

Gadamer, Aesthetics and Modernity¹

Claude Piché, Université de Montréal

Hegel's concept of a 'religion of art' indicates exactly what motivates my hermeneutic doubt about aesthetic consciousness. For it, art exists not as art but as religion, as the presence of the divine, its own highest possibility. (Gadamer, Afterword [1972])

Hans Georg Gadamer's discussion of aesthetics in Part I of *Truth and Method* can be read in one of two ways: as a discrete set of reflections on art or as a paradigm of interpretive understanding that governs the humanities as a whole. I hold the second view. It may be useful, therefore, to reconstruct the foundational role played by art in a Gadamerian hermeneutics by looking at the latter's philosophical presuppositions. I would like to offer a few remarks in regard to this question and, because my main interest is a systematic one, the scope of these remarks will be focused primarily on the role played by art in the argument of Gadamer's *magnum opus*, even though we know that since 1960 he has written many essays on art. We might refer for instance to the essays published together with the lecture entitled *The Relevance of the Beautiful* [1974]. These texts certainly provide an elaboration of his earlier position, and they even show signs of an evolution. But the problem is this: how far do they conform to the

basic claims of philosophical hermeneutics?¹ These are difficulties that can be dealt with only after we become familiar with the place of artistic beauty in *Truth and Method*. The recent publication of the completely revised translation of this book reminds us once again of its undeniable centrality.

Broadly, one can characterize Gadamer's concept of art as Hegelian in orientation, major differences notwithstanding. This comes out clearly at the end of Part I of *Truth and Method* where Gadamer asserts that Hegel was superior to Schleiermacher, the first proponent of a universal hermeneutics.² By basing his theory of interpretation on the Romantic concept of the genius and the psychology of creation, Schleiermacher failed to understand what it is that is specific to art. Hegel, by contrast, is said to have seen more clearly that to experience art is to confront a particular *claim to truth* which is made accessible through *historical mediation*. This conclusion was announced earlier in the chapter.

For this we can appeal to Hegel's admirable lectures on aesthetics. Here the truth that lies in every artistic experience is recognized and at the same time mediated with historical consciousness. Hence aesthetics becomes a history of worldviews—i.e., a history of truth, as it is manifest in the mirror of art. It is also a fundamental recognition of the task that I formulated thus: to legitimate the knowledge of truth that occurs in the experience of art itself.³

Undoubtedly, Hegel was the first thinker to postulate a relation between art and truth. What is more, Hegel considered art to be an expression of the absolute. While this is not true of art in all its historical shapes, it does according to Hegel, hold for the art of the ancient Greeks, a judgment that reflects his classicism. Despite certain reservations about dogmatic forms of classicism,⁴ Gadamer too subscribes to this ideal, although he considers the need for an historical mediation of the truth of the classical period to be all-important. Perhaps the single most important point of disagreement between the two lies in the way in which this historical mediation of truth is brought about, what its vehicle or medium is. For Gadamer, that vehicle is *tradition*, a concept that transcends subjectivity while at

the same time pointing to it (in the sense that traditions must be conscious or else they are blind). For Hegel, that medium is *spirit*. What is distinctive of the Hegelian spirit is the fact that it not only traverses, i.e. mediates, all the past historical stations but also leaves them behind, transcending them in a hitherto unprecedented way. Modernity offers for the first time an opportunity to recast the truth claims of art in the form of *absolute knowledge*, where spirit contemplates itself in the concept, thus becoming transparent. We catch a glimpse, here, of the primacy of science and philosophy over art which characterizes Hegel's system. Gadamer, for his part, challenges the pretensions of Hegel's systematic philosophy. Holding firm to the standpoint of Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Gadamer refuses to take the final step toward conceptual (and therefore abstract) knowledge that Hegel took in the *Encyclopedia* of 1817. One can paraphrase this by saying that he plays Hegel's classicism off against the latter's claim about the truth of modern self-consciousness. The title *Truth and Method* has a polemical undertone: it is because methodical science has for Gadamer a very limited truth claim that there remains for us something like a relevance of the beautiful in regard to the full concept of truth.

The analyses that follow are intended to shed light on three related problems raised by *Truth and Method*: (1) Gadamer's critique of modernity, as it emerges from his conception of art, (2) the relation between natural and artistic beauty and (3) the adequacy of Gadamer's assessment of modern art.

1. Art and Subjectivity

To Gadamer, what defines **modern** as opposed to classical aesthetics is **differentiation**. By **aesthetic differentiation**, Gadamer means the fact that art becomes divorced from the lifeworld in which it used to be embedded. Art today lives in a sphere unto itself, retaining only the quality of beauty, while discarding nonaesthetic aspects such as its cultic, ethical, and political functions. Gadamer's "aesthetic differentiation" is a process of functional specialization through which art frees

itself from its former dependencies (on religion, economy, and the state). Maybe the most appropriate covering term for these various developments is "autonomy of art," for a general growth in subjectivity accompanies the differentiation of art as a separate sphere. And this accounts for the fact that modern art elicits responses that are in general more conscious, and reflective.

By all accounts, including Gadamer's, it was Kant who first promoted the move to a new aesthetics that focused on the autonomy of art and the need for subjective consciousness. Following Kant, beauty does not exist except insofar as it prompts an act of evaluation or judgment. Kant analyzed the specific nature of the faculty of judgment, emphasizing the ways in which it differed from other faculties of the mind. In so doing, he furthered the isolation of the domain of beauty, initiating the move toward the autonomy of aesthetic consciousness. Schiller also highlighted another tendency in modern aesthetics, which is to locate art strictly in the realm of appearances rather than reality. One upshot of this is that beauty is henceforth found in artworks or human artifacts only, whereas in premodern cultures it was also, if not primarily, an aspect of nature. The decline of nature within aesthetics was foreshadowed by the transition from taste to genius in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. Thereafter beauty became the object of artistic creation alone. Gadamer is convinced that the central role played by the idea of genius had a far-reaching, negative impact on art and on the theory of aesthetic reception in the 19th century.

Kant's main concern, however, was to give aesthetics an autonomous basis freed from the criterion of the concept, and not to raise the question of truth in the sphere of art, but to base aesthetic judgment on the subjective a priori of our feeling of life, the harmony of our capacity for 'knowledge in general', which is the essence of both taste and genius. All of this was in a piece with nineteenth-century irrationalism and the cult of genius.⁵

The irrationalism in question is exemplified by the Romantic hermeneutics of Schleiermacher who defines interpretation in terms of an analogy with the activity of the genius. For if genius creates art, it

takes a genius to understand it. On this view, interpretive understanding becomes the same as recreation, which is only possible if "congeniality" (Dilthey) is presupposed. According to Gadamer, this is an instance of psychologism of the worst sort. With the notion of genius in our intellectual luggage, we understand neither the content of art, nor its message, nor anything else about it. In Gadamer's view, the Romantic theory of art, with its cult of the genius, reduced art to *meaningless* chatter, a development that is brought to a head in early twentieth-century thinkers like Paul Valéry and Georg Lukács. For Gadamer, Valéry's statement that "my poetry has those meanings that people care to give it"⁶ ("mes vers ont le sens qu'on leur prête") discloses his "hermeneutic nihilism." Similarly, Gadamer castigates the reduction of art to lived experience (*Erlebnis*) in the young Lukács as a sign of the "absolute disjunction" of art from other realms of everyday life. Faced with generalized repression, the individual in modern civilization necessarily turns art into a refuge, a place where the need for self-expression is satisfied in a vicarious, emotional way. Equating true aesthetic experience with lived experience, as Lukács does, is, for Gadamer, symptomatic of the malaise caused by "the complicated workings of [a] civilization [that was] transformed by the Industrial Revolution."⁷

The above quotation is indicative of the strong link that Gadamer sees between modern theories of art and modernity in general. The aesthetic differentiation that he condemns is actually only one facet in a larger spectrum of characteristics that define modernity as a whole. Theories of modernization have been around, in sociology and in other social sciences, for close to a century. They all seem to be built around the concept of differentiation. Weber and Habermas⁸ are two of the most well-known advocates of such a theory of differentiation. For example as far as culture is concerned, they identify modernity with the growing autonomy of three fields: science, morals, and art. Their autonomy rests on the fact that each represents a different cultural value, namely, truth, goodness, and beauty. Weber and Habermas insist that under the auspices of modernity these values have to be treated as separate entities, whereas in traditional societies

there may be a tendency for them to be amalgamated. While sharing the analytical approach of a theory of differentiation, Gadamer reaches a diagnosis that is different from that of Weber and Habermas. To him, modernity is quite simply a form of illness; and differentiation is the cause of this disease that afflicts modern man. As a remedy Gadamer prescribes the Platonic idea that beauty is not only an aesthetic quality but essentially linked to truth and goodness. Such seems to be the therapeutic aim of the first few chapters of *Truth and Method* in which he demonstrates that the concepts of "common sense", "judgment" and "taste" originally had moral and political connotations in addition to their narrowly aesthetic meanings. Once again, Kant is seen to occupy a strategic position on the threshold of the modern period inasmuch as he made explicit the autonomy of the validity claims of science, morality, and art. Kant is identified as the culprit who deprived art of any cognitive claim. After Kant, theoretical knowledge is forever confined to the natural sciences; nature becomes the exclusive object of study of mathematical physics.⁹ The natural sciences expound the only truth about nature that we can arrive at with certainty. What is more, the truth of natural science is compelling because it can be turned to technological uses. As such, it has only a narrow scope, corresponding to what Horkheimer called "instrumental reason." Conceived as a matrix for technological exploitation, nature predictably loses its relevance for modern aesthetics. Artistic beauty gains primacy over natural beauty. But beauty that is man-made can only produce self-images of man. "This switch to the point of view of art ontologically presupposes a *mass of being* thought of as *formless* or ruled by mechanical laws. The artistic mind of man, which mechanically constructs useful things, will ultimately understand all beauty in terms of the work of his own mind."¹⁰ At this point, the "ontological" implication of modernity comes into view, which is that man no longer sees himself as part of nature, for nature, unable to contribute to his self-understanding, has become "alienated" from him.¹¹ Modern man lives in a "disenchanted world." Unlike Weber who coined the phrase, Gadamer takes it

literally to mean that we live in a world abandoned by the gods. We will see later that this is more than a figure of speech. The process of disenchantment did not start with modernity but much earlier. It is Christianity that marks the first phase of the "dedemonization" of the world. The following passage concerning the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane, a dichotomy that goes back to the New Testament, is instructive in this regard:

Only with Christianity does profaneness come to be understood in a stricter sense. The New Testament undemonised the world to such an extent that an absolute contrast between the profane and the religious became possible. The church's promise of salvation means that the world is always only 'this world.' The fact that this claim was special to the church also creates the tension between it and the state, which coincides with the *end of the classical world*; and thus the concept of the profane acquires special currency.¹²

This initial step, away from the ancient and into the modern world, is of momentous importance. It signals the beginning of the end, so to speak. What remains to be seen is just how tenable Gadamer's classicism is in the context of his idea of art and the whole undertaking of a philosophical hermeneutics.

II. Art and Nature

Gadamer's reservations about Romantic aesthetics, we saw, are part of a larger critique of modernity. At the deepest level, it is a critique of the ontological presuppositions of art in the modern world. Modern autonomous art, Gadamer claims, occupies an isolated sphere, a sphere of mere appearances, divorced from reality. Modern art is also becoming more and more "disenchanted." For this, Gadamer lays the blame, though not exclusively, on Kant and his "nominalist concept of reality,"¹³ a conception that turns nature into an object of mathematical physics. Gadamer believes that such a concept reduces nature to a mere object of human domination. Critical of this reduction, he proposes a wider, non-instrumental concept of reason and truth. These matters are broached in the concluding chapter on "The Universal Aspects of Hermeneutics." Here, reason and truth are

discussed in terms of their relation to two things, language and beauty. Not art, but beauty is now used as a paradigm for the manifestation of truth that characterizes interpretive understanding. Beauty is related to truth because both share the same ontological ground. In this connection, Gadamer approvingly refers to Plato who felt that the order and symmetry we find in beauty are expressions of the natural order of being. On this theory, nature represents a stable ontological order. This order is teleological in the sense that every form in the scale of beings has its own end, its own telos, hence its own degree of perfection, and beauty must be judged in relation to this criterion. Gadamer associates himself rather closely with this conception of the world as an ordered cosmos and it is from this vantage point that he criticizes the modern view of nature as an object of domination. Modern science deprives nature of its essential ends, turning it into an indifferent, non-intentional (*absichtslos*) reality.¹⁴

At this juncture, we come face to face with a profound shift in Gadamer's perspective. In Part I, he seemed to be arguing that art is the paradigm for every act of interpretation, whereas in the final chapter he accords primacy, not to art, but to natural beauty, relegating art to an "exceptional case." In his defense, it should be said that he opposes a narrow definition of *mimesis*, one that views art as a mere copying of nature.¹⁵ Instead, art is seen as an independent human activity. Art, however, is only valid to the extent that it fills the lacunae left by nature, thus completing nature's order. The discussion of Plato's metaphysics of the beautiful deserves to be quoted at some length:

As we can see, this kind of definition of the beautiful is a universal ontological one. Here nature and art are not in antithesis to each other. This means, of course, that in regard to beauty the priority of nature is unquestioned. Art may take advantage of gaps in the natural order of being to perfect its beauties. But that certainly does not mean that 'beauty' is to be found primarily in art. As long as the order of being is itself seen as divine or as God's creation—and the latter is the case until the eighteenth century—the exceptional case of art can be seen only within the horizon of this order

of being. We have described above how it was only in the nineteenth century that the problems of aesthetics were transferred to art.¹⁶

It is important to note that for Gadamer the characterization of the natural order as "divine" is preferable to the notion of "God's creation." This can be gleaned from his assessment of the Judeo-Christian tradition as a whole, the latter having allegedly started the process of disenchantment by conceiving God as pure spirit. Moreover, there is a direct line which leads from this tradition to the birth of solipsism in Descartes, to modern individualism and ultimately to Hegel's absolute spirit. By the time that it had developed fully, this "idealistic spiritualism" had left reality completely behind. Needless to say, Gadamer does not return to the Greeks and their divine cosmos. To do so would be to betray a lack of hermeneutic sensibility. All the same, cosmology figures prominently among his intellectual concerns. It is in this light that Part III must be understood, which deals with language as an ontological realm where nature and history are reconciled, where the order of being and the dimension of time are mediated. It is in this connection that Gadamer appropriates Humboldt's conception of human language as a "view of the world" (*Weltansicht*). Human beings, then, gain access to the world through language, for the manifestation of this world is essentially linguistic.

What, then, is the place of art in such a world? The answer is that art simply assimilates itself to it as a higher order. With respect to poetry, for example, Gadamer states that poetic language realizes an inscription into existing relations of order (*Einrücken in Ordnungsbezüge*).¹⁷ The reader of poetry takes part in the artistic representation in the same way as he or she participates as a natural being in the cosmological order: he or she is not the master of the game. To demonstrate this Gadamer evolved the metaphor of play earlier on in the chapter on the ontology of the work of art, emphasizing that the player does not control what is happening in the game. There, play was seen to have a subjectivity of its own, one which reduced participants to something less than full subjects. It is only logical that Gadamer would want to come back to the idea of play in the closing

section of the book in order to bring the whole of his theory into proper view. The attitude of the spectator in art is not just a metaphor for the broader relation of man and world; art itself is a celebration of the divine order of nature. We must assume that he means this quite literally or else his remarks about art having something to do with religious ceremony or cultic festivities would be meaningless. This notion comes out most clearly in the assertion that "a work of art always has something sacred about it."¹⁸ We now realize why Gadamer took such pains to analyze the gradual elimination of natural beauty and its classical connotations at the hands of the modern "standpoint of art." Gadamer seeks to stem this tide by revaluing tradition in general, and that of ancient Greece in particular. If successful, this strategy yields something that is in very short supply in contemporary aesthetics—a normative yardstick by which to create and judge works of art.

III. Art and Criticism

In this section, I will test the applicability of Gadamer's concept of art to forms of art that are specifically modern (without necessarily being "modernistic"). He bases his model of aesthetic experience on the idea of play. Ironically, play is conceived as a given with which the spectator must fuse if he or she is to share in the truth of the artwork. How appropriate is this conception to those types of artworks that have come into being during the modern period? I am thinking of the many examples found in painting, music, and literature where communication with the public is not immediate but has to be established through reflection. Mediating between the work and its reception usually is the job of criticism, more narrowly, art criticism. Gadamer, who is aware of this fact, believes that the increasing need for art criticism today flows directly from aesthetic differentiation, a development he deplures. He blames any kind of aesthetic consciousness for interrupting the normal mediation between the work and its reception. "This accords with the fact that aesthetic consciousness is generally able to make the aesthetic distinction between the work and

its mediation only in a *critical* way—i.e., where this mediation breaks down. The communication of the work is, in principle, a total one."¹⁹ According to Gadamer's model of an unproblematic hermeneutic relation between the work and the spectator, art that requires explicit reflection and mediation fails *ipso facto*. From his perspective, there is no point in asking whether modern artworks are authentic, whether they are bearers of some truth or other. Since Schleiermacher is Gadamer's authority on the Romantics, he fails to attribute a positive role to aesthetic reflection and critique. Rather, he equates them with a wilful denial of the manifest truth of artworks. In the last analysis, criticism represents a psychological, subjective, and hence external moment in the process of understanding.²⁰ If criticism has any relevance at all, it is with respect to the spectator, and not the work. Let us quote a passage from a text published a few years before *Truth and Method*: "All criticism of poetry, which presupposes that the interpreter is touched by the work of the poet, is and remains a *self-critique* of the interpreter."²¹ The artwork must be kept free of suspicion. Only the interpreter can be criticized for his or her subjective, finite point of view.

In an earlier section, I mentioned that, for Gadamer, Valéry and Lukács are representative of the contemporary heirs of Romantic aesthetics and hermeneutics, heirs who illustrate most clearly the tendency toward meaninglessness in modern art and aesthetic theory. Perhaps Gadamer could have learned a thing or two from Walter Benjamin's doctoral thesis on *The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism* (1919) which sets out, in a more positive way, the contribution made to aesthetics by the early Romantics. Based on the writings of Novalis and F. Schlegel, Benjamin reconstructs the Romantic idea of criticism, suggesting that, far from being a standpoint external to the artwork, criticism is actually a constitutive moment within it. Without going into the details, I want to touch on a few key facets of Benjamin's characterization of Romantic art criticism. Benjamin argues that criticism is not a subjective attitude, a widespread belief to the contrary notwithstanding (a belief shared by Gadamer). "Critique, which is nowadays considered the most

subjectivistic attitude, was for the Romantics the regulator of all subjectivity, contingency, or arbitrariness in the creation of the work."²² Criticism, then, is an intrinsic component of the structure of artworks that require completion by the reader/onlooker. As Benjamin puts it: "Contrary to received opinion, criticism is quite definitely not judgment but fulfilment, consummation and systematization of the artwork, on the one hand, and dissipation into the absolute, on the other". The Romantic conception of art stresses the formal aspect of the work. In it, form is, as Hegel observed, no longer adequate to its content. The process of constructing forms therefore goes on vacuously and *ad infinitum*. Nevertheless, the work finds a rule within itself. This rule, this internal law of form, gives a direction to infinite reflection, thus consummating the critique. The work has within itself its own yardstick. In Benjamin's words: "The immanent tendency of the work and accordingly the yardstick of its immanent critique is the reflection on which it relies and which reaches an explicit form."

The above gloss on Benjamin's reconstruction of Romantic art theory and art criticism is meant to show that Gadamer's classicist conception of art is one option among many. Once he has chosen the model of ancient Greece and its classical art form, he can no longer be sensitive to artistic modernity in its fullness and diversity. Gadamer's interpretation of Romanticism, because of its prejudices, is not the only possible one, and maybe not the best one.

Gadamer, we noted, admires Hegel's aesthetics because it throws light on two important moments pertaining to the work of art: The work's claim to truth and the historical mediation of this truth. But he also puts his finger on a shortcoming in Hegel, which is that Hegel sublates aesthetic truth, reducing it to philosophical truth. In the end, the philosophy of absolute spirit transcends every stage of mediation through which it passes, culminating in self-contemplation of spirit. For Gadamer, this marks a return to the transcendence of a Christian divinity. And since this philosophy culminates in immediacy, Hegel, in this one respect, is no different from Schleiermacher and his hermeneutics of congeniality.²³ According to Gadamer, aesthetic

truth overcomes the spectator like an illumination, like an event beyond his or her control. The spectator has to be open to it, just as he or she is open to the divine world order in which he or she partakes through language. Since the beginning of the modern age, this openness has been called into question. In "Prometheus and the Tragedy of Culture,"²⁴ a piece dating back to the immediate post-war period, Gadamer construed the emergence of subjectivity as a revolt against the gods, against the natural order of things. The emancipation of modern subjectivity is seen as a vainglorious tendency which finds its purest expression in the myth of the artist as genius, the "specifically modern myth." The consequences of this revolt have turned out to be disastrous. This, incidentally, is the backdrop against which we can try to make sense of Gadamer's rejection of "critical reflection" in his debate with Habermas. I have tried to provide an outline, and no more, of what it might mean to give a positive turn to the notions of critique and reflection. Following Benjamin, I conceive modern art as a medium of reflection such that mediation is deliberately taken on as a task by the spectator/reader/listener. To this complex and artificial role of aesthetic consciousness, Gadamer juxtaposes his ideal of unproblematic communication between the artwork and the public. Historically, it was realized in past periods when ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) was a constitutive part of the content of art. According to Gadamer, these were the "great ages in the history of art."²⁵ Logically, the idea of classicism in Gadamer's hermeneutics is more than a name for a historical period: it serves as a *normative* and systematic category. Undoubtedly, great ages of art, or great ages of anything for that matter, are a thing of the past. In this situation, we are duty bound to give promising forms of modern art a fair hearing, rather than dismissing them outright. They may not embody absolute truth but if they are authentic, they do bear witness to the legitimacy of modernity.

NOTES

1. This is the fully revised version of a paper given at McGill University on March 14, 1988. For the stylistic refinements brought to this text, I would like to thank Elizabeth Ennen and in particular Christian Lenhardt, who also made many precious suggestions.
2. Robert Bernasconi in his "Foreword" to Gadamer's *The Relevance of the Beautiful* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) identifies an evolution from *Truth and Method* to the more recent papers in which Kant plays a central role. It would also be interesting to compare the function of the 'symbol' in *Truth and Method*, where it is marginalized for the sake of a 'rehabilitation of allegory', and in "The Relevance of the Beautiful," where it fulfils an essential task in the description of the representative character of art.
3. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1975), 161, trans. W. Glen-Doepel revised by J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, *Truth and Method* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Corporation, 1989) 169.
4. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 93, trans., 98.
5. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 11, trans., 14. For Gadamer's conception of classicism, see the section on "The Example of the Classical" (*Wahrheit und Methode*, 269-275; trans., 285-290) as well as his early piece on "Bach und Weimar" (1946), *Kleine Schriften II* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1979) 77. The polemic against dogmatic classicism in the "Nachwort" (1972) of *Wahrheit und Methode* (539-541, trans., 577-579) also has precedents in Gadamer's writings. See for example "Hölderlin und die Antike" (1943), *Kleine Schriften II*, 31. Gadamer's traditionalism and classicism have recently become a target of criticism. E.g. Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Plötzlichkeit, Zum Augenblick des ästhetischen Scheins* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981) 29, 32; Hans Robert Jauss, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982) 26-27, 668, 790-791; Peter Bürger, *Zur Kritik der idealistischen Ästhetik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983) 15-16; Walter Schulz, *Metaphysik des Schwebens, Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Ästhetik* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1985) 63-70.
6. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 56, trans., 59-60.
7. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 90, Anm. 2, trans., 95, note 183.
8. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 61, trans., 65.
9. For a critical account of the role played by art in the recent developments of Habermas' theory of communicative action, see my "Art and Democracy in Habermas," in H. J. Siverman and D. Welton, eds., *Writing the Politics of Difference* (Stony Brook: SUNY Press), forthcoming.
10. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 37-38, trans., 40-41.
11. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 454-455, see also 45, 55, trans., 479 (underlined by C. P.), 48, 59.
12. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 79, trans., 83.
13. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 143, trans., 150 (underlined by C. P.). "It is precisely in the disenchantment of the world that Max Weber saw the law according to which history inevitably progresses from *mythos* to *logos*, to the rational world-view... The secularization of Christianity first produced the rationalization of the world, and today we understand why. Indeed it is Christianity which, by proclaiming the good news of the New Testament, first accomplished a radical critique of myth. The entire pagan world of the gods, not only the world of this or that people, is denounced and revealed to be, in the light of the transcending God of the Judeo-Christian religion, a world of demons, i.e. a world of false divinities and fiendish beings, and this because the all mundane gods,

- figures of a world experienced as a superior force. In accordance with the Christian message, the world is understood as the false essence of a mankind in need of salvation. From the standpoint of Christianity, the rational explanation of the world by science entails the threat of a fall from God, insofar as man pretends to have an autonomous access to truth. But in so doing Christianity paved the way for modern Enlightenment, whose incredible radicality swept away Christianity itself, making possible the radical destruction of the mythical sphere, i.e. of the world-view dominated by thisworldly gods". H. G. Gadamer, "Mythos und Vernunft" (1954), *Kleine Schriften IV* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1977) 49 (my translation). See also his "Die Philosophie und die Religion des Judentums" (1961), *Kleine Schriften I* (Tübingen: J. C. Mohr, 1976) 203 and "Über das Göttliche im frühen Denken der Griechen" (1970), *Kleine Schriften III* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1972) 64.
14. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 79, trans., 83.
 15. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 48, trans., 51. The cosmology of Plato's *Timaeus* occupies a central place in the studies devoted to Greek philosophy. See among others, in the *Kleine Schriften III*, 4, 10 16sq, 37sq, 67sq, 227, 246.
 16. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 78, trans., 82.
 17. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 454, trans., 479.
 18. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 464, trans., 489. This reminds us of the famous expression which occurs in the chapter on classicism: "Einrücken in ein Überlieferungsgeschehen," *Wahrheit und Methode*, 275, trans., 290.
 19. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 143, trans., 150. Rainer Warning, in his remarkable critique of Gadamer's classicism, has been struck by the boldness of the sentence found in the "Nachwort" to *Wahrheit und Methode* and quoted in the above epigraph. Zur Hermeneutik des Klassischen", *Über das Klassische*, ed. R. Bockholdt (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987) 98, Anm. 20.
 20. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 114, (modified) trans., 120 (underlined by C. P.).
 21. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 112, Anm. 1, trans., 118, note 218.
 22. "Rainer Maria Rilkes Deutung des Daseins" (1954), *Kleine Schriften II*, 186 (my translation). Compare H. G. Gadamer, "Zur Fragwürdigkeit des ästhetischen Bewußtseins" (1958), ed. D. Henrich and W. Iser, *Theorien der Kunst* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982): "We here touch on a second critical point of this theory [i.e. idealistic aesthetics with its doctrine of the productive imagination of the genius]: the phenomenon of aesthetic critique does not fit well with the theory of the conformity of production and pleasure... Whenever [aesthetic critique] claims a reproductive competence by raising concrete critical objections, or even by putting forth positive suggestions of its own, it inevitably becomes a misguided form of criticism. Its reproduction is a manifest illusion. Understanding and pleasure certainly imply an activity but it is entirely different from the activity of production. This is so obvious that aesthetic critique, where it appears to be justified, in fact manifests a lack of artistic sense, instead of actually recognizing and correcting it. Later we will have to deal with the fact that aesthetic critique and aesthetic judgment in general have merely a secondary relation to the work of art," 65; "Only when this anticipation of completion remains unrealizable, i.e., when the discovery of meaning fails, is freely exercised aesthetic consciousness thrown back upon itself. It is precisely in this sense that every aesthetic critique is secondary; it is an experience of privation that leads to the reflective pleasure of aesthetic judgment," 69.
 23. Walter Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstskritik in der Deutschen Romantik, Gesammelte Werke I* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987) 80. All quotations are taken from the chapter on "Das Kunstwerk", 72-87.
 24. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 451, trans., 476.

25. *Kleine Schriften II*, 64-74. In the 1940's, the myth of Prometheus (the Titan) serves as an important motif of Gadamer's literary essays. For his interpretation of Goethe, see "Vom geistigen Lauf des Menschen" (1944), *Kleine Schriften II*, 106-117, and "Goethe und die sittliche Welt" (1949), *ibid.*, 102-103. With regard to Hölderlin, the following passage dating from 1943 presents a clear anticipation of the underlying idea of *Truth and Method*, according to which the revolt of the Titans (i.e. modern man) cannot overthrow the domination of the gods: "... the divine order is a unification of chaos. The real message of the poet however is the indestructibility of the domination exercised by the organizing spirits. The rebellion of the Titans, the rejection of the divine, is essentially powerless. What looks like a weakening of the power of the gods is only an appearance. The law is still in force; it even governs the dedemonization of the world". "Hölderlin und das Zukünftige", *ibid.*, 58-59. More recently, see *Kleine Schriften IV*, 30sq, 36, 68sq.

26. *Wahrheit und Methode*, 77, trans., 81.

arc
1974