understanding of something with one another. Both Gadamer (and I) acknowledge that this horizon can be discerned in communication, in the sense that it is an Utopian test we adduce to test the value of a dialogue.

The problem with Habermas' deployment of this ideal speech situation is that he posits it as a goal inherent in social evolution, a reality that history is moving inexorably towards, and one that we should try to bring into existence through social and political action. But imagining a utopia, wishing, in no way releases us from the need to set one's hand to the job here and now. The power to wish:

> … is the creative capacity of human beings to come up with wishes and to try to find ways to satisfy them, but that does not change the fact that wishing is not willing; it is not practice. Practice consists in choosing, of deciding for something and against something else, and in doing this a practical reflection is effective, which is itself dialectical in the highest measure. When I will something, then a reflection intervenes by which I bring before my eyes by means of an analytical procedure what is attainable: If I will this, then I must have that; if I want to have this, then I have to have this; until at last I come back to my own situation, where I myself can take things in hand. To speak with Aristotle, the conclusion of the practical syllogism and of practical deliberation is the resolve. This resolve, however, together with the whole path of reflection, from the willing of the objective to the thing to be done, is simultaneously a concretization of the willed objective itself. (Gadamer, 1981, p. 81)

What Gadamer is doing here is taking the classic rationalist account of practical reasoning—in which one represents a goal as desirable and then chooses the most efficient and effective means to that end—and reinterpreting it.

First he insists on the difference between wishing and willing. Wishing 'is defined by the way it remains innocent of mediation with ‘what is to be done'. Wishing means imagining sublime futures or scenarios, but without any attempt to turn them into reality by connecting them to what we can practically do. As Gadamer notes, 'This is not to say anything against wishing'. But it is to point out that wishing is not willing, just as utopia is an imagined ground of critique of the present, not a project of practical action.

But, right at the end of this passage, and this is his second point, Gadamer introduces the theme of 'concretization'. He continues:

> For practical reason does not consist simply in the circumstance that one reflects upon the attainability of the end that he thinks is good and then does what can be done. ... [T]he aim itself, the ‘universal,’ derives its determinacy by means of the singular. We are familiar with this in many areas of our social experience. We are familiar with it from the jurisprudence of all times. What the law prescribes, what a case of a given law is, is only determined unequivocally in the eyes of a formalist who endangers life. Finding the law means thinking the case together with the law so that what is actually just or the law gets concretized. For this reason the body of precedents (the decisions already laid down) is more crucial for the legal systems than the universal laws in accord with which the decisions are made. Only in this way, too, is the practical meaning of utopia filled in. It, too, is not a guide for action, but a guide for reflection. ... Practice, then, certainly does not rely solely upon an abstract consciousness of norms. It is always concretely motivated already, prejudiced to be sure, but also challenged to a critique of prejudices. (Gadamer, 1981, pp. 81-82)

It is significant that Habermas has now acknowledged the justice of Gadamer's remarks, and accepts that his ideal speech situation should not be construed as a practical goal of social action nor as a blue-print for a future substantive form of life. (Bernstein, 1984; McCarthy and Hoy, 1994)

THE *ERGON* OF A PLATONIC DIALOGUE

Just as Gadamer interprets Plato's dialogues within the context of the generic conventions of the time, so too Hadot insists that Plato's dialogues are in fact 'spiritual exercises', not transcriptions of real dialogues. They are literary compositions intent on provoking, seducing and staging the path of a soul towards wisdom.

> A dialogue is an itinerary of the thought, whose route is traced by the constantly maintained accord between questioner and respondent … the dimension of the interlocutor is, as we can see, of capital importance. It is what prevents the dialogue from becoming a theoretical, dogmatic expose, and forces it to be a concrete, practice exercise. For the point is not to set forth a doctrine, but rather to guide the interlocutor towards a determinate mental attitude. It is a combat, amicable but real. … [T]he same thing happens in every spiritual exercise: we must *let* ourselves be changed, in our point of view, attitudes, and convictions. This means that we must dialogue with ourselves, and hence we must do battle with ourselves. (Hadot, 1995, p. 91)

This understanding of the 'method of development' of a Platonic dialogue as not a matter of expounding the objects of a domain or the parts of a whole, but as a journey of persuasion and seduction oriented to the particular state and symptoms of the soul of the 'patient', can be transposed to enrich our sense of the movement of topics and activities in the ABE classroom.

If the orchestration of the curriculum is not primarily answerable to the exposition and inculcation of a body of knowledge but to the unlearning of limiting points of view and the opening up and cultivation of new points of view, then the unfolding of the interchanges, the process, of the curriculum takes on a different caste:

> Dialectic must skillfully choose a torturous path—or rather, a series of apparently divergent, but nevertheless convergent, paths—in order to bring the interlocutor to discover the contradictions of his own position and to admit an unforeseen conclusion. All the circles, detours, endless divisions, digressions, and subtleties which make the modern reader of Plato's *dialogues* so uncomfortable are destined to make ancient readers and interlocutors travel a specific path. … What counts is not the solution of a particular problem, but the road travelled to reach it; a road along which the interlocutor, the disciple, and the reader form their thought, and make it more apt to discover the truth by itself … the point is not to find an answer to the problem before anyone else, but to practice, as effectively as possible, the application of a method. (Hadot, 1995, pp. 92-3)

The goal of this torturous dialogic path is a sense of who one is and one's place in the larger order of things and thus to be free of the 'unhappy disquiet' of worries and passions that hold the individual back from 'living a genuine life' and 'being truly himself'. The Platonic dialogue as a spiritual exercise concerned to separate the soul and the body is 'an attempt to liberate ourselves from a partial, passionate point of view—linked to the senses and the body—so as to rise to the universal, normative viewpoint of thought, submitting ourselves to the demands of the Logos and the norm of the Good. Training for death is training to die *to one's individuality and passions* in order to look at things from the perspective of universality and objectivity.

Notice that it is precisely on this question of 'rising to the universal' or 'rising to the particular' that the Aristotelian tradition of practical philosophy substitutes a practical wisdom, *phronesis*, as a dimension of *bios practikos* for the theoretical wisdom, *sophia*, of the *bios theoretikos*. However, they need not be completely incompatible. Learning a disinterested *ethos* in regard to one's own desires is an important feature of being able to see a situation from the point of view of others. Thus insofar as 'rising to the universal' retains a dialogic dimension, the two orientations complement one another.

It is when 'rising to the universal' is interpreted as a shift from dialogue to monologue, as a movement from perspective-limited views to a universal 'view from nowhere', from coming to an understanding with others to coming to understand abstract principles per se, that rising to the universal and rising to the particular become incompatible. It is this (Kantian, Platonic) formulation of 'rising to the universal' that is a primary target of this thesis and the *topoi* of aesthetics, hermeneutics, rhetoric and ancient philosophy are all 'spiritual exercises' intended to expunge this false reading of 'rising to the universal' and replace it with an interpretation in which rising to the universal is through and for 'rising to the particular'. *Theoria* on this view does entail a distanciation, even an invocation

of Utopia, but in order to engage more deeply with the conflicted overdetermination and incommensurabilities, the contingencies and unpredictabilities of actual practical situations.

ANCIENT SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

The ancient schools of philosophy, even the contemplative Platonic school, were fundamentally concerned with cultivating an art of living, a form of life, a practice of the *bios theoretikos* which stood in opposition to *bios praktikos*. The mainstream schools of ancient philosophy were all organized around the *locus communis* (commonplaces) of coping with the uncertainty and variability of the world of *praxis* and the clash of en*doxa* thrown up by the emergent trading cities of the ancient world such as Athens. Different schools of philosophy had different arts for coping with the dis-ease of the city (*polis*).

Epicureans sought to evade the *agon* of public life altogether by fostering a life centred on the cultivation of the pleasures of the moment (*carpe diem*), finding a joy at the heart of the present. They cultivated a comportment that concentrated on the fact that 'one only lives once', that 'life is short' and that 'one can only live life each moment at a time, so do not be concerned for the future'. It's injunction was: 'Live in the present and savor it'. In this way, Epicureanism is profoundly opposed to *bios praktikos* which is concerned with the agonies and uncertainties of ensuring that justice is done. Epicureanism is a philosophy that has left profound effects on western culture. It has shaped the entire ethos and genre of pastoral, the project of moving back to the country-side or village in order to escape 'the maddening crowds' of the city, a motif that still strongly shapes our sense of the possible forms of living a good life.

Stoicism, by contrast, is not concerned with finding the pleasures of the moment but with creating an acceptance of the fatalities and duties of the moment. Stoicism is focused on ridding oneself of the desires, expectations and hopes that undermine the capacity to accept one's fate (*amora fata*), and the necessities and imperatives of one's life situation over which one has no control. Stoicism is concentrated on learning to love the necessities of fate and the duties of one's station and thereby confine one's desires to the domains of life within one's control. Instead of beating one's head against the wall of necessity, the Stoic learns that freedom lies in the recognition of necessity. This putting in perspective of one's desires, wishes, and hopes is a training in 'rising to the universal' (Hegel) and a deconstruction of egocentricity. The Stoic does not favor 'their own or themselves'. They are impersonal and impartial, the guardians of universality and disinterestedness. Stoicism cultivates a form of life dedicated to treating oneself and one's own as simply one more case, not a special case, by means of the cultivation of *ascesis* which focuses on extirpating emotional attachment and embracing a more universal rationality (*nous*), which is why it was the Stoics who formulated the concept of human nature and of natural law.

Skepticism as a school of philosophy sought to escape from the agon of *doxa* by cultivating the experience of *ataraxia*, the experience of the way that the truths and falseness of competing views balance one another. Opinions or doctrines that contradict one another each possess the same degree of conviction and thus cancel each other. In this way, skepticism cultivated a comportment that is not a search for the truth but a calmness beyond all doctrines. Skepticism insisted that no doctrine can validate its truth-claims against those of other doctrines, thus the *agon* involved in the search for a single overarching universal truth is a futile and arrogant enactment of dogmatism. Instead of cultivating a commitment to argument as a passion for truth, Skepticism cultivated an ironic, skeptical calm that refused entanglement in the *agon* and disputation of competing doctrines.

This section has sketched a sense of *theoria* as a escape from the dis-ease of social and political life into a different form of life, a different art of living—*bios theoretikos*. This sense of *theoria*, as a rising to the universal, does not make metaphysical claims to finding or formulating ultimate or universal principles. The claim to reason of these schools is a claim to escape the imperatives and disputes of knowledge by 'seeing through' the will to truth. In contemporary jargon, we could say that these schools of philosophy deconstructed or engaged in ideology critique concerning the will to know and the will to truth. This work of putting knowledge in its place is still exemplary and instructive. In face of an academy forced to present itself as researching the solutions to the practical social and personal problems of life, and therefore posing as experts on the 'arts of living' particularly for policy makers, the lessons of the ancient schools of philosophy are still pertinent and exemplary.

CHAPTER 6 *THEORIA* AS PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

In this chapter I continue the work of reconstructing a sense of *theoria* that is not mortgaged to contemplation or an academic body of propositional knowledge.

The previous chapter, **Chapter 5: Theoria as philosophy** was concerned with two tasks. Its first section was dedicated to subverting the hegemonic place of *theoria* as some kind of knowledge of ultimate reality (metaphysics). Its second section was dedicated to retrieving the ancient sense of philosophy as an art of living, as the practice of spiritual exercises intent on forming an autonomous region for the soul that is immune to the vicissitudes of social, physical, emotional, material and political life. In these arts of living, knowledge was positioned either as a subordinate element in spiritual exercises or as a dogmatism to be surpassed by a cultivation of indifference. In this way, instead of constituting the whole of *theoria*, knowledge assumed a limited role within a larger *bios theoretikos* comprised of practices, habits, social relationships, virtues, and values. Instead of *theoria* being construed as a private 'cognitive' attribute, property or operation, it becomes a form of life, a conjuncture of many elements organized around the memory, enactment and cultivation of certain comportments dedicated to 'rising to the universal'. However, in a sense both these tasks were negative tasks designed to clear a space in which to situate practical philosophy as a form of *theoria*.

This section, **Theoria as practical philosophy**, now takes up the positive task of exploring the concept of 'practical philosophy' itself. I will perform this task by recalling the second moment in *TM* which I nominated as relevant to forming the grounds for construing ABE as practical philosophy. This moment, which I called 'the Aristotelian moment', forms the second of three sections in which Gadamer formulates his systematic 'theory of hermeneutic experience'. Having re-valued the notion of 'prejudice' by means of Heidegger's notion of 'fore-structure', rehabilitated the concepts of 'authority' and 'tradition', formulated the principle of 'history of effect' (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), and retrieved the hermeneutic of application from the domains of theology and jurisprudence, Gadamer finally recalls Aristotle's notion of practical philosophy in a section titled 'The hermeneutic relevance of Aristotle', before moving on to articulate his concept of experience (*Erfahrung*) and his concept of the fundamental dialogism of language and human being.

'THE HERMENEUTIC RELEVANCE OF ARISTOTLE'

In section of *TM* titled 'The hermeneutic relevance of Aristotle', Gadamer recalls Aristotle's ethics as exemplary for specifying his own philosophical hermeneutic. Towards the end of the previous section Gadamer had been arguing that:

> understanding is not a method which the inquiring consciousness applies to an object it chooses and so turns it into objective knowledge; rather, being situated within an event of tradition, a process of handing down, is a prior condition of understanding. *Understanding proves to be an event,* and the task of hermeneutics, seen philosophically, consists in asking what kind of understanding, what kind of science it is, that is itself advanced by historical change. (*TM*, p. 309, italics in the original)

So, at this point Gadamer re-invokes the questions he raised in the very first passages of *TM*. In order to formulate an hermeneutic that can respond to this task, Gadamer turns to the notion of 'application' from legal and theological hermeneutics in which the application of a law or gospel surpasses and enriches, supplements, that which is contained in the original law or gospel, but does not thereby stand outside it:

> To interpret the law's will or the promises of God is clearly not a form of domination but of service. (*TM*, p. 311)

It is at this point that Gadamer turns to Aristotle because:

> if the heart of the hermeneutical problem is that one and the same tradition must time and again be understood in a different way, the problem, logically speaking concerns the relationship between universal and particular. (*TM*, p. 312)

It is precisely the difference between this relationship of universal and particular within the domain of social life (*ethos*) and that relationship in the domain of nature (*physis*) that constitutes the difference between theoretical knowledge and practical wisdom.

> Human civilization differs essentially from nature in that it is not simply a place where capacities and powers work themselves out; man becomes what he is through what he does and how he behaves—i.e., he behaves in a certain way because of what he has become. Thus Aristotle sees *ethos* as differing from *physis* in being a sphere in which the laws of nature do not operate, yet not a sphere of lawlessness but of human institutions and human modes of behavior which are mutable, like rules only to a limited degree. (*TM*, p. 312)

According to Gadamer, Aristotle is not arguing that social life is 'unprincipled' but that principles function differently in social life from the way they function in nature. Aristotle's interest in formulating a knowing attuned to *ethos* is a response to the fact that both Socrates and Plato formulated their ethics in terms of 'an equation of virtue and knowledge, *arete* and *logos*' (*TM*, p. 312). Aristotle rejects their claim that 'the good' is simply a matter of knowledge and wants to insist that the good is a matter of demeanor, a tact that is embodied in the more ontological strata of habits and orientation.

EPISTEME AND *PHRONESIS*

Thus, the very first step in coming to understand what a form of *theoria* oriented to the cultivation of practical wisdom is, is to grasp the radical difference for Aristotle between the domain of *episteme* and the domain of *phronesis*:

> We might say that it was his conception of the peculiar texture of this object-domain that determined for Aristotle the nature of the theoretical reflection that supervened it; this would be in accord with his general habit of granting priority to 'ontological' considerations in his reflections on the methodology of knowledge. (Dunne, 1993, p.158)

Aristotle's practical philosophy is grounded on the insistence that the life-world of human beings demands a form of knowing different from that which applies to non-human regions of reality. For Aristotle, different forms of knowing are a consequence of the different object domain. Different object-domains disclose and articulate themselves through different forms of knowledge and methodologies.

Episteme, a mode of knowing based on axiom, proof, demonstration and the unambiguous definition of terms, is only applicable to those regions of reality characterised by necessity and stability. The paradigmatic expression of *episteme* is mathematics which deals with the unchangeable, because 'only where something is unchangeable can we have knowledge of it without having to take another look from time to time (Gadamer, 1998, p. 50).

The world of human *praxis*, by contrast, is a region of contingency and instability, a world of 'probability', a world where things can be otherwise. No person can be relied on to act or respond identically on different occasions; no course of events can be relied on to take the same path or sequence every time; no utterance can be relied on to reveal its meaning transparently; and there is no one with ultimate insight into either themselves, others nor into what is happening or what is going to eventuate. The world of human social life and its happenings is thus what Anaximander termed *aperion,* i.e., the radically indeterminate. For the Greeks, social life is neither subject to nor a manifestation of underlying laws and causalities. According to the tradition of practical philosophy, the domain of *praxis*, the life-world, is a domain where things 'can be otherwise' and where we can only know things 'probably', not 'certainly'. The form of knowledge appropriate to social life is thus not an *episteme* that formulates laws and essences, but practical wisdom, *phronesis*, which discerns particular situations and people and the conjuncture of power, emotions, and need at play in that situation as a site of conflict.

THEORY FOR SOCIAL LIFE

Thus the approach to social life taken by practical philosophy differs fundamentally from a metaphysical or scientific approach to social life. Whereas the social sciences look to an underlying order, a grammar or syntax of social rules and institutions (e.g., Chomsky's 'competence') that determine social reality (e.g., Chomsky's 'performance'), practical philosophy views social life as an unpredictable outcome of intersecting narratives of utterances, events and their effects.

Practical philosophy as a *theoria* of social life that does not posit a determinant underlying syntax of *archés*, rules or principles, thus construes itself very differently from objectivist versions of theory. For practical philosophy, theory is not a matter of 'conceptual' knowledge of the social world or life-world.

> Aristotle did not see himself as working out, on the smooth ground of 'theory', either a method or a set of laws which were then, through their application by practical reason, to bring order and system into an otherwise messy and irrational practice. (Dunne, 1993, p. 159)

Practical philosophy does formulate generalizations or rules of thumb, 'principles', but they possess an entirely different function and status from the generalizations of modern social science. In modern social science, the generalization (concept or statement) is expected to subsume the situation as instance. Generalizations in practical philosophy, by contrast, serve as orientations, as short-cuts, as mnemonics, as a 'default setting'; they function as the 'beginning moment' of an interpretive engagement with the specificity of the situation. Practical philosophy formulates its generality—its principles, rules, concepts, *archés* and so on—in the fashion of Kant's reflective judgments, whereas the mainstream social sciences formulate their generalities as determinant judgments.

Admittedly, it is very difficult for us ('moderns') to even imagine the practice of reflective judgment as a form of theory. For us, almost by definition, a theory claims to represent the underlying order of a domain by means of the construction of concepts or theoretical constructs. Because our 'picture' of theory is dominated by the paradigm of representation and the subsequent application of this representation as technique or technology, the only way we can conceive of theory operating in relation to action is by substituting a codification or regularization of actions in the name of reason. In this sense we are hostage to a modern (or ancient Platonic) account of a *theoria* oriented to *praxis* as practical reason. Giddens' double hermeneutic (Giddens, 1984) provides an exemplary case of this temptation.

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY IS NOT 'INTUITION'

Thus, our question is: if *phronesis* is what governs good *praxis*, what cultivates *phronesis*, given that *phronesis* itself is not reducible to a straightforward compliance with, or obedience to, norms, rules or procedures? Aristotle's answer is: practical philosophy. But what could possibly be the role of *theoria* in such a situation?

At this point it can be tempting to construe an altogether non-theoretical source and form of knowledge that is attuned to particulars. Generally, this alternative mode of knowledge is construed as perceptual as opposed to conceptual, knowledge by acquaintance as opposed to knowledge by description, intuitive as opposed to discursive, sensible as opposed to abstract. The history of philosophy and epistemology is littered with these anti-rationalist movements whether as forms of empiricism, Romanticism or phenomenology. These positions tend to emphasize the radical distance between theory and this alternative mode of knowing.

However, it would be misleading to consign practical philosophy to this nominalist or aesthetic camp. Kessels and Korthagen (1996, 1999) in their effort to wean teacher education away from an *episteme*-oriented program of professional training and development towards a *phronesis*-oriented program, tend to argue from the radical difference in *phronesis* and *episteme* as forms of knowledge to a radically experiential curriculum. This does not follow. Although *phronesis* itself may be radically contextual and too particular and over-determined to be captured in a theoretical formulation, practical philosophy as the educational cultivation of *phronesis* need not be so ineffable. As Gadamer insists, there is still a generality operating in practical philosophy as discourse, even though the deliberation and judgment of the moment surpasses this nurturing conversation.

Practical philosophy should not be reduced to *phronesis* itself. As a form of reflection oriented to *phronesis*, practical philosophy necessarily involves a certain distanciation from its object of concern—*phronesis*. Practical philosophy is a discursive practice concerned to cultivate, form and shape *phronesis*. Even so, this distanciation does not directly formulate a more discerning insight into 'what needs to be done'—the province of *phronesis* itself. Practical philosophy assembles the 'principles' and values that are 'at issue' in the exercise of *phronesis*. But these principles and values can only come to bear on the particular situation as fore-structures, as prejudices, as comportments, as virtues. They cannot function as straightforward rules or norms to be imposed or applied. As Gadamer insists:

> êthos for [Aristotle] is the archê, the 'that' from which all practical-political enlightenment has to set out. (Gadamer, 1981, p. 133)

Practical philosophy cannot outdo *phronesis* in discerning what to do in the individual situation; it does not even attempt to do this. Practical philosophy works at supporting and developing *phronesis* by cultivating comportment, not supplanting it:

> Aristotle's own analogy of making the target more perspicuous for the archer is one that appeals to Gadamer. This does not at all replace actual skillfulness with the bow, but it helps 'to make aiming easier and to make the steadfastness of the direction of one's shooting more exact and better. (Dunne, 1993, p. 160)

The Renaissance humanists were right to insist that practical philosophy is a cultivation of tact, taste, judgment, and sensibility. Aristotle, of course, called what practical philosophy cultivated *arete*, virtue.

CONTRAST WITH GIDDENS' 'SECOND ORDER CONCEPTS'

The relation between practical philosophy and *phronesis* is not Giddens' 'double hermeneutic' in which the vernacular knowledge of *sensus communis* is translated into the theoretical 'second-order' concepts of experts (the first hermeneutic) and then disseminated back into the 'first-order' *sensus communis* (the second hermeneutic). This is precisely what the relationship between practical philosophy and *phronesis* is not. And it is at this precise juncture that Giddens reveals his fundamental attachment to modernity and the Enlightenment project despite its 'risks'. Unlike Giddens who simply takes up the modernist notion of theory, this thesis is attempting to reach back past the modernist notion of reflexivity embodied in the notions of first and second order concepts, to an older and more fundamental, more radical sense of *theoria*, a mode of *theoria* that is not a claim to mastery nor a claim to a rationality that is unavailable to participants in *praxis*. It is concerned to put forward a notion of theory suitable for injection into a democratic world of *praxis*.

RETURN TO ARISTOTLE

To work at formulating a clearer sense of what practical philosophy could be, I will return to the text of Aristotle himself. However, it is important to acknowledge that Aristotle did not face the same questions we face. What to us seems an abyss he crosses without a second thought and what to us seems peripheral he will lavish attention on. Thus, to engage with Aristotle in formulating a concept of practical philosophy, is itself an example of Gadamer's practice of philosophical hermeneutic. To concentrate solely on reconstructing 'what Aristotle meant' would not solve 'our' problems. The question is: can Aristotle's notion of practical philosophy still speak to us given our present situation? Can we 'hear what he has to say' in such a way that it is relevant to our situation—I mean of course the situation of ABE and the ways it construes itself as a cultivation of *theoria* in its students. Or are we condemned to Giddens' double hermeneutic in which, say, linguistic theories such as Systemic Functional Linguistics or similar are deployed to codify and technicalize the 'first order' language we speak, read and write into a 'second order' metalanguage which is then disseminated back through the educational system as a set of 'second order' meta-names, techniques and methods to be mastered by students in order for them to be counted as competent members of their 'first order' speech community.

Already, in the previous chapter, we have noted that the ancient schools of philosophy did not identify *theoria* with knowledge as such, but often with a comportment defined as the other of knowledge—with skepticism or indifference (*ataraxia*). Thus *theoria* as the taking up a more reflective stance, a more distanced comportment, does not necessarily entail taking up a 'second order' representation:

> Aristotle's practical philosophy is, one might say, a theory which, designed to protect practice against unwarranted theoretical incursions, bolsters it by showing how and why it must stand fast in its own peculiar strengths and modes of procedure. Theory here contributes to a heightened awareness on the part of the practiced moral agent of what is already implicit in his way of life. (Dunne, 1993, p. 160)

To appreciate Aristotle's notion of practical philosophy, it is critical to recall his sense of the radical disjunction between the way that 'the eternal' conforms to laws and is thus capture-able in propositions whereas the domain of the social is dispersed and disseminated in such a way that it cannot be captured in propositions of the same order of determinacy.

PHRONESIS

For Aristotle, no matter how detailed one's knowledge of the principles or regularities that should govern a region of social life, it is not possible to simply deduce what to do from this knowledge. For a radical gap between generalities and particular situations remains. There is an unbridgeable gap between principles and their applications, a gap that can only be bridged by *phronesis*. What to do, the good, in 'this' particular situation is not deducible from a set of rules or norms. Or, to be more accurate, one *can* deduce what to do from the rules, norms or principles, but to do so is to evade taking responsibility for finding what to do, for finding the good and what is just, in this particular situation. For Aristotle, to simply 'apply rules' is to be *akribidas*, to be an unbending and rigid person who does not recognize that each situation needs to be treated on its merits, and that the application of a rule needs to be mediated by practical wisdom, *phronesis*.

As an analogy between the limits of general concepts or laws in face of the intricacies of specific situations, Aristotle compares the rigidity of the *akribidas* with the rigidity of a straight-edged ruler as compared with the flexibility of a tape rule (a Lesbos ruler) for measuring objects that are curved or irregular. However, the fact that a straight-edge is not determinant does not mean that rulers, norms or standards should be dispensed with altogether. Rather:

> We must … see that any distinction between the universal and the particular which would simply include the latter under the former is unsustainable. The 'universal' ideas that make up one's habitual practical-moral knowledge—such as justice, bravery, truthfulness —cannot be 'stamped' on each act or situation, nor do they provide the kind of specification for action that a craftsman's working out of the *eidos* of his product provides. In Gadamer's words, Aristotle 'does not regard the guiding principles that he describes as knowledge that can be taught. They have only the validity of schemata. They always have to be made concrete in the situation of the person acting.' Phronesis itself, then, is not a knowledge of ethical ideas as such, but a resourcefulness of mind that is called into play in, and responds uniquely to, the situation in which these ideas are to be realized. (Dunne, 1993, p. 272).

Practical philosophy is a cultivation of the principles at issue in the exercise of *phronesis*, not a 'second order' codification of the rules of *phronesis* itself. Practical philosophy is in this sense quite at odds with Saussurian notions of the human sciences as formulating the *langue* underpinning the *parole* of everyday life-worlds.

ARISTOTLE ON EQUITY, THE MEAN AND *KAIROS*

Besides his discussion of the concept of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) there are (at least) three other places or *topoi* under which the gap between universal and particular in human social life is highlighted by Aristotle and the tradition of practical philosophy: first, the concept of equity by which a judge mediates between the legislator and the particularity of the case; secondly, his concept of 'the mean' which defines virtue and especially justice as the finding of a balance between competing excesses or between 'too much and not enough'; and thirdly, the concept of *kairos* which is the capacity to sense 'the moment' in one's actions or speech.

Aristotle's concept of equity is concerned with the moderation of the law so that justice is done to a case rather than simply applying the full force of the law. In later traditions this mitigation is sometimes called 'mercy' or 'compassion'. It is not because he has no alternative that a judge refrains from applying the full force of the law, 'but because to do otherwise would not be right. In restraining the law, he is not diminishing it, but on the contrary, finding a better law' (*TM*, p. 318).

The key point of Aristotle's concept of equity (*epieikeia*) as 'a correction of law where it is defective owing to its universality' (*NE*, V, 10, 11137b28) is based on distinguishing a mechanical application of laws on the one hand and doing justice to the uniqueness of the situation on the other. According to Aristotle, written law is confined to speaking in generalities or in terms of the usual case, and thus invariably errs by over-simplification:

> Aristotle shows that every law is in a necessary tension with concrete action, in that it is general and hence cannot contain practical reality in its full concreteness. … The law is always deficient, not because it is imperfect in itself but because human reality is necessarily imperfect in comparison to the ordered world of law, and hence allows of no simple application of the law. (*TM*, p. 318)

In such cases, according to Aristotle, we need to 'say what the legislator himself would have said had he been present, and would have put into his law if he had known' (*NE*, V, 10, 11137b24-6). Here

Aristotle adduces the rhetorical *status* of 'letter and spirit' (*scriptum/voluntas*) which is one of the principal strategies for aligning situation and written (or fixed) law. However, in truth, the entire edifice of *status* theory is given up to providing avenues (places, *loci*, *topoi*) for probing and arguing this relationship between situation and law. But it is important to keep in mind that Aristotle is not enjoining a Diltheyian empathic identification with the legislator, rather he is insisting that those charged with deliberation and judgment take responsibility for going beyond a mechanical application of the law by exercising their own judgment.

THE MEAN

The other context in which the indeterminacy, variability and contingency of the context of action—we could also include reflexivity insofar as the definition of the situation also depends on how participants actually do define it—is foregrounded by Aristotle in his notion of 'the mean' (*he mesotes*).

Unfortunately, this concept of 'the mean' has come down to us as a commonplace of moderation and prudence adduced to dampen the passions or enthusiasms of the young. But, as Dunne points out, it functions quite differently for Aristotle himself:

> [The mean] does not, contrary to what is sometimes supposed, install an ideal of ultrasobriety or moderation (a meaning reinforced by some of the associations of 'prudence', the word most often used to translate *phronesis*); rather it indicates that the accomplishment of virtue calls for a concrete mediation between what one already knows of the demands of a virtue and the opportunities and limitations of the present situation. (Dunne, 1993, p. 311)

Aristotle himself describes the mean in terms consonant with the way *kairos* focuses on matters of timing, but generalized to other features of circumstances besides time:

> It is no easy matter to be good. For in everything it is no easy task to find the middle … anyone can get angry—that is easy—or give or spend money; but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, that is not for everyone, nor is it easy. (*NE* 2.9.1109a24-29)

Likewise, the term *kairos* invoked here by Aristotle to explain 'the mean' is also a key term in rhetoric.

KAIROS

Kairos means that although the rhetorical effect of an element of speech on its audience depends on how well it is attuned and adapted to the mood (*ethos*) of its audience generally, there is a special dimension of attunement concerned with timing.

In one sense, timing is everything. Most rhetorical decisions can be construed as decisions about timing: what to say first and what to hold back? How elaborately to amplify or intensify a point? How to adjust one's speech to the emotional response of the situation and to the speeches of others? When to 'make your move' and 'play your best card' or 'introduce a wild card' and so on. In passing, it is worth emphasizing that these matters of appropriateness are far removed from the normative rules of social occasions or genres. In fact their entire *raison d'etre* is to supplement, concretize, adapt, even exploit, the normal rules and expectations of the occasion.

We can immediately sense the correspondence between these circumstances of *praxis* and the issues probed and debated by orators, which must raise the question whether rhetoric as an educational discipline is a critical component or vehicle of practical philosophy. If practical philosophy is a cultivation of *phronesis* which is itself an attentiveness and attunement to the intersection of generalities or principles on the one hand and the exigencies or circumstances of situation on the other with the goal of formulating 'the mean', a mean that reconciles and integrates the competing values and interests at issue, then surely practical philosophy itself will be comprised of discourse which puts these considerations into play and learns to judge their effects and meaning. This point will be taken up in Chapter 6, 'ABE as the tactful cultivation of experience', which ties the discussion of practical philosophy back to the reality of discourse within the ABE classroom.

APERION

The point to emphasis at this juncture is that:

> Being virtuous is difficult because it involves finding one's way through what Aristotle, following the Pythagoreans, calls the *aperion*—i.e., the uncircumscribable range of potentially noticeable features and the consequently unlimited possibilities of action that inhere in each situation—and settling on the one best and most appropriate response. (Dunne, 1993, p. 312)

Gadamer sums up this theme of the radical distance between universal and particular concerning the act of speaking itself insofar as speech also an event of *praxis*, a speech-act:

> real knowledge has to recognize the *kairos*. This means knowing when and how one is required to speak. But this cannot be assimilated on one's own by way of rules and mere learning by rote. There are no rules governing the reasonable use of rules, as Kant stated so rightly in his *Critique of Judgment*. (Gadamer, 1981, p. 121)

Thus, insofar as *phronesis* is an effect of education, it cannot be a mere matter of inculcating rules, norms, procedures or information. *Phronesis* is a matter of *kairos*, a matter of, we could say, tact and taste incarnating a feel for the situation and its actual and possible interpretations, its conflicted ideals and desires.

As Gadamer points out, a rigorous canon of terms or norms is of limited use in the context of the indeterminate character of the world of *praxis*:

> The knowledge that gives direction to action is essentially called for by concrete situations in which we are to choose the thing to be done; and no learned or mastered technique can spare us the task of deliberation and decision. As a result the practical science directed towards this practical knowledge is neither theoretical science in the style of mathematics nor expert know-how in the sense of knowledgeable mastery of operational procedures (*poiesis*) but a unique sort of science. It must arise from practice itself and, with all the typical generalizations that it brings to explicit consciousness, be related back to practice. In fact, that constitutes the specific character of Aristotelian ethics and politics. (Gadamer, 1981, p. 92)

Aristotle insists that not all domains are open to the same rigorous demonstrative or syllogistic epistemological regime that he prided himself on articulating and expounding in his own logic-oriented works:

> Now fine and just actions, which political science investigates, admit of much variety and fluctuation of opinion.… We must be content, then in speaking of such subjects and with such premisses to indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and in speaking about things which are only for the most part true, and with premisses of the same kind, to reach conclusions that are no better. In the same spirit, therefore should each type of statement be *received*; for it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just as far as the nature of the subject admits; it is evidently equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician scientific proofs. (*NE* 1.3.1094b15)

Practical philosophy does not deal in apodictic or determinate concepts. It operates in the world of the 'probable', the arguable, the reasonable, the plausible—the world of the rhetorician.

Aristotle even argues that young men should not attend lectures on political science:

> for he is inexperienced in the actions that occur in life, yet its discussions start from these and are about these; and further since he tends to follow his passions, his study will be vain and unprofitable, because the end aimed at is not knowledge but action. (*NE* 1.3.1095a1-6)

What Aristotle seems to be suggesting here is that to approach practical philosophy with the hope of discovering principles that can reduce the complexity, vagueness, over-determination and variability of social life, its *aperion*-like character, thereby telling the 'young Turk' what to do, so he can unreflectingly impose his will on situations is totally inappropriate. Practical philosophy, by contrast, is a discourse that allows one to share and refresh one's feel for the radical indeterminateness of human and social life so that when the situation demands deliberation, one will be able to mobilize a practical wisdom that allows one to 'tune into' the conflicted matters at issue in it. Practical philosophy is a discourse, a conversation, which draws on the experience of participants and formulates this experience so that it can 'speak to' future situations of action.

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY AS CARE OF THE CITY

In this section I have tried to show that practical philosophy is a tradition which cultivates a form of wisdom and *theoria* located in immediate proximity to *praxis* and *phronesis*, thereby undoing the opposition between *bios theoretikos* and *bios praktikos*. Thus the comportment recalled, awakened,

enacted and cultivated by *theoria* as practical philosophy is a comportment oriented to a life of acting and speaking in the community, a life of *praxis*.

> *[P]raxis* in its more specific sense … referred to a life of engagement with one's fellow citizens in the affairs of the *polis*, a life which, presupposing the prior fulfillment of the needs of survival, could exemplify various excellences of character (*ethos*) such as justice, courage, self-control, and magnanimity. (Dunne, 1993, p. 157)

For this tradition of *theoria*, wisdom is not a matter of finding a region of life beyond the vissitudes of political life, but rather a matter of nurturing, supporting and reflecting on the conditions and events of good social and political life. Practical philosophy is a form of *theoria* oriented to *vita activa*, not *vita contemplativa*.

Philosophy as practical philosophy is thus not simply 'care of the self' (Foucault) or 'care of one's soul' (Socrates), but a care of the polis, the city and its *sensus communis*. Practical philosophy is a practice of life (a *bios*) constituting the:

> cultural and educational tradition … so-called *philosophia practica (sive politica)*, a tradition stretching from Aristotle right up to the eighteenth century, a tradition which 'formed the systematic framework for all the "arts", inasmuch as they all stand at the service of the '*polis*'. (Gadamer, 1981, p. 88)

Practical philosophy is concerned to cultivate and nurture the principal comportment-based conditions of a 'happy' polis—*ethos*, *ethnos* and *hexis*.[9] Practical philosophy is a form of *theoria* oriented to shaping the good of the *polis* by shaping the virtue of the citizenry. That is, the conditions of a good *polis*, or the conditions that *theoria* as practical philosophy can especially contribute to, are matters of *habitus* and the temper or tone of social and discursive relations—in short, matters of *ethos* and *ethnos*. They could be summed up in the term *sensus communis*. Practical philosophy is thus that faculty or field of practice charged with caring for the *sensus communis*.

THE HISTORY OF PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

There is not space to trace the history of practical philosophy as an educational practice or practical ideal. In fact, because practical philosophy verges on the paradoxical as a form of *theoria* and education, it has not even yet been adequately explored or documented.

As an emblem of the elusiveness of practical philosophy, I can do no better than recite the poignant story of Hannah Arendt's death which seems to capture and distil the essence of her life-work and the way it circled closer and closer to practical philosophy together with the concepts of judgment and *sensus communis*. Having earlier in her life articulated the *Vita Activa* (Arendt, 1958) under the headings of labor, work (*poiesis*) and action (*praxis*), in her final work, *The Life of the Mind* (1978), Arendt turned to the task of formulating a concept of *theoria*, a concept of thinking, in which thoughtfulness and thoughtlessness could have implications for our moral and political lives. This line of thinking arose from her sense that Eichmann was someone who did not think or reflect on things. He seemed unable to escape 'cliches, stock phrases, adherence to conventional, standardized codes of expression and conduct' (Arendt, 1978, p. 4). She formulated her fundamental question, thus:

> The question that imposed itself was: Could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining whatever happens to come to pass or to attract attention, regardless of results and specific content, could this activity be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually 'condition' them against it? (Arendt, 1978, p. 5)

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[9] Aristotle termed these comportments *arete*, translated into Latin as *virtu* and into English as 'virtues'. Unhappily, I find I cannot bring myself to use the term 'virtue' because it is now overlaid by a long history of what Gadamer calls 'effective history'—that is, a drawing out of lines of meaning in the original term that are not simply 'overlaid' in the sense that they are figurative or could be 'picked off' at the fault-line between the original word and its later accressances. The whole weight of Gadamer's notions of 'historically effected consciousness' and 'prejudice' is that we cannot jump out of our own history in this way. I also find the term 'character' as a translation of '*ethos*' difficult for similar reasons. So, for now I will skirt around the term 'virtue' by calling on such terms such as '*hexis*', 'comportment', '*ethos*', and '*habitus*' which do not have such strong ties with a deontological construal of morality.

She completed two volumes, *Thinking* and *Willing*, and delivered them as Gifford lectures. The third and final volume she titled, *Judging*. Here at last she would grapple with practical philosophy in both its theoretical and practical aspects. Unfortunately—and here is where, as Heidegger might phrase it, practical philosophy insisted on withdrawing from us and keeping itself in the dark—after her death:

> a sheet of paper was found in her typewriter, blank except for the heading 'Judging' and two epigraphs. Some time between the Saturday on finishing 'Willing' and the Thursday of her death, she must have sat down to confront the final section. (Arendt, 1978, Editor's Postface, p. 242)

Let this Kafka-esque—one of her favored authors—anecdote by her friend and editor, Mary McCarthy, symbolize the elusiveness of practical philosophy, and its capacity to evade even that thinker who more than any other in modern times rejuvenated the concept of *praxis* as a key concept for rethinking political life. Like Gadamer, Arendt had attended Heidegger's early lectures on Aristotle but was determined to rethink practical philosophy in a way that was neither a naïve return to neo-Aristotelianism, nor followed Heidegger into his naïve embrace of Nazism and subsequent withdrawal into a politically quietist philosophy of contemplation.

SCHOLARSHIP

Without the exemplary and incisive practical wit and wisdom of Arendt, we are left to the more plodding work of scholars. Yet, whereas the history of philosophy, the history of jurisprudence, the history of political thought, and the history of rhetoric have all been studied extensively, practical philosophy itself which is as it were an orientation governing all of these fields has been relatively neglected.

Toulmin has studied the mid-seventeenth century dismissal, articulated by Blaise Pascal, of case ethics (Toulmin & Jonson, 1988) and has formulated the notion of two distinct and competing modernities, a sixteenth century modernity that was more attuned to practical philosophy, which he associates with Montaigne, and a seventeenth century modernity associated with Descartes and Hobbes which he construes as a moral panic that rejected practical philosophy in order to pursue 'mathematical exactitude and logical rigor, intellectual certainty and moral purity' (Toulmin, 1992, x).

McLean (1992) has studied Renaissance jurisprudential theories of interpretation; and Skinner (1996) has studied the history of Ciceronian *scientia civilis* in order to context Hobbes' attempt to formulate a new scientific *scientia civilis* to exclude rhetoric, because of its characteristic insistence that there will always be two sides to any question, from participating in the institution and governance of social life. Similarly, Eugene Garver (1987, 1994) frames his oeuvre as contributions towards a 'history of prudence'.

However, as a purely indicative gesture towards the later history of practical philosophy, I will briefly adduce Montaigne to show that this tradition of practical philosophy as a concern for the incommensurability between universal and particular and the consequent need for a discourse exploring the persuasiveness of different ways of construing the situation—rhetoric—that can both exploit and form an ethos-based practical wisdom, *phronesis*, was still strong in the sixteenth century. Of course, we have already encountered this tradition of practical philosophy under the heading of humanism in Vico's summation adduced in the early part of *TM*, a section analyzed in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

INTERPRETING THE LAW

In his introduction to the Digest, *Corpus Juris Civilis*, which was the founding text of Roman Law for the Middle Ages, the sixth-century Emperor Justinian had conceded that human law cannot be of its nature eternal. That is, the law is not a matter of *episteme*:

> It is the condition of human law always to decline endlessly, no part of it can stand unchanged for ever, and nature makes haste to bring forth many new forms; we expect therefore that subsequent [to our endeavors] some situations will arose which thus far have not been captured in the web of the law. (Maclean, 1992, p. 50)

Yet, to meet this challenge, he ordained that:

> the authority of the Emperor should be sought when such problems rise. ... [A]ll interpretation of the Corpus beyond that which is authorized (word-for-word translation into Greek, particular points of difficulty in given passages), *paratitla* (brief explanatory notes or summaries) is forbid-

> den on pain of deportation and confiscation of all property,...so as to prevent *verbosi* from generating further *discordia*. (Maclean, 1992, p. 50)

Yet, despite this attempt to outlaw interpretation, the tradition of practical philosophy is clearly still at work in Boniface Amberbach (1495-1562) who:

> in his *Defencio interpretum iuris civilis* (1524-5) argues that interpretation is necessary since laws are general and cannot encompass the infinite diversity of human actions and events without the intervention of the jurist. (Maclean, 1992, p. 57)

However, I will focus on Montaigne himself, who embodies a nuanced acceptance of the inevitability of interpretation grounded in an ironic and skeptical acceptance of the finitude of humanity and the indefinite play of circumstance and language, a comportment more attuned to the comportment of Pyrrhonian skepticism and Aristotle's practical philosophy.

He opens his classic essay, 'On Experience', by citing Aristotle's words: 'No desire is more natural than the desire for knowledge' but then redirects us away from 'knowledge' towards 'experience' which although 'a weaker and less dignified means' of gaining truth is one we should embrace because 'we should not disdain any method which leads us to it' (Montaigne, 1993, p 1207). He then observes that every particular thing is both alike and unlike other things and deploys this foregrounding of difference to point up the utopianism of the *Justinian Corpus*. He writes:

> Likeness does not make things 'one' as much as unlikeness makes them 'other'. Nature has bound herself to make nothing 'other' which is not unlike.
>
> That is why I am not pleased by the opinion of that fellow (viz. Justinian) who sought to rein in the authority of judges with his great many laws, 'cutting their slices for them'. He was quite unaware that there is as much scope and freedom in interpreting laws as in making them. (And those who believe that they can assuage our quarrels and put a stop to them by referring us to the express words of the Bible cannot be serious: our minds do not find the field any less vast when examining the meanings of others than when formulating our own—as though there were less animus and virulence in glossing than inventing!) (Montaigne, 1993, p. 1208)

However, not only are the words of the legislator ambiguous and in need of interpretation by judges, the law cannot foresee the variety of potential cases:

> What have our legislators gained by isolating a hundred thousand categories and specific circumstances, and then making a hundred thousand laws apply to them? That number bears no relationship to the infinite variations in the things that humans do. The multiplicity of our human inventions will never attain to the diversity of our cases. Add a hundred times more: but never will it happen that even one of all the many thousands of cases which you have already isolated and codified will ever meet one future case to which it can be matched and compared so exactly that some detail or some other specific item does not require a specific judgement. There is hardly any relation between our actions (which are perpetually changing) and fixed unchanging laws. (Montaigne, 1993, p. 1208)

Montaigne's insistence that the variability of circumstances can never be captured beforehand in written texts, so that interpretation, equity and *phronesis* is always needed to 'rectify' the abstractness and generality of the law and normative order, is clearly an continuation of practical philosophy.

SECTION 2: RHETORIC AND PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

Insofar as social life consists in '*probatios'*, things that can be otherwise, things that appear differently depending on 'where you are coming from', *theoria* is a comportment in which one does not simply 'act out' one's immediate emotions or attitudes, but takes up a more even-handed and neutral approach in which one tries to balance the conflicting points of view. Clearly, the *progymnasmata* exercises and commitment to *logoi dissoi* (exploring issues and arguments from the point of view of both/all *partes*) of rhetoric and the 'spiritual exercises' of philosophers in learning to discipline and evade the imperious demands of desire and emotions such as anger, were both critical to cultivating this theoretical comportment, this comportment of 'reason'.

In fact, the rarely-read Book 2 of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is taken up with a detailed account of emotions and how they can be addressed, intensified, appeased or changed by the orator. Learning to see things differently is not just a matter of intellectual conviction (*logos*), it is more importantly a shift in stance, a shift in sympathies (*pathos*) and a shift of identification (*ethos*). This empathy with the other and concern for a common ground is what we could call practical reason. As one's circle of

sympathies and identifications widens, one is more fair-minded and less solipsistic in one's approach to things. One is even prepared to concede that one may be wrong.

Rhetoric thus became a key instrument or component of practical philosophy. Insofar as knowledge of the *polis* or city was not a matter of contemplative knowledge of a field of objects (*episteme*), knowing the *polis* becomes a matter of coming to agreement through dialogue and communication. In a sense, the socio-political domain becomes knowable to the extent that a consensus emerges. To know the 'state of play' of the world of *praxis* is a matter of knowing the players by being involved in the game and developing a feel for the players and the flow of the play itself.

To know in this sense is a matter of experience and feel, not conceptual rigor. Rhetoric is the art or *techne* that hones the skills of players in the game of citizenship. The orator's task is to form a consensus, to form a general will, through the powers of his discourse, thereby bringing the social world to some sort of stability, in place of the paranoia of competing players in a war of all against all.[10] Thus a certain sort of stability and predictability is winnable through an emergent consensus, not by study or application of Platonic 'ideas' or similarly abstract concepts.

CICERO

The key historical figure in this tradition of practical philosophy as a cultivation of the orator and his task of bringing the city to agreement, was Cicero and the tradition of Roman rhetoric:

> The positive image of citizenship put forward by the Roman rhetoricians centred on the figure of the *bonus civis* or *vir civilis*, the man who knows how to plead in the law courts for justice and to deliberate in the councils and public assemblies of the *res publica* in such a way as to promote policies at once advantageous and honourable. This is the figure who emerges as the hero of Cicero's *De officiis*. 'While the life of those who cultivate *otium* is undoubtedly easier, safer, and less of a burden or trouble to others, the life of those who apply themselves to public affairs and the handling of great matters is at once more valuable to mankind and is better suited to winning us greatness and fame.' (Skinner, 1996, p. 69)

Similarly, Quintilian reaffirms this valuing of the life of *negotium*, public activity, over the life of *otium*, contemplative leisure:

> It is the truly civic man who is at the same time truly wise—the man who does not devote himself to useless disputations, but instead dedicates himself to the administration of the commonwealth, the very activity from which those who like to be called philosophers have withdrawn themselves as far as possible. (*Inst,* XI, I, 35)

Practical philosophy as taken up by Cicero and Quintilian, which inspired and shaped Renaissance *scientia civis*, insisted that the man of wisdom or reason on the one hand and the man of eloquence on the other were not incompatible figures. Without wisdom or reason, eloquence is blind, but without eloquence wisdom and reason are impotent. Both Cicero and Quintilian accuse the philosophers of separating the inherent unity of wisdom and speech.

> According to Cicero, 'wisdom' for the early Greeks originally included both eloquence and ethical (philosophical) virtues about the truth and the good life. But then Pythagoras, Democritus, and Anaxagoras 'abandoned the sphere of government and gave themselves entirely to study'. Gradually, some, debarred from politics, 'created for themselves a new interest and amusement as dialecticians … and sciences invented for the purpose of molding the minds of the young on the lines of culture and virtue'. (Smith, 1998, p. 38)

With Socrates, according to Cicero, the split became final:

> whereas the persons engaged in handling and pursuing and teaching the subjects that we are now investigating were designated by a single title, the whole study and practice of the liberal sciences being entitled philosophy, Socrates robbed them of this general designation, and in his discussions separated the science of wise thinking (*sapiender sentiendi*) from that of elegant speaking (*ornate dicendi*), though in reality they are closely linked together. … This [Socrates] is the source from

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[10] Notice how close this description of the orator and the outcomes of his work (*ergon*) and interventions is to the notion of a 'social contract' . The key difference is that practical philosophy figures the constitution of the social world as an emergent outcome of communicative *praxis*, whereas the social contract view of liberalism figures this consensus as having 'always already' taken place.

> which has sprung the undoubtedly absurd and reprehensible severance between the tongue and the brain, leading to our having one set of professors to teach us to think and another to teach us to speak. (Cicero, 1971, III, xv, 57-59)

For the Ciceronian tradition, rhetoric is intimately related to the tradition of practical philosophy.

In fact, according to Gadamer, rhetoric is a modality of practical philosophy, not a *techne* of speaking, 'more a philosophy of human life as determined by speech than a technical doctrine about the art of speaking' (Gadamer, 1981, p. 119). As Quintilian phrases it:

> The man who can really play his art as a citizen … is none other than the orator of our quest… These two branches of knowledge were, as Cicero has clearly shown, so closely united, not merely in theory but in practice, that the same men were regarded as uniting the qualifications of the orator and the philosopher. (Quintilian, 1, I, Proemium, 10-13)

Let this be our cue to shift focus from *theoria* as 'learning to think' to rhetoric as 'learning to speak'.

ELOQUENTIA: THE *TELOS* OF RHETORIC

Rhetoric was an education dedicated to cultivation of the *vir oratoria,* the public orator. Practical philosophy was a pedagogy dedicated to producing *phronemos*, the practically wise man. Rhetoric was, according to some rhetoricians, the *techne* of *phronesis*, the technical dimension of practical wisdom. Rhetoric was that which ensured the effectiveness of the interventions and contributions of the citizen. Thus according to the Ciceronian tradition, *eloquentia* fuses the social power of rhetorically effective speaking and the virtue and goodness of practically wise citizens or *phronemos*. In this way rhetoric claimed to encompass philosophy as the discipline of wisdom. For the Ciceronian tradition, wisdom without eloquence was powerless, eloquence without wisdom dangerous.

Together, these traditions comprised a pedagogy designed to produce *vir civilis*, the citizen, as a man who can interpret the laws and other binding texts at issue in a situation, could judge the alignment and intersection of values, interests and forces at issue and speak with conviction (*ethos*), power (*pathos*) and reason (*logos*) to successfully persuade an audience to form a community of consent and practical resolve about the matters at issue. Both traditions are elements of the tradition of *praxis*, a philosophy of life centred on the cultivation of the comportment of the good citizen (*bonus civilis*) 'who willingly served his community by pleading for just verdicts in the courts and beneficial policies in the assemblies' (Skinner, 1996, p. 284).

The attributes of the exponent of this form of life, its *habitus* and its language games stand in marked contrast with the comportment of the 'good subject' as someone whose 'sole duty is that of living in obedient subjection to the laws' (Skinner, 1996, p. 285). The good citizen, the man of civic virtue, within the classical tradition of *praxis* was 'generally described as an active, participative figure, someone capable of helping to frame the laws as well as administer them' (Skinner, 1996, p. 285).

THE CENTRAL PLACE OF RHETORIC IN THE LIBERAL ARTS

Despite the accusations of inauthenticity directed towards it by philosophers from Plato to the present day and despite its educational marginalisation over the last two centuries (because of the polarisation of our world into a Cartesian scientific culture and a Romantic aesthetic culture), rhetoric was in actuality the coping-stone of a system of education designed to form the character, values and skills of the ruling elite in the Western tradition. And even after the official expulsion of *eloquentia* from the curriculum and its replacement by the Plain Style of modernist epistemology, rhetoric has lived on as an oppositional paradigm within the academe in a range of guises—as 'postmodernism', as 'deconstruction', as 'hermeneutics', as professional writing, as elocution, as communication, as 'the humanities'.

The struggle between philosophy and rhetoric is a standing *topos* of European intellectual and cultural history. Kimball's history of the Liberal Arts is even titled *Philosophers & Orators* (1995) and is organized around the competing hegemonic aspirations of philosophy (and later, modern natural science) as a disinterested pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, on the one hand, and, on the other, rhetoric as an interested worldly pursuit of community and consensual judgment through the powers of persuasion. Barilli (1989) mobilizes the same conflict between rhetoric and philosophy as the key figure organizing his history of rhetoric as a contest between 'the analytic discourse' of logic, philosophy and science, on the one hand, and 'the full discourse' of rhetoric, on the other.

COMPETING HEGEMONIES: MIDDLE AGES, RENAISSANCE, MODERN METHOD

Historically at any specific time, one or the other achieved a hegemonic position. For example, during the medieval period, theology and philosophy were dominated by the scholastic forms of discourse and argumentation of the dialectical or logical tradition. This 'short discourse' of syllogistic or dialectical reasoning which contrasted with the 'long discourse' of rhetorical speeches, was reinvigorated by Abelard[11] and evolved into the oral *Disputatio* of medieval universities, finding its definitive realization in the Articles of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* (1989). This logic of the syllogism marginalised rhetorical discourse as a discourse of reason. As a consequence, rhetoric found a home beyond the provenance of the University as vocational training in the practical arts of preaching (*ars praedicandi*) and letter writing (*ars dictamen*).

By contrast, the Renaissance rediscovery of the entire text of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratio,* of previously fragmented or unknown texts of Cicero, and the translation and interpretation of the entire Byzantium tradition of Greek rhetoric, especially Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Hermogene's work on *stasios*, were precipitating factors in the emergence of Renaissance humanism as a counterstrophe to the scholastic Aristotelianism of the Universities.

> The notion of 'humanism' in the Renaissance is held together chiefly by the preoccupation with rhetoric, particularly with rhetoric as it was conceived by Cicero, as political wisdom. … Rhetoric provided an ideal alternative to the violence that was so characteristic of the age and a means for managing uncertainty in a time when traditional beliefs and values were being questioned. (Conley, 1994, p. 143).

However, the seventeenth century reconstruction of scientific method by Descartes, Bacon and Hobbes—even though they were themselves superb exponents of rhetoric—and the rejection by the Royal Society of the prose of persuasion in favor of a plain prose of representation, again marginalised rhetoric. Thus according to Sprat, the Royal Society resolved that in the natural sciences:

> the only remedy that can be found for this extravagance: and that has been, a constant Resolution, to reject all amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style: to return back to the primitive purity, and shortness, when men deliver'd so many things, almost in an equal number of Words. They have exacted from their members, a close, naked, natural way of speaking; the positive expressions; clear senses; a native easiness; bring all things as near Mathematical plainness, as they can; and preferring the language of Artizans, Countrymen, and Merchants, before that of Wits, or Scholars. (Sprat, cited in Conley, 1994, p. 168-9)

RHETORIC AS 'FALLEN' SPEECH

Ever since the birth of Western philosophy, rhetoric has been 'framed' as a specious 'fallen' mode of speech and reasoning that simulates the authentic speech and reasoning of philosophy, and as a mode of speech that 'persuades' its audience by base manipulations of emotions and sleight of hand, not by the clarity and logical necessity of reason. Thus, like the figure of 'woman', Rhetoric is constantly positioned as 'the other'. Rhetoric is to philosophy as woman is to man; as appearance is to truth; as illusion is to substance; as flattery is to sincerity; as manipulation is to transparency; as interested is to disinterested. From time immemorial, rhetoric has suffered from this charge of not caring about the one Truth, and of tactical manipulation and relativism. Notably, in *Gorgias*, Plato attacked the Sophists and their rhetoric as engaging in a play of language that only mimics or pretends to be concerned with knowledge, truth or justice. He accused rhetoric of engaging in an art of simulacra, seduction and manipulation.

Conjure the standard commonplaces summoned by conservative critics such as Bloom (1987) to attack the popular media or popular culture, and you will find the very commonplaces deployed against rhetoric: both (rhetoric and the popular culture of the mass media) are construed as partial, interested exercises of power, not objective neutral forms of inquiry; both pander to their audience yet are intent on manipulating and leading their audience; both rely on cliches and commonplaces—the lowest

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[11] Jacque Le Goff, (1993, p. 59) cites Abelard saying to Heloise: 'More concerned with teaching than with eloquence, I seek the clarity of the exposition, not the ordering of eloquence; a literal meaning, not rhetorical ornamentation'.

But notice the careful disposing of the grammar of this sentence into balanced antitheses. Surely, this is an exemplary display of the powers of oratory!

common denominator—not validated esoteric knowledge; both are an exercise in conscious technique and method, not spontaneous epiphanic intuition; both are worldly and commercial, not aristocratic and aesthetic.

Kant captures the general consensus among philosophers when he insists that rhetoric is 'the art of deluding by means of a fair semblance' in discourse designed 'to win over men's minds to the side of the speaker before they have weighed the matter, and to rob their verdict of its freedom' (Kant, 1911, p. 53). Even Aristotle, who, as it were, attempted to 'split the difference' between Plato and rhetoric in the opening sentence of his *Rhetorica*—'Rhetoric is a counterpart (*antistrophos*) to Dialectic'—failed to disperse the odium attached to rhetoric.

Whereas rhetoric is a discourse engaged in the transactions and deliberations of everyday speech acts concerned with negotiating status, authority, face, interests and power, philosophy projects itself as having transcended this everyday world of flux and the *agon* of opinion and reputation, and as therefore inhabiting a higher domain, a realm of speech that is 'universal and ideal'—to use Habermas' Kantian terms. Rhetoric is thus discourse as self-interested will to power, while philosophy is discourse as impartial and universal will to truth that has escaped the particularities and partialities of context and concrete situatedness, that has escaped the limits of localized place for the continuities of space and extricated itself from the finitude of circumstances and burst into the sphere of the infinite or absolute.

However, by invoking the (grammatical) categories of the 'finite' and the 'infinitive', I am deliberating invoking the extensive and subtle reflections within the body of Rhetoric itself concerning the aporias at work in the relations between: universal and particular, *arché* and instance, principle and case, paradigm and instance, rule and instance, law and equity. And as the province of equity (*aequitas*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*), these are of course the central *topoi* of practical philosophy.

It is also these motifs that bring rhetoric into proximity with post-metaphysical philosophy. According to Wittgenstein, metaphysics is a temptation to purity, an effort to evacuate the sense of place and concreteness from language as speech and substitute language as well-formed formulae. Post-metaphysical philosophy is the effort to reverse this flight of metaphysical discourse from its embeddedness in locality and specificity, and to reinsert rational discourse back into its circumstances, as more embedded, embodied, situated and pragmatic. By rejecting the positing of a universal ground governing a purified language, postmetaphysical philosophy is thus committed to 'bringing language back home' (Cavell).

DISSOI LOGOI

Like practical philosophy generally, one of the tasks of rhetoric has been to carve out for itself a mode of responsible persuasion that is located in between the 'proof' of epistemologically grounded knowledge (*episteme*) on the one side, and manipulative and irresponsible trickery or flattery of 'sophism' on the other. Excavating and defining this intermediate zone has been a difficult task, especially because one of the founding texts of rhetoric is written by a philosopher, Aristotle, who, although not hostile, like Plato, was inevitably ambivalent towards rhetoric especially in view of the fact that he is also proud of his pioneering place in founding 'logic' and the other modes of scientific knowledge.

According to Aristotle, rhetoric, like dialectic, is different from other 'arts' and 'sciences' in that it does not deal with a defined or delimited subject-matter constituted as a 'field' or 'body of knowledge'. Dialectic and rhetoric are both generic and are 'in a manner within the cognizance of all men' for all 'up to a certain point, endeavor to criticize or uphold an argument to defend themselves or to accuse' (*Rhet,* 1.1.1).

One of the ways that dialectic and rhetoric differ from other arts and sciences is that 'Rhetoric and Dialectic alone of all the arts prove opposites' (*Rhet,*1.1.12). By this, Aristotle means that they are concerned to explore both sides of an issue, not just find a single principle or proof to underwrite the subject matter. But this concern for exploring both sides of a question is not simply a matter of procedure. For Aristotle, *dissoi logoi* (examining both sides of an argument) arises out of the ontological character of the subject-matter itself that is dealt with by dialectic and rhetoric—the realm of 'the probable' as opposed to the realm of 'the necessary' or the 'arbitrary'.

DUBIUM

'The probable' is defined by Aristotle as 'things that may, generally speaking, be other than they are' (*Rhet*, 1.2.13). Things that could be otherwise are things we deliberate about: actions or orientations we are entertaining, things we are unsure about—*dubium*. If some course of events or situation is inevitable or obvious, it is *certum* and not *dubium*, and thus it is not a possible object of rhetoric. We only deliberate about the probable, about matters that can be otherwise, about matters that can be affected by what we do. The domain of the practical is thus that region which is indeterminate and whose movement towards determinacy is something on which we can have a say or effect. The practical is that region where we can make a difference, sometimes even a decisive difference, even though at other times only a marginal difference.

The paradigm of 'the probable', for Aristotle, is social life itself (*praxis*), the life of human beings and their communal relations (the *polis*), the life of interpersonal relations (*philia*). Despite the continuing efforts of theorists to produce arts ('If you do or say x, then you can be sure that she will respond by saying or doing y') or sciences ('x causes y'), two thousand years later, despite the concerted efforts of psychologists, sociologists, linguists and many other 'cognitive scientists' or 'therapists', most courses of action and interchange remain scientifically unpredictable. Every attempt to capture social life within a body of norms (*langue*) ends up having to acknowledge a dimension or realm of social life that evades the capture of determinate concepts (*parole*). The domain of the practical is not the determined outcome of a system of rule or principles.

THE PROBABLE

However, we need not conclude that social life or the 'parole' pole of social life is utterly random or contingent. As Ricoeur points out, Aristotle is trying to delineate a domain that 'splits the difference' between the realm of the necessary and the realm of the contingent or arbitrary. We do not have to submit to the binary—langue or parole. And in fact as we have seen, Aristotle insists that everyone participates in this domain; everyone has knowledge and understanding of the possible unfoldings of a course of action or the possible movements of a conversation. The choice is not between principled and unprincipled as Hunter (along with Saussure and Durkheim) argues: there is an intermediate region, the region of the 'could have been otherwise'.

In this region we are not always at a loss or continually surprised, 'For that which is probable is that which generally happens' (*Rhet*, 1.2.15), even though it does not always happen. Perhaps we could say that the domain of the probable is a domain where what happens depends on how someone sees or construes something and therefore on how they act in response. But this does not mean that every instant of people's lives is a matter of intense reflection or deliberation; most of the time on most things we act habitually—however at any point we can interpret differently and thus act differently. The possibility of this interpreting otherwise means that we can deliberate about how to interpret or how to act. This process of deliberation, this marshalling of the relevant considerations, is what Aristotle calls rhetoric. 'Rhetoric then may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever' (*Rhet,* 1.1.14). Rhetoric brings to bear the reasons for interpreting a situation this way or that, as warranting this response or that. If the interpretation of the situation were 'an open and shut case' there would be no need for this marshalling—there would be no need for rhetoric. In such a case we would simply conform to the ruling syntax or *langue*—what the doctor says, what the mechanic says, or what the financial counselor demands.

But, as Aristotle notes, even experts in their field need to engage in rhetoric to the extent that they need to persuade us of a course of action without being able to 'prove' that action by deduction from the axioms of their science because we the 'persuadees' cannot follow a long chain of reasoning within a specialized field:

> The function of Rhetoric, then, is to deal with things about which we deliberate, but for which we have no systematic rules; and in the presence of such hearers as are unable to take a general view of many stages, or to follow a lengthy chain of argument. (*Rhet,* 1.2.13)

The deliberation at issue in rhetoric is not monologic. It is the interchange, the debate, between how the same thing is interpreted from different points of view with a view to coming to a judgment (*krisis*) about it, judgment about what to do (in the case of deliberative rhetoric) or a judgment about what happened and its justice (in the case of judicial rhetoric).

RHETORIC AND PERSUASION

However, there is a difference between dialectic and rhetoric. Rhetoric is not simply the (illocutionary) mustering of the considerations or arguments impinging on a question, but is a 'perlocutionary' intervention intent on effecting a change of stance in an audience. Rhetoric operates in a region that is not as pure nor as philosophical as Plato's *Dialogues* or Habermas' 'ideal speech situation':

> Rhetorical communication does not address superior minds or pure spirits, but rather beings of flesh and blood subject to feeling tired, bored, or bewildered, if arguments are too hard to follow or 'narrow'. ...This is why rhetorical discourse must simultaneously pursue and bring together three different goals: *docere*, teaching on an intellectual level; *movere*, touching the feelings, the emotional 'experience' of the audience; finally, *delectare*, keeping their interest alive, soliciting their attention so that they will follow the threads of one's thoughts, without becoming bored, indifferent, distracted. (Barilli, 1980, p. ix)

In fact, Aristotle's emphasis on the assembling of arguments was not meant to suggest that rhetoric is not an art of persuasion, rather it was a protest at Sophists who had suggested—or been interpreted as implying—that persuasion is a function of *pathe* only, that rhetoric is mere verbal trickery and manipulation of the audience's emotions through the rhetorician's mastery of discourse and its devices. He was, as it were, restoring the balance between the rhetoric of *elocutio* and the rhetoric of *inventio*. But, as we have noted: this was a commonplace accusation against rhetoric. According to this view of rhetoric, the *telos* of speech is victory or getting the result you want—no matter what means are deployed. In this way the techniques of rhetoric are reduced to tactics or skills to be ruthlessly deployed in order to achieve an outcome. This view that rhetoric is persuasion through simulation and semblance rather than through reason is the view argued by Socrates in Plato's *Gorgias*. Quintilian notes that:

> Cornelius Celsus seems to have agreed with these early rhetoricians, for he writes 'The orator only aims at the semblance of truth,' and again a little later 'The reward of the party to a suit is not a good conscience, but victory'. (*Inst,* 3.60)

However Quintilian himself refuses to sever the connection between rhetoric and the claims of truth, justice and goodness. Rhetoric is not only a *techne* in the sense of a skill, it is a *techne* in the sense of attunement to the intimations of values that can be formulated as arguments that ring true to an audience. Even with Aristotle, if we return to his claim that the function of rhetoric 'is not so much to persuade, as to find out in each case the existing means of persuasion' (*Rhet,* 1.1.14), we need to interpret this claim not as a rejection of persuasion but as an insistence on the integrity of 'the means of persuasion' in their own right. The orator should not be judged simply in terms of success or failure to persuade. The way that success or failure to persuade is achieved is vital. Success is not everything:

> The same holds good in respect of all the other arts. For instance it is not the function of medicine to restore a patient to health, but only to promote this end as far as possible; for even those whose recovery is impossible may be properly treated. (*Rhet,* 1.1.14)

What Aristotle is insisting on here is that Rhetoric is not simply a matter of achieving a successful outcome for a client. Rhetoric should not be defined in a purely outcomes-based or instrumental manner. Rhetoric possesses an internal integrity and its own 'internal goods', its own standards. This distinction between an internal integrity and outcomes is, according to Aristotle, basic to any art. Nowadays we would say: to any profession. All professions live in the tension between the service or 'outcome' it sells—a certificate, health, victory in court—and the professional standards it answers to. This is an important issue for those of us who live within governmental regimes intent on defining education as a service or commodity entered into contractually between teacher and student.

CALLS FOR THE RECOVERY OF RHETORIC

Yet, despite the historic suspicion of rhetoric, in many quarters, both academic and educational, we hear repeated calls for its revival. The entire spectrum of human and social sciences is now subject to this revival of rhetoric. In English Studies or Literary Studies—leaving aside the continuing influence of Kenneth Burke (1969) or the Chicago school of neo-Aristotelians such as Richard McKeon (1998) and Wayne Booth (1983)—the most prominent cases have been Paul de Man, a key 'relay' in the transposition of Derrida's deconstruction into the field of American literary criticism, Terry Eagleton (1981), a prominent Anglo-Irish Marxist literary theorist and Stanley Fish (1990) who formulated the concept of interpretive community.

In the social sciences generally, there has been an upsurge of interest in rhetoric (Nelson, 1987) especially in the sense of the constructedness of the text as the human sciences retreat from the realist assumption of a transparent representational text. For example, anthropologists (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) are now more self-conscious about the way their writings address one audience—their colleagues—and occludes another—the people they are studying. The rubric of 'social constructivism' generally is intended to insist that actions, selves, institutions, activities and so on are socially situated and enacted in relation to other participants and audiences. As a turn away from the cognitivist notions of self, mind, discourse and action, the so-called 'social constructionist turn' often amounts (unwittingly) to a 'turn to rhetoric'. Even psychologists are reconstructing their discipline in light of rhetoric (see Cheyne, 1998). In the social study of science, there is now a strong tradition of studying the rhetoric of science in which the texts of scientists formerly interpreted as disinterested representations of an objective reality, are (re)interpreted as worldly works of persuasion (Bazerman, 1988).

Similarly, the recent history of linguistics is witness to a shift towards rhetoric. The standard account of modern linguistics has it that Saussure instituted an epistemological rupture separating the unscientific pre-history of philology from modern scientific linguistics by formulating *langue,* not *parole,* as the object of linguistic study. However, post-Saussurian linguistics has consisted of a struggle between the purity of linguistics as a structuralist science formulating and testing hypotheses concerning the underlying grammars of human speech, and a more worldly conception of linguistics that takes account of the social and interpersonal dimensions of language. The gradual emergence of pragmatics, discourse studies, sociolinguistics, and social linguistics as fields of inquiry complement the long-standing resistance of the functionalist paradigm of Firth, Halliday and his colleagues to the hegemony of the Chomskyian paradigm, as well as the recent emergence of the integrationalist paradigm of Roy Harris and his colleagues in Oxford. Clearly, these more worldly versions of linguistics are situated in the neighborhood of rhetoric as a tradition. In fact, Halliday explicitly situates himself as inheriting the insights and orientations of the ancient Sophists over against the semantic approach to language and discourse of philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle.

As a general commentary on this recent revival of rhetoric I would make two points: Insofar as this revival is an insistence on viewing discourses as worldly, as speech-acts with consequences (whether designedly or unwitting) on audiences and communities, I welcome it. However, insofar as this revival often takes the form of a reading of the unconscious of a text as speech act, that is, as a hermeneutic of suspicion, in my view it presses against its limits. Invariably these latter styles of rhetoric turn into protocols and methodologies for reading that are riven by the very subject-object dichotomy that Heidegger and Gadamer, together with other ontologically-oriented theorists, were bent on overcoming. Insofar as these new rhetorics position themselves as 'critical', they will reproduce the very theoreticist schemata that the revival of rhetoric as a practical form of life should redress.

By not articulating rhetoric in the context of a turn to practical philosophy, these rhetorics tend to echo the founding figures of Platonism and Kantianism with their dualism of pure and impure, disinterested and interested, and so on—Foucault's 'transcendental-empirical couple'. The revival of rhetoric, in my view, should be framed within a revival of practical philosophy even though both must be inflected by hermeneutics. My suggestion is that Gadamer is the figure who best manages to balance these different traditions and tasks.

LESSONS LEARNT

Recalling rhetoric helps us 'remember' that even written discourse is essentially communicative and shaped by the task of addressing and persuading its imagined community or reader. The monologism of logical or scientific prose which presents itself as tracing the logic of the object-domain it represents, is a rhetorical strategy that effaces the context of production and the context of appropriation. That is, representational prose is a prose that denies its own rhetoricity. It is a discourse that denies that the selection of its 'moves' (*inventio*) and their order (*dispositio*) is fundamentally shaped by its imagined interlocutor and the imagined audience. Yet even a text enamoured of representationalism cannot unfold itself by simply mirroring an objective reality without any concessions to audience or readership.

Every text by definition projects an audience or readership as its ground, as its object of persuasion. Without postulating such an interlocutor, we would never know when we have said enough nor when to move on to the next point. Only by positing an audience/readership and their assumptions, can we locate the limits that allow us to create a finite text, a text that is not compulsively driven to say everything—like the computer that when it is asked for information, indiscriminately disgorges all the data it possesses. Perhaps this is what a search on an Internet search engine is—a text with no

determinant audience. (In passing, Derrida's project is easily stateable in these terms: to show that the limit or determination you settle on to frame your audience, text or meaning is in fact not a limit, that it is indeterminate, that it is *aperion*.)

The other lesson we can learn from rhetoric is that 'the matter' of discourse, Gadamer's *Sache,* is essentially contested. That is, framing the ground of consensus or persuasion in a concept of 'discourse community' which is defined by a notion of constitutive rules or conventions, simply evades the dispersed reality of being, and substitutes a 'social' ground for the earlier 'metaphysical' ground of agreement. The *sensus communis* of rhetoric, by contrast, does not posit an underlying deep grammar binding us. *Sensus communis* is a sense of community, a sense of needing to be, or rather of being unable to escape being answerable to and needing to address others in an effort to forge community. Community is a regulative ideal, not a determinate reality. Community is an utopian horizon, an imaginary place posited for purposes of criticism, inscribed at the heart of our discourse.

The lesson in this for ABE is that we are not simply inducting or converting students into our discourse community as a finalized or closed syntax of conventions and rules, rather we have to formulate the substance of ABE anew in each specific situation in such a way that 'it speaks to' its students, in such a way that it 'persuades' them. This can only be if the discourse of ABE teachers can 'find the *topoi*', formulate the motives and motifs within their students as grounds of persuasion. But this presupposes an effort to re-formulate (reinvent) ABE so that it is answerable to these motives and motifs. That is, ABE exists to the extent (and only to the extent) that teachers and students can find/forge a common ground on which to understand (and misunderstand) each other. Nor should we think of this conversation as progressive—as if eventually teachers and students would come to 'true' understanding with each other. Similarly, learning to write is learning to imagine an audience or community which is defined by a constellation of views that can be taken as assumptions by a student for building their argument.

Thus, the rhetoric that I wish to cultivate is the tradition of ancient rhetoric as a substantive practice in social life with an *ethos*, *habitus*, practices, values and 'internal goods' (MacIntyre, 1981), and as an educational apparatus for cultivating the *ethos*, skills, knowledge and attunements needed to participate in the game of persuasive speech (*eloquentia*). Rhetoric as a bottomless Nietzschean will to power or as a deconstructive reading of the rhetorical (ideological) unconscious of text tends to be too 'textualist' for my interest in ABE as practical philosophy. My hope is that this sketch of Aristotelian and Ciceronian rhetoric as a substantive social practice or form of life in which language and discourse are embedded in the social interchanges and public life of the community, will contribute to a 'thicker' and more substantive sense of the meaning of language and discourse by contrast with 'thin' cognitivist or 'textualist' notions of language and discourse.

SECTION 3: HERMENEUTICS AS PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

In this section I sketch a history of hermeneutic as a narrative leading to Gadamer's 'philosophical hermeneutic', or rather a narrative of the formation of the practical substance, the *habitus*, in which Gadamer was formed and which he, in turn, re-formulates.

For the purposes of this thesis, I wish to highlight only two 'moments' of a much more complex history. The first moment is the emergence of hermeneutics as a basis for argument within ancient rhetoric (*interpretatio scripti),* thereby instituting a relationship between hermeneutics with equity. The second moment is the Romantic (and radical Protestant) notion of text as an encounter with 'the radically other'. Both moments constitute essential features of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic which is both a renewal of the equity of practical philosophy and an acknowledgement of the radical otherness of cultures and situations.

HERMENEUTICS IN THE KEY OF RHETORIC

In describing this first moment, I rely on the scholarship of Kathy Eden (1997) who has carefully documented the development of hermeneutics and its inextricable symbiotic dependence on both rhetoric as an educational regime cultivating the art of persuasion (*artes bene dicendi*) and in its intimate relationship to the principles of practical philosophy such as *phronesis*, equity, accommodation, and *decorum*. In this way we can understand more deeply Gadamer's self-understanding of his work as an interpretation, appropriation and renewal of this ancient *habitus*, practice, *ethos* and pedagogy that is practical philosophy.

From ancient Greece right up till the Protestant Reformation, hermeneutics was an art of interpretation which was called in when reliance on the face value of wording failed. Hermeneutics was the reading of the elusive, the resistant, the obscure, the ambiguous. The practices and methods of this traditional hermeneutics were codified, taught and learnt in rhetoric. Interpretation was a resource that could step in and supplement the resources of grammar. There is thus an analogy between the relationship between the art of grammar and art of hermeneutics on the one hand, and the relationship between the universal text of a norm or law and the uniqueness of the situation and its justice on the other. Interpretation supplements and 'rectifies' an understanding based on grammar in the same way that the equity of *phronesis* supplements and 'rectifies' a judgment based on a literal reading of the law. And in fact a primary site for the exercise of interpretation was precisely in disputes regarding interpretations of written laws (and other legal texts such as contracts and wills) and their application to the particular case.

As a consequence, hermeneutics as the formulation of the art of interpretation was first articulated by rhetoricians as a codification of the tactics and arguments available to the orator in the construal of written texts so as to favor one party to a dispute. Because laws are written for the general case and cannot foresee every possible situation and because they are usually written in a different time and place, legal documents are chronically infected by both an abstract generality and a disabling anachronism. Determining what a legal text means in the matter at issue is thus critically dependent on interpretation. White captures this indeterminacy of legal text and its need for interpretation nicely:

> One way to identify what is misleading about the form of a legal rule might be to say that it appears to be a language of description, which works by a simple process of comparison, but in cases of any difficulty it is actually a language of judgment, which works in ways that find no expression in the rule itself. In such cases the meaning of its terms is not obvious, as the rule seems to assume, but must be determined by a process of interpretation and judgment to which the rule gives no guidance whatever. The discourse by which it works is in this sense invisible. (White, cited in Garver, 1995, pp. 211-238)

Thus, hermeneutic as *interpretatio scripti*, as the interpretation of written legal texts that are too general or too indeterminate to speak to the specific situation, addresses the very same gap between text and application, norm and situation, that is the concern of practical philosophy and *phronesis*. Interpretation and *phronesis* both address the same weakness in written language, its inability to update, adapt and accommodate itself to the variety and variability of new and different situations. Traditional hermeneutics was deeply engaged in rhetorical contexts, imperatives and strategies.

> As practiced by the ancients and their humanist admirers, interpretation is by and large adversarial, an antagonistic affair. Because one of its most pressing arenas was the law courts, moreover, many of its most compelling strategies belong to forensic debate. (Eden, 1997, p. 2)

In fact it was in the context of interpreting and debating the meaning and import of legal texts that hermeneutics most fully articulated its strategies, so that:

> the most comprehensive and detailed treatments of interpretation in so-called classical antiquity come from the rhetorical manuals of Cicero and Quintilian, among others, and more particularly from their treatments of *interpretatio scripti*, the interpretation of written material pertinent to legal cases, such as laws, wills, and contracts. (Eden, 1997, p. 2)

However, the law was not the only arena in which texts are used to determine 'what is to be done'; 'religions of the book' also deploy texts as rules of life and action. For Christians, the task was to hear the 'word of God', the gospel, in the Bible, not simply to hear the commandments—to hear the Spirit of the Word of God, not just the Letter or Law. The first Fathers of the Church thus extrapolated:

> the relation between strict law and equity from classical legal theory into one between the Old Dispensation under Jewish law and a New Dispensation of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Rejecting the 'literalizing' practices of their so-called Judaizing forebears, these early Christians advocate a spiritual reading of Scripture. (Eden, 1997, p. 2)

In fact the entire *ethos* of Christianity and its distinction from Judaism rests on this distinction between letter and spirit, law and charity, in which the letter of the law is considered to be pharisaical and hypocritical.

SCRIPTUM/VOLUNTAS

To return to the relationship of rhetoric and hermeneutics, the strategies of textual interpretation in rhetoric are codified under three headings or *topoi*: *scriptum/voluntas*, ambiguity and context. These are the three *bases* from which one can argue the meaning of a text: first, by distinguishing between what the wording says (*scriptum*) and what the author meant (*voluntas*); secondly, by arguing that a word, phrase or passage is ambiguous and can be interpreted to mean something different; and thirdly, by arguing that a passage's meaning needs to be interpreted in light of some context of: other passages, other texts, the author's context of utterance, the author's habitual disposition and beliefs, and so on.

Although these different strategies of interpretation can seem to collapse into one another, Cicero and Quintilian both insist on keeping the status *(basis)* of '*scriptum/voluntas'* separate from the *basis* of 'ambiguity'. This meant that the former is dealt with as a matter of proof (*probatio*) while the latter is a matter of style (*elocutio*). Eden notes that this difference in approach to text resonates with two approaches to meaning:

> In keeping with this split, each of the separate divisions of the art enforces its own theory of meaning, which by turn complements and confounds the other. The arts of rhetoric, in other words, characterize meaning differently in their different sections: under invention as intentionality—what moral and legal agents mean to do or say—and under elocution as signification—what words mean. In those parts of the manuals covering *interpretatio scripti*, these two concepts of meaning collide, engendering not only the overlap between the first and second grounds of controversy but also the competing claims of *voluntas* and *scriptum*. The history of this collision, moreover, coincides with the history of rhetorical theory. (Eden, 1997, p. 10-11)

However, it is important to note that whereas modern theorists (e.g., Hirsch and Betti) might take the notion of *voluntas* or author's meaning literally by positing an actual inner mental intent on the author's part, in ancient rhetoric *voluntas* is a strategy of argument. Invoking *voluntas* is a way of evading a literal reading of the text; it is not claiming empathic insight into the legislator's inner mind. Sometimes, the invocation of *voluntas* in ancient rhetoric even takes the form of imagining how the author (legislator) would re-word their law if they were present in the current situation and therefore cognizant of the potential import or interpretations of their wordings. But again, there is no suggestion of a psychological investment in this traditional distinction. In fact, it is more appropriate to locate *voluntas/scriptum* in relation to equity which addresses the gap between a law and its application than to the more psychologistic metaphors of inner/outer or intention/expression. The *voluntas/scriptum basis* is best understood in relation to the *topos* of equity which is the insight that no text can apply transparently to every single case. Thus the text of the law in its generality needs rectification by equity in order to take account of the infinite variety and variability of human circumstances and cases.

The intimacy between *voluntas/scriptum* and the issue of equity is demonstrated by the fact that Cicero argues that the advocate of *voluntas contra scriptum* must support his case with a claim for equity:

> For it would be the height of impudence for one who wishes to gain the approval of some act *contra scriptum* not to gain his point with the help of equity (*aequitas*). (Cicero, *De inventione* 2.46.136)

Bringing the law and the circumstances of the case into alignment is a matter of equity. These are situations demanding a *phronesis* of equity, a judgment that does justice to the peculiarities of the situation and its circumstances in face of the deficiencies of 'the letter of the law' (*scriptum*) by invoking 'the intent of the legislator' (*voluntas*).

Eden comments thus:

> The interpretive tradition that Cicero inherits as part of the rhetorical tradition … follows Aristotle not only in aligning equity with intentionality but also in recognizing the limitations of any written statement, whether in the form of a law or a will, to take account of each and every eventuality or set of circumstances that may come under its sway. (Eden, 1997, p. 15)

The notion of interpreting a text, like an action or a speech, in terms of its congruence and accommodation to the circumstances is second nature to those trained in rhetoric. It is the particularities of context and circumstance (persons, times, places, causes, means, incidents, acts, instruments, and so on) that provide many of the bases of the arguments marshaled by orators in mounting their cases in order to form convictions in their audience. Similarly, the *decorum* of a speech is chiefly a matter of

determining its *aptum*, its *kairos*, which are all matters concerning the relationship between the speech and its attunement to the situation, its audience and the unfolding moods and *ethos* of the occasion. Thus both in terms of *inventio* and in terms of *decorum*, rhetoricians are attuned to interpreting human matters by their circumstances and contexts. It is little wonder that these became hermeneutic resources in the interpretation of texts.

This sketch of the way that the practice of interpretation developed within the womb of rhetoric is, I hope, sufficient to reveal the origins of hermeneutics in intimate proximity and dependence on both rhetoric and especially the motifs of practical philosophy.

THE REFORMATION

I now move on to a sketch of the later emergence of hermeneutics in its own right. I will focus on the emergence of Romantic hermeneutics, after a quick side-glance at the Reformers' insistence on *sola scriptura*, before finally moving on to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic.

Gadamer, in tracing the gradual shift from rhetoric to hermeneutics in the history of the West, points out that the revival of rhetoric by the Renaissance was in one sense fundamentally different in its mode of operation and functioning, in its region of operation and effects, from ancient rhetoric:

> Yet there was something strange about the rebirth of declamation. How could there be a renaissance of classical oratory without its classical space—the *polis* or *res publica?* After the end of the Roman republic, rhetoric lost its political centrality, and during the Middle Ages it formed part of the academic culture overseen by the church. It could not experience a renewal of the kind for which humanism strived without undergoing a more drastic alteration in function, for the rediscovery of classical antiquity was connected with two things, both pregnant with consequences: the invention of printing and, following the Reformation, the explosion of reading and writing connected with the doctrine of universal priesthood. (Gadamer, 1997, p. 48)

These shifts in technology and domain shaped shifts in practice leading to a 'culture of silent reading that demoted spoken word and even words read aloud to the second rank' (Gadamer, 1997, p. 41). There was a gradual shift from reading as a means of shaping one's *habitus* and resources for speaking (*imitatio*) to reading as textual interpretation, as a hermeneutics of the text as such. There is thus a subtle shift from agency and text-production to reception and text-response. The silent reader and critical commentator become key 'images' of discourse, displacing the orator and even the writer of speeches. Similarly, there is a corresponding shift in the framing of ancient rhetoric so that the rhetorical situation shaping the socially and institutionally situated speech of the ancient orator is reconstrued as the conventions of written genres adopted by writers of speech.

However, the shift from rhetoric to hermeneutic is even more emphatic in Flacius, a philologist and humanist who had been won over to Luther and the Reformation:

> [F]or Flacius the most important difficulty in Scripture, underlying the whole principle of *sola scriptura*, does not lie in the general difficulties posed by any text written in a foreign language. This side of the matter Flacius explicates fully, since he was a leading Hebrew and Greek scholar who therefore felt he had special competence in the area; fundamentally more important is a religious reason for difficulty. 'According to holy doctrine, all men are naturally not only slow and dull; they are, in addition, strongly inclined to the opposite of what it says; we are not only incapable of loving, honoring and understanding it; we consider it silly and impious, and shrink away from it.'
>
> Here is a central motif of all hermeneutics, namely, the task of overcoming and assimilating the strange, receives a special, indeed unique formulation, one to which all other kinds of textual strangeness—whether of language, historical outlook, or form of expression—are subordinate. For here what is at issue is the ur-motif of Protestantism: the opposition of law to the promise of grace. (Gadamer, 1997, pp. 52-3)

Thus the task of correctly interpreting the Bible for Flacius is not simply a matter of the foreignness of the language, of the world-picture of the Hebrews or of the discourse genres employed by them, it is also a matter of the disposition of the reader. Without grace, readers naturally resist the text.

Perhaps we could interpret Flacius as a forerunner of Freud's concept of the unconscious and of Habermas' notion of ideology critique. For both Flacius and these later theorists, there is a natural estrangement from the text such that the naïve reader systematically misinterprets the text and resists responding to its projected 'uptake'. Here, reading is no longer simply a matter of decoding signs, nor a matter of a straightforward textual *interpretatio* in the key of rhetoric. Reading (the Bible) is

now a matter of overcoming a fundamental estrangement between reader and text grounded in the human condition itself. 'Hearing the text' is not simply a matter of mobilizing philological techniques or strategies, it is a matter of composing one's soul to let the Word of God incarnated in the literal wording 'speak the gospel' so that one can 'hear the glad tidings'.

ROMANTIC HERMENEUTICS

Having glanced at the Protestant hermeneutics of reading the Bible, I now proceed to sketch some motifs of what Gadamer calls Romantic Hermeneutics. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is the key figure in this movement. After, and in reaction to, the Enlightenment aspirations for language and text as transparent conduits of objective meanings, Romantic hermeneutics emerged during the nineteenth century as a sensitivity to the otherness of the object of interpretation. Instead of positing a common ground of 'human nature' or 'objective reality' as a bridge between reader and author, Romanticism posited an original historical, cultural and linguistic 'context' which determined intention, meaning and import.

In this way, Romantic hermeneutics insisted on a formative holism of text and context that instituted a radical discontinuity between the context of utterance and later contexts of reception and interpretation. This sense that texts are uniquely specific events in history and that their meaning is defined by their context, not by the signs out of which they are made, is the key insight of historicism. Basically, the distance between reader and text has tipped over into an abyss. No longer is it only 'the exception' or 'special case' that requires interpretation: the divide between author and reader is now so radical that misunderstanding is natural. It is as if Flacius' account of the resistance between 'fallen' reader and the Bible has now been extrapolated to all reading and understanding. The natural default condition of the reader is misunderstanding, not understanding.

Romanticism is thus marked by the development of a sense of history, that is a sense of estrangement from the cultural past together with a wish to understand it. This contrasts with the Enlightenment desire to consign the past to the past, to forget the past, except as a record of superstition and ignorance. However, the Romantic desire to understand or commune with the past, the alien, the primitive, the uncanny was self-consciously staged by imaginatively projecting oneself into the original context of utterance. Because a text is an utterance whose meanings are determined by the context of utterance itself, the meaning of the text must be instantial of and unique to that situation.

However, this sense of the specificity of the text as situated utterance created profound methodological and epistemological conundrums that defined the problematic of Romantic hermeneutics. How is it possible to read a text correctly or to know what a text means, if the context of utterance (production) and the context of reception (consumption) are both subject to their own contextual constraints? If a text is a whole and the parts take their sense from their contribution to the whole defined by the rhetorical situation of utterance, then it is not at all clear how one can retrieve the meaning of the text without reassembling or gaining insight into the original context of utterance. If a text is in fact fundamentally a 'text in context' and its meaning made by its relationship to its context, then somehow its later interpretation must entail retrieving the context in order to understand the intended rhetorical action of the text as speech-act. This means that by definition all historical interpretation, all interpretation of texts from the past, is beset by the methodological conundrum that its objects of interpretation, texts, are as it were derived of their other half, their context of utterance, which is not 'in' the text.

A range of strategies were designed to cope with the implacability of this insight into the situatedness and historicity of texts. For example, Schleiermacher, the central figure of romantic hermeneutics, envisioned two complementary strategies that the reader could deploy in order to reach back into the original context of production and thereby understand the meaning of a text that resisted natural understanding. Both were methods for projecting the reader beyond the confines of the context of reception and back into the original context of utterance:

> The first was variously called grammatical, historical, or comparative reconstruction. For Schleiermacher, the paradigmatic object of interpretation is a text. And just as a word in the text can be understood only in relation to its context in the sentence, so also the part-whole version of the hermeneutic circle applies to wider contexts: the relation of the text to the author's canon, of the canon to the language, and of the language to other languages and to previous and subsequent history generally. (Weinsheimer, 1991, p. 3)

However, clearly this strategy for coming to 'know' the meaning of a text by means of the nested contexts in which it is situated is an infinite task and can never reach the sort of certainty that

Schleiermacher (and later Dilthey) hoped for in their search to specify a ground and rationality for *Geisteswissenshaften* (Humanities and Human Sciences) alternative to the methodology of the natural sciences and their knowledge of objects. Schleiermacher thus simultaneously posited a more direct route to the author's meaning—the divinatory method:

> However, the interpreter of a given text cannot be content with understanding what contemporaneous authors typically thought, or even with what this author characteristically wrote; rather, the objective of interpretation is to determine what this author means in this specific text. The understanding of an original and creative author cannot be mediated solely by the typical and characteristic; it also necessitates immediate understanding of the particular as particular, and this intuitive or empathic understanding Schleiermacher calls divination. (Weinsheimer, 1991, p. 4)

Whereas the approach to the text via its contexts can only construe it in terms of the typical and characteristic, the divinatory strategy, which is 'not merely supplemental to but inseparable from contextual reconstruction' (Weinsheimer, 1991, p. 3) approaches the text in the uniqueness of its utterance. 'Using the divinatory [method], one seeks to understand the writer immediately to the point that one transforms oneself into the other' (Schleiermacher, cited in Weinsheimer, 1991, p. 3):

> To understand the other as such, interpreters take their inspiration from the universal traits of human nature that they too possess, but further they must take a sympathetic leap beyond themselves and even beyond the common and shared. In this way individual interpreters become the individual creators whom they interpret. (Weinsheimer, 1991, p. 4)

Clearly, this positing of an empathic intuitive identity between creator and interpreter is a desperate measure on Schleiermacher's part.

Gadamer's genius, in my view, was to respond to this historicist impasse by 'changing the game'. Instead of continuing in this effort to justify the knowledge of hermeneutic interpretation, Gadamer locates hermeneutics within a wider phenomenon of cultural loss, revival and renewal:

> Historically it is worthy of note that while rhetoric belongs to the earliest Greek philosophy, hermeneutics came to flower in the Romantic era as a consequence of the modern dissolution of firm bonds with tradition. Of course, hermeneutics occurs in earlier times and forms, but even in these it represents an effort to grasp something vanishing and hold it up to the light of consciousness. Therefore, it occurs only in later stages of cultural evolution, like later Jewish religion, Alexandrian philology, Christianity as inheriting the Jewish gospel, or Lutheran theology as refuting an old tradition of Christian dogmatics. (*PH*, p. 21)

What Gadamer is pointing to here is a moment of alienation as the propelling moment in hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics, according to Gadamer, is the work of overcoming this alienation, overcoming the fact that an utterance or text does not make sense and so 'has nothing to say to us' through a work of interpretation. Hermes himself, of course, was the messenger of the gods interpreting the signs of their pleasure, displeasure, desires, intentions. Hermeneutics is thus essentially concerned with the other, the alien, with that which resists understanding. In Gadamer's words:

> the hermeneutical problem only emerges clearly when there is no powerful tradition present to absorb one's own attitude into itself and when one is aware of confronting an alien tradition to which he has never belonged or one he no longer unquestioningly accepts. (*PH*, p. 46)

Hermeneutics is a matter of 'overcoming foreignness by gaining understanding'. In contemporary parlance, hermeneutics is cross-cultural understanding.

However, in terms of tracing the genealogy of Gadamer from the point of view of philosophical hermeneutics as an interpretation and resumption of practical philosophy, the critical motif in Romantic hermeneutic is the radicalization of understanding by its postulation of misunderstanding as the typical and initial experience of 'the given'. Thus 'true' understanding now becomes the outcome of interpretative work on this initial misunderstanding. Without the work of interpretation, vernacular readers necessarily misunderstand text because they do not grasp its relationship to its context and also because they themselves are situated inside a perspective and context as well. Both the reader and the text are inextricably situated in the particularity of their own context. This inevitable mismatch between contexts with its concomitant misunderstanding can only be 'corrected' by the work of interpretation. In this way, not only does Romantic hermeneutics resume the concern of practical philosophy with the temporal gap between legislation and its application, but also with the variability and particularity of cases demanding the insight of *phronesis* and equity.

GADAMER'S ONTOLOGICAL HERMENEUTIC

I now expound Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic. Because I want to emphasize the ontological dimension of Gadamer's work, I will begin with a brief account of Heidegger's ontological turn. Admittedly, to pretend that one could interpret Heidegger, the texts of Heidegger, Heidegger as text, in a few paragraphs is laughable yet structurally required in providing a narrative account of Gadamer's concept and practice of philosophical hermeneutics.

As already noted, historicism assembled itself around an epistemological problematic centred on how to reconcile belief in the validity of the knowledge produced in the *Geisteswissenshaften* with the contextuality of both the subjects and object of interpretation. It was precisely this aporia that Heidegger radically transformed by repositioning interpretation as an essential feature of *Dasein*. Instead of being positioned as a method, as a set of protocols that are consciously followed in order to ward off misunderstanding or render the opaque transparent, interpretation is re-positioned as a universal dimension of the way humans find themselves in the world.

Thus, Heidegger imparted an 'ontological turn' to hermeneutics, reworking it from a method, a learnt technique to an apriori, a ground or background that always already precedes anything we do, which he called: *Dasein*, 'being there'. *Dasein* is the world we are born into. It is something we have no control over and are un-conscious of; it precedes consciousness. It is before consciousness. It is the way of life, the public forms of life we are born into. Any 'ontic' cognitive activity, such as deliberate or learnt forms of textual interpretation already rests on this prior 'naive' understanding, an understanding that is not the outcome of conscious actions or activities. For Heidegger and Gadamer, 'understanding' and the interpretation always already embodied in it, is not a mental *operation*, but a primordial mode of being of human life itself.

So, the final stage in the emergence of philosophical hermeneutics is Gadamer's own articulation of hermeneutics as an ontological process underpinning all human life (Heidegger's 'hermeneutic of facticity'), not simply the interpretation of written texts or their difficult passages or the interpretation of the authorial intention behind alien texts. All human understanding implicates interpretation, but interpretation as an operation that is 'always already' prior to any systematic deployment of methodic reading strategies or techniques. Thus, no matter what particular style of reading is deployed—cognitive, critical, deconstructive, psychoanalytic, feminist, post-colonial—there is always another process of reading, of making sense, that has already taken place. In a sense Gadamer is returning to the original view of a natural reading as preceding the deployment of artful self-conscious modes of reading. However, instead of construing this initial reading as a simple reliance on a decoding of the textual wording, he projects the hermeneutic circle right into the heart of reading itself. This initial reading is not a matter of decoding the stable symbols of the text. Each symbolic relationship has to be interpreted in the light of its place in the whole and its relationship to all the other meanings. Reading is a matter of projecting a whole on the basis of an interpretation, which is then tested and revised in light of later interpretations. This hermeneutic circle also applies to all non-reading situations. All activity is now a matter of 'reading the situation'. Human being insofar as it is a matter of understanding is also always already a matter of interpretation.

Gadamer appropriates Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* in his concept of 'prejudice' which captures the way that we are always already situated in history and language. We exist in an already interpreted life-world. Anything we encounter has already been subjected to the 'as' of interpretation embodied in our form of life and its language games. Thus interpretation is no longer a matter of method or consciousness. It has always already taken place as it were 'before' we begin our deliberative processes of reasoning.

It is important to remember that the German *Vorurteil* lacks the pejorative connotation implied in the English 'prejudice' so sometimes it is translated as 'pre-judgement' or 'pre-judice' to rid it of the connotation of irrationality or dogmatism. All reading is approached with a pre-judgement, which simply means that we are always already in a world and that this world already contains the matter we are setting out to read. And yet our ontology is not a prison-house. For Gadamer, reading is an experience and experience is defined as negation. Experience is what shows up the limits of how we currently think and are, by opening out new avenues of thinking and being:

> Instead of seeing interpretation as an objective or subjective act, Gadamer thinks of it as playing a game. In playing, we do not stand over against the game; we participate in it … (Weinsheimer, 1991, pp. 13-4)

Interpretation is fundamentally ontological: it precedes, shapes and surrounds our efforts at understanding and interpretation of situations and texts, and yet it is also our point of leverage, our surface of friction, for coming to understand differently.

But 'coming to understand differently' is not simply a matter of forming different representations of the object of interpretation that are objectively adequate to represent it truly. Rather, coming to understand is to participate in an ontological unfolding—a dance or game of meanings.

Thus, taking his lead from the hermeneutic practices of the law and of preaching, Gadamer insists that understanding does not consist in excavating the 'author's intention' nor even 'the author's unconscious', but in bringing the text into dialogic contact with the context of the reader's present situation. This interpretation of the text in terms of its application to the situation will in turn open up new facets of the original text. New dimensions of meaning will be added to the original text. Thus, in Gadamer's view 'a text' is not a finalized or closed structure that achieves its fullness of meaning at the moment of authorship, rather it is an unfinalized historical being that accumulates more meaning as a result of new interpretations and applications.

However, Gadamer rejects the notion that the discourse of the interpreter is a meta-language that masters the language of the text thereby construing it as a mere object. Interpretation does not mean mastery of a stabilized and reified object-language by a transparent subject-language. Gadamer's fundamental point is that the situation of interpretation can only yield understanding because the interpreter brings both languages into conjuncture so that they both enter into the life of one another. In this way, the text enters into the vital living present of the interpreter, his/her discourse and world, while the interpreter enters into the world of the text by construing its contemporary relevance. The 'dead' text of tradition is resurrected as a present effect and voice in the very application and acknowledgement of its power and relevance by the interpreter. Tradition brings itself to life in the living discourse of the interpreter. Tradition is as it were a virus that reproduces itself in the lives of those engaged in interpreting and understanding their culture.

However, we must not think of tradition as a unitary totality—as a single unified way of life or functional social system or as a language. Gadamer's tradition is not an 'expressive totality' as in Lukacs or in Raymond Williams' 'structure of feeling'. Rather it is always already a history of question and answer, of claim, response and counter-response, of commentary and counter-commentary, of interpretation and interpretation of the interpretation. That is, Gadamer's tradition is a history of *parole*, a history of dialogue. Tradition is always already exploding with plurality, with interpretations of interpretations of interpretations. For Gadamer, there is no original essence or text or system of meanings. All is interpretation. Tradition is a polyphonic assembling of discourse concerning 'who we are and how we should act'. Like Bakhtin's emphasis on heteroglossia—the plurality and contestation arising out of the competing plurality of social interests and cultures of the present and past—Gadamer emphasizes the plurality, fragmentation and contestation among the cultural resources we have come into, been thrown into, and find ourselves with.

According to Gadamer, these resources constituting our tradition and forming our being-in-the-world are a matter of language. But here we must be very clear about what 'a matter of language' means. Language does not mean the linguistic system as a system of lexico-grammatical differences. When Gadamer uses the term *Sprachelichkeit* this should be glossed as 'conversation' or 'dialogue'. It corresponds more to Saussure's *parolé* than to his *langue*. *Sprachelichkeit* means the play of language, the to and fro of discussion when interlocutors are caught up in and self-forgetfully engage in a conversation to come to agreement concerning some matter. *Sprachelichkeit* does not imply that speech is simply the instancing or realization of an underlying linguistic system of differences or that the logic of question and answer, of claim and response, is merely the expression of an underlying grammatical order.

This theme of 'application' is what distinguishes Gadamer from other hermeneutic approaches. This concern with the specificities of the context of reception is also a critical theme in rhetoric, jurisprudence and ethics. In the law it is framed as the rule of equity, in rhetoric it is a concern with *circumstancia*, and in ethics it is a matter of *phronesis*. Thus, historically, the motif of 'application' is a concern for the variability of circumstances and situations, rather than simply subjecting the particular to the rigid rule of a law or text. In this way a literate life, a life lived by reference to texts does not mean a rigid fundamentalist 'living by the book'. Instead it means a considered discernment of what the text has to say, what it means, what it could mean, in this situation here now.

Thus, in this context it would be possible to define a literate culture as a culture of the book, a culture which relates the horizon of life to a normative order articulated in a canon of texts. Governance is a matter of invoking a canonical textual order. Within this governance by reference to a textual canon there is a continuum ranging from fundamentalism at one end of the spectrum to relativism at the other end. A fundamentalist culture is one in which there is little leeway about how to relate the matters, issues and situations of life and the norms of the book: the book is always right and it is obvious. In Will's terms, this form of governance is deductivist and applicative.

A hermeneutic culture, by contrast, is one that places both the life and the book 'at risk'—neither is obvious nor can be taken at face value. Both need to be interpreted; and glossing one onto the other is a matter for debate and judgment, a matter of *phronesis*, not logical deduction. In Will's terms, this form of governance is ampliative. In this sense the Ciceronian tradition of civic humanism was strongly hermeneutic. Rhetoric was precisely this art and practice of reconciling canon and the matters at issue.

PART FOUR ABE AS *BILDUNG*

Can one learn this knowledge? Yes; some can. Not, however, by taking a course in it, but through 'experience.'—Can someone else be a man's teacher in this? Certainly. From time to time he gives him the right *tip*.—This is what 'learning' and 'teaching' are like here.—What one acquires here is not a technique; one learns correct judgments. There are also rules, but they do not form a system, and only experienced people can apply them right. Unlike calculation rules. (Wittgenstein, 1963, p. 227)

CHAPTER 7 ABE AS THE TACTFUL CULTIVATION OF EXPERIENCE

In the preceding chapters I have attempted to formulate and articulate the metaphor 'ABE is practical philosophy' as a contribution to the governance and 'pursuit of intimations' (Oakeshott) of the educative practices and comportments of ABE. I have relied on the Aristotelian formulation of the different forms of knowing comportment—*theoria*, *praxis*, and *poiesis*—and their respective *habitus*-grounded capacities—*episteme, phronesis* and *techne*—to argue that the region of *praxis* has been occluded in recent times (in fact even as far back as Plato) by a foregrounding of *theoria* and *poiesis*.

This conspiracy between *theoria* and *poiesis* was intensified when their relationship was reconstructed during the seventeenth century as two sides of the selfsame enterprise—scientific knowledge—so that *episteme* was reconstructed as the formulation of concepts to represent the causal relationships of objects and events in a domain or dimension of reality, and *poiesis* was re-construed as the technical application of these concepts. Paralleling this shift was a foregrounding of 'logic' at the expense of dialogue and persuasion as the motor of speech and text, a shift which in turn displaced the focus of rhetoric from the *inventio* and *dispositio* of speech and text (the formulation of the subject-matter and its unfolding) to a 'rhetoric of *elocutio'* which was confined to decorating the textual surface of an already finalized 'content' by 'colouring' or 'clothing' it in figures and tropes.

Vico (1993) protested this displacement and attempted to re-institute ancient *rhetorica* against the *critica* of Descartes as a form of knowing comportment concerned with speaking and acting as forms of governance. Gadamer, in turn, begins his magnum opus, *TM*, by re-calling Vico's recalling of rhetoric and practical philosophy as constituents of Renaissance humanism. In the spirit of Vico and Gadamer, this thesis has also re-called the Aristotelian tradition of practical philosophy to order to find ways of formulating the activity, the practice, of the ABE classroom and the role of teachers in governing that discourse.

ABE AS *BILDUNG*

In this chapter I want to explore the pedagogic discourse of the ABE classroom when construed, not as a 'proof' of theoretical knowledge (*episteme*) nor as a training in technical procedures (*techne*), but as primarily a cultivation and articulation of *habitus* underpinning *phronesis*. I undertake this inquiry not so much in the spirit of trying to outlaw *sophia* or *poiesis*, but in an effort to 'put them in their place', thereby revaluing the domain of *praxis*, of action guided by practical wisdom. In this way we can hopefully come to a deeper sense of what instruction and pedagogy means when we are engaged in ABE.

In this chapter I will draw out some lessons for ABE as a field of adult education from the traditions and practices adduced in this thesis—practical philosophy, rhetoric and philosophical hermeneutics—and I will use Gadamer's hermeneutic renewal of practical philosophy as a way of articulating the significance of what is happening in ABE classrooms as more than language learning or pre-vocational training.

The chapter is divided into five sections:

- The first section contrasts CBT as a formulation of education oriented to *poiesis* with a Gadamerian formulation of education oriented to *praxis*.
- The second section argues for an inherent 'will to community' in human being that infects all educational practice.
- The third section explores Gadamer's concept of the 'experienced person' as the telos of a general education oriented to *Bildung*.
- The fourth section argues that there must be a re-balancing of the competing formulations of the classroom as a scene of knowing comportments by articulating a concept of tact.
- The fifth section explores the 'genres of address' used by philosophical writers to form the comportment of their readers and extrapolates these genres of address to the ABE classroom as para-

digms in order to illuminate the forms of discourse appropriate to an ABE classroom dedicated to practical philosophy and the cultivation of practical wisdom.

SECTION 1: CBT: THE TURN TO PRACTICE AS A TURN TO *TECHNE*

During the 1980s, the Australian union movement, industrialists and the Labor government decided to reconstruct Australian secondary industry so that it could compete on the emerging global market. One of the 'tools' they appropriated for this effort was the notion of Competency-based Training (CBT), and so the National Training Reform Agenda mandated that all programs of vocational education and training be competency-based.

Perhaps the best way of interpreting CBT is not so much to focus on what it is, but on what it is trying not to be—on what it is opposing. By characterizing CBT as a rejection of other traditions of industrial relations, public policy and education, we can more easily account for the inner tensions and contradictions within the emergence and development of CBT itself. I leave aside issues of industrial relations except to note that 'competence' was originally intended to function as a yard-stick for measuring the value of labor for the emergent 'value-added' post-Fordist mode of production in which the competence of the work-force stood in a calculable relationship with the value added to the raw materials and resources supplied by the capitalist, thereby allowing wage rates to be negotiated in a mutually agreeable and 'objective' manner. However, this effort to position 'competence' as the post-Fordist theoretical equivalent of the Marxist concept of 'labour-power' for the Fordist mode of production, sank without trace beneath the onslaught of industrial relations deregulation.

Pedagogically, there were two training traditions that CBT was responding to. On the one hand, it was distancing itself from the thousand year-old tradition of craft guilds in which an apprentice is attached to a master in order to experientially absorb the *habitus* of the craft and its esoteric knowledge by 'being there'. This tradition, now re-theorized as 'peripheral participation' (Lave & Wenger, 1991), was castigated by CBT as 'time-serving' and 'sitting with Nellie' and rejected as an anachronism no longer relevant to the new technologically-based forms of work in which there was no place for the exercise of the experientially-based intuitions, judgments or untheoretically grounded talents and experience of the craft-worker.

On the other hand, the CBT movement was also distancing itself from the behaviourist tradition of training in which practical activity was analyzed as the enactment of detailed procedures. Within this behaviourist tradition, activities had been analyzed into atomistic procedures or 'tasks'. Technical training consisted of learning to proceed through these minutely detailed steps in order to perform an action issuing in the desired outcome.

However, besides these two traditions of training, there were two 'academic' traditions that CBT was also distancing itself from. One was the scientific bodies of knowledge associated with higher education academies. The other was the tradition of liberal arts and humanities associated with the Arts Faculty and Comprehensive Schooling.

And so, CBT defined itself in opposition to four traditions. It was opposed: to the 'time-serving' of traditional apprenticeships; to the detailed input specification of behaviourist pedagogy; to the abstract decontextualized content-learning of academic disciplines; and to the concern for meaning, ethics, ethos, the person and 'the soul' at issue in the humanities.

CBT AS A TURN TO *POIESIS*

This rationalization and codification of the teaching and learning of ABE—which was construed as part of the Vocational Education and Training system—in terms of 'competence' (know how) rather than 'propositional knowledge' (know that), might at first sight seem a salutary turn away from the dominance of *episteme* towards a strengthened focus on the practical and dispositional outcomes of education. Unfortunately, and this is the importance of retrieving a distinction between *praxis* and *poiesis*, the shift from 'theory' to 'practice' within the modern '*episteme*' (now using the term in Foucault's sense) in fact took the form of a shift from *episteme* (in Aristotle's sense) to *techne*, not a shift from *episteme* to *praxis*. So, even though the CBT movement may have set out with good instincts in wanting to undercut the taken-for-granted assumptions of a cognitively oriented academic curriculum and its slighting of an education for practice, in fact it too has relied on a deficient concept of practical activity and has, unfortunately, legislated this deficiency into its over-arching nor-

mative documents—its Competency Standards documents. It has thus underestimated the complexities of representing and cultivating the capacities for practical action.

The 'Achilles heel' of CBT has been its faith in the written word as a form of representation. CBT, especially in its early youthful utopian formulations, was predicated on the hope that a normative written procedure could codify and substitute for the situated comportmental experience and judgment of workers. In this sense, CBT, as an attempt to rationalize and codify the competencies of a field of practice, placed its faith in Will's 'deductivist' mode of governance to the exclusion of the more diffuse 'ampliative' modes of governance and cultivation of a field of practice.

Moreover, the CBT regime has turned this approach back on the very practice of education and training itself under the heading of 'train the trainer'. Thus even the practice of education and training itself is now construed as simply a matter of enacting a set of procedures. In short, education and training are the exercise of a *techne* that issues in a product. In fact CBT would seem to have instituted a training regime that is adapted to cultivating workers with a comportment more suited to a Fordist mode of production than to the more dispersed, more contextualized and more flexible post-Fordist mode of production.

ABE AS PRAXIS

By contrast, my wish is to construe the work of ABE teachers as a work of *praxis*, not *poiesis*, and as an exercise of *phronesis*, not *techne*. On this view, participation in purposeful practical activity does not consist of mere rule-following. It must also include the hermeneutic activity of critically reflexive application; it mobilize a *phronesis* grounded in a history of experience and *habitus*; and finally it must rely on a communal co-articulation of the meaning(s) of what is happening and its contexts of significance in a far richer assortment of genres than the abstractly textualized taxonomies, ranks and lists of competency statements.

Construing the work of ABE teachers as *praxis* means that they are expected to interpret, not just conform to, the curriculum frameworks constituting the normative texts of ABE as a field of educational practice. This interpretation mediates the generic statements of the frameworks and the specificities of particular students and their situations in such a way that the generic statements themselves are re-contextualized and given new and different meanings. This process of concretizing normative documents by applying them to a range of situations contributes to the articulation and reinvention of the meaning of those documents by constructing precedents and exemplars. Thus, the meaning of the normative texts is not somehow inscribed on the text itself as its 'literal meaning', nor is it something to be retrieved by reconstructing the intention of its writers. No text can interpret itself; no text can say what it means. Every text falls short of saying enough to be applied to a human situation in a transparently unambiguous way.

To be fair, I should acknowledge that the naivety or utopianism of the early formulations of CBT has been moderated in recent years, and the import of the charges I am making has been accommodated by shifting to a more localized sense of governance through the notions of 'benchmarking' and 'enterprize level customization'. However, normative texts need interpreters who can engage in critical mature dialogue with them, not abject, immature or grudging conformity. This dialogue is dependent on the existence of what is now called a 'culture of training'.

This means that it is imperative to cultivate the ethos of ABE educators by creating a *sensus communis* within which they can speak and cultivate both themselves and their colleagues as well as the normative texts themselves and the traditions of interpretation and practice assembled around them. Ensuring the conditions for this cultivation of dialogue, a dialogue that can form and reform the *ethos* and *habitus* of the field of ABE, its pedagogies and educational orientations, is the most important 'quality assurance mechanism' for ensuring the integrity of a field responsible for forms of knowledge not reducible to mere technique. It is not by accident that the notion of practical knowledge expounded by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* interlocks with his concept of the *polis* as an essential condition for the cultivation of the virtue of free men. For Aristotle, the ethics of individuals and their actions is inextricably intertwined with the larger *ethos* and customs of institutions and community.

CBT: A KANTIAN EXERCISE IN GOVERNANCE

Thus 'the turn to practice' in CBT has in fact been a turn to *techne* and *poiesis*. This entire culture of governmentality is predicated on Kant's notion of practical reason as obedience to a norm or rule. However, as I have been arguing, as a culture we are already in possession of a richer notion of gov-

ernance arising out of a notion of action (*praxis*) framed as practical wisdom (*phronesis*), that is, in terms of the discernment of the decisive features within an overdetermined, paradoxical and unique situation of action, a discernment that arises out of an attunement, *habitus* and experience of participation in *praxis* under the guidance of a *phronemos*—who, as Wittgenstein points out in the passage heading this chapter, can 'from time to time give the right *tip'*. These competing views of practice lead to quite different interpretations of the ABE classroom and what it is about.

The Kantian view leads to an obsessive concentration on the textual codification of the normative order. In education, this means an inordinate expenditure of time and resources on 'output statements' such as curriculum frameworks, reporting frameworks, and competency standards documents. The Practical Philosophy view, by contrast, concentrates on the reflective formulation and cultivation of *phronesis*, individually as *habitus* and communally as *sensus communis*, by engaging practitioners in conversations around how to interpret specific situations and texts and how to respond to past and potential interpretations. These situated conversations, focused on mutual persuasion, are 'always in process'.

The task of professional development is to 'keep the conversation going' and to keep everyone in touch with 'the state of the question'—'the state of play'. Although agreement is posited as an utopian horizon, it is not suggested that agreement is necessary to constitute an orderly or stable field. All that is needed is *topica* that are fruitful to rhetorically dispute, not absolute norms or agreement.

SECTION 2: EDUCATION AS HERMENEUTIC DIALOGUE

However, the contrast between reason as submission to norms and reason as articulation of ethos and ethnos does not only find expression in the ways a field of education governs itself and 'institutes reason'. This difference also shows up in the forms of discourse *within* ABE classrooms. There will be a contrast in the sorts of discourse (whether reading, writing or speaking) presented to or demanded of ABE students.

By drawing on Gadamer's concept of experience as negativity in which learning is fundamentally an unlearning and on his concept of hermeneutic experience as dialogue with eminent texts that by putting us into question, open up an otherness within, around and before us by inscribing a wider horizon for our world, I will now formulate the concept of ABE as practical philosophy with a more hermeneutic inflection. This coming together of negativity, otherness and dialogic plurality, which is at the same time an exercise in suspicion, remembrance, resoluteness and hope, is clearly an activity that cannot be planned, administered or staged in the purely instrumental mode of *techne*.

Education in the mode of *techne* is forced to abandon these comportments of hermeneutic *praxis*. From the point of view of *poiesis*, the comportment of *praxis* and hermeneutic experience seems anarchistic, unpredictable and uncertain in its outcomes and effects. By not conforming to a 'proper' rational normative order in which 'reason' flows from curriculum document to teacher plan to classroom implementation and finally back to the evaluation of the outcomes against the original performance specifications, a classroom organized in terms of the comportment of *praxis* can strike those committed to *poiesis* as one in which the teacher has abdicated responsibility and control. However, what is at issue is not order versus disorder, but two competing practices of order and governance.

TEACHING AS TACT

Van Manen (1991) is one educational theorist who has taken up Gadamer's recovery and exposition in *TM* of 'tact' as one of the key 'guiding concepts of humanism'. Unfortunately, he construes tact in an excessively phenomenological and subjectivist manner, more in the manner of Dilthey's *Erlebnis* than Gadamer's *Erfahrung*. As a consequence, this chapter will not adopt van Manen's foregrounding of personal experience, but instead explore teaching as a form of practical philosophy, as the tactful governance of the classroom as a scene of a disclosive and rhetorical dialogue of plurality, natality and remembrance oriented to the formation of a *sensus communis*. In this way it may be possible to bring to bear a different sense of normativity, order, authority, accountability and governance from that assumed in institutional structures organized within the comportment of *poiesis* in which governance is reduced to the procedures and practices of administration (within a chain of command), management (of the process of activities) and auditing (of compliance with standards).

Teaching, I argue, is the instituting and governance of the classroom as a scene of dialogue and hermeneutic experience, a site for the ontological play of a differential *sensus communis*, not the imposition of a regime of truth on students which stamps them with identical skills or knowledges. This notion of governance as an exercise of *phronesis*, rather than an enactment of theoretically grounded norms answers Will's (1988) call for a concept and practice of governance that includes the ampliative dimensions of norms and practices, not merely the replicative subsumption of instances under rules.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF NOT COMMUNICATING

A Gadamerian framing of the classroom would insist that no matter what methodology is deployed in that classroom, a classroom 'is' a site of communication, a place where human beings will find themselves communicating and trying to understand one another. This is true of even the most isolating modularized, teacher-proof, self-paced curriculum regimes. By using the phrase 'will find themselves' I have deliberately abstained from ascribing intentionality to this event of communication and understanding. Like Gadamer, by saying 'human beings will find themselves communicating and trying to understand one another' I am emphasizing *pathos*, the fact that communication is something that happens to us, irrespective of whether we intend, plan or wish it. Fundamentally, communication is not a function of intention or planning; it is a function of the fact that *Dasein* is 'being with' (*Mitsein*). So, at this ontological level, despite the expectations or intentions of teachers, students, or governing institutions, a class is a place in which conversation, communication, can take place, in which human beings can try to find topics around which they can come together and understand one another.

Gadamer's claim is that this coming together of people who use language as a way of instituting and bringing to expression a common reality or world between and around them, is a universal and fundamental, that is, *ontological* reality of human beings. This communication by formulating a common topic of discourse, a *Sache*, is a world-building and world-disclosing activity, that outflanks and as it were, metacomments on any other modes of communication or activity taking place. Thus the almost imperceptible raising of an eyebrow in a silent, speechless workplace can be an eloquent act of communication that both expresses a *Sache* common to the workers who witness it, and places that world in dialogue with the world of capitalist factory owners.[12]

SOLIDARITY

Notice that this emphasis on the classroom as a site of *Sprache*, of communication, is in opposition to the massified Fordist classroom in which each student is supposedly cocooned off from their fellow-learners creating an extreme subjectification and solipsism, in which the only legitimate communication is that between teacher and student and where the student is expected to internalize the teacher's form of life or the textbook's content. However, it is also opposed to the subjectivist classroom where each student is intent on their own subjective meaning-making. Gadamer's emphasis is on the actuality of that which, even if banned, still exists in the cracks and interstices of the official activities. As I have pointed out, at worst it will consist of the odd surreptitious non-verbal gesture—a wink, nod, smile, or grimace. These efforts to form(ulate) a community of understanding are enacted through relatively invisible actions or through almost imperceptible ways of inflecting public actions, even by deploying the, as it were, uncontrollable. Every class of boys in traditional education knew the solidarity-building power of a sneeze, a blowing of the nose, a scraping of the chair, a fart. Each of these acts, performed at the 'kairotic' moment, could galvanize a entire class of students into solidarist resistance.

I won't bother to explore this line of enquiry any further. I have only introduced it to emphasis that Gadamer's notion of the ontological reality of understanding does not mean that we should try to *make* our classes into places where students talk with one another. Or rather, it might mean this, but this is not the point I am making here. The point I want to establish here is that it is impossible to stop talk intent on establishing rapport and understanding. Communication (*Verständigung,* 'coming to an understanding with others'*)* will out; it is always potentially on the agenda of any and every occasion, whether there officially or not, intended or not, desired or not. Like a weed, it will find a

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[12] It would be interesting to trace and document the ways in which disciplinary subjectivist traditions have tried to forbid horizontal communication between novices or learners in order to obstruct the emergence of solidarity as a countervailing power. The forty-day silence of initiation into the Jesuits immediately springs to mind.

way to intrude itself into any gathering of human beings. Attempting to find topics of discourse around which we can agree is, as it were, built into human being. If we have to, we will plumb for the most banal and non-controversial topics simply to establish this rapport—this is the function of 'weather talk' between strangers.

In more philosophical terms, we could say that the tendency or need to institute a situation in which there is communication between an 'I' and 'Thou' regarding a 'he', 'she' or 'it' verges on the transcendental. The sense that we do or could or should live in a common world, and the compulsion to construe and institute a common world though discourse, is fundamental. Gadamer calls it 'universal' and identifies it with *logos* or Reason.

FORGING A COMMON WORLD

So, the Gadamerian claim for the universality of *Verständigung*, 'coming to an understanding', means that an intrinsic *telos* of any coming together of human beings will always mobilize a will to community, the will to invoke/institute a common world of discourse. As far as ABE is concerned this means that, no matter what pedagogic construction or institutional goals are imposed on the coming together of teachers and adult students, there will always be the desire to word a common world. Again, it is important to insist that this need not be a conscious or deliberate desire. Rather, it is something that we feel compelled to do. It is something that befalls us even when we attempt to evade it or fear it. Using Heideggerian terms we could say that an ABE class is 'thrown together'; that is, its participants simply find themselves together and thus find themselves answerable to finding/formulating/ forging a common world in which they can recognize themselves, one another and their community in all its otherness. 'Otherness', because instituting or invoking this common world and common language is a dialectical and an ever-moving horizon. It is the end of the rainbow we pursued as children: each time we arrive at the place it appeared, it has moved. An ABE classroom has not chosen to be together, nor does it express any visible common world or horizon. We could say: an ABE class is a world of strangers, of people who are strangers to one another and to themselves; and this is especially the case if they imagine or take for granted they are not strangers to themselves or to one another.

Communication and community are horizons inflected with an utopian dimension, but that does not mean they should be things we plan-fully try to implement. By insisting on the ontological basic-ness of 'coming to understand' as 'coming to understand one another', neither Gadamer nor I intend to suggest that this understanding or this community of understanding is finalizable or finally achievable. Nor do we want to underestimate its fragility.

SECTION 3: CULTIVATING 'THE EXPERIENCED PERSON'

In this section I approach the question of what further lessons philosophical hermeneutics carries for ABE pedagogy by exploring Gadamer's formulation of experience as a movement towards openness.

A key element of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic is the rehabilitation of the notion of 'experience'—a notion that Gadamer himself acknowledges to be 'one of the most obscure [concepts] we have'. According to Gadamer, the way that practical philosophy and *phronesis* engage with experience is different from the way that experience is accommodated in more rigorous scientific knowledge (*episteme*). In my view, it is impossible to develop a substantive sense of practical philosophy as a form of education without attending carefully to Gadamer's account of 'experience'.

According to Gadamer, the aim of philosophical hermeneutics as a reflective practice is the cultivation of what he calls the 'experienced person'. But Gadamer does not characterize the person of experience as someone who possesses the cognitive 'fruits' of experience, but rather as someone who is open to experience. What Gadamer's experienced person has learnt from experience is that there is experience and to look to experience, not shrink from it.

In this way Gadamer formulates a new *telos* for pedagogy, one that is eminently suited to characterize what I am calling ABE. Importantly this mode of human being that is intended and hoped for in ABE is not defined in terms of the mastery of disciplinary knowledge. 'No discipline, of course, has experience as its province; experience, in fact, is precisely what eludes knowledge, method, training, and effective history itself' (Crusius, 1991, p. 42).

Although acknowledging that experience builds knowledge, Gadamer insists that there is another dimension, another *telos*, to experience. This dimension is not a growth in knowledge but a process of 'insight'; insight into our finitude, into the fact that we are always finding that we don't understand things and that we have got things wrong, that we are limited by our dogmatism; insight into the finitude of our concepts, norms and normative texts. However, the experienced person of insight is not someone who attempts to throw off their dogmatism by wielding a skepticism or critical methodology; instead, they are the person who realizes that they will always be dogmatic and in point of fact their very purchase on things depends on this dogmatism, this 'prejudice'. This person, the person of experience, is thus open to learn. They approach life with wonder, not suspicion; with faith that they can learn at least what is untrue in their present understandings and thus nudge closer to the truth or as it were to 'the true-er'—with a lower-case 't'.

HERMENEUTIC REFLECTION AS LEARNING TO LEARN

The capacities of the 'experienced person' is not to be characterized in terms of the possession of a set of core skills or generic competencies as these are currently theorized. The experienced person as the *telos* of ABE pedagogy needs to be framed in terms more akin to Bateson's notion of deutero-learning (Bateson, 1972), as learning to learn, and so as more concerned with our fundamental orientation to experience—Heidegger's 'fore-structure' and Gadamer's 'prejudice'. In Aristotelian terms these capacities of the ideal ABE student would be termed 'intellectual virtues'. These capacities reach beyond the common reduction of 'learning to learn' to 'study skills' and the formation of efficient and effective procedures and routines for dealing with academic disciplines and their institutional systems.

However, even though we can be trained or discipline ourselves to deploy particular routines and sub-routines at pre-determined moments in the study process, such as asking questions, taking notes, revising, active listening techniques, there is a whole other layer of orientation to learning that is more primordial than the deployment of these routines, which determines both how and when these routines are to be exercised and whether they help or not. Judging where and when to exercise a routine is conditioned by a deeper comportment and sense of things that is an outcome of our experience. That is, the norms of study can no more determine the efficacy of study than the application of laws can determine the equity or justice of the case. Learning how or what can never settle the questions of where and when: these are matters of kairos and *phronesis*, matters of judgment and tact.

However, behind this more localized comportment about where and when to mobilize an interpretive tactic lies an even deeper comportment with learning and experience as such. This is our fundamental attitude to experience, to confusion, to the alien and the foreign, and how open we are to experience, how willing we are to place our current prejudices at risk. This underlying comportment to experience I will call: hermeneutic style. Hermeneutic style is how we comport ourselves towards life as negation. Hermeneutic style is what Heidegger calls *Befindlichkeit,* which is our habitual underlying stance or orientation towards things, the way we find our world, our 'instinctive' way of responding and acting—Dreyfus (1991, p.168) translates it as 'where-you're-at-ness'. This underlying *habitus* or comportment includes and integrates what would normally be separated out as the different domains of cognition, attitude, affect and behavior.

HERMENEUTIC REFLECTION AS KNOWING YOU DON'T KNOW

Hermeneutic reflection is the hermeneutic style or *habitus* of Gadamer's 'experienced person'. It is not just a methodology or practice, although it does include this. Hermeneutic reflection is knowing you don't know, it is awareness of your own finitude, awareness of the possibility of otherness, awareness of your inability to formulate the grounds of your own being, consciousness, language, actions, or life. Hermeneutic reflection means expecting, looking out for the negativity of experience, for experience which will teach you the partiality of your present understandings and teach you truer ways of thinking about things.

Hermeneutic reflection means being able to experience more of your life as occasions of learning, of learning the strangeness of the world we live in and the dangerous naivete of imagining that we could master it. Hermeneutic reflection is learning to live life as learning. It is learning not to go through life without noticing that which challenges your current stance on things, or going though life with your eyes averted from the foreign, the alien, the different. Hermeneutic reflection welcomes the inexhaustibility of being and welcomes the opportunity to participate in the human project of bringing being to language and thereby potentially making it present to us as a 'we'.

RETRIEVING THE CONCEPT OF EXPERIENCE

At this point I need to back-track and examine more rigorously Gadamer's recovery of the notion of experience, a concept that is typically contaminated by a phenomenalist reduction to sense data by the empiricist tradition, on the one hand, and on the other, rejected by the rationalist and structuralist traditions as illusory insofar as all experience is 'always already' determined by an apriori. So, it is important to trace the way Gadamer works to recover a viable sense of experience as the ground, medium and outcome of hermeneutic experience and reflection.

One of the tasks Gadamer sets for himself in *TM* is to retrieve a concept of experience (*Erfehrung*) that is framed more broadly than the epistemological definition of experience as data or information for the production of abstract knowledge, while at the same time not allowing it to collapse into a romantic notion of 'personal experience' (*Erlibnis*). Experience, he argues, has been 'subjected to an epistemological schematization that truncates… its original meaning' and as a result of this orientation towards knowledge and science, the hegemonic notion of experience 'takes no account of the inner historicity of experience' (*TM*, p. 346).

Gadamer begins his investigation by showing that Husserl's notion of experience of 'the lived world' is still too dominated by the notion of 'presence' and that, as a result, Husserl 'makes perception, as something directed toward merely external physical appearances, the basis of all other experience' (*TM*, p. 347). He then turns to the reflections of Bacon and argues that Bacon's experimental method is 'more a discipline than a method', more a 'methodical self-purification of the mind' aimed at 'preventing it from indulging in overhasty generalizations' and a strategy for:

> consciously confronting [the mind] with the most remote and apparently most diverse instances, so that gradually and continuously it can learn to work, via a process of exclusion, toward the axioms. (*TM*, p. 349)

On this reading, Bacon sounds more like the practice of a skepticism common to Pyrrho, Sextus Empiricus, Montaigne or, in more recent times, Wittgenstein. Thus the empirical method is more a strategy of critique for dispelling dogma and 'world-pictures' that pre-structure our understanding, a form of ideology critique rather than a positivist methodology for identifying the truth.

Gadamer continues by noting that the 'idols' or 'prejudices' Bacon is combating with his experimental method are such natural tendencies of the mind as our tendency to 'always remember what is positive and forget all the *instantiae negativae*', or the way that our minds are guided by the conventions of our language. Bacon is thus trying to institute a disciplined approach to experience with the power to displace and counteract the 'natural' way humans engage with experience.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF EXPERIENCE

Gadamer uses this contrast between 'the experience of daily life that men have always had' and 'scientific procedure in the modern sense' as articulated by Bacon to posit a 'universality of experience' that precedes the 'universality of science'. According to Gadamer, the disciplined methodology and data of modern conceptual knowledge rests on a prior order of experience arising out of our habitation in everyday language and culture, in 'forms of life' and the 'language games' that enact them. Gadamer suggests that occupying an 'indeterminate intermediate position' between the individualized perception or event and the formal concepts of knowledge, there is an order of experience, a generality that arises out of (memory) *mneme* and the learning of names and speech generally. Gadamer is pointing to a region of generalization that we could call 'common sense' or 'the vernacular' which is the *Befindlichkeit* we acquire from induction into language. For language and literacy practitioners, this contrast re-calls the contrast between the common sense of spoken language and the 'uncommon sense' of technical language (Vygotsky, 1986; Halliday & Martin, 1993).

However, according to Gadamer, we must not construe experience or common sense as a finalized possession of a body of knowledge or of facts—as a finalized theorizable order. Rather we must frame what we know from experience as something that is always at risk, always at issue, always open to refutation or reworking, as a process, as something that is always 'in process'. Experience is the resources for making meaning, the *habitus*, we approach the present with. It is what we have learnt from the past but it is not something formulated in propositions. It is the 'fore-structure', the prejudices we draw on to orient ourselves to, make available to ourselves and thus make sense of, what is happening to us.

> Experience is always actually present only in the individual observation. It is not known in a previous universality. Here lies the fundamental openness of experience to new experience, not only in the general sense that errors are corrected, but that experience is essentially dependent on constant confirmation and necessarily becomes a different kind of experience where there is no confirmation (*ubi reperitur instantia contradictoria*). (*TM*, p. 352)

The generality embedded in experience is thus not an apriori or holistic cultural order.

This region of experience is clearly the domain of what Gadamer calls 'prejudice' which is his rendering of Heidegger's '*Dasein*' and our reading of Bourdieu's '*habitus*'. Prejudice is the equipment at hand for construing our experience. The important point at this juncture is that, unlike Kant's 'apriori' and like Hegel's dialectic, this 'always already' can be problematized, can reveal its limits, can become visible and thus open to negation. New experience can show up the narrowness or partiality of our past experience.

Experience is an heuristic order, an order that although possessing a 'set' or 'orientation', is open to 'the new'. It is an order that depends on new experience for its validity and confirmation, but which learns nothing new from mere repetition. That is, mere repetition is not new experience, because it is already within the bounds of experience.

EXPERIENCE AS NEGATION

'"Experience" in the genuine sense is always negative' (*TM*, p. 353). Experience is what challenges prior experience. It is only the difference of the present that challenges the experience, the set, arising from repeated experiences in the past. Gadamer cites Hegel's conception of experience as skepticism in action. Experience is always an exposure of the limits—the untruth—of what we thought we knew, of the experiences we have had and the lessons we drew from them as experience. Thus experience is inherently dialectical. But, for Gadamer, this dialectic does not move towards a final Hegelian truth but instead towards a radical openness—to the development of a *habitus* or comportment that is 'particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them' (*TM*, p. 355).

Perhaps it is important to insist at this point that we can only formulate experience in its untruth, at the point that it no longer represents our experience. Thus, paradoxically, we cannot directly, positively formulate our experience, but only how what we thought to be true, isn't. 'Insight is more than the knowledge of this or that situation. It always involves an escape from something that had deceived us and held us captive' (*TM*, p. 356). Formulating experience is always a matter of interpreting it, never just grasping it; thus experience systematically evades our formulations. This is simply another formulation of one of Gadamer's central insights: understanding is always understanding otherwise. To this extent, Gadamer joins Nietzsche, Derrida, Adorno and other devotees of negation and the hermeneutic of the Other.

EXPERIENCE AND TRUTH

And yet Gadamer does not simply insist on the alterity of our experience and its formulations. He also wants to insist that there is a truth in everyday experience and language. Without falling back on Hegel's dialectical achievement of absolute knowledge, Gadamer does not want to rest with an insistence on non-identity and relativity. What he does at this point is formulate a concept of learning from experience as a distilling of experience from prior experience that is different from the construction of formal concepts. 'Experience stands in an ineluctable opposition to knowledge and to the kind of instruction that follows from general theoretical or technical knowledge' (*TM*, p. 355). Whereas structuralists jettisoned the category of 'experience' altogether and replaced it with 'codes', 'conventions' and 'rules', Gadamer insists on specifying a sense of experience that is neither the repetitive conformity to an a priori syntax, nor the progressive discovery and validation of scientific knowledge.

Gadamer thus wants to reinstate a domain of experience, learning and knowing intermediate between the region of individual perceptions and the region of discursive knowledge. A domain of generality, a domain framed in terms of the life-world, in terms of the fact that we all grow up in a language projecting a world. But what form of knowledge, what form of learning, what form of generality could this be, a generality that is neither a simple outcome of repeated experience, nor the development of concepts?

What Gadamer does at this point is retrieve a metaphor in Aristotle where Aristotle is providing an account of a form of experience and its generality that is neither a mere inductive accumulation of past experience nor the development of formally defined concepts. Here is Gadamer's re-telling:

> Aristotle has a very fine image for the logic of this procedure [i.e. the essential dependence of experience on confirmation]. He compares the many observations someone makes to a fleeing army. They too hurry away—i.e., they do not stand fast. But if in this general flight an observation is confirmed by its being experienced repeatedly, then it does stand fast. At this point the general flight begins to stop. If others join it, then finally the whole fleeing host stops and again obeys a single command. The whole army under unified control is an image of science. (*TM*, pp. 351-2)

For many months after reading Gadamer's re-telling of this image I could not sense any compelling power in it. It did not constitute a 'new experience for me—with the power to negate'. It did not carry any conviction for me at all. It seemed corny and unconvincing. It did not strike me in any compelling way. It did not stay with me. It did not stand fast. It simply hurried away into the past. I sensed that it had to be a key move in Gadamer's account, but it seemed weak. How hard it is to rid ourselves of the demand for epistemological rigor, especially if we have been trained as analytic philosophers! It was only later that this analogy began to hold. It found confirmation, not in the form of mere repetition (mere repetition cannot lead to learning, because it is not a new experience: it can cast no new light) but in the form of a further analogy or extrapolation or metaphor, in the form of an interpretation, an understanding differently, that showed up the original to me.

THE ROLE OF PARADIGMS

It was in puzzling over how it was possible to get from one particular to another in a principled and justifiable way, as opposed to an instinctive or habitual way, without bridging via universals that I suddenly understood what Gadamer meant by invoking Aristotle's metaphor of the fleeing army and the way it gradually re-forms around a new centre. To quote Gadamer:

> the birth of experience [is] an event over which no one has control and which is not even determined by the particular weight of this or that observation, but in which everything is co-ordinated in a way that is ultimately incomprehensible. The image captures the curious openness in which experience is acquired, suddenly, through this or that feature, unpredictably, and yet not without preparation, and it is valid from then on until there is a new experience—i.e., it holds not only for this or that instance but for everything of the kind. According to Aristotle, it is through this universality of experience that the true universality of the concept and the possibility of science comes about. Thus the image illustrates the way the unprincipled universality of experience (its accretion) eventually leads to the unity of the arché (which means both 'command' and 'principle'). (*TM*, p. 352)

Thinking about a generality that moves from 'case to case' rather than the subsumption of cases under norms or universals was a (new) experience for me, not just 'more of the same'. I realized the limits of my previous understanding of Gadamer's notion of generality, by sensing a new way of thinking about generality, a way based on the sudden insight into the metaphor Aristotle is presenting.

But rather than simply try to expound the Aristotelian metaphor directly, let me first detour through a metaphor for his metaphor. Think of a tune and how there can be a dominant note or theme in it that the melody always comes back to. Or a linguistic metaphor: think of the unfolding of a text and how there are key motifs, key metaphors, key words and phrases that the text constantly returns to, reinvokes and works on. Now, think of the ambiguity in the Kuhn's notion of 'paradigm' and in Plato's 'ideas'. Are paradigms and ideas the definitional specifications of the properties of whatever falls under them? Or are paradigms and ideas representative particulars, exemplary cases, that we deploy as templates or yard-sticks for classifying other cases?[13]

Here was something that has always puzzled me since my youthful studies of Plato's theory of ideas. I had always wondered how he could have been so stupid as to think of ideas as particulars, as ideal objects, instead of as definitions? Now I knew. It was me who was stupid. Plato (and Kuhn) were right to equivocate on whether their notions of 'eidos' or 'paradigm' are universals or particulars because they are, I now see, particulars serving as universals, being used as universals, being used to

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[13] A similar opposition is at work in the contrast between 'persons' and 'principles' or 'concrete Others and abstract Others' in the discussions around Carol Gilligan's 'ethic of care' (Gilligan, 1982).

classify. They are prototypes, exemplars, 'false generalizations [that are] continually refuted by experience', typifications that are shown not to be so.

FROM CONCRETE EXPERIENCE TO ABSTRACT TECHNICALITY

As Gadamer is quick to point out, any metaphor including Aristotle's is always misleading in some way. And yet it does form the grounds for a learning experience, for 'moving on', for making better (or a different) sense of things. My metaphors drawn from the motifs of music and text as a way of coming to terms with the coalescence of order out of chaos will certainly let me down at some point, but for now they do make sense (for me) of the way we can reason from 'case to case' or from 'particular to particular' without drawing on an underlying universal or norm.

Experience is not the simple reproductive re-stamping of the same, but the productive negating of the projection of past experience as paradigm, *vorbild*, pre-judgement, expectation, or principle for approaching and dealing with experience, a negation which then projects a new *arché*, a new principle, a new motif, a new rule around which the diversity of our future experience can be ordered. And of course the larger text of life will in turn show up the limits or ambiguities and shortcomings of this new *arché*. There is no end to this process. Whereas Aristotle posited the ontological priority of universals, Gadamer does not. Experience as a process is essentially negative:

> 'experience' in the genuine sense—is always negative. If a new experience of an object occurs to us, this means that hitherto we have not seen the thing correctly and now know it better. (*TM*, p. 353)

This analysis of the role of experience in learning is important for a theory of learning and teaching.

Gadamer's concept of genuine experience as what we might call an 'Ah! ha! experience' that suddenly illuminates and makes sense of one's prior experience by the disclosure of something one had not understood is at odds with the bland assumption that teachers exercise mastery over student experience and learning, an assumption embedded in the practices of CBT. CBT construes education as a matter of *poiesis*, a technique for bringing about an 'outcome' in students, namely their learning. By articulating a sense of experience that is not simply a matter of mastering the 'present to hand' via repetitions of perception (rote learning) nor an inculcation of technically specified concepts or 'archés', Gadamer opens up a new region or account of learning as a matter of experience.

TWO CONCEPTS OF EXPERIENCE: *ERLEBNIS* AND *ERFAHRUNG*

But bear in mind he does not mean the Romantic notion of experience which is a matter of subjective inner sensibility—*Erlibnis*. Experience for Gadamer is more public, more common, more an effect of history—*Erfahrung*. So, in pointing to the uncontrollability of learningful experience and to its unpredictability, Gadamer is not just pointing to 'individual differences' or the 'unique subjectivity of each student'. Rather, he is pointing to the human condition as a matter of *pathos* as well as agency, as something that cannot be mastered but which is something that has to be lived. In a footnote added to later editions Gadamer contrasts, despite the strong parallels, his dialectic of learning from experience with Popper's hypothetico-deductive model of critical science:

> This [refutation of past generalizations by new experiences] parallels Karl Popper's paired concepts of 'trial and error'—with the restriction that those concepts all too often proceed from the deliberate, and all too rarely from the suffering side of human experience of life. Or at least that is so, insofar as one looks only to the 'logic of scientific discovery,' but not if one thinks of the logic actually effective in human experience of life. (*TM*, p. 353)

Gadamer's point is not simply a point about the finitude of institutions, although it does include that dimension. He is pointing to the finitude of the human condition more generally, 'the logic actually effective in human experience of life', a condition that organized modernity has been bent on mastering and subjecting to the discipline of the *arché* which, as Gadamer notes, means both 'command' and 'principle'.

THEORIZING THE OTHER

The important thing about 'having an experience' is not so much the purely additive or inductive perceptual or referential contact with an object which teaches us something new about itself and its kind—although this is part of what an experience is. Such an approach to experience can only produce a knowing that calculates the typical and regular behaviours of populations. As Gadamer notes,

empirically oriented social sciences tend to adopt this methodology. More important is that we experience the otherness of the other, experience the other as a Thou.

We must learn to acknowledge the other as engaged in meaning making. However, even this construal of experience is partial. Gadamer compares this focus on the 'otherness of the other' with historicism which while acknowledging the autonomous agency of the other (as epoch, tribal culture, person), yet deludes itself into thinking that it is not also involved in a power relation with that other, and that it is prejudice-free in its approach and framing of this Thou.

Gadamer cites teachers and welfare workers as exemplifying this form of relationship between I and Thou. He writes:

> By understanding the other, by claiming to know him, one robs his claims of their legitimacy. In particular, the dialectic of charitable or welfare work operates in this way, penetrating all relationships between men as a reflective form of the effort to dominate. The claim to understand the other person's claim in advance functions to keep the other person's claim at a distance. We are familiar with this from the teacher-pupil relationship, an authoritative form of welfare work. (*TM*, p. 360)

This one-sided relationship in which one claims to already know the other better than they know themselves, is better known to us as Ricoeur's 'hermeneutic of suspicion'. It is a relationship in which one party views the other through a grid of concepts or sedimented experience. In this situation the experiencer mobilizes their reflexivity, their consciousness, to withdraw from mutuality, from acknowledging the reciprocity of the dialectic of recognition in the relation between I and Thou. As a result they will not learn from putting their prejudices 'on the line'. Nor can they learn from the Thou. The Thou becomes 'matter' on which they inscribe their already existing concepts:

> A person who believes that he is free of prejudices, relying on the objectivity of his procedures and denying that he is himself conditioned by historical circumstances, experiences the power of the prejudices that unconsciously dominate him as a *vis a tergo*. A person who does not admit that he is dominated by prejudices will fail to see what manifests itself by their light. It is like the relation between I and Thou. A person who reflects himself out of the mutuality of such a relation changes this relationship and destroys its moral bond. A person who reflects himself out of a living relationship to tradition destroys the true meaning of this tradition in exactly the same way. (*TM*, p. 360)

Gadamer is in fact trying to show that historicism is still dominated by a cognitivist notion of experience. To this extent, experience is still conceived as a form of mastery; as a dominance of Theory over *Praxis* which claims to be enlightened and innocent, but which is in actuality embedded in an actual history of relationships of power. The expert theorist or administrator who withdraws from the rough and tumble of dialogue is characterized by Gadamer as playing the role of the 'spoil sport' because they think they have 'seen through' to the 'real motives' and 'hidden agenda' (*PH*, pp. 41-42).[14] Gadamer is suggesting that the hermeneutics of suspicion which construes Thou's discourse as symptomatic, and so as not needing to be taken seriously as argument or claim, as truth-speaking, is just as objectifying as a cognitivist hermeneutic committed to 'hard scholarship' of an objectivist kind.

By contrast with this objectifying mode of interpretation, Gadamer claims that the fullest notion of experience can be exemplified through the metaphor of a dialectic of recognition between I and Thou, but in a relationship in which 'I' does not symptomatically deconstruct nor speak for 'Thou', but rather lets Thou 'say something to us'. In this relationship both are open to the other.

> Without such openness to one another there is no genuine human bond. Belonging together always also means being able to listen to one another. …Openness to the other, then, involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do so. (*TM*, p. 361)

Only with this type of hermeneutical experience do we reach that 'openness to tradition characteristic of historically effected consciousness'. In fact, it is only at this point can we see that Gadamer is trying to separate himself off from the Hegelian notion of experience which culminates in a cognitivist

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[14] Personally, I feel that much current research in the field of Adult Language and Literacy (ALL) is open to this charge. It is a form of research that tends to 'speak for' its clients as objects, rather than place its own prejudices at risk thereby opening up the possibility of coming to understanding between I and Thou.

absolute consciousness such that 'experience has ceased and a higher form of knowledge is reached' (*TM*, p. 357).

For Gadamer, the end point of experience is not the finality of absolute knowledge, but an openness to experience and lack of dogmatism. That is, experience leads via the continued falsification and negation of one's prior knowledge to a fore-structure that is open, as it were, to anything. In this way one's prejudice, one's orientation to experience itself, allows one to be open to whatever presents itself. One has not pre-judged it so narrowly or so emphatically. One is open to the otherness and difference of experience. One does not just classify it, nor explain it away symptomatically according to classifications already at hand. One listens to it, listens for its dissonance because one wants to learn from experience and lead a life of experience, a life of learning.

SECTION 4: TEACHING AS KAIROS

In this section I articulate a notion of teaching that is congruent with a pedagogy oriented to the cultivation of the 'experienced person' as a person attuned to the conflictedness, particularity and otherness of situations. Construing ABE classrooms as places for coming to deeper understanding of ourselves and our world by engaging the otherness of alien worlds through dialogue between different standpoints in which all are intent on giving voice to the same reality (*Sache)*, impacts on our understanding of the classroom and its transactions. If we frame our classrooms as conversations in which we move towards a (never reachable) horizon of commonality and thereby deepen our understanding of ourselves, of one another and of our worlds, language is at the heart of this unfolding of understanding, because interpretation means being able to put into words, being able to express, our world.

Our world, our selves, only become really real to us when we express them, when we can manifest them in communion with others, when they are reflected back to us in our encounter with the other, when we catch glimpses of our world as they are reflected off, or opened up by, revealed, exposed, by becoming strange, estranged from, and uncanny to ourselves. In this way our world, our taken-for-granted world, our assumptions, are uncovered and thereby altered thus altering us. In this way, coming to understand things means coming to understand ourselves and our world, but this event of experiencing our world differently changes us and our assumptions, changes our world. Learning in such an ABE class does not just mean acquiring new linguistic skills, new cognitive schemas or new practical skills, it means becoming a new person, coming to live in an evolving, emergent and different world, a world that is moving towards a more general and universal world, a world that is more shared and more public.

This view of ABE as a play of conversation between different worlds frames language as a medium of worlds of meaning. I find Gadamer's play on *Verstehen* ('understanding'), *Verständigung* ('coming to an understanding with') and *Einverständnis* ('understanding, agreement, consent'), of understanding as a process/happening of dialectical encounter, a provocative metaphor for characterizing Adult Basic Education and its concerns with language. Language itself is subordinated to expressing, exploring, articulating, contrasting and mediating different points of view, different cultures, different languages. Language itself will become salient and visible as the medium, the *Vermittlung*, realizing these differences. Thus, ABE is language-focused, not in order to master language systems as 'objects' or 'conventions' that can be stated as levels of skill according to National Reporting Frameworks, but because language is the universal medium of dialogue and the narratives of experience and emergent understanding. The ways that language is attended to and used in such a class will differ radically from a class that is framed by the view that language is a set of conventions (whether linguistic, social or both) that must be learned and mastered, on the one hand, or rejected as ideological, on the other.

Gadamer's goal of understanding also provides us with a way of thinking about ABE as adult pedagogy and its dignity in a way that does not simply re-invoke the 'unserious' childlike playfulness of progressivism. Gadamer allows us to differentiate ABE from the structures and ethos of schooling, without construing adult education as the 'playful' indulgence in hobbies. To come to an understanding, to let new understandings 'happen to us' means engaging with otherness and, in the process, reinventing what our world is and who we are. This is a process without end. We are always learning, always changing. There is no finality, no essence, no absolute at the end of the road. We are always 'on the way', always 'in process'. We never arrive. This is what it is to be human and finite. We stop learning only when we die or prematurely shrivel up into rigid, unlearning dogmatism.

ABE should be a place of understanding emerging from a dialogue between different interpretations and their truths. ABE students should experience these changes in understanding and reinvention in themselves and their world. They should learn to be open to understanding, open to experience, open to the alien, to the other that negates their world, to that which problematizes their reality, to that which threatens their security. ABE students should emerge from this encounter as strong adults who know how to risk themselves in dialogue with things that are beyond their ken. In this way ABE students will know that learning is not just a matter of mastering techniques, habits, facts or concepts, but a matter of opening oneself up to language as a place of change.

THE ART OF PEDAGOGY

In expounding Kant's notion of judgement, Michel de Certeau points out that judgement is not confined to the instantiation of social conventions, but is concerned:

> more generally [with] the act of concretely creating a new set by putting one more element into a convenient connection with this relation, just as one adds a touch of red or ochre to a painting, changing it without destroying it. (Certeau, 1984, p. 73)

This emphasis on the way that judgement is concerned not only with interpreting the particular, but with shaping an assemblage, designing a harmony, in all its given heterogeneity and particularity so that it is transformed from 'a given equilibrium into another' (Certeau, 1984, p. 75), not only characterizes art, but also good pedagogy. Or, another way of putting the point more accurately, it shows that good pedagogy is more art than science.

Teaching is fundamentally a matter of working up curricula and its enactment. Working up a curriculum means taking what is given—the students, past experiences, curriculum documents, the strengths and weaknesses of students, your own history/trajectory of skills, interests, practices, strong points, weak points and aspirations; the time frame, resources—and working 'with them', 'on them' in order to work them up into an emergent order, a structure, a narrative, a program that will put in play the matters at issue. If we think of an entire course, including all its activities, discussions, readings and writings, as constituting a single unfolding text or game, like a long novel, then we can think of the art of teaching as the art of orchestrating the pacing, the sequencing, the echoing, the harmonies, the counter-pointings, the rhythms of the emerging curriculum text. And always, despite extended prior planning, this unfolding is continuously improvised, tweaked, fine-tuned and finessed in 'real-time' as the teacher senses and responds to shifts in student understanding and positioning.

Even the planning process for teaching is not what rationalists enjoin: knowing what to do is thinking about who is in your class, about what happened yesterday or last week, about what you have had to cancel for next week, about shifts in affection between various class members, and about your lack of preparation time because of juggled family obligations. Planning is more a matter of attending to the particularity of the situation and participants, than it is a matter of implementing general procedures for planning curriculum. Planning what to do is more like feeling our way into a play or novel, into the range of characters and their relationships and trying to predict, imagine, 'what would happen if...'. It is trying to imagine whether you should do or say this before that, whether you should use this as a springboard or context for understanding that, or maybe reverse the order by using 'that' as a context for learning 'this'.

THE *KAIROS* OF TEACHING

Good teaching is a matter of timing, of *kairos* and tact: of how to sequence and how to pace things, about when to speed up, when to pass over, when to ignore, when to detour, when to repeat, when to slow down, when to stop, when to take a breather, when to increase the tempo, when to crack a joke, when to put pressure on, when to cajole, when to explain, when to recall, when to foreshadow, when to say nothing, when to leave the room, when to bite your tongue, when to change the subject.

This process is captured perfectly by Certeau's figure of tweaking, of locating a subtle, seemingly insignificant intervention as the powerful point of leverage, rather than the rationalist notion of curriculum planning in which there is a pretence of 'beginning from the beginning', beginning with a clean slate, and working one's way through by a rationalist constructivism (whether linear or recursive is of minor moment). Ancient Greek thinkers often used the metaphor of the navigator, of guiding an enterprise through the exigencies, surprises and unpredictabilities of environment and situation, as a metaphor for action and the governance of action. Teaching is keeping the discourse and activities of the classroom 'on course'.

Thus, judgement in education is working things up into an ensemble that will achieve its point. It is more like conducting than manufacturing. It is a matter of emphasis, a matter of foregrounding, a matter of pacing, of what leads into what. A matter of what precedes what, of what contexts what. For our purposes, we could say that judgment is concerned with the textual dimension of curriculum, with 'packaging' the content and interchanges into an order that is relevant, intelligible and holistic.

But, working up a curriculum is not a matter of first planning it, and then later—after the planning is over—enacting it. The planning is never completed and always at issue. The planning accompanies and monitors the entire curriculum process. Thinking the curriculum through to its final shape is not separate from steering the curriculum to its final shape and both must be achieved *in situ*. The shape of the curriculum is emergent, a matter that is at issue, throughout the entire 'delivery'. Teaching of the sort at issue here is not a matter of 'delivering' a(n already finalized) curriculum.

TEACHING AS TIGHT-ROPE WALKING

Judgement is not a matter of prior planning, nor just a matter of summative judgement after the fact, but an emergent formative balancing act that is continually at issue and in play. It would be worthwhile retrieving Aristotle's reflections on the notion of 'the mean' in which good action is not so much a matter of instancing a principle as a matter of guiding an activity process through a narrative in which competing principles, desires, needs and accountabilities are at issue and kept in play. In this sense teaching is more like navigating or policy making; a case of steering between dangers (as Foucault famously insisted). Certeau cites Kant who is in turn adducing the common sense views of his compatriots:

> where I come from, [Kant] writes (*in meinem Gegenden*: in my region, in my 'homeland'), the 'ordinary man' (*der Gemeine Mann*) says (*sagt*) that charlatans and magicians (*Taschenspielers*) depend on knowledge (you can do it if you know the trick), whereas tightrope dancers (*Seiltanzers*) depend on an art. Dancing on a tightrope requires that one maintain an equilibrium from one moment to the next by recreating it at every step by means of new adjustments; it requires one to maintain a balance that is never permanently acquired; constant readjustment renews the balance while giving the impression of 'keeping' it. The art of operating is thus admirably defined, all the more so because in fact the practitioner himself is part of the equilibrium that he modifies without compromising it. In this ability to create a new set on the basis of a preexisting harmony and to maintain a formal relationship in spite of the variation of the elements, it closely resembles artistic production. It could be considered the ceaseless creativity of a kind of taste in practical experience. (Certeau, 1984, p.75)

This last sentence could have been written by Gadamer himself. And of course because the grounds for ordering the elements of the curriculum cannot be discursively justified, the judgments involved take the form of a 'tact', and seem closer to a 'feel' or sense or sensibility, than to discursive reasoning. Notice also how the subtle adjustments of the tightrope dancer correspond to the shifting responses of a player to the to-and-fro of the moves or plays in the context of the emergent state of play. But I would rather relate this back to Gadamer's initial characterization of tact as that form of knowledge cultivated by the humanities:

> By 'tact' we understand a special sensitivity and sensitiveness to situations and how to behave in them, for which general rules do not suffice. Hence an essential part of tact is that it is tacit and unformulable. One can say something tactfully; but that will always mean that one passes over something tactfully and leaves it unsaid, and it is tactless to express what one can only pass over. (*TM*, p. 16)

This sensitivity to the emergent possibilities inherent in the unfolding of action and speech and the judgment to actualize one train of thought while tactfully passing over another, is not capturable in general rules for curriculum development. What is critical to fruitful teaching:

> is the necessity of surrendering to an interaction in which one's lack of sovereignty always puts one at some kind of hazard and in which there is always a need for a *situated reflection* for which no indemnity can be provided by a method or technique with an independent security outside this interaction. (Dunne, 1993, p.117)

In terms of curriculum development, surely it is clear that designing a program of study that is efficient and effective, relevant and empowering, demanding yet accommodating, cannot be simply a matter of technical skill or abstract knowledge. More critically, it is a matter of attunement, of judgement, as the 'ceaseless creativity of a kind of taste in practical knowledge', a knowledge grounded in an acquired *habitus* through apprenticeship into a *sensus communis*. My question, the question standing behind this entire thesis, is: surely the current changes (instituting a competitive

market, casualization, privatization and so on) in the field of ABE are undermining the possibility of such a *sensus communis*?

SECTION 5: PHILOSOPHICAL PROSE AS MODELING *BILDUNG* OF THE CLASSROOM

It might seem that, despite my attempts to flesh out the notion of practical philosophy, it is still too elusive to provide any substantive guidance to teachers or students of ABE concerning pedagogy.

In one sense this is inevitable insofar as a principal task of practical philosophy is the protection and defense of *phronesis* and *praxis* from the colonizing incursions of *episteme* and *techne* that has been a continuing feature of Western culture. As Gadamer notes, insofar as practical philosophy takes up this task, it takes the form of critique, rather than a positive practical wisdom. However, I have supplemented this negative, critical role of practical philosophy with a more positive account of *theoria* as 'spiritual exercises' in philosophy as an art of living. Yet, neither of these construals of practical philosophy provide substantive instruction concerning the teaching/learning process of ABE: on the one hand, the critical role as it were enjoins us to resist the current processes of codification and rationalization and to protect ABE classrooms as precious islands of hermeneutic experience; on the other, the arts of living are 'practices of the self' that help in coping with the dis-ease and ontological insecurity of life in a 'risk society'.

TEXT AS *ERGON*, NOT *LOGOS*

But neither speak to the actual forms or flow of discourse in the classroom. For that we must look to the forms of discourse deployed by philosophers themselves in their efforts to cultivate practical *habitus* through hermeneutic experience. We must follow the injunction of both Gadamer and Hadot: don't focus on the doctrinal content of philosophical texts, focus on their pragmatics, their speech acts, their ways of acting with and on the reader.

Texts that are concerned with *theoria* as practical philosophy are not driven by the logical exposition of a theory. Just as Gadamer and Hadot insist that we attend to the movement of Plato's prose and his choice of genre, and not simply attempt to extract the content per se as a doctrine, so too we can model the form of discourse suitable to a practically oriented *theoria* by attending to the movement and genre of philosophical prose.

Although this fact has not explicitly been brought into focus, we have already encountered a range of genres or forms of discourse at work in practical philosophy as it engages in the cultivation and shaping of *habitus* and *phronesis*—dialogue, rhetorical dispute and the genre of utopia. In the Preface we noted two modes of practical philosophical address: provocation, as in Stanley Cavell (1979); and articulation, as in Charles Taylor especially his *Sources of the Self* (1989). Gadamer has adduced Plato's dialogues and his Utopias as a model of the sort of movement of ideas and 'turns' of text involved in the cultivation of *ethos*. Hadot has emphasized the spiritual exercises of the schools of philosophy as pedagogic practices explicitly designed to effect change in the *habitus* of students.

GENRES OF ADDRESS

I'm not sure just what categorial framework to mobilize in classifying these different styles of address in the discourse of practical philosophy. One might think of them as registers, except that register tends to be tied tightly to the notion of a field of inquiry or a domain of social activity. What we need is a term for different ways of approaching the same field, or more accurately, different ways of relating the reader or audience to the same field. The term 'rhetoric' as in 'rhetoric of Utopia' or 'rhetoric of provocation' and so on might be suggested; or the term 'style' as in ironical style or provocative style and so on. Unfortunately 'rhetoric' is a term that is now used so loosely that it is losing its connection to its own historical context of practice; the term 'style' is similarly indeterminate. The problem with the term 'genre' on its own is that, in educational contexts, it also tends to be very field-driven. 'Genres' tend to be named in terms of how they address and textually process the content, rather than in terms of how they address the reader. So, I have decided to coin the term 'genre of address' as a term of art for these differences in philosophical address.

The critical feature of 'genres of address' such as Plato's dialogue, Cavell's provocation, Taylor's articulation, Socratic questioning, Utopian epideictic, Wittgensteinian instructions, or Gadamer's

interpretation of a text, is that it is the relationship between speaker and listener, author and reader, that is critical:

> Although every written work is a monologue, the philosophical work is always implicitly a dialogue. The dimension of the possible interlocutor is always present within it. This explains the incoherencies and contradictions which modern historians discover with astonishment in the works of ancient philosophers. In philosophical works such as these, thought cannot be expressed according to the pure, absolute necessity of a systematic order. Rather, it must take into account the level of the interlocutor, and the concrete tempo of the *logos* in which it is expressed. (Hadot, 1995, p. 105)

What is 'driving' the discourse is a marshalling of resources that put students in a situation where they can 'turn', where they can catch a glimpse of the limits of their present understandings. Discourse of this order is not a logically structured exposition of a field; it is a highly interactive staging of voices, turns, issues, metaphors, stories and demands for attention.

Hadot's instructions about how to read the philosophical texts of the ancient schools of philosophy recall Cavell's comparable concern with the proper protocols for reading a philosophical text with practical intent, rather than with doctrinal or theoretical intent. He writes:

> When we read the works of ancient philosophers, the perspective we have described should cause us to give increased attention to the existential attitudes underlying the dogmatic edifices we encounter. Whether we have to do with dialogues as in the case of Plato, class notes as in the case of Aristotle, treatises like those of Plotinus, or commentaries like those of Proclus, a philosopher's works cannot be interpreted without taking into consideration the concrete situation which gave birth to them. They are the products of a philosophical school, in the most concrete sense of the term, in which a master forms his disciples, trying to guide them to self-transformation and -realization. Thus, the written word is a reflection of pedagogical, psychagogic, and methodological preoccupations. (Hadot, 1995, pp. 104-5)

Thus philosophical texts are pedagogic, rather than informational, in an emphatic sense. This is why they are instructive as models of the pedagogic discourse of a classroom focused on cultivating practical wisdom, not knowledge. A *Bildung* pedagogy as practical philosophy does not construe its reader or student as in need of more 'cognition' such as 'information' (facts) or of a more rigorous 'logical argumentation' (method).

A pedagogy in the key of practical philosophy is intended to transform the reader's mode of being in the world, not just their cognitive attributes. Any discourse that intends to transform the reader's habitual dispositions or ethos is a *Bildung* discourse, a reflexive discourse. It is a mode of discourse that self-consciously persuades (seduces, re-locates, provokes) the reader through a constellation of tropes all intended to allow them to move to new practices, new tropes, new ways of looking at reality.

DISCOURSE AS CULTIVATION

ABE construed as the discourse of practical philosophical is intended to scaffold students into a reflective form of life, or more accurately, into living their lives more reflectively. The discourse of the classroom is orchestrated to provide resources, metaphors, genres, motifs, and vocabulary; in short, the tropes and topics needed for the formation of *theoria* as practical philosophy.

The movement of discourse in an ABE classroom is mimetic; not so much mimetic of a world, but productively mimetic of the *habitus* of the student. Pedagogy is the stratagems needed to work students so that they deepen their sense of things. My own guiding presumption is that ABE instruction in the ways of bringing meanings to textual form has substantive effects on *habitus*. In short, my guiding theme is the postulation of a productive mimesis between the *Bildung* of a text and the *Bildung* of a student by reading both of these in relation to the *Bildung* of the culture as a whole as a dialogic *sensus communis*.

Another way of putting this point would be to say that 'ideas' are not just factual concepts, but are rather 'prose forms' or tropes intended to maneuver the reader's sense of things. The power of ideas as principles underlying human discourse and social life depends not on their (ideational) content but on their role as driving the movement of discourse and ideas, a movement that is not to be accounted for by appeal to some abstract grammar of forms but as the substantive and concrete play of ideas in terms of doubt and belief, desire and disgust, assertion and response.

THE LANGUAGE GAMES OF PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

Thus, practical philosophy enters the classroom, not as a theory or doctrine, but as *ethos* or demeanors, as genres of address, as the movement of ideas and voices comparable to the movement of voices in the prose of Plato, Wittgenstein and Hegel. So, in this way we arrive back at the issues of the address of philosophical prose with a practical bent, of philosophical prose as articulation and provocation, first raised in the Preface; issues of how to construe a discourse that is oriented to the cultivation of *habitus*, not proof of a theory or the methodic communication of information.

Transferred to the classroom we could expect ABE as practical philosophy to also exploit these genres of address: teacher-led Socratic dialectic, in which students are led to acknowledge their own finitude; rhetorical debate, in which students learn to formulate and listen to competing points of view and their possibilities for resolution or reconciliation; epideictic invocations of a Utopian normative order, in which students learn to subject the status quo to critique; provocation, which deliberately alienates and shocks the reader out of their prejudiced forms of understanding and reading; articulation, which speaks on behalf of a *sensus communis* at issue in the differences within the classroom; and competing interpretations, concretizations and applications of 'what a text means for us here now', which aim at persuading others and shaping a common interpretation.

Texts and teachers in practical philosophy are careful to respect the integrity of their readers or students. They do not try to brow-beat them or convince them of the truth of some doctrine. Their underlying intent is to be a pretext, a provocation, a midwife to the student or reader's own emergent reflective sense of self-responsibility and responsibility for (and to) the whole. Philosophical texts of this order are tactful in finding a formulation that can function as Aristotle's one soldier and thereby form of steady point around which the student or reader can re-interpret their experience. Philosophical texts of this order attempt to enact the game of *theoria*, of hermeneutic reflection; or more accurately, they attempt to stage a game of *theoria*, a 'game of rising to the universal' in such a way as to summon or call (interpellate) the reader or student into the game. It is when we take the game seriously and let it work us over that we come to sense things differently.

Enacted without tact, discourse of this order takes on the character of manipulative bullying and is given over to seduction and trickery. In such a case we could say it descends into 'mere rhetoric'. For example, Gould observes that 'the controversy surrounding Cavell's voice and the way he writes' are not just matters of personal idiosyncrasy, personality or self-expression, rather they are concerned with 'deeper issues about voice and method' (Gould, 1998). He agrees that Cavell's prose makes a 'very particular and often problematic impression', 'presents itself to many as a unified field of force, insinuating and domineering by turns' and 'has called forth clouds of controversy' (Gould, 1988, p. 2).

If I were to explore this line of inquiry fully it would entail an investigation of all those philosophers nominated as by Rorty 'edifying', that is, those philosophers who are concerned to disrupt or subvert the assumptions underpinning 'normal discourse', including Heraclitus, Socrates, Augustine, Montaigne, Pascal, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein. Cavell (1984), also, groups these philosophers under the heading of 'existentialist' to signal their concern for more than mere cognition, their concern for life as a moral exercise. I have been using Aristotle's term 'practical' or '*praxis*' to point up this feature. However, this is too large a task.

TEXTS AS INTERPELLATION: HEGEL'S DIALECTIC AND WITTGENSTEIN'S THERAPEUTIC CRITIQUE

Instead I will briefly summon two modern philosophers as models or paradigms, as Aristotle's soldier, that can provide vantage-points for interpreting and shaping the classroom discourse of ABE as a form of *theoria*: Hegel's dialectic and Wittgenstein's therapeutic critique. (Unfortunately, for reasons of space I must leave aside the figure of Socrates, the exemplar *par excellence* of genres of address embodying practical philosophy.)

Both Hegel and Wittgenstein write a prose focussed on inducing a reflective 'turn' in the reader, but not a turn to a specific view or doctrine, not a turn that submits to the authority of the author, but a 'turn' that arises out of the reader's own history. Their prose enacts and mimics the very process of 'turning' they are trying to forward. Their prose is not simply the synchronic representation of an object domain described in a spectatorish way, but a *darstellung*, a dialogue with the reader intended to position the reader not just as a subject 'over against' the 'information' being conveyed (the conduit model of language), but to reposition the reader in relation to their world (their self, their field of

action, their sense of the future, their modes of valuing, their sense of their relationship to the Other). They provide the reader with new pictures, characters, paradigms, exemplars, narratives, phrases or words around which meanings can assemble and stabilize just as Aristotle's fleeing army reassembles around a single unmoving soldier, thereby forming a new horizon of interpretation in which things can find their place and significance.

HEGEL'S DIALECTIC AS A MODEL OF LEARNING

In Hegel's prose and concept of dialectic, we find a significant genre of address for 'picturing' the method of development of the discourse of a *Bildung* classroom oriented to practical philosophy. Hegel takes the *agon* of rhetoric and transmutes it into an unfolding progression of positions each of which turns out to be unsustainable, thereby propelling the subject to formulate a new position that is superior. This mode of discursive progression is captured by David Wood in his term, 'reflexive modification':

> By reflexive modification I mean the way in which philosophical texts in particular, though perhaps not exclusively, proceed by reflection on themselves. The continuity of a descriptive novel is standardly based on credible event continuities. But philosophical writing is always potentially if not actually self-generative. The way one draws a conclusion from an argument is only one of many forms of reflexive modification. This category would include drawing out the consequences of what has already been written, translating a complex claim into other terms, as when one summarizes a result, or spells out the message. Indeed it covers all occasions on which the principle of textual progression rests on the transformation of part of what has previously been written into an object of further reference. If I were now to have written 'Let me explain what I mean' this would have been an unequivocal example of reflective modification. The concept of reflective modification would enjoin one to look for the actual principles by which a particular philosophical text transforms itself. It is entirely fortuitous, but the most celebrated example of such textual productivity is to be found right on our doorstep in the concept of the dialectic as Hegel developed it. (Wood, 1990, p. 73)

Hegel does not think of *Bildung* as *Kritik* but as *Bestimmerung*, as a gradual coming to form and as a succession of tropes which evolve to holistically define the meaning of the *Sache*. Hegelians called this the 'unfolding dialectical logic of the concept'. For Hegel, new scientific meanings have to gradually 'come to form' out of the meanings of the past vernacular, just as rhetorical tropes work over an initial common sense proposition until it becomes a compelling statement by the end of a speech. Thus, Hegel rejects the Enlightenment picture of 'turning' in which the views of common sense are displaced by being proven to be false or lacking validity and thereby replaced by a superior scientific vocabulary of technical terms that assimilate and erase the meanings of common sense or tradition.

THE PROSE OF REFORMULATION

The momentum or motivation for the movement of discourse in a *Bildung* classroom is not a matter of movement through a logical chain of reasoning, nor of movement through the items in a taxonomy or logical space, but the succession of formulations as they succumb to the movement of thought in which 'the weaker is made stronger' time after time in a search for a formulation that does more justice to the plurality of perspectives contained within the whole. Of course there is never a time when one's horizon does encompass the whole, when one does speak to or for the whole. We are always riven by partiality, by foregrounds and backgrounds, by the familiar and the unknown, by desires and investments in some particulars, not others. The most basic insight of philosophical hermeneutic is that we are finite creatures, that we always (must) function from within a context, from within a horizon. And that it is the mobilization of this context as resource that allows us to grapple with the Other. Gadamer is emphatic that the notion of an expanding horizon does not entail Hegel's concept of absolute knowledge, which is the claim to speak to and for the whole absolutely. But, practically, this means it is difficult to find a genre of address that can express both the wish to speak for and to the whole including the Other, and the acknowledgement that one's discourse is positioned as partial, interested and localized.

Hegel's 'rise to the universal' is textual and discursive. It is a movement towards an imaginary vanishing point conflated with an utterance speaking from that vanishing point. Hegel's universality is a movement, not an archimedian point. Universality, for Hegel, is the fulfillment of the substance of *sensus communis*, not the rejection of substance in the name of a Kantian 'form' or 'spirit' of universality.

THE UNIT OF MEANING: TEXT, NOT PROPOSITION

But substance can only be grasped discursively though the unfolding of form:

> If form is asserted to be identical with essence, then it is therefore a misunderstanding to believe that knowledge could spare itself from and be satisfied with essence or that which is in and of itself. It would be a misunderstanding to believe that some absolute principle or absolute intuition would render the extended execution (*Ausfuhrung*) of essence or the formal development (*Entwichlung*) of form unnecessary. Precisely because the form is as essential to essence as essence itself, essence cannot be grasped or expressed merely as essence, that is as unmediated substance or as pure self-intuition of the divine, but must also involve form and the complete richness of developed form; only in that way can essence be grasped and expressed as something real [effective; *Wirkliches*]. (Hegel, 1910, p 14)

This is a key defense of the significance of literacy, of prose, of extended text. Substance or essence are unspeakable and unknowable without discourse. Intuition is dumb. But what intuition requires as a supplement is, not schemas (i.e. Kant's universal procedures), but form, *Bildung*, 'coming to form', i.e. textuality. It might seem that the contrast is not too great if we interpret Kant's 'schemas' as tropes of discourse, as processual textual grids rather than systemic cognitive grids. But there is still a significant difference from the angle of literacy and its forms of prose and their role in education. This is because Kant's schema view still operates within the single proposition or self-contained text as realization of a theoretical system, whereas Hegel's notion of *Ausfuhrung* is the notion of 'text' as actively undoing and (re)forming a sense of things, not just tracing a picture of what is already there as propositions or theories.

Textuality is the interplay of competing voices, not just the logical unfolding of content. What drives text is the interplay of questions and responses, of point and counterpoint, of one view and other views. Even Habermas has had to transform Kant's tribunal of reason from its monologic deployment of schemas to an exercise of reason as a communicative interchange of points of view. *Theoria* is fundamentally coming to realize the limits of your own point of view and coming to sense the truth of what others have to say. This *habitus*, the *habitus* of Gadamer's 'experienced person', can be modeled by ABE classrooms and its genres of address.

WITTGENSTEIN'S THERAPEUTIC CRITIQUE AS A MODEL OF ABE PEDAGOGY

Another picture of what learning is when it is construed under the figure of practical philosophy, instead of cognitive development, is Wittgenstein's way of thinking about the *praxis* of philosophy in terms of combating the power that 'images' or 'pictures' hold over us, and our sense of ourselves and our world. Whereas Hegel's notion of *Bildung* has a progressive movement of 'rising to the universal', Wittgenstein is more concerned to free us from delusion which is the task of critique.

For Wittgenstein, philosophy is a matter of dissolving the stabilities erected by 'pictures' or 'images' (let's say: Aristotle's soldier as paradigm) thereby freeing us into new pictures together with their new possibilities of acting and living. This means that Wittgensteinian philosophy and its discourse is a matter of taking the reader/student through a series of therapeutic mind-games that release them from the hold of a picture or metaphor:

> Work on philosophy—like work in architecture in many respects—is really more a working on oneself. On one's own interpretation. On one's way of seeing things. (And what one expects of them.) (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 16).

PEDAGOGY AS IMPERATIVE, NOT DECLARATIVE

Importantly, Wittgenstein's prose is composed as a discourse of imperatives telling us what to do, not declaratives telling us what to think or what things are—*that* he leaves to us to discover as the upshot of following his instructions. That is, Wittgenstein's prose does not consist of propositions; it does not represent the world. Instead it tells us to do things. Its fundamental grammar is a grammar of command and injunction, not the grammar of statement or representation. According to his own account of what a proposition is, that is, a picture that can be true or false, his own discourse is not, nor is it intended to be, propositional.

More specifically, we can imagine someone following an instructional text and learning not just a new way of acting or doing but a new way of thinking and knowing. If this seems categorically odd, then we can use a Wittgensteinian technique to dispel its seeming impossibility, and show its implausibility to be an illusion arising from the hold over us of a 'picture' of knowing and doing as two

quite separate faculties or departments of the mind. We can learn new ways of thinking by following instructions to do something because the doing propels us into an experience.

To dissolve the seeming impossibility, let's mimic Wittgensteinian prose. Think of this case:

> Imagine someone trying to help someone to see an aeroplane in the sky. They say, 'Stand here and you will be able to see it just to the left of that telegraph pole and above that little cloud'.

Here we have a case of someone instructing someone about how to 'experience a fact' without stating or presenting that fact. All they do is instruct the person about how to 'set' themselves in order to apprehend the fact.

Here is another case:

> In helping someone to see the 3D picture in a 'magic eye' illusion, someone says: 'move it slowly away from your nose and keep your eyes unfocused'.

Again we have imperative, not statement; a case of 'how to' statements as it were producing a 'know that' experience in the student.

Notice that both of these contexts are pedagogic. Both are situations in which someone is trying to disclose something new to someone else. In other words, we do have practices for helping others 'see' new things. Notice that we can't 'make' them see it, we can only place them in a position to 'see' it. The actual seeing itself is an event, a happening. It is not something that we can causally make happen. We can use all our stratagems and tactics to try to allow or facilitate it, but we can't make it happen. 'Seeing something' is like 'falling in love' or 'being converted'. It is not an action; it is a *pathos*, it is something that comes over us, a flash or a slow dawning realization.

Wittgenstein has exploited the well-known duck rabbit figure to show this. We always see the world 'as' but we cannot directly control this—only indirectly. For example, if a love relationship fails, you can't directly get yourself over it. But you can do things that indirectly put yourself in a situation where you are liable or attuned to 'get over it'. For example, you can go away on a holiday and hope to forget your unhappy love affair by being thrust into a new and different world. So, with regard to these deeper and more determining ideas or aspects of our lives (Heidegger's *Befindlichkeit*), we can do something specific and hope that it changes our sense of things, the contours of our world. But we can't directly change the dimensions of our world by following a cognitive logic. This does not mean we shouldn't follow a train of logical argument. It is just that, on its own, it may not be sufficient to re-shape the contours, the horizons, of our life.

These 'pictures' constitute, if you like, the limits of our language and thus the limits of our world. By definition they are invisible to us. Just as we can't see our eyes precisely because we see with them, so too these pictures are what we construe the world with and thus they are not objects within that world. We need the trickery of Wittgenstein's therapy to catch sight of these limits. They constitute the grammar of our world.

This practice of creating contexts 'in which new beliefs are possible and relevant', of reframing contexts in ways that permit us to see things in a different way and to see the relevance of what was not important before, is not just a description of philosophy. I want to claim it as a potential description of ABE as a pedagogy intent on occasioning hermeneutic experience in students so that they come to understand their world differently by their attempts to formulate it.

Thus Hegel and Wittgenstein provide us with two further pictures of the genres of address suited to the hermeneutic *Bildung* of ABE students: the Hegelian genre of dialectic in which the contributions of different voices are caught up in a progressive movement to a shared sense of 'the big picture' of the *Sache* at issue; and the Wittgensteinian genre of 'Look at it this way' in which the limits, the grammar, of our lives are thrown into relief by imagining other possible scenarios or worlds. These add to the repertoire of the ABE classroom.

ABE is thus fundamentally a matter of world disclosure, of disclosing new possibilities of action and thought in our students. Education is a *praxis* of world disclosure, not a science or technology for causally making things happen. Thus the focus of effort in ABE pedagogy is a hermeneutic work on the taken-for-granted sense of things (Wittgenstein's 'pictures', Gadamer's prejudices and horizons) expressing, shaping and constraining students understanding of their world.

SUMMARY

This chapter has been an exercise in listening to and learning from the traditions of philosophical hermeneutics and practical philosophy for guidance concerning the conduct of discourse within the ABE classroom. In this way it has tried to form a picture of the ABE classroom as more than a locus for the distribution of propositional or procedural knowledge.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

This thesis has been an exercise in philosophical hermeneutics. It has attempted to discover and formulate 'what Adult Basic Education is' by listening to traditions of education standing behind it. Rather than study 'the objects' of its practice (students) or the institutional setting of its practice (policy), I have concentrated on 'coming to understand otherwise'—hopefully more deeply and fruitfully—the educational *praxis* in which we find ourselves, our community, and our commitments. In short, the intent of this thesis has been to cultivate the *sensus communis* and self-understanding of ABE as a field of adult education by interpreting ABE itself as practical philosophy, that is as a region of education concerned with the cultivation of *phronesis*.

The precipitating cause of the thesis was a brush with the imposition of the technical forms of governmentality, an encounter that was especially devastating insofar as the field of ABE was a new and unformed field of general education for adults which was attempting to institute a practice of education situated mid-way between Adult Literacy, on the one hand, which is oriented to the mastery of literacy skills ordinarily developed in children by primary schooling, and Tertiary Education. Thus the intended outcomes of ABE for adults corresponded to the capacities formed in children by secondary schooling. The intention was to formulate a general curriculum for adults which equated with the capacities possessed by children on completion of compulsory education, or more to the point, the capacities formed by traditional grammar schools with curricula informed by rhetoric.

However, despite its origins in the *agon* between educational practice and bureaucratic practice, this thesis has not been an analysis or critique of 'the bureau' (see Lo Bianco, 1997; Brennan, 1997). Instead, it seeks to renew a deeper sense of ABE as a player in a game of governance, a game that is not reducible to the procedures and practices of modern governmentality. In this way the thesis is positive in orientation, not 'critical' and so aligns itself with Hunter's (Muspratt, 1997) pleas for a 'less critical', 'less principled' rethinking of education. Unlike Hunter, of course, it does not then take on itself the role of defending 'the bureau' or the institutions of governmentality from the 'principled' denunciations of educators.

The thesis has addressed the four 'moments' or tasks incumbent on any modern hermeneutic: as a hermeneutic of suspicion, it has deconstructed and resisted the hegemony of technical rationality; as a hermeneutic of faith, it has retrieved the occluded rationalities of *praxis* and rhetoric; as an exercise of *phronesis*, it has, on the Foucauldian assumption that 'everything is dangerous' (Foucault, 1984, p. 343), judged that governmentality is 'the main danger' for contemporary ABE; finally, as an exercise in *theoria*, it has attempted to formulate a persuasive and convincing picture of 'the state of play', the 'status of the question', in the unfolding history of ABE.

If the 'modes of address' of this thesis were to be phrased in terms of the 'offices' of classical rhetoric, it could be argued that it has taken up all three of the traditional modes of address cultivated by ancient rhetoric. It is *judicial* insofar as I position 'representation' as the other party; it is *deliberative* insofar as I try to heal or reconcile the differences between representation and rhetoric, between *habitus* and consciousness and look to a consensual future; and it is *epideictic* insofar as I praise rhetoric, hermeneutics and practical philosophy and thereby celebrate the cultural heroes that bind us together as a community.

However the mode of address of this thesis has in fact been primarily epideictic. It has not been deliberative insofar as it has not actually proffered any practical proposals for ABE. It has not been judicial insofar as it has avoided engagement in argumentation with competing positions or paradigms. Thus, unlike Habermas' valorization of argumentation, the primary mode of address of this thesis has been epideictic which, according to Sheard, is a discourse through which a community reflects on its publicly and privately held beliefs and prejudices and decides whether to reaffirm or reform them:

> Epideictic discourse today operates in contexts civic, professional or occupational, pedagogical, and so on that invite individuals to evaluate the communities and institutions to which they belong, their own roles within them, and the roles and responsibilities of their fellow constituents, including their leaders. We see examples of such discourse on the op-ed pages of our newspapers on our televisions, in our classrooms, at conferences, in professional journals as well as in places of worship and other sites at which communal and institutional goals, practices, and values are reaffirmed, reevaluated, or revised and where specific kinds of behaviours are urged. (Sheard, 1996, p. 771)

Without question, the discourse of this thesis has been a discourse of amplification, not argumentation, a discourse that can seem self-indulgent and self serving, a discourse that emphasizes the performative aspects of language by engaging in linguistic and syntactic play. And yet this attention to *ethos* and *pathos* should not be interpreted as an irresponsible falling away from the demands of *phronesis*. Rather, epideictic is a form of *theoria*:

> The audience of an epideictic speech understands or *theorizes* as a preparation for learning and ultimately for practical action. The epideictic speaker formulates principles derived from the common store of his audience, then applies these principles to well-known or typical objects or persons. From this act of application, the audience 'learns' or 'understands' the connection between the principles and the manifestation of the principles, an act of comprehension which illuminates their own experience (*pathos*) and increases their trust (*ethos)* in the speaker's judgment (*logos*). (Oravec, cited in Sheard, pp. 776-7)

Sheard summarizes her articulation of epideictic rhetoric in terms that I am happy to appropriate in order to characterize the primary 'mode of address' at work in this thesis:

> We can say that epideictic is educative, that it is in many ways ritualistic, that it elicits judgment, that it can initiate, support, influence, or lend closure to other modes of discourse, and we should add not only that it participates in reality at critical moments in time but that it interprets and represents one reality for the purpose of positing and inspiring a new one. We can say that epideictic's relation to the worked is reciprocal because such discourse both responds to and creates 'opportune' or 'critical' moments in time (*kairos)* that warrant critical attention and corrective action.
>
> Ultimately, the epideictic 'moment' is one of dis-ease to which discourse may respond therapeutically (as in the eulogy, where the goal is to restabilize individuals and community through healing rhetoric) or critically (as in political speeches, whose short-term goal may be to destabilize current conditions so that long-term stability is possible). In both cases discourse offers a vision. (Sheard, 1996, p. 790)

Thus, the work of practical philosophy as a cultivation of practical wisdom is to a large extent performed in the 'key' of epideictic.

THE PRIMACY OF PRACTICAL DISCOURSE

A principal theme of this thesis has been to suggest that the category of 'theoretical knowledge' is too thin a category for framing the tasks of ABE. This is why I have returned to older traditions such as rhetoric and practical philosophy which insist on a 'thicker' sense of what is being transacted in 'language and literacy education'. The reduction of *formatio* to 'information' must be resisted; literacy education is not merely a matter of *logos* but also a matter of *ethos* and *pathos*. Language is a primary medium of *Mitsein*, of how we live together, not simply an instrument of communication. Insofar as education is an induction into and the cultivation of a social practice or form of life, the scene of education is necessarily a site of formation, not simply information. Like the humanities, ABE is engaged in the *formatio* of *ethos* and *habitus*, not simply the dissemination of information or construction of valid propositions.

I am very conscious that my 'turn to the practical' takes place in the neighborhood of other similar 'turns to the practical'. Obvious examples are the American Pragmatist work on 'reflective practice' by Schön (1983, 1987), the educational theorizing and practices that draw on Friere (1972) and Habermas such as 'critical action research' (Carr and Kemmis,1986) or 'critical pedagogy' (Giroux, 1989), and feminist theories of 'care' (Gilligan 1982; Noddings, 1984). All operate within the vicinity of my own line of thought. The fact that I do not cite these lines of intellectual work is not intended as a slight; rather, the more pressing task seemed to me to be the retrieval of the fading voices of practical philosophy, rhetoric and philosophical hermeneutics and to try to reinsert them in the educational conversations of the present—an exercise of hermeneutic retrieval.

Another serious absence from this thesis is any sustained treatment of the *topoi* of 'language' or 'literacy' in their own right. Whereas Gadamer is usually framed as engaged in 'the linguistic turn', I have foregrounded his 'practical turn'. This has meant that, except for the theme of the dialogism of language, I have neglected Gadamer's meditations on language especially as formulated in Part 3 of *TM*. Similarly, I could not deal with rhetoric and its history in the detail I had originally envisaged.

Basically, I have tried to resituate ABE as a participant in governance, by dissolving the difference between the practices of governing, formulating rules, on the one hand, and the practices of applying or following rules, on the other. I have traced a tradition of practice, practical philosophy, from Aris-

totle's reflections on equity right through to Will's notion of ampliative governance, which insists that practical social life exceeds the competence of theoretical concepts or laws. Thus the governance of practices is not a meta-theoretical task reserved for Habermas' deliberative forum, rather, it is at issue in each and every context of application. 'Rising to the universal' does not mean withdrawing from social life into an abstract meta-analysis in which abstract norms are subjected to even more abstracted norms.

As Gadamer insists, application is intrinsic to understanding. Confronting a new or different context of application, a different scene of action, must productively turn back on and reshape the original 'universal'. Application is productive, not reproductive. The moment of 'applying a universal' is not just an application of a self-identical entity; using an idea or theory inevitably means reworking it, reshaping it, adapting it. Applying a universal throws it into a different light, highlights different aspects. Applying a universal to a new context of practice means unpicking and re-stitching its seams into a different shape. An idea takes on a different look in a new environment. As Gadamer puts it: we always understand otherwise; and understanding always involves application.

I have therefore attempted to formulate a concept of *theoria* in which distanciation and self-estrangement does not mean stepping back into a cognitivist region of abstract concepts, but a stepping forward into a deeper participation in the otherness, contestation, contingency and plurality of the social world. Thus 'coming to understand' is truly a matter of 'coming to an understanding with', as Gadamer insists. *Theoria* is thus inherently dialogic, not a matter of logical deduction:

> Like playing tennis, we grasp a concept by serving, returning and rallying it back and forth with other players in conversations. …. To understand a general term, and so know your way around its maze of uses, it is always necessary to enter into a dialogue with interlocuters from other regions of the city, to listen to their 'further descriptions' and come to recognize the aspects of the phenomenon in question that they bring to light, aspects which go unnoticed from one's own familiar set of examples. Since there is always more than one side to a case, one must always consult those on the other side. (Tully, 1995, pp. 109-100)

However, I have also argued that the turn to practice and *phronesis* is particularly attuned to what Beck calls the increasing reflexivity of modern social life.

In fact, what Beck calls 'reflexivity' is simply the reappearance, the renewed salience, of what Aristotle called 'equity' or rhetoricians 'circumstance'. Reflexivity is the acknowledgement that the application of norms demands tact, *phronesis* and dialogue. It is precisely at the moment of application that issues of commensurability and translation arise, that algorithms and universal norms either fall into confusion or turn into blind weapons. Coming to understand in specific situations, coming to a sense of what is happening, what is going on and what to do is more an ideographic movement from 'case to case' than a nomothetic movement from universal to particular. This is the domain of hermeneutics: engaging in a dialogue with the specific Other by attempting to come to an understanding by forging common ground, rather than attempting to colonize, imperialize or heretic-ize the other within the rubric of a universal norm or thematic.

As an anti-rhetoric and anti-hermeneutic regime, modernist discourse construes itself as straightforwardly theoretical and justified in formulating 'meta'-categories. It uses this outsider's perspective, this Archimedian position, to underwrite its claim to generality and critical insight. Both claims (the claim to universality and the claim to critique) are grounded in claims to insight into underlying structures, rules, patternings and effects that lie beyond the ken of other participants. Theory as 'meta' is thus the claim to read the unconscious of others.

By contrast, a view that espouses interpretation (not explanation), must locate the sources and resources of generality and critique within the discourses circulating in its sociodiscursive field, thereby eschewing any claim to a transcendental 'meta' insight into an underlying determinant grammar of life. Whereas the 'meta'-perspective claims to validate its findings methodologically irrespective of whether participants accept or take up the construal of their world on offer by the theorist, practical hermeneutic discourse must position itself much more modestly and vulnerably in relation to its audience. The truth of practical discourse fundamentally entails and depends on its 'uptake'.

Philosophical hermeneutics is thus not a modern discipline—like sociology or linguistics. It is the form that practical philosophy takes in a post-metaphysical world. Hermeneutics is the 'clearing' in which critical reflection exists 'after practical philosophy' and 'after rhetoric'. Philosophical herme-

neutics is to postmodern *praxis* what practical philosophy was to ancient *praxis* and what epistemology was to enlightenment *praxis*.

This thesis, thus, does not frame itself as fundamentally oriented to the construction of a body of knowledge about an external referential domain (thereby contributing to a social or philosophical theory of literacy practices), but has construed itself as a meditation, an assay, concerning the possible, desirable meanings of adult literacy as ABE. It has examined 'how things look' when ABE is situated within the same series, the same semantic space, as such terms as 'virtue', '*phronesis*', 'wisdom', 'judgement', 'life' 'reflection', 'critique', 'edification', 'reason', '*praxis*', 'persuasion' and so on. In short, I have explored the metaphor: *ABE is philosophical hermeneutics as the hermeneutic retrieval of practical philosophy*.

I add this philosophical hermeneutic perspective to current paradigms of ABE, not so much to displace or replace existing perspectives on adult literacy, but more to supplement, complement and complicate the polyphony of voices, perspectives and approaches to language and literacy. I do not write in the name of a new truth that is absolute or that obliterates other perspectives on ABE, but in a voice that adds a further dimension or counterpoint to existing ways of framing literacy. As a rhetorician I acknowledge that there is always something to be said for other views. However that does not mean I must refrain from arguing strongly for my own point of view, which I do by disclosing the 'belongingness' of adult literacy to much older lineages of reading and writing practices, practices of rhetoric and hermeneutics, and their concomitant reflections on the pedagogic and general significance of practices of reading and writing—theories of rhetoric and hermeneutics. I am thus allying myself with Gadamer in his effort to weave the incommensurable histories of rhetoric, hermeneutics and philosophy into a dialogue thereby formulating a common ground called 'philosophical hermeneutic' in response to, and as an effort to come to an understanding with the modern human sciences as fundamentally engaged in cultivating *sensus communis*.

Misunderstanding is now an abiding presence that shadows us throughout our entire lives and can at any moment disrupt our everyday words and deeds rendering them alien, uncanny and unfamiliar. We can respond to this opening up of Otherness in one of two ways: we can try to know and master 'it' by invoking or constructing a semiotics or scientific grammar, that is, invent a new technical language that traces uncanny symptoms back to an underlying order; or we can try to come to an understanding 'with it'. Gadamer's claim is that we cannot and should not always opt for knowledge and technology in our dealings with the new, the other, the uncanny, the alien, the foreign, the ambiguous. We should not always map and master it in a net of concepts, but instead come to an understanding of and with it by listening to it.

Thus, the overall theme of this thesis has been to argue that a primary goal of ABE is to foster the *habitus* of *phronesis*, practical wisdom. The 'ideal ABE student', like Quintilian's 'ideal orator', is a person who is morally and discursively equipped and attuned to speak and act in the world—a world of ambiguity and indeterminacy—with responsibility, compassion and discernment.

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