PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF HERMENEUTICAL

PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION

William Orville Taft
Ph.D.

Goldsmiths College

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to establish a foundation for a process model of education based on the hermeneutical philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer. The first chapter discusses the general precepts that characterize hermeneutics as a variant of postmodern philosophy. Special attention is paid to the problematic nature of knowledge and the implications that has for the development of curricular studies and pedagogical practices.

Chapter Two examines the basic ideas of Gadamer's philosophy, especially as they apply to educational issues. Most importantly, his conception of interpretive understanding proves to be conversational in nature. At the heart of conversational knowledge is an I-Thou relationship, which guides participants engaged in discussion as well as learners involved with the interpretation of all forms of textuality.

Chapter Three outlines three characteristics of a hermeneutically guided pedagogy. These are 1) the usefulness of authoritative expertise 2) the need to employ a text-centered curriculum, and 3) the propriety of setting personal self-development as the paramount goal of any curriculum. These three educational objectives are shown to distinguish a hermeneutically guided curriculum from the historic practices of the Humanities Curriculum Project.

Chapter Four represents a general review of educational literature that is considered hermeneutical. Some of the articles are directly or indirectly supportive of Gadamer's philosophy, others contradictory. All contribute to a point of view that expands upon my own interpretation of Gadamer. They also provide a counterpoint to the conclusions that I initially drew from my research (and reading) and place that research into a broader intellectual context.

The final chapters are an account of experiments I conducted that were predicated on a hermeneutical approach to humanistic studies. My analysis of these experiments

yielded the three characteristics of a hermeneutical pedagogy listed above. My conclusion is not the product of an empirically pure search for truth. It is, rather, the result of an interpretive activity that includes a thorough recognition of the presuppositions that condition my own interpretive understanding.

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

Part One of this thesis attempts to establish a general philosophical foundation for a hermeneutically based pedagogy. In Chapter One some of the most elementary issues in postmodernist philosophy are discussed, for example, the rejection of objectivism as a basis for truth-claims, as well as the insurmountable problems raised by subjectivism as an alternative. Knowledge itself is explained as problematic.

More specifically, a critique of Descartes's *Cogito* Philosophy is undertaken in order to show that Cartesianism, despite its origins in what Richard Palmer refers to as "a nonhistorical subjectivity" (Palmer 1969, p.225), has lent itself to an objectification of knowledge in which the world divides between subject and object, knower and known. The result of this is that no bridge other than formalized analysis remains to join the sundered phenomenon of self and other. Objects of study, therefore, have no essential effect on self-understanding. Analysis, in fact, becomes the preferred mode of study, superseding interpretation and the interpreter's goal of gathering meaning.

I will contrast this reliance on analysis and related types of inquiry with the hermeneutical process of interpretive understanding in which no separation between knower and known is assumed. Herein, the preferred mode of understanding is through dialogue between self and other, the latter being conceived as that which is other-than-oneself - either text, treatise, artifact, work of art, or conversant (interlocutor). The other, in whatever form, bears meaning that is potentially relevant to one's self-understanding.

In the second part of Chapter One I will discuss Richard Bernstein's critical rejection of theoretical objectivism (and its philosophical antagonist, subjectivism) in favor of a concept of relativism that allows for comparability between different frameworks of understanding.

Chapter Two is devoted to discussing and defining the basic concepts that

characterize hermeneutical philosophy, especially that espoused by Gadamer: prejudgments (prejudices), traditions of understanding, I-Thou relationships, self-understanding, and dialogic learning.

Chapter Three is a brief critical review of the work of Lawrence Stenhouse, giving special attention to the Humanities Curriculum Project, which was fundamentally influenced by his ideas on a process model of curriculum. I have isolated three ways in which a process model of education guided by hermeneutical principles of understanding differs from the educational practice of the Humanities Curriculum Project. They are: 1) the understanding and use of authority 2) the need for a text centered curriculum, and 3) the emphasis that is placed on challenging student self-understanding.

Some comment is needed on how I interpret Stenhouse, Elliott, and others who are associated with a process view of education. My own framework of understanding, which inevitably colors all my interpretive endeavors, includes a strong commitment to dialectical reasoning, especially as it is manifested in the social psychology of Silvan Tomkins. Tomkins (1963) divides ideological thinking into two basic categories that are in bipolar opposition to one another. The one he designates as left-wing (the reader is assured that I will employ these categories as Tomkins defines them rather than by their more conventional political associations) and the other as right-wing. These are defined and discussed in Chapter Two. Tomkins reasons that a dialectical alternative, a synthesis of these two ideological extremes, is preferable to the extremes themselves. He designates this as a centrist ideology.

My understanding of Gadamer and his hermeneutical philosophy, therefore, has been conditioned by a framework of understanding influenced by Tomkins's centrism. This idea is prejudicial. I only came to recognize it during the process of interpretively reading Gadamer. As a prejudice it certainly influences how I understand his philosophical ideas, which themselves are part of a greater tradition of understanding. For example, my notion of authoritative expertise - discussed in Chapter Three -

represents a dialectical compromise between a left-wing rejection of the notion of authority altogether and a right-wing belief that it is through authority that knowledge is handed from one generation to another.

It is not so much a matter of whether I read Gadamer correctly - although it is quite possible to read something incorrectly - but, rather, a matter of how I was intellectually positioned to understand what I have read. One's frame of reference is crucial, although not determinate. Through the process of interpretation, one's prejudices do not remain unaffected. Mine certainly did not.

Chapter Four is a general review of hermeneutic literature. It provides for an expanded view of this widely diverse - and often divisive - discipline. Herein I suggest a possible future modification of my own point of view as represented in the first three chapters. Shaun Gallagher's (1992) conception of "moderate hermeneutics", while close to my own centrist reading of Gadamer, provides the opportunity to intergrate certain features of the thinking of other schools of hermeneutics into Gadadamer's basic framework.

CHAPTER ONE

KNOWLEDGE, OBJECTIVITY, AND RELATIVISM

A debate about objectiveness is at the core of the postmodernist critique of knowledge. Doubt has been cast on the notion that interpretive understanding is determinative and that meaning can be somehow fixed around indices of truth that are objective in nature. In the course of the development of twentieth century philosophy, the emphasis has also shifted from what we know to how we experience the world. For example, when Ivan Karamazov, Dostoyevsky's character in *The Brothers Karamazov*, says that if God does not exist, all is permitted, his fictional insight not only prefigures this century's anxiety concerning the consequence of there being no absolute basis for determining knowledge of good and evil but also reveals an underlying concern with how one experiences the consequences of God's nonexistence.

The consequences of having or not having a basis of objective knowledge and values have been widely debated. Almost every major philosopher has had to deal with this and related questions. Since I am greatly concerned with the interpretation of texts, I will draw on what may seem, at first, to be an innocuous, even irrelevant, example of this perennial problem, but one that is, nevertheless, paradigmatic for the broader purposes of pedagogy. By that I mean that the lessons derived from pondering certain problems in textual criticism are as applicable to matters of pedagogy as they are to metaphysical or epistemological speculation. This detour is meant to function as a specific illustration of the more general problem of objectiveness in both philosophical studies and literary criticism. Later on the reader will see the value of this discussion as it applies to the actual interpretation of books in a curriculum that is based on the hermeneutical principles of interpretation.

E. D. Hirsch in his book *Validity And Interpretation* (1967) argues, in what sometimes amounts to a tone of moral of urgency, that an objectivity of textual interpretation is both possible and necessary. He believes there is one underlying and deterministic meaning to a work of art, especially a literary text, that does not change during the process of interpretation. This meaning, which can be identified as the author's intended meaning, can be ascertained by a careful examination of the text if it is "unsullied by the interpreter's own normative goals or his views of the work's importance" (Hoy 1978, p. 14). Although it has been a concern of postmodern literary criticism that literature should detach itself from the purely subjective consciousness of an author - his or her personal thoughts and feelings - Hirsch holds that there has to be an objectivity of interpretation in order to establish what a book (text) means. He believes "that a verbal meaning is determinate. . . . that it is an entity which always remains the same from one moment to the next - that it is changeless. . . . that it is what it is and not something else" (Hirsch 1967, quoted in Palmer 1969, p. 61). Having obviously considered the consequences of the alternatives, Hirsch contends that without objective meaning, a proliferation of readings culminates in a "babel of interpretation". He seems to fear something like an anarchy of interpretation, a kind of nihilism in which an infinite regress of interpretive schemes amounts to no meaning at all. Hirsch's fear is not to be lightly dismissed if literature is to be considered an important human activity rather than an idle concern. If literature fosters, for instance, self-understanding (as hermeneuticists contend), one has to ask if a subjectivistic interpretation of texts does not risk turning a process, which is at the heart of human cultural development, into unregulated idiosyncrasy. All interpretation - to borrow from Ivan Karamazov - would be permitted. Considering the Tower of Babel metaphor, which serves to focus Hirsch's attack on interpretive frameworks of understanding that deny an objectivity of meaning, the consequences of this to Hirsch not only signals a lack of communication but a general social dissolution.

Conversely, one must also consider the negative consequences of even Hirsch's

qualified objectivism (Hirsch 1967, p. 207). What - to continue our example - if the author's intentions are taken as the measure of a work's meaning? Imagine, for instance, that a group of students are studying *The Brothers Karamazov*. Say that they are assigned to write interpretive essays to be based on their reading of the novel, They are directed not to be concerned with plot, structure, or any of the formal concerns that often attend the study of books in literature classes, but rather, they are to read, discuss, and write about the novel in a way that is meant to extend an understanding of themselves to a new situation partly established by the novel. Now, what would happen to this process of potential self-transformation if they somehow came into the knowledge - indisputably factual - of Dostoyevsky's personal intentions toward the novel's meaning and took that, perforce, to be the overriding criterion by which their understanding must be guided?

A close examination of Dostoyevsky's notebooks and the letters he wrote to admirers during the course of his writing - the novel was published in serial form in a magazine - might lead students to conclude, for example, that Father Zossima, the Russian Orthodox priest and one of the book's central characters, represented Dostoyevsky's own views and, as the morally normative voice of the novel, constituted what Hirsch would consider to be the objective meaning of the book (Yarmolinsky 1971, p. 405). If such a univocal meaning could be established, what then would be the use of applying the novel to their own lives unless students were looking for a confirmation of what they already held to be true? At most, there could be but one understanding and, perhaps, but one plausible application. This, once established, would most likely preclude any understanding of life besides the one purposely espoused by Dostoyevsky.

Discussion under these conditions would tend toward mere argumentation. Some students would agree with Dostoyevsky's normative values, finding his message, as I have suggested, to fit what they already believe to be true. Others who disagree with it would run up against a point of view from which they were simply precluded. Neither

group could hope to find themselves changed or transformed by such an ungenerative encounter. And neither, more to the point, would find themselves possessed with an extended capacity for experience.

Thus it can be seen that the claim of objective truth limits the experience a reader can have with a text. Yet our historical experience with the *The Brothers Karamazov* is really quite different from what Hirsch might lead one to believe. Dostoyevsky was, in fact, never quite certain what effect his novel was having on his readers. Letters exchanged between serialized issues with friends and admirers, many of whom were devout Slavophilic Christians like himself, displayed the anxiety he was having over his novel's message. He seems to have been especially anxious after having written certain sections in which Ivan Karamazov discussed his rebellion against God. He wrote hurriedly to his readers to assure them that in ensuing issues Father Zossima would successfully answer Ivan (Yarmolinsky 1971, pp. 404-407). This being the case, certainly authorial intention cannot be considered coincidental with the novel's "objective" meaning.

Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian literary critic, gives us quite a different way of understanding this and other novels when he writes of the "polyphonic voices" within *The Brothers Karamazov* (Bakhtin 1973, pp. 4-5 and p. 13). These voices are characterized by a dialogic quality. Father Zossima and Ivan Karamazov are part of a conversation that extends to potentially all interested and articulate readers. What unifies the author and the reader are not the intentions of the author (nor, as we shall see, the projected *a priori* beliefs and values of the reader) but a common grounding in the subject matter itself. Students - if properly prepared - come to the novel to take a rightful place in the conversation begun by the fictional characters. The voices that start within the novel can be extended into the classroom, expanding the meaning of the novel to new situations, i.e., ones that involve students and are removed from the original text by time and place but with the potential for relevancy intact.

How can we then believe, as logically follows from Hirsch's objectivism, that the

conversation within *The Brothers Karamazov* begins and ends in a self-conscious and deliberate way, consistent with the intentions of the author? Too many faults can be found in this idea. How is one to treat, for example, the hypothetical case of an author who deliberately plans to include future readers (students) in a conversation meant to extend beyond his or her own original text? If verbal meaning is determinative or changeless, then no author could ever intend or foresee (one must be able to foresee what one intends to do) an open-ended conversation between readers and text. Evidently, if Hirsch is right, this would be beyond the reach of the author's intentions, as first conceived, since the determinative meaning of the author's actual words would negate anything a conversant would ever have to say. Words - if we are to believe that words are the bearer of meaning - would be negated before the conversation really begins. This, I submit, is a logical inconsistency in that the author's intentions cannot be limited by his own intentionality. Also, if the author's motive is an "entity", coextensive with a "genuine discriminating norm" (Hirsch 1967, quoted in Hoy 1978, p. 32), as Hirsch writes, then subjectivity, which can be nothing if not coextensive with the author's consciousness, has become confused with objectivity. It is only by knowing that the text is not coextensive with the subjective consciousness of the writer that the idea of an opening toward an interpretive future, which is made from the art of picking up and extending the conversational voices within the text, makes any sense whatsoever.

Thought of in this way the reading of any text becomes problematical, and it can now be seen that this expression does not carry its conventionally pejorative associations. If a text were not inherently problematic, there would be no possibility for a reader to enter into a dialogic relationship with it or into a conversation with others concerning its meaning. All discourse would find itself reduced to an analytical search for the author's own intentions - or to finding some other criterion for the objective measurement of truth. (Hirsch's thinking is, however, more subtle than I have allowed for present purposes. A careful reading of Hoy's critique of Hirsch's views on

authorial intentionality, for example, must allow for the distinction he makes between "significance" and "meaning". While this is beyond the scope of my current inquiry, fairness, in the long run, would require it - see Hoy 1978, pp. 13-25).

Hoy - contra Hirsch - also makes a coincidental but compelling common sense observation about reading in general that may prove to be of great interest to pedagogists. Do we, in fact, not usually read for significance or meaning before we ever think to probe a book for the author's intentions? It may, of course, be possible to discern that the text means one thing to the writer and something else to the reader, but this realization is *a posteriori*. One only belatedly, if at all, endeavors to base understanding on any inherent meaning of the text. If we do not interpret as we read, it would be difficult to imagine how a text could enter into our lives at all. Hoy believes that Hirsch has failed to see that the understanding of meaning and the interpretive application of the text blend into the same experience during the process of reading. The practical reader does not distinguish between what a text means and how it might significantly affect his life. One must be careful, Hoy warns, when Hirsch says, "To understand an utterance it is, in fact, not just desirable but absolutely unavoidable that we understand it in its own terms. We could not possibly recast a text's meaning unless we had already understood the text in its own" (Hoy 1978, p. 16).

What does it really mean, after all, for Hirsch to fear a "babel of interpretation", if not that each interpretive voice potentially cancels out every other voice? But he does not consider what is equally inimical to interpretive understanding: a subjectivity that aspires to objective status, constituting a single and definitive meaning that precludes all others. Which is worse, in other words, from a dialogic standpoint: a babel of competing voices or the silence that comes from one singular, univocal, and overriding answer?

It is axiomatic in hermeneutical philosophy to consider that a text is the tentative answer to a question. An author, in the simplest terms, is someone who has asked a question of the world in which he or she lives. The written text discloses the world

that is first opened up by a question. The discernful reader searches for the question the author has asked, knowing from experience that the text is only temporarily limited by the author's ability to answer his own question. What really occurs in successful interpretation is a creative proliferation of new questions, each of which opens up or discloses the world in some way the original author did not foresee (Heidegger 1964, pp. 649-701).

All interpreters stand within a tradition that includes the past and present. A text comes forward in time to establish its meaning in relation to a new and partially alien situation. Its immanent meaning rests in its capacity to do this. The text is never an object to be known in itself. It is, instead, part of a subject matter that is comprised of ever renewing questions and tentative answers, which are passed along within a tradition of understanding. All interpretation requires a relationship to the current situation of the interpreter. Hoy reinforces this point saying:

> Once written, the language of the text is freed from the constraints under which it may have been conceived. Any action can have consequences that exceed the expectations of the agent, and these consequences may give rise to the necessity for other actions which the agent did not anticipate. . . . interpretation may appear to have thrown new light on . . . the text, but as time goes by, other aspects . . . may gradually appear to have been eclipsed either by the very brightness of the interpretive illumination, or by the shadows caused by the angle of incidence. Thus, immanence of the . . . text turns out to be another name for the historicity of interpretation. That a . . . text appears to transcend particular interpretive understanding leads us to call it immanent (Hoy 1978, pp. 99-100).

Meaning adapts to new situations, and no feasible distinction between understanding and application can be found within the terms of this process. This realization casts doubt not only on the objective nature of interpretive activity but also enhances the likelihood that knowledge is inherently problematic. This insight forces curriculum writers and teachers to reconsider the nature of the learning process.

The specifics of Hirsch's notion of authorial intention are instructive, but a return to

a more generalized concern with the untenableness of the extremes of subjectiveness and objectiveness, a mischievous ambivalency found within Cartesianism, is necessary to complete this argument. It would be useful, therefore, to place this perennial intellectual conflict into a broader historical context by examining the subject/object dichotomy that derives in part from the historical ramification of Descartes's thinking.

In a book often referred to by curriculum specialists interested in philosophical hermeneutics, *Beyond Objectivism And Relativism*, Bernstein provides the following useful and comprehensive definition of objectivism:

> By "objectivism", I mean the basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness. An objectivist claims that there is or (must be) such a matrix and that the primary task of the philosopher is to discover what it is and to support his or her claims to have discovered such a matrix with the strongest possible reasons. Objectivism is closely related to foundationalism and the search for an Archimedean point. The objectivist maintains that unless we can ground philosophy, knowledge, or language in a rigorous manner we cannot avoid radical skepticism (Bernstein 1983, p. 8).

This comprehensive definition of objectivism, which I sometimes refer to, following Hoy, as theoretical objectivism, will be used as a touchstone for much of this and later chapters. But of more immediate concern is Bernstein's critique of Cartesianism, which serves to concentrate his strong objections to what he calls the "garden variety of objectivism":

> In modern times objectivism has been closely linked with an acceptance of a basic metaphysical or epistemological distinction between the subject and the object. What is "out-there" (objective) is presumed to be independent of us (subjects), and knowledge is achieved when a subject correctly mirrors or represents objective reality. This dominant form of objectivism is only one variety of the species (Bernstein 1983, p. 9).

This "dominant form" or "garden variety" of objectivism historically finds its most influential expression in the development of Cartesian philosophy. Cartesianism is characterized by a dichotomy between a potentially knowing subject - Descartes's *cogito* - and a world of objects that can also potentially be known. These objects accordingly have a distinct existence apart from the subject-observer's own. But, as Richard Palmer observes, "Truth, to Descartes, is more than mere conformity between the knower and the known, it is the subject's rational certainty of this" (Palmer 1969, p. 144). An object's independent existence follows not from the prior existence of the dichotomy itself but is established when the singular consciousness of an individual becomes the ultimate reference point of all knowledge.

This is not, at first, an easy point to follow. If the subjective consciousness of the individual is the reference point for rationally certain knowledge, then Cartesianism, one might anticipate, is a subjectivist point of view; but since it is not an explanation is required. It is, in fact, true that subjective consciousness, according to Descartes, is anchored in its own obvious self-reflection:

> What is known is not seen ultimately as an ontologically independent entity presenting itself as it "is", as disclosing and manifesting itself to us in its own power of being; rather, what is known is seen as an object, as something which the conscious subject presents to itself (Palmer 1969, p. 144).

This statement needs to be looked at carefully. Palmer has not mistaken Cartesianism for anything like solipsistic thinking. Rather, he notices how it is important to know that in Cartesianism the subjective consciousness of the observer presents the object of knowledge to itself. Knowing, in other words, originates with the subjective pole of a subject/object dichotomy. Objects of study acquire a meaningful reality of their own insofar as they are grounded in one's own self-certainty. Assured of one's independence from the world of objects, one becomes corollarily certain of the objects themselves.

Descartes tells us, at the beginning of the *Meditations on First Philosophy*, that his purpose is to ground the hope he has for certainty of knowledge in an assumption of radical doubt. The first task he sets for himself is an imperative one. There has to be something upon which he can anchor his understanding. The only stability he can find is the self-evident awareness of his own thinking self - his famous *cogito*. Only that he thinks cannot be doubted. If he is to come into any trustworthy knowledge about the world of objects, which are beyond or outside himself, that knowledge must turn out to be consistent with his first realization. Objective reality must reaffirm what he already knows: the self-evident certainty of his own indisputable existence.

The mind, moreover, can perform a function that Descartes describes as "looking into the body". One would correctly expect that when the mind does look into the body it does not find the objects that are usually associated with the world of external objects. Therefore, Descartes concludes that the body, unlike the mind, must be an "extended thing" - having "extension, shape and motion", which allows it to mediate the mind's relationship to objects that must be outside its own self-consciousness. (Descartes 1995, "Meditation VI", p. 327). To use a spatial metaphor: it is out there rather than in here.

Because Descartes has assumed a stance of radical doubt from the outset, he is also forced to ask himself if there is anything in the mode of awareness that he calls sensation from which he can draw a conclusive argument for the existence of physical objects independent of himself. Sense experience had once - before his experiment in skeptical doubt - seemed certain enough; ideas about the world outside himself appeared to come independently of his desire for them. But he found that the senses could be fooled. Objects, for example, that appear small at a great distance prove to be large close-up.

Descartes thinks carefully and deliberately about this. His essence is to be a thinking being. He has found within himself certain ways of being aware. And he also seems to sense the existence of things outside himself, but he hesitates - maybe not.

But at this point of near indecision Descartes notices something upon which his thinking will come to rest.

> I can clearly and distinctly conceive of my whole self as something that lacks these abilities, but I can't conceive of the abilities existing without me, or without an understanding substance in which to reside. . . . the conception of these abilities includes the conception of something that understands . . . (Descartes 1995, "Meditation VI", p. 328).

If these abilities to perceive things outside of the *cogito* are to exist, they must reside in an understanding substance (mind) that is tightly bound to, yet somehow distinct from, a bodily substance that is capable of extension into the world of objects. He also notices a variation on this conclusion. There is something in him that receives ideas about external things that does not require the cooperation of his own will or desire. That, in itself, proves that these ideas have an existence distinct from himself. This observation is enough, after all, to allow him to overcome the self-imposed limits he first set for his process of inquiry.

Since mind and world are distinct - and one can never rely on sense impressions alone in order to know the world - Descartes realizes that he needs to establish a bridge between self (mind) and world by which the body can find extension into the world (Melchert 1995, p. 300). This bridge will be built of the stuff of pure understanding - which is of the mind alone. The bridge between the subjective consciousness of an investigator and an independent world of objects must be constructed of rigorous methods of analysis that are protected from the biases of the investigator. Descartes had already established, to his own satisfaction, that an idea of any object must possess the same formal reality that the thing outside the self inherently possesses. He writes that there must be in them "everything that I clearly and distinctly understand them to have - every general property within the scope of pure mathematics" (Descartes 1995, p. 328).

Cartesian thinking leaves us, I believe, with two primary realities. There is the

thinking self, closely associated with the pure light of understanding, which is manifested especially through mathematical methods of analysis - or their verbal equivalents. Descartes also acknowledged a world of objects outside the thinking self, which is presented to the mind, insofar as the senses are involved, in a dubious manner. Only the light of pure understanding could sort things out in a way that could be trusted. Our senses turn out to be an imperfect bridge between these two bifurcated poles of knowledge, and this bridge can only be crossed with any acceptable degree of certainty when it is properly supported by formal methods of understanding. One can see that it is difficult to label Descartes as an objectivist because of his subject centered epistemology. Yet the methods he advocated have left a legacy of formal objectivism rightly associated with the philosophy that has incorporated his name, that is Cartesianism. His efforts to establish a basis for the certainty of knowledge were, no doubt, primarily meant to bridge the chasm between the inner world of thought and the outer world from which consciousness is excluded. And his objectivism was qualified to some extent by the relationship between the inherently mental faculty of pure understanding and the methods used to insure that understanding.

If ambivalence is part of this inheritance, positivistic science has stepped in to assure us that the world really is a collection of objects waiting for our knowing consciousness to master - with the proper methods in hand, of course, in order to assure objectiveness. But what are the consequences from all of this for the interpretation of texts and events and ultimately the practice of pedagogy?

If it is true in the humanistic disciplines - science being beyond the scope of this thesis - that no dependable bridge has yet been built between the subjective consciousness of the beholder and the objective meaning of a text or social event, then there should be no wonder that the floodgates of objectivism would seem to have been breached, as Hirsch and others influenced by the Cartesian tradition fear, drowning the possibility of unequivocal meaning in a torrent of subjectivity.

Ever new interpretations of texts, events, and works of art proliferate, and faith in

finding an objective basis for truth gets put off into an indefinite future. Moreover, when belief in an objective reality, or in an access to that reality, breaks down, we are left with isolated individual consciousness whose "reflexive operations of mind", as Palmer (1969, p.224) says, reaches no further than the limits of a single person's own experience.

I believe that we can trace our dilemma to the original Cartesian error that began with the assumption of an isolated subject-observer who, perforce, could only make certain and absolute contact with the "outside" world through the abstract assurances of unalloyed reason, as I have explained it above. But what if it were not necessary to have such assurances in order to live in this world? What if we do not exist apart from objects - by this I have in mind the things we seek to understand - in the way Descartes assumes that we do? The language of everyday experience does not require this separation of us from the world. Do we not usually speak, as it were, from out of experiences composed of language? Is language - as common sense dictates - not a sufficient conveyance between the mysteries of self and the uncertainties of world? No matter how often the tendency occurs to make our actual experiences abstract, we find that the common experience of language reasserts, through the activity of interpreting texts and events, a world of which we are very much a part. How many of us ever really feel the need to repeat Descartes's experiment in radical doubt?

The demand for objective certainty - which always includes the counter threat of descent into radical skepticism - when extended beyond its proper domain (perhaps in the natural and physical sciences, for example) is often, if not always, chimerical. We do not really live out our lives in a world that is split between knowing subjects and objects that are potentially knowable but separated from the subjective consciousness that would know and master them. The claim for objectively grounded knowledge and a concomitant set of values derived from some place outside the individual begins with a false start. Palmer warns that we have mistakenly assumed

a non historical human subjectivity as the origin and reference point for everything. Thus despite the word "objectivity", the center from which our bearings are taken is subjectivity. But if everything goes back to subjectivity and there is no reference point outside it, human will-to-power becomes the mainspring of human activity (Palmer 1969, p. 225).

That is, if our methods fail to produce useful or believable results, we risk falling into skeptical and untenable doubt about both the inner and outer world.

Palmer is warning us that relapses from a belief in an objectivity of knowledge and value, without any other feasible recourse, have often lead us into what Nietzsche labeled the will-to-power. But with a collapse in the effectiveness of the methods we employ to bridge the gap between *cogito* and world, we have historically found ourselves left only with an ersatz objectivity as I have attempted to show. Because our existence with others proves unsustainable without some source of value, it remains, by default, for the great creators of world history, Nietzsche claimed, to fill the vacuum left by the retreat from the world-in-itself.

This was, of course, the basis for Nietzsche's *Ubermensch*, or the one who overcomes the limitations of self in order to make value in a world devoid of its objective certainty. But, as Nietzsche realized and feared, such value makers are always on the edge of a moral abyss. Nihilism (which Hirsch also fears in his own way) is the consequence of the failure of one's values to find sufficient acceptance.

We can question Nietzsche's proposal that our values - our most esteemed values anyway - have derived from a handful of world-historical value makers. Nietzsche lists Socrates, Spinoza, Caesar, and Jesus as creators of value, albeit in a supra-historical sense (Kaufmann 1968, pp. 147-151, 414-415). We might ask if it is true that what attains to the status of truth, or to a standard beyond one's self, is actually only what the will-to-power of great individuals has given us out of their desire to create value.

Are we left with only this legacy to hand on to our students: on the one hand, a will-to-believe with no basis outside one's self to protect it from an unlimited

proliferation of self-cancelling meanings and, on the other, assertions of truth that cannot be distinguished from the vulgar dogmatisms that we have sacrificed so much in our century to escape from? Does the subject/object schema, as Palmer (1969) describes the Cartesian dilemma, inevitably end in confusion and unproductive ambiguity?

I believe that there is an option, a way of breaking out of this bifurcated schema that is like running furiously from one deceptive pole of the dilemma to the other - like a rat on a barn's beam dashing frantically back and forth from one end to the other, unable to extricate itself. The way out of this dilemma requires the introduction of a third issue - relativism - before that option can be fully discussed.

This section of the chapter ends with the following example that serves to illustrate more concretely the ideas under discussion so far. It is meant to help illustrate the relevance of these issues to pedagogical matters. Most importantly, it demonstrates the consequences, both pedagogically and morally, of failing to comprehend the damage that is done educationally when philosophy is neglected.

I once observed a group of high school students discussing the idea of objective knowledge with a professor of philosophy. The professor, whose area of expertise was symbolic logic, planned to demonstrate that there was a plausible objective criterion for making evaluations of works of art. She presented the students with a choice by first playing for their consideration a Michael Jackson song that was currently popular and then, for comparison, a Bach concerto. She specifically asked which was the better piece of music. The question clearly implied a need for an aesthetic evaluation.

Every student indicated by a show of hands that the Bach piece was better. It may have been a bit of a surprise to the professor to see such unanimity. I remember thinking that she probably thought that in a group of young people some, at least, would naturally prefer the pop music and might confuse what they preferred with what they thought was better. But if she was surprised - and I thought I could detect it faintly in her facial expression - she received the results pleasantly.

She went on to ask why they had made the choice they did. They replied, with as much unanimity as before, that they simply thought it was better - but could have, with as much justification, chosen the other. It was a matter of personal taste, they adamantly claimed. Not being able to get around their ingenuous reply, she suggested that they had intuited that the Bach concerto was better music because of its complexity, which she went on to demonstrate mathematically. They continued, however, to insist that this had nothing to do with the choice they had made. They argued vehemently that neither mathematical complexity nor any other criterion could possibly constitute an objective standard for evaluation to which everyone was bound as a basis for decision making.

For one thing, this vignette illustrates how discussions about the nature of truth should be at the heart of curriculum planning. In this example, a professor with an idea and a group of articulate students joined in a conversation that had profound historical antecedents, yet the opportunity to extend this conversation was aborted by rehashing the perennial disagreement about objectiveness vs. subjectiveness. This may not be absolutely wrong in all cases, but it is certainly not as productive as it could be.

On the one hand, the professor assumed that some objective certainty was necessary in order to justify a value judgment. On the other hand, the students perceived an attempt to establish such a certainty as a limit to their individual freedom of choice. An either/or dichotomy reasserted itself at the expense of a better laid conversation about music. Either it was objectively true or it was not - and, therefore, must be a subjectively based decision.

From the position of hermeneutic philosophy, both the students - for whom the omission was excusable - and the professor - for whom it was less so - missed the crucial but often overlooked distinction to be made between what Hoy refers to as theoretical objectivism and objectivity when the latter term is used in such a way as to denote fairness and a willingness to entertain the thoughts, feelings, and evaluations of others, while examining one's own prejudgments on the same matters.

Hoy, with a mind to the central importance of dialogue in the interpretive process, writes that, "Any interpreter can have a practical interest in seeing that his interpretation will be acceptable to as many readers as possible; objectivity in this practical sense is a matter of degree" (Hoy 1978, p. 13). This is quite different from the objectivism that the professor had in mind when she asked the students which piece of music they preferred, hoping to explain - if not to prove - that mathematical complexity provided an objective basis for their choice.

If one examines or interprets this teaching event carefully, one can reasonably conclude that these students were in touch with what Gadamer considers a prejudice or, somewhat less confusingly, a prejudgment that provided them with a basis for their choice. It is highly doubtful, as the professor suggested, that all of them somehow sensed the superior mathematical unity of the classical music and its aesthetic consequences. It is more probable that these young people must have come into a tradition of understanding (and valuing) that led them, in this instance, unanimously to a decision concerning what was most to be valued, despite their insistence upon an inalienable right to simply judge one thing to be better than another. Wouldn't a search for the root of those prejudices - and I don't mean to imply anything necessarily negative by using this word - have made for a more productive lesson?

If one only considers that most of these students came from highly educated families familiar with the history of classical music, it comes as no surprise - as it did to the professor - that they would say that the Bach concerto is better than the music of Michael Jackson. From the seventeenth century until the present, listeners, both expert and from the lay public alike, have discussed what is best in music. These young people were heirs to that collective and historical tradition of judgment, which the professor mistook, I think, as an intuitive sense of mathematically complex musical harmonies.

Also overlooked in the way the lesson was presented was the issue of how free the learner is in the value making process. If there really is an objective basis for

evaluation that mandates one form of music to be superior to another, then that is an *a priori* standard over-and-against which the individual must be measured. And anyone who would refuse to recognize or accept that standard as a criterion for judgment would run the risk of a stubborn and ineffectual idiosyncrasy. But if the basis for objectiveness is untenable, must then the person who evaluates music, to keep our example, must be resigned to living in a world in which his or her own values are to be inexorably lost in a flood of conflicting ideas, each one as valid as any other? Or, lastly, if the student is the inheritor of certain traditions, is he or she so conditioned by the presuppositions of those traditions as to be considered a helpless pawn that cannot hope to influence the hand that would position his or her understanding?

But the student is free, in actuality, to interact with the tradition into which, as Heidegger would say, he is thrown. If values are derived from the whole of a tradition of which one is a part, one can conceivably affect that tradition even in small and unassuming ways. Do our various traditions strike us as being like prisons? Hermeneuticists contend that by coming to know the prejudices and the presuppositions that are an inherent part of one's existence, a wide range of options becomes available. One can affirm, or modify, or even completely overthrow these influences in the course of time. Would the students who took part in this discussion not have fared better if they had been encouraged to examine the nature of the prejudgments that led them to choose Bach's music as better - even though they would have been, as I suspect, loathe to think that they were influenced by anything other than their own egos?

I cannot recall if any student thought to ask the professor what it was that made her think that mathematical complexity amounted to superiority. Where did she, in fact, get this as an unquestioned basis for the comparative evaluation of music? Would she not have behaved more properly as an educator if she had simply recognized her own prejudgments as an analytical philosopher, openly admitted that she planned to convince them of her point of view, and asked them to sincerely examine their own

assumptions about the nature and source of value in the give and take process of conversation? Of course, she would have had the responsibility to be objective - but the sense of the word would change from Bernstein's definition of theoretical objectivism to both Hoy and Bernstein's distinction between objectivity and objectivism. She could even have entered into the conversation as one voice among others in an extended dialogue that had its origins long before this particular happening in a classroom one evening. If she had begun by discussing all the problematic issues of interpretation and value making that I have just touched upon, quite a different lesson would have ensued - one based not on the assurances of an unverifiable objectiveness, nor upon an anarchy of unregulated and unlimited thoughts and feelings, but one that assumed from its inception the problematic nature of knowledge. One imagines a very different process in which the instructor, despite her welcome expertise with this subject matter, also becomes a learner.

We have, however, raised a new issue which requires a separate but interrelated discussion. There is always more than one tradition of understanding. That being so, how does one escape a collective variation of the "babel of interpretation" that is founded in radical skepticism and subjectivity? How are very different traditions to understand one another, if at all?

The remainder of this chapter will be concerned with an exposition of Richard Bernstein's significant contributions to hermeneutical philosophy. It will be shown that he circumvents the intellectual impasse raised by Cartesianism when he replaces its basic assumptions with a postmodernist perspective to which he contributes greatly. The reader is reminded that the Cartesian philosophy established a subject/object schema based on a dichotomy that begins with a subject whose knowledge of an external world of independent objects is predicated upon its own self-awareness. Bernstein modifies how this dichotomy is conceived by substituting the idea of relativism for subjectivism in the word-pair. That is, the isolated thinking subject of Descartes's *Meditations* is displaced from our consideration when Bernstein moves the

locus of attention from the Cartesian "I am" to an emphasis on the paradigms of understanding that individuals necessarily and inevitably employ when seeking a meaningful interpretation of experience.

Bernstein, in effect, replaces the old Cartesian dichotomy with a transitional one: relativism/objectivism, which he promises, according to the title of his book, *Beyond Objectivism, and Relativism*, to ultimately resolve. On the initial relationship between these polarities he writes:

> . . . many of the participants in these disputes argue as if we must choose between the alternatives of objectivism . . . or relativism. But this way of framing the key issues is misleading. We gain a better insight into the positive achievement of the postempiricist philosophy and history of science when we appreciate that what is really going on is that the whole framework of thinking that poses issues with reference to these and related dichotomies is being called into question. The most significant outcome of these discussions is the tentative steps taken toward a post-Cartesian and postmodern understanding of rationality. (Bernstein 1983, p. 23).

In order to follow Bernstein's thinking one must put aside the lingering issue of subjectivism, which is not, however, altogether unrelated to relativism. Hoy, whose work supports Bernstein on many significant points, says that there is the type of weak relativism "whereby saying 'the text means such and such' only means 'it means this to me'. . . " (Hoy 1978, p. 69). Relativism in this sense is subjectivistic. But Hoy also defines, in contrast to this weak variety of relativism, what he appropriately calls contextualism, wherein interpretation depends on "the circumstances in which it occurs - that is, to its context (particular frameworks or sets of interpretive concepts, including methods)" (Hoy 1978, p. 69).

The idea of contextualism is also important to Bernstein who poses the question: What is the relationship between different contexts? The issue this question implies is of central importance to both curriculum planning and pedagogy. For instance, in a curriculum planning meeting, a professor of art history said that in his department

contextualism had always guided teaching as a matter of course, even when he and his colleagues didn't know what to name it (he supposed it to be a recent critical trend). They had simply assumed that that which surrounds the work of art forms a larger unit of meaning that sheds light on it in such a way as to make it understandable to students when the proper connections are made.

What he seemed to ignore was the relationship between the context of the work of art and the context or situation of the student. If the student has to leave his own frame of reference behind in order to understand the Early Renaissance, for example, where is the relevance to the student's own life experience? And if there is no relevance, why is it that the student is required to study this bygone age in the first place? These questions derive not only from philosophical inquiry, but also from the commonplace experiences of teachers concerned with the relevance of their material.

This issue is one of the main subjects of discussion in this chapter. But before I make the transition in my discussion from the conventional Cartesian interest in a subject/object schema to an almost exclusive examination of relativism, a brief diversion is necessary. Cartesianism not only involves a knowing subject that is initially recognized as independent from all objects of knowledge, but one that also comes to know those objects through the methods imposed by the process of pure understanding. When subjectivism, as one of the poles upon which Cartesianism is founded, is discarded as an epistemological necessity - as Bernstein and other hermeneuticists have advocated - one might anticipate that a theoretical objectivism would reassert itself as the only or, at least, most likely option. That, however, is not exactly what has happened. Rather, the locus of meaning shifted to somewhere outside the individual through distribution to a variety of "specific conceptual schemes, theoretical frameworks, paradigms, forms of life, societies, or cultures" (Bernstein 1983, p. 8). But relativism has preserved, despite this development, a Cartesian epistemology, by insisting upon a methodological formalism to guide one's interpretive understanding of other cultures, frameworks of understanding, and historical periods

that indicate forms of life not one's own. Under the hegemony of methods these become merely objects of study, and so the ideas, feelings, and values of other cultures and other frameworks of understanding remain differentiated from that of the researcher's own. Methodological objectivism - wedded to this kind of relativistic thinking - aspires to protect the results of research from the influences of the researcher's own presuppositions concerning the phenomenal world. Methods are meant to insulate the researcher from a reverse flow of knowledge and experience.

Thus, knower and known are still kept separate in this new Cartesian fiction. In fact, it becomes the ethical duty of the researcher to insure that this happens. Relativism - having taken the useful and realistic step of rejecting theoretical objectiveness - comes to adhere without any sense of contradiction to another type of objectiveness that allows for a multiplicity of contexts to exist but, at the same time, ensures that these differing frameworks of understanding remain separated and unable to influence one another.

Something very important is left out of the interpretive equation by methodological formalists. It is as if for them the interpreter never had a life conditioned by a context that is different from the one under examination. Yet one's own thoughts, feelings, beliefs, memories, habits, and values are, in fact, an inherent part of the process of understanding. How could any text, to use a specific and relevant example, ever be understood if that text and its reader did not share something in common? The same is true for any phenomenon under interpretive examination. Methodological formalism provides no way positively to include those prejudgments that enhance understanding.

Let's return our attention to the more immediate issue of theoretical objectivism and relativism, per se. There are mutually held anxieties between these antagonist camps. Remember that Bernstein has already assured us of his intention to make it the basic concern of his exposition to not take sides in this conflict of ideas. His purpose is to go "beyond" the conflict.

Of relativism he writes:

> Relativists are suspicious of their opponents because, the relativists claim, all species of objectivism almost inevitably turn into vulgar or sophisticated forms of ethnocentrism in which some privileged understanding of rationality is falsely legitimated by claiming for it an unwarranted universality (Bernstein 1983, p. 19).

And, contradistinctively, he says of objectivism:

> The primary reason why the *agon* between objectivists and relativists has become so intense today is the growing apprehension that there may be nothing - not God, reason, philosophy, science, or poetry - that answers to and satisfies our longing for ultimate constraints, for a stable and reliable rock upon which we can secure our thought and action (Bernstein 1983, p.19).

No lack of sympathy for these respective and somewhat justifiable fears should be inferred from Bernstein's observations. He certainly understands the dangers of both "vulgar ethnocentrism" (objectivism) and the lack of "a stable and reliable rock upon which we can secure our thoughts and actions" (relativism). His critique is not centered on rejecting either of these two contradicting positions but in surmounting their inherent limitations. He is, in effect, a macro-dialectician who recognizes that in going "beyond" diametrically opposed points of view, one is not logically obliged to completely negate either position (Hampden-Turner 1981, p. 184). In rejecting bipolar positions, Bernstein does not mean, at the same time, to dismiss their justifiable anxieties about one another as if they had no merit or justification in social experience. Objectivists have good reason to fear the threat of nihilism inherent in the relativist position. And, conversely, the relativists have equally good reasons to fear unjustified objectivist attempts to build exclusionary systems of unitary truth.

That which is useful or compelling from these historically antagonistic schemes must be somehow retained. Synthesis requires this. Hermeneuticists, like Bernstein, have come to recognize that it is important to retain the objectivists' concern for a

reference point of truth that is "beyond" the individual - or any one particular framework of understanding - without falling into the trap of making a claim for the exclusiveness of any one set of ideas, beliefs, or values. This must allow for a comparability between different modes of understanding in order to ensure that an expanded capacity for experience is available to those who interpret.

Bernstein helps to circumvent the persistent impasse on this issue by clarifying the idea of incommensurability, an expression that is at the heart of a controversy that surrounds the thinking of Thomas Kuhn, especially in his epoch making work on the history of science, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970). Kuhn refers to the relationship between contending scientific paradigms as incommensurable. Bernstein argues persuasively that Kuhn's use of this term was misunderstood by his critics who often mistakenly considered it to be synonymous with incomparability, and hence it followed that they would come to accuse Kuhn of a pernicious relativism. Bernstein writes that "Kuhn's . . . remarks about incommensurability have been taken to mean that we cannot compare rival paradigms or theories. . . . The very rationale for introducing the notion of incommensurability is to clarify what is involved when we do compare alternative and rival paradigms" (Bernstein 1983, p. 82).

Bernstein uses the example of the toppling of Newtonian mechanical physics by Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Einstein's curved universe, specifically, is not the linear one that Newton's calculations showed it to be. This great difference constitutes a basic conflict between the two theories. The one cannot be derived from the other. Kuhn's critics (and ironically some of his supporters) claim that this sort of observation, which is perfectly consistent with Kuhn's ideas, puts him squarely into the relativist camp - an accusation that Bernstein thinks misses the point Kuhn is trying to make. Rather, he argues that Kuhn believes that the incompatibility of rival paradigms does not preclude comparison but, as the following quotation explains, allows for the transformation of one theory or paradigm in light of another.

He [Kuhn] is fully aware that it is certainly possible to reconstruct or transform "Newton's laws" so that we can derive an approximation of the laws from Einsteinian mechanics. But this is precisely the point: it is just an approximation that is derived, and one that is not, strictly speaking, identical with Newton's laws. It is only because we can give a translation and a transformation from the perspective of Einstein that we are enabled now to speak of a transformed Newtonian theory as a special case of Einsteinian theory (Bernstein 1983, p. 83).

Kuhn certainly thinks that representatives of competing paradigms "see things differently", but that does not render the communication of commonly understood meaning impossible. Such a claim by Kuhn's critics and supporters alike shows an unfamiliarity with the modifications relativism has undergone under the influence of hermeneutical philosophy.

Bernstein makes a new and important distinction between methodological objectivism and a crucially modified form of relativism, which is remarkably similar to Hoy's conceptualism. This kind of relativism positively encourages comparison among rival paradigms - if not point by point compatibility. Kuhn, in effect, makes way for reasoned discourse and the possibility - if not probability - of agreement. Simply put: his "relativism" is not absolute. Representatives from differing frameworks of understanding can, by communicating with one another, free themselves from the threat of imprisonment in their own paradigmatic structure of understanding. The give and take of discourse depends upon fairness and a willingness to listen sincerely to the other part of a conversation. One's prejudgments and values - everything upon which one's ability to interpret and understand is based - must be examined in light of another's opinions, ideas, feelings, and values.

Bernstein presses beyond the limitations of objectivism and relativism as either/or choices by following up his discussion of Thomas Kuhn with an examination of Paul Feyerabend's incommensurability principle. Feyerabend's own discipline is the history of art, and, in particular, he is interested in showing how Greek archaic art discloses a *Weltanschauung* unique to its own period but not confined to it as conventional

relativism might argue. Feyerabend tells us that "The modes of representation used during the early archaic period in Greece are not just reflections of incompetence or of special artistic interests, they give a faithful account of what are felt, seen, thought to be fundamental features of the world of archaic man" (Feyerabend 1975, quoted in Bernstein 1983, p. 87).

Feyerabend hereby defines a particular period of Greek culture as having a coherence that gives it a style of its own that is different from other periods of Greek art such as the classical or hellenistic. This presents the art historian with the same issue of relativeness that concerns Kuhn and other philosophers of science: How does the researcher compare one distinct cultural-historical period with another? How is a researcher who is inevitably conditioned by the values and judgments of, say, the modern period to understand the archaic Greek period that is separated from him or her by time, distance, and language? It has long been recognized that the greatest impediment to understanding the archaic Greek period has been the prevalence of value judgments derived from the later classical Greek period, which have, in turn, so significantly influenced western aesthetic values. It was once commonplace for art historians to consider the *kouroi* of the archaic period, for example, to be the result of crude and underdeveloped workmanship rather than pieces of art - statue-beings - that should be judged or understood in their own right by employing the ideas, standards, and values of the culture from which they came.

Feyerabend borrows from the experience and practices of anthropology in order to address the problem of how one comes to interpret and understand a far distant and alien era without either crudely projecting from one's own frame of reference or, conversely, giving oneself completely over to the object of study - even if that were somehow possible. The following quote from Feyerabend's work on the anthropological method reinforces this crucial point:

> Having completed his study, the anthropologist carries within himself
> both the native society and his own background, and he may now start

comparing the two. The comparison decides whether the native way of thinking can be reproduced in European terms (provided there is a unique set of "European terms"), or whether it has a "logic" of its own, not found in any Western language. In the course of the comparison the anthropologist may rephrase certain native ideas in English. This does not mean that English as spoken independently of the comparison is commensurable with the native idiom. It means that languages can be bent in many directions and that understanding does not depend on any particular set of rules (Feyerabend 1975, quoted in Bernstein 1983, p. 88).

Feyerabend (via Bernstein) expresses himself in terms familiar to philosophical hermeneutics. When he says, "the anthropologist carries within himself both the native society and his own background", he is not far removed from Gadamer's notion of a "fusion of horizons" - which is explained in the next chapter. It is sufficient at this point in my discussion to add that Gadamer says, "To think historically always involves mediating between those ideas [of archaic Greek art, to keep our example] and one's own thinking" (Gadamer 1994, p. 397). Both quotes express an idea about a process of interpretation that requires commitment to the kind of objectivity that Bernstein means to distinguish from either theoretical or methodological objectiveness. The researcher (or student) who ponders *Kouroi* or *Korai* carries within himself ideas, feelings, and values that derive from a tradition of understanding that is not only capable of impeding the process of understanding but also of forwarding it. The understanding that comes about through mediation requires that one listens to a text, event, work of art, or the words of another person, allowing those to have an influence on the way one experiences the unfamiliar. Yet at the same time, one brings all the ideas, beliefs, habits, feelings, and values of one's own life to the interpretive process. Those that impede an expanded capacity for experience are hopefully recognized and if necessary discarded or put aside. Some will, however, positively aid in the process of understanding. Either way, there are simply no methods so effective as to allow one to forget one's own traditions of understanding. If this were even possible, it would not be desirable. The methodological net that would catch one's unproductive

prejudices would also catch those which enable one to comprehend.

It is the unwillingness to compare our own values to those of others that defines the lack of objective involvement with the interpretive process. The interpretive process can only be characterized as objective when the researcher is willing to be fair-minded and sincerely open to other points of view. The proper analogy here would be to the jury that gives a defendant a fair hearing by being open to but not blinded by his or her testimony.

Just as an authentic conversation is not designed to defeat another point of view, it is also not meant to encourage, much less ensure, self-abnegation. The back and forth and give and take character of dialogue must be taken seriously. Conversation founded on this notion of objectivity is characterized by what Martin Buber (and Gadamer) has deemed an I-Thou relationship - an idea that will also be more adequately developed later on.

Bernstein echoing Gadamer observes:

> We are not confronted with forms of life that are so self-contained that we cannot compare them. If this were really the case, the appropriate response would be silence. On the contrary, he [Feyerabend] attempts to understand what is distinctive about this style [archaic Greek art] - and the procedure for bringing out what is distinctive depends on a skillful use of comparison and contrast. The basic presupposition here is that we can understand what is distinctive about this incommensurable style and form of life - and we do not do this by jumping out of our own skins (and language) and transforming ourselves, by some sort of mystical intuition or empathy, into archaic Greeks. Rather, the analysis proceeds by careful attention to detail - to the various "building blocks" - working back and forth to appreciate and highlight similarities with and differences from other styles and forms of life (Bernstein 1983, p. 90).

Bernstein is describing a dialectical manner of interpretation that by-passes the peremptory idea that one must choose between the objective and the purely relative view of things, an unnecessary choice which he thinks distorts the process of

understanding. The relative distance between styles, cultures, frames of reference, and historical eras may never be completely surmounted. But comparisons can be struck that share both poles of an essentially dialectical encounter. Comparative understanding can lead to what is largely unexpected: that is, an original way of thinking. This is true whether one is attempting to understand a historical or contemporary event, a culture whose ethos seems incommensurable with one's own, or a distantiated text.

Bernstein ends his analysis of Feyerabend and Kuhn by making the following points concerning hermeneutics in general:

I. A correct interpretation is not the only interpretation (Bernstein 1983, p. 91). No interpretation is definitive. We can decide between better and worse interpretations but the matter is always open-ended. There are always fresh ways of looking at any phenomenon. No interpretation is ever so right as to let one settle permanently onto any particular meaning. This is the legacy of relativism's triumph over theoretical objectivism.

II. Incommensurability, which implies that the rational comparison between different paradigms, theories, frames of reference, societies, etc., always involves openness (Bernstein 1983, p. 91-92). One's own framework of understanding changes during the process of interpretation. Such changes always posit new reference points. But the viewpoints and the prejudgments that condition them are not merely free floating. Always, there is something most accurately described as being just beyond our present capacity to experience. It is something alien to our own traditions of understanding that challenges us like an alert sentry and makes us pull short of choosing between definitive understanding and no understanding at all. The hermeneutic process of interpretive understanding creates in us the sense of an ever expanding opportunity to experience both the familiar and the strange simultaneously.

III. In learning about that which is alien we ultimately learn about ourselves (Bernstein 1983, p. 91). Relativism as it is usually understood is negated by the

process of hermeneutical interpretation, which involves the knowing subject in an open ended relationship with the phenomenon of study. It is the antithesis of objectivism, both theoretical and methodological varieties. It also affirms the place of the interpreter in the process of interpretation. The final goal is not knowledge itself, but to do as Rilke admonished in his great poem, *The Panther*, "You must change your life".

Bernstein writes:

> we can understand the ways in which there are incommensurable paradigms, forms of life, and traditions and that we can understand what is distinctive about them without imposing beliefs, categories, and classifications that are so well entrenched in our language games that we fail to appreciate their limited perspective. Furthermore, in and through the process of subtle, multiple comparison and contrast, we not only come to understand the alien phenomenon that we are studying but better come to understand ourselves (Bernstein 1983, pp. 91-92).

Bernstein ends his discussion of incommensurability with an analytical interpretation of the scholarship of Peter Winch and his view of the social sciences, which is broader than either Feyerabend or Kuhn's particular disciplines. The following quotes from Winch are extremely important in coming to understand how relativism has been transformed through its encounter not only with hermeneutical philosophers, per se, but also with other social theorists who have helped in their own way with the dialectical criticism of Cartesianism as it has been manifested in the development of dogmatic relativism.

> What we may learn by studying other cultures are not merely possibilities of different ways of doing things, other techniques. More importantly we may learn different possibilities of making sense of human life, different ideas about the possible importance that the carrying out of certain activities may take on for a man, trying to contemplate the sense of his life as a whole (Winch 1964, quoted in Bernstein 1983, p. 97).

and,

> We should not lose sight of the fact that the idea that men's ideas and beliefs may be checkable by reference to something independent - some reality - is an important one. To abandon it is to plunge straight into an extreme Protagorean relativism, with all the paradoxes that involves (Winch 1964, quoted in Bernstein 1983, p. 98).

In concluding, nothing could be more important in understanding the hermeneutic critique of relativism than Winch's use of the word "checkable" - that our "ideas and beliefs" may be compared to and checked against something independent of them, and, conversely, other beliefs and ideas can be compared to and checked against our own.

What then is the importance of students reading texts from past eras? Does it merely amount to an antiquarian interest that teachers force upon them? If that was so, then every school child who has ever demurred by asking, "Why do we have to study history anyway"? was one step ahead of curriculum writers. Why indeed do students have to read books written in times past? The hermeneutic answer, which takes one beyond the either/or dichotomy of relativism and objectivism, is that we borrow from the experience of a historically grounded culture in order to change our self-understanding. This involves a check of our own experience against some other.

Why does one read a Dickens novel? If the only answer a curriculum writer can come up with is: in order to understand the early Victorian period, it is certain that the pedagogy that follows will flounder on the question of relevance. Why, to delve even more specifically into the significance of this question, would a student be asked to consider the character of, say, Miss Mowcher in *David Copperfield?* Is it her quaintness that recommends this? Or is it the wonderful pun on her name (Mowcher - mouser) and the recognition of the deep moral commitment invested in this character, a dwarf lady who explains in the most poignant way how her buffoonery eases the way of a little person in a world of big and uncomprehending people? Or is it the moral realization that might come from this seemingly innocuous little person who can see right from wrong more certainly than others who have the outward stature to see

farther than herself? Or maybe it is because this sensitively conceived character helps to disclose the world in such a way that a student might never have expected and in doing so opens up for the reader, young and old alike, a new way of being?

We see from this example that a bygone historical period is not lost to the reader at all. A morally significant story still has meaning to the modern reader. If the past - or what is alien to us in any way - is to be relevant, then the process of interpretation must involve the way life might be experienced in the future. And this requires the possibility that one's moral self is transformable in the process.

This section of the chapter, like the first, was meant to shed doubt. If knowledge is not objective in nature, then it might be merely relative to one framework of understanding or another. But relativism in its dogmatic form, wedded to a theoretical objectivism, has also become problematic. This now leads us into the next chapter, especially to the discussion of dialogue and its central importance to the nature of hermeneutical understanding and self-transformation.

CHAPTER TWO

HERMENEUTICS AND PEDAGOGY

Before I begin to discuss the issues involved in a hermeneutically guided pedagogy, I will explain the influence that the work of the American social psychologist Silvan Tomkins has had on the conception of this thesis. In Gadamer's sense of the word, my belief in the rightness and usefulness of Tomkins's dialectical approach to social psychology constitutes a prejudice that undoubtedly predisposes me to understand hermeneutic philosophy and related problems of pedagogy from this particular point of view. The following discussion is an acknowledgment of my debt to Silvan Tomkins as well as an attempt to establish in my reader's mind the framework of understanding that guides what is to follow.

In an essay directed toward a clarification of ideological thinking, Silvan Tomkins provides a useful and original analysis of educational ideologies as they are concerned with understanding the nature of the learner and the learning process, especially when that process is identified with the acquisition of culture. His thinking begins by asking this twofold question: "Is man the measure, an end in himself, an active, creative, thinking, desiring, loving, force in nature? Or must man realize himself, attain his full stature only through struggle towards, participation in, conformity to, a norm, a measure, an ideal essence basically independent of man" (Tomkins 1963, p. 391-392)? A positive answer to the former distinguishes left-wing ideologies, and to the latter it distinguishes right-wing ideologies (these designations should not be confused with the usual political connotations that surround these terms).

These categorical distinctions provide the clarity needed to uncover certain fundamental assumptions made by all intellectual disciplines, including formal education, concerning human learning and value-making. If knowledge, for example,

as embodied in a humanities curriculum is to be something that exists apart from and prior to a student's experience with a particular subject matter, and if this information has already been sorted through and made comprehensible by scholars and experts and put in place for students to master in a way that others have already deemed correct, then one encounters a right-wing educational ideology. If students, however, are presented with primary source data about, say, some historical event and asked to think about it in their own fashion, drawing their own conclusions about the meaning of that event, then they are being directed as students to act in accordance with a view of human nature that puts an emphasis on the autonomy of the learner and on the uniqueness of an individual's experience. This would involve a pedagogy, from Tomkins's point of view, that is ideologically left-wing.

Most real life examples are less clear-cut than hypothetical ones. Most curricula is something of a mix of the two, and that, judging from Tomkins's conclusions, is no doubt for the best. Yet, in actuality, much is also confused, and the true nature of things disguised by the seeming truth of labels that are not, after all, so clear-cut when more closely examined. There was, to illustrate this point, a movement in social science education in America in the nineteen seventies described as inquiry education. It would at first seem likely that this movement would be considered, to employ Tomkins's categories, a left-wing one. Students were not told ahead of time what data meant. They were instead taught how to employ the hypothetico-deductive method and turned loose, so to speak, with primary source material. Upon closer inspection, however, it is certain that someone chose the particular data to which these students were to be exposed and even more significantly chose the methodology that they were required to use. Unsuspecting students may never realize that a historian might validly apply other methods of interpretation to his or her data. This is tantamount to an unquestioned assumption about how truth is obtained. Furthermore, the proper use of this particular method became a measure against which student achievement was assessed. This, as it turns out, meets Tomkins's criteria for a right-wing educational

model, something most educators advocating the inquiry method would have been unlikely to admit (see the discussion in Chapter One on methodological formalism as a disguised form of objectiveness).

Tomkins argues a preference for a centrist position made up of integratable aspects of any two ideological extremes. His is a structuralist argument, one that may have a convincing basis in common experience. I once heard a teacher say that he wasn't concerned with what fifteen year olds thought about literature - not until they had carefully read and studied the subject matter. Then he quickly added that he would be greatly interested in what they might be thinking. Both the right-wing position, summed up by the teacher's statement "I am not concerned . . .", and the left-wing position, implied in his amended statement that "I am then greatly interested . . .", found in this teacher's experience a common ground for realistic expression in a centrist position toward education that contained the soundest aspects of diametrically opposed extremes.

Often, especially after periods wherein one particular ideology is dominant at the expense of others, there are pronounced compensatory shifts from the one extreme to its opposite. Pedagogical battle lines get drawn with losses and gains being determined by the retreat and advancement of one's own dogmatic position. But what most often goes unnoticed to those caught up within such struggles are the values from an opposing point of view that could be integrated with one's own to produce a more complete and effective educational practice.

In my judgment, the movement in educational history referred to in this thesis as process education is - to use Tomkins's terminology - ideologically left-wing. But when Lawrence Stenhouse, a process educator, argued that to expect students "to be the sole source of information in a discussion group of adolescents seems unwise" (Stenhouse 1970, quoted in Elliott 1983, p. 113), this insight and admission on his part constituted a correction to what was an essentially left-wing curriculum project - the very idea of self-directed discussion groups being left-wing. Through this critical

insight, Stenhouse coincidentally suggested that an ideological shift from the left toward the center of the ideological spectrum would be advisable. This was more than just a practical suggestion. It also recognized that students not only lacked the time but perhaps the inclination to do such work. Researching all their own information for discussion groups was beyond the extent of their educational experience. This would open up a role for what I call authoritative expertise. That is, someone already experienced or knowledgeable enough would have to research the subject matter needed for informed discussions.

Authority in education has usually been considered a right-wing value. But that conclusion is not necessarily so. Gadamer defines the expert as one whose knowledge is superior. It does not follow, he argues, that the expert should be allowed to assume a position in relationship to students that would bring with it the intellectually imperious habits often associated with authority figures in the world of education. Experts could just as well be charged with using their superior knowledge to provide the information that is necessary for informed and fair minded discussions. Their proper role might be analogous to that of a consultant. The use of subject matter experts in this case would be indicative of neither left-wing educational ideology [wherein expertise is considered as an impingement upon self directed studies] nor right-wing ideology [wherein experts are meant to convey to students knowledge of truths that stand outside of the realm of their own personal experience]. Expertise could be employed according to a centrist reading of hermeneutical philosophy. A student's freedom to direct his own thinking in a discussion-based curriculum would be commensurate with the diverse knowledge and information he had available to inform that thinking. This is consistent with Stenhouse's observation that "students should not be expected to be the sole source of their own information for a discussion".

One might mistakenly assume - given the ideas put forth in Chapter One of this thesis - that a pedagogy based on philosophical hermeneutics would be classified as a left-wing pedagogy. Yedullah Kazmi, for example, a writer who represents the

hermeneutical tradition, argues that conversation is not only the best way to obtain knowledge but that knowledge and conversation are coeval (Kazmi 1993, p. 345). Remember that Tomkins defines the left-wing ideological tendency with the rhetorical question, "Is man the measure, an end in himself, an active, creative, thinking, desiring, loving, force in nature"? These descriptors appear to fit the inherent values and goals of a discussion based pedagogy and would also appear to be consistent with the motives that drove such manifestations of process education as the Humanities Curriculum Project (see Chapter Three for an expanded discussion of the HCP). However, by implicit argument in this chapter, I hope to make it clear that the kind of self-correction that attended Stenhouse's insight quoted above is a move toward the center of the educational spectrum of values. And that this centrist position has been anticipated by Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy from its inception.

Furthermore, the idea of the acquisition of culture (*Bildung*) as understood by the tradition of German hermeneutics might at first seem to be "right-wing" by virtue of its emphasis on the individual's self-overcoming and the transcending of particularity. But that is a misunderstanding dispelled by the hermeneutical belief in the problematic nature of knowledge and, corollarily, by the hermeneutical insistence on a conversational pedagogy that is able to affirm, reject, or modify the traditions of understanding that condition the individual's thinking to begin with. Cultural knowledge, from a hermeneutical point of view, is subject to the personal experience of the learner. In as much as cultural knowledge influences one's self-understanding, it does so through the application of that knowledge to situations new and unique to the learner(s), which in turn affects the accumulated store of cultural experience. Hermeneutic philosophy is, therefore, inherently centrist or can, at the very least, be convincingly read from what Tomkins deems a centrist's ideological position. This insight guides my application of Gadamer's work to the pedagogical and curricular matters subsequently discussed.

Before I begin my discussion of various aspects of hermeneutical philosophy, I

want to take one more look at this philosophical tradition through the eyes of the social philosopher Ortega y Gasset. Ortega's ideas coincide with Tomkins's thinking on ideology in a way that helps one to better understand the relationship between culture and education.

Ortega coined the term "mass-man", to describe anyone who "accustoms himself not to appeal from his own to any authority outside him" (Ortega 1960, p. 62). Or, as he adds in an explanatory note on the next page, "That man is intellectually of the mass who, in face of any problem, is satisfied with thinking the first thing he finds in his head". Again, upon first examination this sounds, in Tomkins' terminology, like the right-wing assumption that the measure of our successful humanity lies apart from the self in an *a priori* fashion. But Ortega - like Tomkins - who stands outside the hermeneutic tradition and is remote from many of its basic concerns, cannot upon careful consideration be confined to such a one-sided understanding.

When Ortega says of the "mass-man" that he or she is satisfied with thinking the first thing that comes to mind, it is not necessary to infer from this characterization that something objectively true is needed to offset first and unexamined thoughts. It is rather that another's point of view, whether supportive, ameliorative, or contradistinctive, be used to correct one's own (what Winch calls "checking"). This correction would be objective but only in the sense that it consists of something apart from one's own present state of mind, something that should be considered fairly and with all possible candor, without any party having to bear the improbable onus of proving itself to possess the definitive answer to any question. What merely comes to mind, whether some free floating and idiosyncratic notion or the prejudices of a tradition to which one is bound by the accident of birth, must be "checked" in the light of thinking that is other than one's own. This may be in the form of a text that represents another point of view, or a person whose ideas are different from one's own, or even an event that is remote in time from one's historical period.

Our capacity to experience the world is expanded when the interpretive process

becomes more than just a finding of pre-existent knowledge. There is an element of making involved in any creative process of interpretive understanding. Of course, room must be made in one's life for new ideas, beliefs, values, and perceptions that are found in our cultural storehouses. But as these enter into our own life experience they are subject to the transformative nature of authentic experience. That which was pre-existent in one's self-understanding and that which is other than one's once present self-understanding may synthesize to form a new understanding of self based upon newly acquired experience. This is also a synthesis of finding and making, the right-wing's and the left-wing's preferred mode of learning respectively.

A tradition or framework of understanding is to be compared to an inheritance that one has the opportunity to hoard, or to profligately spend, or to wisely invest. To hoard it is to leave it like it is - one always has the consolation of knowing it's there merely for the finding. To spend it is to give it up for something else or to exchange it for something one never before had in one's possession. But to invest it means both to keep it and have it grow at the same time.

One, of course, always runs a risk with one's cultural capital. In any discussion concerning truth, one can lose what one invests in the course of conversation. Ideas, beliefs, feelings, values, and habits are exposed, by comparison and contrast, to other traditions of understanding, and this sometimes undermines what one already believes to be true. Yet it is possible to fuse one experience of the world to another.

Concepts of Hermeneutic Philosophy

Bildung is the German word for culture and is inherently tied to a tradition of liberal education that is specifically German. It finds expression in the Nietzschean idea of self-overcoming and in the Hegelian belief that the goal of education is to acquire a universalization of spirit. The latter, for example, says that humans are "not, by nature, what [they] should be" (Gadamer 1994, p. 22). If one accepts this tradition that humans are not as they should be and are, therefore, in need of culture, then the

acquisition of culture is a matter of an educational practice that should bring with it the opportunity to overcome the particular limits of one's own existence.

Gadamer, closely conforming to Hegel's thought in this matter, writes:

> It is the universal nature of human *Bildung* to constitute itself as a universal intellectual being. Whoever abandons himself to his particularity is *ungebildet* (unformed) - e.g., if someone gives way to blind anger without measure or a 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 . . . (Gadamer 1994, p. 12).

Although Gadamer disclaims such Hegelian notions as an Absolute Spirit unfolding in history, it is from Hegel that he first borrows his understanding of the universal as not something that one finds or discovers but rather as something toward which one builds. It is, therefore, through work or, as Gadamer/Hegel say(s), through "working consciousness" that one rises to the level of a universal education that takes one beyond the particular limits that self-seeking desire often sets. Gadamer refers to this as the practical aspect of *Bildung*, and he once again relies on Hegel, this time for an analogy with professionalism to make his point.

> Every profession . . . demands that one give oneself to tasks that one would not seek out as a private aim. Practical *Bildung* is seen in one's fulfilling one's profession wholly, in all its aspects. But this includes overcoming the element in it that is alien to the particularity which is oneself, and making it wholly one's own (Gadamer 1994, p. 13).

This insight is applicable to educational practice precisely because students cannot be expected to understand that there is a future potentially open to them that is greater than their present limited self-understanding allows. Hegel specifically says that one should "know how to limit oneself - i.e., to make one's profession wholly one's concern. Then it is no longer a limitation" (Hegel *Propaedeutic*, quoted in Gadamer

1994, p. 13). The hermeneutic goal for education is to show students that they can apply cultural knowledge to the understanding of their life-experience in such a way that it helps them to transcend personal limitations. This chapter attempts an explanation of those aspects of hermeneutic philosophy that might combine to form a guide to a pedagogy concerned with the acquiring of culture, insofar as that is coterminous with self-development.

As I hope to eventually establish, culture is specifically acquired, insofar as hermeneutic philosophy is concerned, through the dialogic encounter between self /other; self/text; self/event. The goal is for the learner to expand his or her opportunity for experience rather than to accumulate knowledge, per se. If one is unformed (*ungebildet*) who does not move from the limitations of his or her own particular existence toward a more universal sense of self, then one has simply not become dialogically involved with the world into which he or she was born.

The acquisition of culture - insofar as the learning process is concerned - affords the opportunity for the student to connect to the experiences of others. Whether the other is a partner in an interpreting dialogue or an ancient text, it makes no difference. The goal of a hermeneutic education is for the learner to forge links to the greater cultural experiences of humankind. This is what is meant by universalization.

First of all, a clear distinction must be made between absolute universalization and concrete universalization. The former is related to an objective understanding of knowledge and the latter to a process of dialogue which Gadamer describes in the following way:

> The universal viewpoints to which the cultivated man (*gebildet*) keeps himself open are not a fixed applicable yardstick, but are present to him only as the viewpoints of possible others. Thus the cultivated consciousness has in fact more the character of a sense. For every sense - e.g., the sense of sight - is already universal in that it embraces its sphere, remains open to a particular field, and grasps the distinctions within what is opened to it in this way. In that such distinctions are confined to one particular sphere at a time, whereas cultivated

consciousness is active in all directions. . . . It is a *universal sense* (Gadamer 1994, p. 17).

This universal sense is potentially common to all despite frameworks of understanding that make for separate, sometimes competing points of view. Even if another cultural understanding or paradigm stands "outside" one's own experience, it does not do so in a way that precludes the comparability discussed in the last chapter. Participants in the dialogic encounter between different frameworks of understanding are obliged to listen to one another. This give and take in a hermeneutically guided conversation is preparatory to the making of universal understanding.

There are two variations on the universal, but both remain subject to the same process of dialogic understanding. First, there is the encounter with one's own culture, or framework of understanding. Secondly, there is the possibility of encounter with a tradition of understanding that is foreign to the interpreter. Each of us, to use Heidegger's phrase, is thrown at birth into a particular cultural situation (Heidegger 1962, pp. 219-224). Herein we obtain a notion of personally meaningful existence. Educationally, the first step towards an expanded understanding of the world is for a person to acquire a more thorough knowledge of his own cultural milieu - all the while realizing that it is typical of modern societies to be composed of many diverse, often conflicting traditions of understanding. Gadamer writes that "Every single individual who raises himself out of his natural being to the spiritual finds in the language, customs, and institutions of his people a pre-given body of material which, as in learning to speak, he has to make his own" (Gadamer 1994, p. 14).

Of course, we are not naturally endowed with culture. Most people are relatively uninformed about the stock of cultural understanding available to them. Students, therefore, must be guided in order to increase their capacity for further experiencing their own cultural world. And even more careful guidance is needed to include frameworks of understanding beyond those indicative of the societies into which they happened to be born. Whether it is the former or the latter, there is a sense in which

the universal is the "alien that we come home to". By listening and speaking with others - openly, sincerely, and fairly - one learns "to recognize oneself in other being" (Gadamer 1994, p.13). Through the dialogic we can incorporate some other part of the world and make it into our own. This is what is meant by the paradoxical suggestion that one comes home to the alien. This is the process whereby one comes into possession of a universal sense of things.

Moreover, no one has ever reached a living state of self-completion or self-sufficiency because there is always another book to read or another conversation to take part in. The immanent meaning of any book or other work of art only finds realization through an interpretive hermeneutical activity that necessarily requires the applicability of the text to the life situation of the interpreter. Therefore, the universal itself has an open future. The means to this future is dialogic activity.

The universalization of experience, moreover, requires a community setting. An acculturated life cannot be achieved in isolation. Even the most esoteric scholarship, acquired, perhaps, through many hours of solitary reflection, is only preparatory to the time when that knowledge will be communicated to others. In fact, it is through conversation with others that one's ideas, feelings, and values find legitimacy. The workings of an individual's mind are confirmed, rejected, and modified through dialogic relationships. The notion of an intellectual mind true to its own thought - what the ancient greeks called autarchy - is an illusion. The life of mind is an inherently social activity.

Gadamer tells us that the Aristotelian idea of *sensus communis* should be understood as a sense of things that derives from the common experience of people who talk with one another. He contends that the process of interpretive understanding can only take place as a social activity that is characterized by the give and take of authentic conversation. The desired result of this process is a movement that builds toward a common understanding of what is considered to be good. In *The Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle elaborated by discussing "self-sufficiency", which he

identified as an aspect of the highest good. He explained, "By self-sufficience we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is born for citizenship" (Aristotle, 1947, p. 317). In effect, Aristotle defined the self by pointing out its essential relationship to other persons.

The key to understanding the notion of *sensus communis* becomes apparent. It is within a community of interest that the standards for any human activity can be set. If it is left up to the isolated individual to determine by purely subjective means what is best, there would be no real standards. One's common sense - which derives from a common experience with language - assures us of this. The standards that we apply to all human activity derive from a social nature that is itself derivative of the cultural conversations we hold in common.

For example, humans have over the course of time discussed what is good in music. The results of those conversations have been handed down from generation to generation. This makes up the traditions from which we derive both understanding and misunderstanding. The reader is referred to the anecdote I related in the last chapter concerning the philosophy teacher who thought that students would readily agree with her that Bach's music, being mathematically complex, should be judged superior to a pop tune. Upon what was their even limited value judgment based if not upon three centuries of experience with music, out of which certain values (including complexity) have emerged? These students were heirs to a history of discussion and performance concerning what is virtuous or good in music. After all - if one believes Aristotle - one prefers what is best, not what is inferior. Those students knew, however unconsciously, what to prefer because they were constrained in their value judgment by a certain tradition of musical understanding. Perhaps they demurred to say that what they preferred was best because of a modern framework of understanding that councils a degree of cultural humility. Or, perhaps, they were contemporaneously involved in a process of understanding that includes new musical values. Theirs might

have been a conversation that had not quite taken shape, a conversation about musical values in the making. What is best is always in the process of being decided upon. It is like a journalist who is writing a story but can never finish it because new information is always appearing. The final word on anything is never to be written.

Hermeneutical thinkers borrow from Aristotle the point of view that we are social beings who are engaged in an on-going process that involves us in deciding what is best. We are value-makers by virtue of our social natures. Our specific judgments are consequently both temporary and temporal. The only constant is the social nexus for value making, which has one foot in the past and one foot in a projected future.

In discussing moral judgments - and this principle applies to a full range of interpretive endeavors - Gadamer writes "It is morally imperative to detach oneself from the subjective, private conditions of one's own judgment and to assume the standpoint of the other person.. But this unconditionality also means that the moral consciousness cannot avoid appealing to the judgment of others" (Gadamer 1994, p. 33). One inhabits a community of persons who are required to make, as circumstances dictate, certain decisions about what is best to do or, at least, to decide what is not wrong to do. This requires that people talk to one another and that universal rules of right or wrong unfold, for better or worse, within the particular conditions of a human community. Remember that something tends toward the universal when others accept it, however tentatively, as true.

It cannot be overly emphasized that the temporal nature of discourse both limits and extends what Gadamer means by "the standpoint of the other". This paradox originates from the historically conditioned nature of all understanding. It is unlikely that any group of people ever came together in order to discuss and ultimately understand any issue that had not in some way been discussed before. The language we have available to us is a repository for the conclusions, outcomes, and effects of conversations that have survived historically to become part of the way we understand things. There are bequeathed ideas, feelings, values, and opinions that condition our

reflections on all issues of understanding. A community of discourse has a horizontal extension that is made from the relationship of one individual to another, but it also has a vertical extension that characterizes what Gadamer named a "historically effected consciousness". Part of the setting for any discourse comes from a consciousness of its historical antecedents. A text is then, in this way, a conduit to interpretive conversations that have occurred in the past.

For any issue there is the potential for a dialogic community to take shape. *Hamlet*, for example, has been discussed by students, teachers, and critics for centuries. There is a history of discourse that envelopes the text of the play. Any student who takes part in a discussion concerning this work potentially enters into this history of discourse. Moreover, that history only initially stands apart from a conversant. If an unusually perceptive student argues that in Act V, Hamlet is a changed character who is neither the model courtier we hear about from Ophelia - "the observed of all observers" - nor the confused Hamlet of the first four acts - one who is sometimes boldly rash, sometimes indecisive - then this novice critic (which is what we should want our students to be) has probably read the traditional criticism of the play. He or she has searched books for ideas and listened to learned opinion. If influenced by the hermeneutical tradition of interpretation, the student's next step would be to extend the questions about existence that first occurred to Shakespeare and make them subject to his or her own accustomed way of thinking, adding new insight into the play's meaning by finding its applicability to his or her own life.

Hence knowledge of *Hamlet* acquires a concreteness insofar as it finds relevance in one's particular life, but in this way the message of this originally Elizabethan play is universalized. As its truth extends into the life of a twentieth century young person, he or she in turn speaks to others within a contemporary community of interest - perhaps a secondary classroom - about the relevancy and applicability he or she has found. The conversation, which has so far stretched across time, now takes on its localized aspect. All scholarship, whether at the frontiers of knowledge or in the secondary

classroom - to paraphrase Jerome Bruner - is the same (Bruner 1977, p. 14). Just as critics discuss one another's work, so will the student of our example discuss his or her work with teachers or fellow students. However private the initial attempts at understanding seemed to be, our student now enters the realm of public scrutiny. And herein begins the give and take of conversation that provides the student with the opportunity to reject, modify, or reaffirm what he or she has come to understand.

The perplexing question in my own researches has been how to integrate humankind's cultural inheritance into a student's life experience without compromising that student's autonomy as a learner. I have often referred to the hermeneutic preference for "expanding the capacity to experience" over the mere acquisition of knowledge. I now want to explore just what is meant by the "capacity to experience". To begin with, experience necessitates understanding - and understanding requires an effort to bridge the distance between a text of any sort and the present situation of the interpreter (Palmer 1969, p. 236). In other words, it requires, as I have already said, the application of the text to the situation of the interpreter. A successful application expands the interpreter's capacity to experience his world in some new and original way. This fundamental idea is complicated by the persistent problem of subjectivism and objectivism, however. An examination of Gadamer's conception of the nature of authentic experience might best begin with his analysis of the "aesthetic problem" in the work of the French poet, Valery, who thought that the work of art was always incomplete in a way that invited the reader to give it completion. Gadamer convincingly argues that this would mean, if it were true, that the work itself provides no criterion for an appropriate reaction by the reader, viewer, or listener. Gadamer concludes that Valery did not think through the logical consequences of what he believed to be true of works of art.

> From this it follows that it must be left to the recipient to make
> something of the work. One way of understanding a work, then, is no
> less legitimate than another. There is no criterion of appropriate

reaction. Not only does the artist himself possess none . . . every encounter with the work has the rank and rights of a new production. This seems to me to be an untenable hermeneutic nihilism (Gadamer 1994, pp. 94-95).

Gadamer's conclusion is well founded. The poem, or any other work of art, would have whatever meaning a reader chooses to give it - if Valery is taken at face value. There would be no feasible criterion for better or worse interpretations. This is what I have already referred to as a nihilism of interpretation. That is, if no one interpretive understanding is any more legitimate than any other, then all interpretations are equally right. But value by its very nature requires that something be raised above something else. Everything being equal is tantamount to no value at all.

Moreover, by claiming that everyone's opinion is equally valid, the whole notion of an Aristotelian community of interest is invalidated. If everyone's opinion is the same, then there would be no need for a conversational basis of understanding. Why would anyone listen to and carefully consider the point of view of another if that point of view was not potentially superior to one's own - or could not potentially provide a check to one's own understanding?

Gadamer, with the consequences of Valery's notion in mind, refers to Kierkegaard's rejection of a purely aesthetic experience.

By acknowledging the destructive consequences of subjectivism and describing the self-annihilation of aesthetic immediacy, Kierkegaard seems to me to have been the first to show the untenability of this position. His doctrine of the aesthetic stage of existence is developed from the standpoint of the moralist who has seen how desperate and untenable is existence in pure immediacy and discontinuity. Hence his criticism of aesthetic consciousness is of fundamental importance because he shows the inner contradictions of aesthetic existence, so that it is forced to go beyond itself (Gadamer 1994, pp. 95-96).

The understanding of art must then go beyond an immediate impression of meaning. Or, as Gadamer writes, "The phenomenon of art imposes an ineluctable task

on existence, namely to achieve that continuity of self-understanding which alone can support human existence, despite the demands of the absorbing presence of the momentary aesthetic impression" (Gadamer 1994, p. 96).

The works of art we offer students must be joined to their self-understanding. For what other reason would we have students read certain books or look at particular paintings? But if understanding is something purely subjective, rooted in the immediacy of an aesthetically present object, then what justification would one have in imposing culture on reluctant students? What would it matter if students come to stand amazed before our slides, say, of the Sistine Chapel? Have we not come back to the Cartesian split between the subjective and objective and the confusion about reality that this engenders? As Gadamer reminds us, "The pantheon of art is not a timeless present that presents itself to a pure aesthetic consciousness, but the act of a mind and spirit that has collected and gathered itself historically " (Gadamer 1994, p. 97). How then does a consciousness of art that is "historically effected" condition our experience of the world insofar as our self-understanding is concerned? The simplest and most straightforward answer is to first acknowledge that art helps to shape and disclose the world in which, and indeed through which, we have an existence. New understanding represents a change in our world. But those changes do not suddenly come into being *ex nihilo* upon the viewing of a painting, or the reading of a poem. They entail, in part, a relationship to a historical past. Building that relationship is what Gadamer means by the acquisition of culture.

Arthur Janson in his widely used *History of Art* (1995) discusses the relationship between the lay public and experts on artistic matters in a way that is helpful to the present discussion. The following rather lengthy passage is worth quoting.

> Are there really people who know nothing about art? If we except
> small children and people with certain mental disabilities, our answer
> must be no, for none of us can help knowing something about it . . . .
> Art is so much a part of the fabric of human living that we encounter it
> all the time, even if our contacts with it are limited to magazine covers,

advertising posters, war memorials, television, and the buildings where we live, work, and worship. Much of this art, to be sure, is pretty shabby - art at third- and fourth-hand, worn out by endless repetition, representing the lowest common denominator of popular taste. Still, it is art of a sort, and since it is the only art most of us ever experience, it molds our ideas on art in general. When we say "I know what I like", we may really mean, "I like what I know (and I reject whatever fails to match the thing I am familiar with)". Such likes are not in truth ours at all, for they have been imposed by habit and culture without any personal choice. To like what we know and to distrust what we do not know is an age-old human trait. We always tend to think of the past as "the good old days", while the future seems fraught with danger.

But why should so many of us cherish the illusion of having made a personal choice in art when in fact we have not? There is another unspoken assumption at work here that goes something like this, "Since art is such an "unruly" subject that even the experts keep disagreeing with each other, my opinion is as good as theirs. It's all a matter of subjective preference. In fact, my opinion may be better than theirs, because as a layman I react to art in a direct, straightforward fashion, without having my view obstructed by a lot of complicated theories. There must be something wrong with a work of art if it takes an expert to appreciate it".

But if experts appreciate art more than other people, why should we not emulate them? We have seen that the road to expertness is clear and wide and that it invites anyone with an open mind and a capacity to absorb new experiences. As our understanding grows, we find ourselves liking a great many more things than we had thought possible at the start. We gradually acquire the courage of our own convictions, until we are able to say, with some justice, that we know what we like (Janson 1995, p. 25).

This quotation, when read from a hermeneutical point of view, goes beyond its stated purpose of examining the proper relationship between critics and the lay public. It contains, however inadvertently, an excellent statement of the problems associated with the relationship between experience and expertise. No more important remark could be made by any hermeneuticist concerning the challenge to the educator who is charged with teaching some aspect of culture than the one Janson makes: that is, "I know what I like" really means "I like what I know" (and consequently that one tends

to reject whatever is unfamiliar). Although Janson interprets from the standpoint of an individualism of personal choice, he does not fail to comprehend the difficulties associated with that philosophical position. Importantly, he gives an independent corroboration of the hermeneutical analysis of the relationship between a learner and pre-existing expertise. To align Janson's statement with a more formally hermeneutical one, it only has to be remembered that more mature personal choices about art, for example, are tied to the relationships that come to exist between those who are relatively uninformed and those who have already entered into the process of acquiring the experience of culture. One opinion, it would follow, is not as good as another because the expert has already taken his or her place within a historically conditioned community of discourse that is concerned with what is good or bad in works of art. It is not so much that the expert "knows" more than those who make interpretive judgments via the immediacy of an untutored response to works of art, but that the expert has already transcended his or her own initial limitations, which were also once subjective and without historical foundations.

Although Janson does not discuss the role of dialogue, it is not inconsistent with his observations to hypothesize the intellectual existence of a lay person who has decided to overcome his or her own lack of experience in matters of artistic appreciation by entering into a hermeneutical dialogue with experts. Gadamer, in a much criticized - and I think much misunderstood - explanation of authority, writes, "the authority of persons is ultimately based not on the subjection and abdication of reason but on an act of acknowledgment and knowledge - the knowledge, namely, that the other is superior to oneself in judgment and insight and that for this reason his judgment takes precedence - i.e., it has priority over one's own" (Gadamer 1994, p. 279). This is not to say, however, that an expert or authority on cultural matters is in possession of some kind of knowledge, the possession of which constitutes social superiority to the lay person. Rather, it is the superior capacity to make the most of new experiences that establishes one as an authority. To acquire culture in a hermeneutical sense means to

have had experiences with art that have transformed one from lay person to plausible expert. Both words, expert and experience, come from the Latin *experiri*, which means "to try out".

The expert has not merely taken in more knowledge than the non-expert but has experienced works of art in such a manner that previously undisclosed modes of being-in-the-world have been opened up for himself and others. (Their interpretive activities have also found some level of acceptance within a community of interested persons concerned with similar issues.) Heidegger, in his essay entitled "The Origin of the Work of Art", illustrates how a painting can disclose a world to one who possesses expertise in art. He chooses as the focus of his own tutored experience a pair of peasant shoes painted by Van Gogh.

> From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stands forth. In the stiffly solid heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever uniform furrows of the field, swept by a raw wind. On the leather there lies the dampness and saturation of the soil. Under the soles there slides the loneliness of the field-path as the evening declines. In the shoes there vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening corn and its enigmatic self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety about the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the advent of birth and shivering at the surrounding menace of death (Heidegger 1964, p. 663).

How many poems had Heidegger read, paintings had he pondered, pages of philosophy had he studied and discussed to be able to pen these lines? Yet nothing has been exhausted here. No definitive words have been spoken. Always something new remains to be said. Even his own experience is not yet exhausted. His words, bought with such difficulty and self-sacrifice, are a mere beginning for those who will enter new words and ideas into a great historical conversation by first listening to one such as Heidegger. They in turn will have earned their own right to speak original words,

ones that are always relative to those that have gone before. They will speak new words in answer to new, and as of yet unthought of, questions.

I have tried to show something of the nature of the hermeneutical concept of experience and suggest how the acquiring of culture occurs through a relationship that develops between the relatively uninformed and those who possess expertise. Also, I have reminded the reader that experience is characterized by neither objectiveness nor subjectiveness. The work of art, or a text, or a historical event is not an object that stands "outside" the interpreter's life experience. Nor is a work of art properly subject to the interpretive vagaries of a person's purely personal experience. The interpretive object - text, painting, musical score - is essentially an agent of change in an individual's life. But part of that change - by which I mean the extension in one's life of the capacity to have new experiences - originally comes from the historically significant context that originally surrounds, pervades, and defines the object of study.

Closely related to the problem of expertise, moreover, are significant questions concerning the nature of authority. One who possesses expertise is often cast into the role of authority. The problem with authority as it relates to the educational process has been its tendency to impinge upon the autonomy of the learner. Of course, expertise need not be used in an authoritarian way, but its opponents have considered it to be - and not without good cause - the embodiment and purveyor of prejudice. Gadamer characterizes such warranted criticism by saying, "Authority . . . is responsible for one's not using one's own reason at all" (Gadamer 1994, p.277). In order to think for one's self it was considered necessary for progressive thinkers to undo what they considered to be the interpretive hegemony of prejudice by denigrating the very idea of authority.

Gadamer argues that prejudice as an idea garnered its present pejorative associations during the Eighteenth Century Enlightenment, which identified prejudice with an unreasoned adherence to authority. Gadamer points out that "the Enlightenment tends to accept no authority and to decide everything before the

judgment seat of reason" (Gadamer 1994, p. 272). To the savants of the eighteenth century, reason was "its own master". It was considered extraneous and superior to all forms of traditionary understanding. The belief in reason's self-directed efficacy opened up the hope for an understanding of things that was unlimited in scope. This was assumed possible because reason itself had the advantage of a standpoint outside the encumbrances of any particular tradition of understanding. That is, reasonableness could only be achieved when one was free from any particular framework of understanding. Reason and prejudice were antithetical.

It is not difficult to comprehend how this happened. It was in the name of reason that the old forces of kingship, aristocracy, and the church were being challenged. When Voltaire penned "*Ecrasez L'infame*", he had in mind the prejudices, or as he preferred to call them the superstitions, of the Catholic church. The whole of the *ancien regime* was condemned in the name of reason. But just as the French Revolution failed in its bid to install reason as its supreme guide, so did progressive thinkers fail to detach it from the historical situations - and the traditions of understanding - to which it is inextricably bound.

But Gadamer aims at making a case for the rehabilitation of authority. He writes, "If the prestige of authority displaces one's own judgment, then authority is in fact a source of prejudices [in the negative sense of the word]. But this does not preclude it from being a source of truth, and that is what the Enlightenment failed to see when it denigrated all authority" (Gadamer 1994, p.279). Gadamer also contends that blind adherence to the opinions, beliefs, or commands of another is not essential for authority to be respected. Respect for authority is not the same thing as the "abdication of reason". Essentially, the recognition of authority should be based on what he aptly terms an act of "acknowledgment and knowledge". One simply comes to recognize that someone else is superior in understanding, and "for this reason", Gadamer says, "his judgment takes precedence - i.e., it has priority over one's own" (Gadamer 1994, p. 279).

This in no way implies that whatever constitutes authority, whether it is a text or the words of another person, is beyond criticism. Our relationship to authority and the expertise upon which it is based is a dynamic one. Authority, in the hermeneutic sense, has nothing to do with static self-preservation. What one knows and passes on to others is meant to be only a background for someone else's experience. Justifiable authority - insofar as it is an embodiment of expertise - aims eventually to surpass itself through the life experience of others.

This brings us to where Gadamer's examination of prejudices or prejudgments exerts an important influence on his conception of the interpretive process. All of us, for better or worse, to one degree or another, stand within and take perspective from a framework of understanding that, in part, defines who we really are in relation to the phenomenal event of other people and unfamiliar ideas. Our traditions of understanding are composed of prejudgments that often hinder our capacity to understand or experience the phenomenal world in new and original ways. Gadamer warns us that "A person who believes he is free of prejudices . . . denying that he is himself conditioned by historical circumstances, experiences the power of prejudices that unconsciously dominate him as a *vis a tergo*" (Gadamer 1994, p. 360).

In order to receive fairly and sincerely the claims of another, one must be able to recognize one's own prejudices. Prejudices delineate the horizon of our understanding - the point beyond which we cannot see. They can, at their worst, blind us to new experience and the possibility of seeing further and more inclusively. But the metaphor of a horizon connotes both a limitation and also the possibility of going beyond. Prejudices also allow us to see the other's point of view by connecting the interpreter to what is already recognizable in the unfamiliar. Gadamer calls these legitimate prejudices, which anticipate the meaning of the unfamiliar and bond us to communicable subject matter (Gadamer 1994, p. 295). They are, he says, a possible source of truth.

The hermeneutic process of coming to an understanding requires a search for

prejudices at every step of the interpretive endeavor. As one encounters the alienness of the text-as-other-than-one's-self, the opportunity to identify prejudices becomes an obligation. The good reader, striving also to be a good interpreter, becomes habituated in the practice of recognizing his or her own prejudgments.

An examination of the thinking of the Protestant theologian Rudolf Bultmann, focusing on his short but important essay "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible"? (1957) will show, more specifically, how one's prejudices necessarily effect one's interpretive understanding of a text.

Bultmann does not use the word "prejudice" in the same way Gadamer does. He makes the more usual distinction between the word prejudice - with the qualifier "dogmatic" preceding it - and the word "presupposition". There is, however, no discrepancy between the two thinkers concerning basic ideas. Bultmann writes, "No exegesis that is guided by dogmatic prejudices hears what the text says but lets it say only what exegete wants to hear" (Bultmann 1984, p. 146). But he also argues that there are preconditions to all understanding, and that is not the same thing as a blind or misleading prejudice, which lures the interpreter into a misunderstanding of a text.

Every interpreter is guided, according to Bultmann, "by some particular way of asking questions, some particular perspective" (Bultmann 1984, p. 148). This idea parallels Gadamer's notion of a traditionary point of view. The interpreter is conditioned by a perspective. Feelings, beliefs, values, and ideas make up one's standpoint as an interpretive being. The historian, for example, who is guided by his or her own perspective does not, thereby, falsify history, as long as the preconditioned understanding is not guided by blind or dogmatic prejudices.

Both for Gadamer and Bultmann interpretation takes on the structure of a question. But it is only from a vantage of a particular standpoint within a tradition that one can question subject matter. And, furthermore, one can only change or adjust one's own standpoint in light of new insights that are created from comparing or contrasting what one already knows, feels, or values with something new and different.

Bultmann rightly concedes that this way of asking a question is "one sided in questioning the phenomenon or the text from this one particular perspective" (Bultmann 1984, p. 148). It is, however, in assuming that this is the only question that can be asked of a text, interlocutor, or social phenomenon that one's viewpoint becomes distorted or falsified. Bultmann points out that in order to first understand a text or historical event there must be a common relationship between the interpreter and the content matter. A text is about something, and whatever that is the interpreter must already know something about it. Bultmann sums up this point by saying:

> This relation is grounded in the life context in which the interpreter stands. Only someone who lives in a state or in a society can understand the political and social phenomena of the past and their history, just as only someone who has a relation to music can understand a text having to do with with music, and so on. Therefore, a particular understanding of the subject matter of the text, grounded in a life relation to it, is always presupposed by exegesis; and to this extent no exegesis is without presupposition (Bultmann 1984, p. 149).

Without some familiarity with the subject matter, no inroad to the text would be possible. Consider picking up a book about some subject matter with which one is completely unfamiliar. The words on the page are impenetrable. Basic understanding is hardly possible. But, conversely, consider a text that is about a society very different from one's own. I once saw a documentary about the Mehenaku Indians, who live in the Brazilian rain forest. These are a people whose language I do not speak. They are hunter-gatherers whose lives unfold in a world I've never experienced. They neither read books, nor do they write them. They have never pondered Freud or the ideas of depth psychology.

Yet, as I watched the documentary, I felt that I might possibly be able to understand something about the phenomenon of their lives, especially if I could find something familiar and cast that in terms similar to my own experience. For example, sexual tensions between males and females were highly ritualized among this primative

people. The men lived in a large hut that was off limits to the women of the tribe and situated in the center of the village. The women were not even allowed to see into the men's hut where the tribe's "sacred flutes" were housed. It was the strict prerogative of the men to see and play the flutes. Tribal tradition even forbade the women from seeing the flutes. Significantly, it seemed to me, the penalty for violating this taboo was for the transgressor to be raped by all the adult males of the village. Within living memory this had occurred.

One old storyteller revealed part of the mythic structure of the tribe's history. Once a year the men took up the flutes and paraded them through the village. They were long and awkward to carry and hung well below the knees of the men who carried and played them. The women, who took this ritual seriously, fled to their individual huts before the procession began, closed the entrances, and did not look out. The old storyteller acted out how the flutes had once belonged to the women and how the men had risen up and taken them away. The old storyteller was highly animated as he spoke, acting out the primal rebellion of the men against the women.

Certainly this is a strange and alien phenomenon, but not completely so. My reading of Freudian psychology, for example, gives me some insight into the possible phallic nature of the flutes and leads me to question whether or not a castration complex might have been active here. If so, the phallic-flutes must be about the successful attempt of the men to establish and maintain power over the women. The ritual would have to be about power and gender domination.

These were all inroads toward an initial comprehension of Mehenaku society. My pre-understanding allowed me to ask questions about the meaning of these alien phenomenon. At least I was able to establish a position of understanding in relation to them. Of course the basic rules of hermeneutical interpretative understanding require that I check such standard ideas against the phenomenon I am attempting to understand. Are the flutes really phallic objects that symbolize male dominance? Perhaps an understanding of this phenomenon will shed new light on my own inherited

ideas, which include certain Freudian assumptions. What one learns from Freud may stand in need of correction. One's own presuppositions must be checked against the phenomenal event itself.

The great fault of any interpreter, however, is to assume that the questions one asks are the only ones that can possibly be asked. By asking and answering a particular question, one should not assume that anything definitive has been accomplished. It is a largely unrealized ideal of scholarship to know itself, for the most part, to be incomplete. Interpretation is only the restricted process of posing questions and then providing tentative answers. Critical interpretation often loses sight of its inherent and historically determined limitation. There is always another perspective to be taken toward any interpretative enterprise.

One's own tradition of understanding (prejudices it should be noted are the building blocks of tradition) conditions the questions we ask of anything. As we change, so does the position we once assumed in examining our subject matter. In this way, one is never able to find the single and univocal standpoint outside of the history of interpretation from which any phenomenon of understanding can be viewed.

Bultmann sums up his belief in the necessity of presuppositions for the interpretive process by making the following salient points:

1) The exegesis of . . . writings must be unprejudiced. (Bultmann 1984, p. 151).
   - That is blind or unexamined prejudices subvert true understanding and
     interpretation.

2) Exegesis is not without presuppositions . . . (Bultmann 1984, p. 151).
   - Prejudgments make understanding possible. It is by comparing what we know to
     what we do not yet know that learning occurs. Were it not for our
     presuppositions no comparison would be possible.

3) There is a presupposed "life relation" of the exegete to the subject matter
   (Bultmann 1984, p. 151).
   - One must stand to some extent within a tradition of understanding that
     encompasses both exegete and text. Interpretation, at its most successful level,
     however, is a creative act. The exegete can modify, reject, or reaffirm the

framework of understanding that he takes into the process of interpretation. In that way he or she is involved with his or her own conditions of self-understanding.

Prejudices or prejudgments - what Bultmann prefers to call presuppositions - are also the building blocks of self-understanding. Gadamer points out that "all understanding is ultimately self-understanding" (Gadamer 1994, p. 260). If our projections are to be productive of what Kepnes calls a "postmodern" conception of selfhood, the interpreter needs to come to an understanding of a text "by working out the fore-structure in terms of things themselves" (Gadamer 1994, p. 266). That is, self-understanding is opened to a future that allows the interpreter to modify the prejudgments that have until that point made up his or her life-world. One's beliefs, ideas, or values are thus brought into conscious realization - into a kind of relief where they can be affirmed, rejected, or modified according to the new claims of the encounter.

Gadamer's analysis of the role questioning plays in the hermeneutic process is resonant of Bultmann's in significant ways. He writes:

> The most important thing is the question that the text puts to us . . . so that understanding it must already include the task of the historical self-mediation between the present and tradition . . . . The voice that speaks to us from the past - whether text, work, trace - itself poses a question and places our meaning in openness. In order to answer the question put to us, we the interrogated must ourselves begin to ask questions. We must attempt to reconstruct the question to which the traditionary text is the answer. But we will be unable to do so without going beyond the historical horizon it presents us (Gadamer, 1994 pp. 373-374).

Gadamer says that we must "reconstruct the question to which the traditional text is the answer". But notice that he immediately qualifies this recommendation, saying that "we will be unable to do so without going beyond the historical horizons it presents to us". To merely reconstruct the question as it was once conceived would be tantamount

to an act of memorization. Interpretation would culminate not with a creative act of understanding, but with an act of reiteration. To go beyond the historical situation that permeates a text's meaning, one must, as Gadamer directs, become committed to a "mediation" between the traditional stance a text takes in response to the question that brought it into being and the interpreter's present situation. The relationship between the past, present, and future is a seamless one.

Therefore, successful interpretation results from an application of a text - and the question that it once attempted to answer - to the present situation of the interpreter. The thinking of the past is limited by the historical circumstances that made it possible, but it also informs the present. New and more relevant questions are made feasible by a cross-fertilization between the text and the life experience of the interpreter.

To ask a question in the hermeneutical fashion is like looking down a long, straight stretch of road. One sees in the far distance the point at which the two sides of the road appear to come together. There the horizon itself seems to disappear. Yet we know from experience that by walking a little farther on we will see beyond the horizon that has limited our capacity to see. A question can be compared to what motivates us to take those few extra steps. It is a question rather than an answer that allows one to see just a little farther.

The Book Of Job, for instance, opens up a conversation about God's relationship to man, which finds contemporary expression in a book entitled *Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?* (Kushner 1983). Milton picked up on the dialogue between God and Job and adapted the subject matter in *Paradise Lost*. He explained that he was writing to "justify the ways of God to man" (Milton quoted in Cunningham & Reich 1998, p. 218). Alexander Pope, a century later, borrowed Milton's great expression and, with a partially ironic eye turned towards Milton's grand plan, said that he too sought "to vindicate the ways of God to man" (Pope quoted in Cunningham & Reich 1998, p. 257) - and ends his famous, enduring, and often quoted *Essay On Man* affirming that "Whatever is, is Right" (Pope quoted in Cunningham & Reich 1998, p.

260). Voltaire entered this far reaching conversation as a skeptic. In *Candide* his anti-hero ends the novel doubting Dr. Pangloss (the embodiment of Leibnitz's dictum, "It is the best of all possible worlds") by saying that when all is said and done "we must cultivate our garden" (Voltaire quoted in Cunningham & Reich 1998, p. 277). Blake, who thought of himself as being under the direction of emissaries from heaven, reconceives *Paradise Lost*, turning Milton's Christian orthodoxy on its head by introducing a cosmic gnostic alternative. Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov tells his brother Alyosha that he is a rebel against God, being unable to accept a creation in which innocent children suffer. He asks despairingly how he can live believing that to be true? His voice is picked up on by twentieth century existentialism, which tries to find a way out of such dilemmas. Camus, for example, using the absurdity of the world as a foundationless foundation for a moral philosophy, admonishes in *The Plague* that we must always be vigilant, watching for ever present evil that slips up on us while we are unaware.

Each of the above texts was conceived in an attempt to answer a question about life. New questions reached maturity and answers to those questions emerged as texts. New questions already signaled the advent of new voices in a conversation that extended across historic time. The subject matter that extended from time to time was unified, despite the seeming discontinuity in thinking between one historical era and another, by the need to apply the wisdom represented by voices of bygone situations to the present. How would any interpreter, serious reader, or young student, ever know how to begin asking their own questions about any subject matter if they were not at first privy to the questions and answers that preceded them? Ancient voices are potentially active at any present time. Any student who reads, listens, and fairly considers what has come before eventually gains a rightful place in an extraordinary conversation that extends from one historical period to another. A curriculum becomes an opportunity for students to activate and reactualize any traditionary issue. Education is not a holiday from real life. The possibilities of existence should find their

way into the classroom. The task, as we have seen, of a hermeneutically influenced education is to make students aware that they properly belong to a culture more expansive than the one to which they presently belong.

The remaining part of this chapter, however, will be turned over to a discussion of the nature of the dialogic relationship and the postmodernist conception of selfhood. The hermeneutical ideas already discussed, e.g., prejudices, traditions of understanding, the social nexus of criticism, depend for their realization on the pivotal notion of the I-Thou relationship. This conception is crucial in understanding the pedagogical implications of hermeneutical philosophy. It is the adhesive that binds these many ideas into a discernible whole.

The phrase I-Thou is usually associated with the work of Martin Buber, but it is also a term extensively employed by Gadamer as he explains the characteristics of an authentic dialogic relationship. Although Gadamer does not mention Buber's work in *Truth and Method,* the parallels are so striking that I cannot help but emphasize the complementary nature of their work. I will, however, discuss them separately because of their lack of mutual recognition.

The I-Thou relationship is at the center of Gadamer's conception of the dialogic process. It cannot be overemphasized that a dialogic relationship is not confined to those conversations that take place between one person and another. Gadamer is just as concerned to show that dialogue can be established between a person and a text, event, or work of art. The text is approached by Gadamer as if it were a person, keeping in mind that when one addresses a text it is not the same thing as addressing the author of the text (see Chapter One for my discussion of authorial intentions).

To begin with, Gadamer conceives that the I-Thou relationship is closely coupled with the hermeneutical notions of tradition and the process of understanding.

> Hermeneutical experience is concerned with tradition. This is what is to
> be experienced. But tradition is not simply a process that teaches us to
> know and govern; it is language - i.e., it expresses itself like a Thou. A

Thou is not an object; it relates itself to us. It would be wrong to think that this means that what is experienced in tradition is to be taken as the opinion of another person, a Thou. Rather, I maintain that the understanding of tradition does not take the traditional text as an expression of another person's life, but as meaning that is detached from the person who means it, from an I or a Thou. Still, the relationship to the Thou and the meaning of experience implicit in that relation must be capable of teaching us something about hermeneutical experience. For tradition is a genuine partner in dialogue, and we belong to it, as does the I with a Thou (Gadamer 1994, p. 358).

As I have previously shown, texts are handed down throughout historical time. They are discussed from one generation to another. Texts of all kinds - whether literary, or works of art, or philosophical treatises - are bearers of tradition. They are referred to as traditionary because a history of conversation grows up around them. Most specifically, the text is a voice that reaches across time and speaks to the reader, eventually becoming a factor in disclosing something meaningful to the reader concerning a life experience.

What is important about all of this, from a pedagogical point of view, is the capacity of a Shakespearean play, as I have already tried to show, to be relevant to modern audiences, including students who might encounter this play as part of a humanities curriculum. Students who read Shakespeare are not, therefore, condemned to mastering outdated and arcane knowledge. They should be led toward the application of the play to some facet of their own lives. In doing so the text, in a very real sense, becomes a Thou to the I of the interpreter. A play speaks to the interpreter and makes a claim upon his attention. The interpreter listens to the voices that proceed from it. In his proper and rightful turn the interpreter will respond. He speaks, however, from a perspective that is not the same as the text itself. A give and take of a conversation begins to unfold. The play itself can now be seen through a different light. A new way of experiencing the play begins to take shape. The interpreter is not quite the same person he or she had once been.

Gadamer writes, "Historical consciousness knows about the otherness of the other,

about the past in its otherness" (Gadamer 1994, p. 360). This has its parallel in human relationship, Gadamer says, when we "experience the Thou truly as a Thou - i.e., not to overlook his claim but to let him really say something to us" (Gadamer 1994, p. 361). All I-Thou relationships must be governed by reciprocity, which is forged in the give and take of a conversational education.

Stephen Kepnes in his book *The Text As Thou* (1992) describes the remarkable similarities between the thought of Martin Buber, with whom the expression I-Thou is almost synonymous, and Gadamer's conception of the dialogic relationship bearing the same name. He points to the close resemblance between Gadamer's conception of an I-Thou relationship and Buber's description of "the primal setting at a distance", which guarantees "an acceptance of the otherness of the Thou and prepares the way for genuine relationship" (Kepnes 1992, p. 28).

The following table summarizes Kepnes's comparison of Gadamer and Buber (Kepnes 1992, pp 28-29):

Gadamer	Buber
One must be receptive to the claim a text (or other person) makes upon oneself as interpreter.	There must be a receptiveness to the text (or person) on the part of the interpreter.
The interpreter does not remain silent but in turn "speaks back" to the text. The interpreter brings his or her own frame of reference into the "to and fro", as Gadamer phrases it, of the interpretive process.	The interpreter "stands" his ground before the text as Thou. Kepnes quotes Buber from an article on education in which he uses the term "inclusion", meaning: "[The I], without forfeiting anything of the felt reality of his activity, at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other" (Buber 1965, quoted in Kepnes 1992, p. 29).

| The application of the text to what Gadamer considers "the present situation of the interpreter" is essential to the interpretive process. | Kepnes refers to Buber's concern for applying Hasidic texts to the contemporary "crisis of western man". |

It becomes necessary, at this point, if the full significance of the relational term I-Thou is to be understood, that we examine the postmodern conception of self insofar as it engages in and emerges from the dialogic process.

Kepnes, drawing on the work of Gusdorf, makes an important point that has further implications for the critique of Descartes with which I began my criticism of the subject/object dichotomy. He says, "The self as singular is a self that conceives of itself as 'opposed to others'. It 'exists outside of others', and even against others. It is not a self that defines itself 'with others in an interdependent existence that asserts its rhythms everywhere in the community' " (Kepnes 1992, p. 107).

Kepnes gives a brief but suggestive history of the rise of this kind of individualism that characterizes philosophical and educational thought in western culture at least since Descartes. It has its beginnings, he argues, in the Copernican Revolution but finds historic impetus through philosophical speculation in the writing of Descartes, Locke, and Kant. He notes Descartes's *cogito* as the "first principle and basis of all knowledge" (Kepnes 1992, p. 108); Locke's theory of "natural rights and individual liberties" (Kepnes 1992, p. 108) that helps put the individual at the center of an educational process that claims to be chiefly concerned with the uniqueness of individual experience; as well as Kant's "*a priori* principles and categories", which have loci in the mind of morally independent individuals (Kepnes 1992, p. 108).

In all these examples, the individual is conceived as separated from other individuals and the phenomenal world. Kepnes calls this the conception of "the monumental self" (Kepnes 1992, p. 108) and contrasts it with an antithetical understanding, "the relational self" (Kepnes 1992, p. 109), which follows closely upon the thinking of Buber. The essential difference between these two radically different conceptions of selfhood is that the former is characterized as "unique and isolated" (Kepnes 1992, p.

108) and "exists as an essence compressed within" (Kepnes 1992, p. 109). While the latter is "intrinsically related to another . . . and grows to selfhood through relation to another (Kepnes 1992 p.109). The relational self is also "constituted in and through the other person and in the social context" (Kepnes 1992, p.114).

These distinctions have a beginning in the opening of *I And Thou*. Buber writes, "If *Thou* is said, the *I* of the combination *I-Thou* is said along with it" (Buber 1987, p. 3). In short, Kepnes interprets this to mean that one's self develops in relationship to that which is other than itself in the world. If one considers an extrapolation of this ontological insight to pedagogy, a radical shift of educational priorities is inevitable. The goal of education, at least within the humanistic disciplines, becomes the acquisition of a culturally conditioned experience that is bent on the development of a selfhood that is intrinsically related to the otherness of text, event, conversant rather than primarily on the accumulation of factual knowledge. What is rightly inferred is a shift in emphasis from a de facto valuing of knowledge for its own sake to a more pragmatic criterion of evaluation that can be put into the form of this question: Are we presenting material to students in such a way that they will have the opportunity to redefine their sense of self through a relationship to new experiences with the world of culture?

Borrowing from Calvin Schrag's *Communicative Praxis* (1986), Kepnes emphasizes the need to consider the idea of "intersubjective space", which derives from the common social context that makes the dialogic relationship between the "I" and interlocutor possible. Neither subject, it would follow, exists transcendentally. All selves - including the selfness of the text or interpreted event - are in the process, at least potentially, of unfolding within some social context that provides the necessary frame of reference for understanding to occur. This social life is unendingly intersubjective. This commonly held "space" is akin to Gadamer's notion of a "fusion of horizons". Kepnes summons up his own understanding of the hermeneutic process of personal growth when he writes "as I grow I become more enmeshed in concentric

circles of relation that grow out of the dyadic relation and toward greater involvement and responsibility in family, community, and public life" (Kepnes 1992, p. 114). The I-Thou relationship becomes in Buber's terms a "manifold We", unfolding in what Heraclitus named a "common world". "For as I grow in it", he writes, "I become more and more sensitive to the linguistic and behavioral speech of others as a rhetorics of demand, a call to me to respond to the needs of the other" (Kepnes 1992, p.114).

At this point a caveat is warranted because all this is not necessarily a majority part of our given, everyday world of discourse. Buber himself did not believe that the I-Thou relationship was primary. He clearly understood that most relationships are of an I-It nature rather than an I-Thou one. The I-Thou relationship is one that has to be achieved against the grain of the everyday world. It follows that the acquisition of culture (*Bildung*) must be concerned with an educational project that concedes in a certain sense the subject/object relationship - or what Buber refers to as the word-pair I-It denoting, thereby, its common and natural place in the life-world of education (Buber 1958, p. 48). Not all texts lay claim to our attention or find applicability to our lives. And there is such a thing as factuality. There are pieces of information to be learned that precede and make possible the more creative work of interpretive understanding. The I-Thou relationship and the possibility of a fusion of horizon is an ideal for which a hermeneutically based education can only lay the groundwork.

If one is to provide an educational setting for even the limited goals I am suggesting, the principles behind the I-Thou relationship must be adapted to the realities of our schools as we find them. Hermeneutical moments, even under optimal conditions, will be the exception to the rule. Meaningful understanding in a "common world" depends on the ever present possibility of an ideal that seldom presents itself as ready-made, but is, nevertheless, an accompanying prerequisite for those "utopian" opportunities when the acquisition of culture includes an extension of selfhood in a world that contains the historically assured possibilities for shared meaning.

CHAPTER THREE

PROCESS EDUCATION AND HERMENEUTICS

This chapter analyzes the curricular tendency referred to in this thesis as process education. This term will be used to designate various propensities that I consider to be part of a tradition of pedagogy that has not yet matured as a unified, coherent framework of understanding. This analysis will include the work of Lawrence Stenhouse and the culmination of his ideas in the Humanities Curriculum Project; John Elliott's suggestions that hermeneutics is a logical way to extend the work of Stenhouse and others into a broader framework of philosophical understanding; and, finally, writers who have proposed a hermeneutically guided pedagogy.

The experimentation that is reported in subsequent chapters is essentially an attempt to implement such a pedagogy. In that sense, I have attempted a practical application of hermeneutical principals of understanding to a process based curriculum. That is not to say, however, that this present chapter was fully conceived prior to those efforts. The critical review represented in this chapter both informed and was informed by my later, more practical work.

One of the tenets of self understanding that is most essential to hermeneutical philosophy is that an interpreter should become aware of his or her own framework of understanding via the interpretive process. David Hoy makes the following observation concerning hermeneutics as a critical activity:

> The constant movement of interpretation requires awareness of the shadows cast on the texts by the old interpretations, and an attempt at illuminating these shadows by casting new light. Because interpretation is always partial, each interpretation, to the extent that it illuminates different portions of the subject matter, is at least implicitly a criticism of other interpretations. The real practical force, then, of hermeneutical

reflection is this emphasis on the necessity of criticism. "In the long run" such an emphasis will be more forceful than any particular "approach", "school", or "method" of interpretation (Hoy 1978, p. 114).

This chapter can be understood as an attempt to present a critical synthesis of the ideas of several educators whose thinking is related to the hermeneutical tradition. It cannot be overly emphasized that my review of the following articles and books is based on my judgment that Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy is most accurately read from a perspective that avoids a cleavage between "left-wing" and "right-wing" ideological extremes, as those terms are defined by Silvan Tomkins. And that, by holding to such a position, one would logically construct curriculum plans significantly different from those who read Gadamer from another point of view. But hermeneutics, as Hoy reminds, is not essentially concerned with seeing the world in any particular way. It is not a systematic school of philosophy like Marxism or Freudianism. It is essentially a philosophy that emphasizes "the necessity of criticism", and its primary concern is the nature of the practical process that makes criticism possible. Hoy's admonishment that interpretation is partial makes it a matter of course that one should always be ready to submit one's own critical stance to a process of reasonable interrogation. Therefore, this chapter and those following are conceived in a conversational spirit. That new and even well-founded interpretations should eclipse forever those that precede them is no longer tenable in postmodern criticism, except as an artifact of the writing process. Most properly, one remains aware that original interpretation, even if successful, only means that there is, as a consequence of one's efforts, an expanded discourse of understanding.

John Elliott points out that the key idea in Stenhouse's notion of curriculum is the problematic nature of knowledge. He mentions, in support of this observation, Stenhouse's admiration of Peter Abelard's commitment to the "contestability of knowledge" (Elliott, Burgess, and Ball 1989, p. 359). As a practical corollary to this basic insight, Elliott adds that Stenhouse believed that a variability and divergence of

ideas were indicators of a student's educational progress (Elliott et al. 1989, p. 359). Besides the problematic nature of knowledge, Elliott discusses the crucial importance that Stenhouse envisioned dialogue to play in the learning process. He describes actual student participation in the Humanities Curriculum Project saying that "Students came with their values and biases. And they looked at texts and evaluated evidence. The development of understanding was by being open. Although your biases are conditioned for understanding you become open to the text through dialogue with others" (Elliott et al. 1989, p. 365).

Both of these ideas are also essential to the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer who writes: "The experienced person proves to be . . . someone who is radically undogmatic; who, because of the many experiences he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them, is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them" (Gadamer 1994, p. 355). Even though Gadamer emphasizes that knowledge is derived from experience - and thereby establishes a basis for the primacy of experience over knowledge, per se - his point is not different from the one Elliott makes about Stenhouse. Knowledge is never absolute, but changes as the experiences that produce knowledge negate, eclipse, and modify one another. Dialogue, Elliott points out, is indispensable to the learning process because it is through dialogue that students extend their experience of the world in which they live. Elliott writes, characterizing the thinking of Stenhouse, "since knowledge is problematic the really worthwhile thing is to establish a discourse process" (Elliott et al. 1989, p. 365). Evidently it is the problematic nature of knowledge and the inevitable variability of experience that makes a process of discourse the necessary basis for acquiring new experience. Considering the weight of another's point of view is tantamount to being open to a new horizon of understanding.

In an earlier article, Elliott (1983) probes even more deeply into the parallels between Stenhouse's work and Gadamer's hermeneutical studies. Elliott shows, for example, that Stenhouse's praxology of knowledge often transposes with Gadamer's

more specific and elaborate idea of the unity in practice of understanding, interpretation, and application (Elliott 1983, pp. 107-108). Importantly, the language that Elliott's analysis is couched in is hermeneutical, which suggests that he is reading Stenhouse from a hermeneutical perspective.

Elliott also borrows from Gadamer's Aristotelian distinction between *praxis* and *poiesis* in order to discuss the proper goals of a process based education. Elliott, like Gadamer, rejects poiesis - technical knowledge and quantifiable results - in favor of praxis - which he defines as "a matter of actualizing our ideals and values in an appropriate form of action" (Elliott 1983, p. 109) and thereby endorses "an ideal way of life" instead of quantifiable educational goals and predetermined standards against which a student's progress is measured. Elliott quotes Stenhouse, who writes "Exploration and interpretation lead to revision and adjustment of idea and of practice" (Stenhouse 1980, quoted in Elliott 1983, p. 109) - an idea that Elliott believes to be remarkably close to Gadamer's conception of the unity of interpretation, understanding, and application. One of the contributions of Elliott's hermeneutical reading of Stenhouse is the revelation that a pedagogy lies barely concealed in Gadamer's ontological writings. Gadamer himself has unfortunately written little to nothing on educational matters, per se.

Elliott quotes from the *Schools Council Working Paper No. 2, On Raising the School Leaving Age* (1965) to show that the essential problem this document recognized was how "to give every man some access to a complex cultural inheritance, some hold on his personal life and on his relationships with the various communities to which he belongs, some extension of his understanding of, and sensitivity towards other human beings" (Elliott 1983, p. 111). Elliott believed that Stenhouse approved of this statement as a primary goal of education because it argues for the importance of "individual judgment as against rule by authority in the conduct of life" (Elliott 1983, p. 111).

Insight into Elliott's reading of Stenhouse can begin with examining the phrase

"access to a complex cultural education". This is important to do because a concern with an egalitarian access to culture is essential to the curricular reforms advocated by Stenhouse in *Culture and Education* (1967). Some idea of what this phrase entails sheds light on the tradition of process based learning that derives from Elliott and Stenhouse and culminates in the Humanities Curriculum Project. Culture, from a hermeneutical point of view - the view that Elliott has ostensibly adopted in his article - cannot be conceived apart from the historically grounded traditions that give rise to its understanding. Because culture is essentially historical it is contained in texts and in the memory of those who read and interpret texts. Texts and their expert readers constitute an authoritativeness that comes from experience with culture. Access to that experience depends on the willingness of students to recognize such authority. This is not, as Gadamer warns, an unthinking compliance with authority but, rather, the simple, obvious - and temporary - cognizance that someone else knows more about something than you do. Students should never be asked to accept permanently or to believe definitively anything from another's point of view. Instead, they should simply extend to the text or other person enough status as to make them [the reader] an attentive and - in as much as it is possible - open-minded listener. It is sometimes the role of teachers to exhibit their own expertise, not because they hold a position of authority in social terms, but because they possess enough competence to guide students through the maize of experience and myriad of experts that surrounds all forms of subject matter (Expertise, like the allied words experience and experiment, is rooted in the Latin *experiri - to* try out. Even the expert is limited by the problematic nature of what he tries out).

Gadamer conceives of authority in this way:

> the authority of persons is ultimately based not on the subjection and abdication of reason but on an act of acknowledgment and knowledge - the knowledge, namely, that the other is superior to oneself in judgment and insight and that for this reason his judgment takes precedence - i.e., it has priority over one's own. This is connected with the fact that

authority cannot actually be bestowed but is earned, and must be earned if someone is to lay claim to it. It rests on acknowledgment and hence on an act of reason itself which, aware of its own limitations, trusts to the better insight of others (Gadamer 1994, p. 279).

Individual judgment about cultural matters is not then opposed to a hermeneutically conceived authority. Furthermore, according to Gadamer, the acknowledgment of authority is not an *a priori* act. Authoritative status ultimately derives from an act of judgment on the part of the student, whether it concerns the authority of a text or the expertise of the teacher. It would certainly be part of the teacher's role to prepare students to make informed judgments about what is authoritative and what is not. An important book can be given to a student, and the teacher may suggest that it is somehow authoritative. But ultimately that is for the student to decide. In the meantime, however, the student can be expected to treat the text as if it were worth listening to - based perhaps only on the recommendation of the teacher - until that time when the student is experienced enough with the subject matter to decide otherwise. Remember that part of a book or a teacher's authoritative status comes from knowing something the student does not yet know. Once that knowledge is taken up by the student the relationship becomes more nearly egalitarian.

As we shall see Stenhouse's views on authority, especially as they are transposed to the HCP, differ in significant ways from Gadamer's conception just outlined. More will be said of this later on.

Elliott also employs the idea of relevance in discussing the goals of process directed learning. Curriculum, he assumes, should be relevant for the student toward whom the curriculum is directed. But he is not sufficiently careful to distinguish the idea of relevance from that which is merely recognized as being familiar by the student. Gadamer's thinking on this subject is different. He concludes that the application of subject matter to one's life often begins with what is unknown and ends with a familiarity based on an expanded experience with the subject matter.

The curriculum goal of relevance can be misleading if one does not keep in mind

that young people are by their nature inexperienced. It can be argued, therefore, that they are not yet ready to determine what is or is not relevant to their lives. This is why even a process based education needs to employ expertise in order to guide students toward a relevance of which they are unaware.

Elliott observes that Stenhouse's working definition of the humanities is "the study of human issues which were of universal concern within society to pupils", and which entails, "human acts and social situations which are empirically controversial in our society . . ." (Elliott 1983, pp. 111-112). Gadamer's main concern, on the other hand, is the interpretation of texts. There is, of course, nothing mutually exclusive in this. The issue of war, for example, does not preclude the reading of books about war. Nor, it might be argued, does any issue in itself inherently mandate a text-based approach. But there is a difference in emphasis in these two approaches to understanding. For the hemeneuticist appropriate texts are the primary entryway into the discussion of issues and the broader concerns of subject matter that underpin all knowledge capable of universalization.

When confronted with actually implementing a discussion based humanities curriculum, Stenhouse himself recognized that it was unrealistic to expect issue-based discussion to have a practical chance for success unless students had information to help guide their discussions. He opined that it was not realistic to expect them to generate their own information, but he also believed that teacher-generated information would be prejudiced by the teacher's own views. What proved acceptable to him as a source of information to guiding discussion groups were packets of professionally produced information called "material evidence" (Elliott 1983, p. 113). These were, he said, multimedia kits, which included "print, photographs, tape-recordings, and film. [They] consisted of factual material drawn form the behavioral sciences and history, as well as experiential material drawn from the arts". Elliott also said that teachers in this project were "to introduce this evidence in terms of its relevance to the issues being discussed" (Elliott 1983, p. 114). Classroom

discussions, therefore, would begin with the issues students had chosen before they were introduced to the "material evidence". By contrast it would be more consistent from a hermeneutical point of view, however, to begin discussions after the students had been introduced to some source of information. Whether it was a packet of "material evidence" or a text, it would be of primary importance to introduce students to the historical antecedents of the issue they had chosen to discuss. The relevance of the "material evidence" to discussion would not be as important as the relevance of discussion to the material evidence.

Elliott's essay, in general, establishes a basis for extending the scope of process education initiatives. He writes, for example, this cogent explanation of Gadamer's conception of prejudgment:

> Every act of interpretation, whether it be of a linguistic text or some other human act, involves bringing our fore-conceptions or prejudgments to bear on the evidence. This is a condition, not a barrier, to understanding, because we can only grasp meanings which derive from other people's experience in terms of the meaning we give to our own. There is no such thing as a bias-free interpretation (Elliott 1983, p. 116).

By employing the hermeneutical idea of prejudgment, Elliott continues his comparison of Gadamer and Stenhouse noting that within a discussion based curriculum "rival projects can emerge side by side" (Gadamer 1975, quoted in Elliott 1983, p.117). This realization has its counterpart, he continues, in the thinking of Stenhouse who urges that teachers should promote and protect divergent ideas thus allowing for a full range of biases to emerge during discussions. Bringing these biases into the open helps to emphasize the problematic nature of knowledge. Allowing rival meanings to exist side by side, within the terms of a discussion, is also prerequisite, he observes, to what Gadamer calls a unity of meaning, or agreement among discussants as to what something means. Elliott concludes by writing, "By becoming aware of our own prejudgments we become more open to the meaning the facts express. Out of the

dialectical process which emerges our understanding of the facts is extended, and our judgment of the act or situation to which they refer is modified" (Elliott 1983, p. 118).

What Elliott only seems to overlook at this junction in his thinking is that in order to achieve understanding, discussions must range beyond the historical and cultural limitations of any particular group. Fundamental to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is the development of a historical consciousness. To be fully involved with any issue students must come into contact with what others in the past have thought to say about it. There is always a conversation of greater scope than the particular one that is taking place. Full involvement in a historically extended conversation requires a text-based approach because texts embody our historical experience. If a student's point of view is limited to the ideas, beliefs, and feelings brought to the interpretive process from his or her present cultural situation, what he or she makes of the "material evidence" will be commensurately limited.

The need for an explicitly historical approach to discourse is made only more emphatic by the approval Elliott gives to the following quote from Stenhouse's *Culture and Education*:

> We are faced with the fact that we interact with the past through an immense store of written records and works of art. These stored ideas allow us to bring 'the best that has been thought and said' into a dialogue with our contemporary culture. Interaction with the past is an element in our own cultural development; and it is of course a major role of the educational system to keep going this conversation of past and present (Stenhouse 1967, quoted in Elliott 1983, pp. 118-119).

This passage, with its emphasis on "stored ideas" and the "conversation of past and present", suggests one specific point of common understanding between Stenhouse's belief in the importance of a culturally based education and Gadamer's notion of historically effected consciousness. The possibility of a synthesis made up of the educational thinking and curriculum practices of the process education movement, as represented by Stenhouse and Elliott, and the more philosophical, but pedagogically

undeveloped, aspects of Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy is intriguing. There are reasonable points of comparison as Elliott shows. These suggest a confluence of meaning. But at the same time contrasts are apparent. Further comparisons - and contrasts - await a more careful examination of Stenhouse's thinking.

In *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development* (1975), Stenhouse's theoretical basis for an understanding of curriculum development rests partially on the work of the American sociologist Talcott Parsons. Following Parsons, Stenhouse observes that education is a matter of handing on to students what others possess (Stenhouse 1975, p.7). Culture in sociological terms is a product of social interaction. Our beliefs, values, and feelings - that is our cultural knowledge - are an outcome of our social relationships. Stenhouse explains that each person learns according to the social groups to which he has access.

The hermeneutical tradition, however, is not a sociology of knowledge. Its self reflection is ontologically grounded. This tradition is less interested in the distinctive knowledge groups possess, than in the process of interpretation that allows for the transformative application of understanding from one framework of interpretation to another. Class relationships, for example, are not inalterable. But epistemological concerns are perennial and universal. Sociological ideas can be subjected to the principles of hermeneutical interpretation, but they are not part of its self-understanding.

Nevertheless, Stenhouse's point is well taken. The fundamental aim of institutionalized education, Stenhouse observes, is to hand on to students cultural achievements that are not indigenous to those institutions. Education exists to give people access to cultural groups outside their own. The ramifications of this are crucial to groupings within any democracy. Educational activities are not just the product of social actions but are also "determinant" of social actions. Who-says-whatever-to-whom is determined by the kind of education one has.

Stenhouse observes that one can't talk with others if there is nothing in common to

talk about. In order for people to interact with one another meaningfully, there must be a degree of mutual understanding. Certainly the acquisition of language is of crucial importance to the learning process because any possibility for a consensus of cultural values must be carried on by language skills that are, in part, acquired through the educational process. Schools make culture available. Stenhouse believes that one of the principle charges of any educational system is to make the choice of which cultures to teach.

If schools have no inherent culture of their own to pass on to students, they can either support the status quo of society as a whole or try to encourage the development of critical thinking skills that would not only contribute to the practice of learning within the schools, but would also eventually have some positive impact on society itself. Whatever social decisions underlie the development of any curriculum, an educational project designed to incorporate process based learning has an important decision to make at its inception. On the one hand, curriculum writers can build curriculum around what they perceive to be subject matter that is relevant to students. The designers of the Humanities Curriculum Project were right in assuming that in order to base curriculum on the "principle of relevance", i.e., relevance to the student's perceived social interests, that the students themselves would have to direct their own discussion topics. However, from a hermeneutical point of view, this raises a problem. Is what students perceive as relevant also culturally worthwhile in the long run?

The other option, of course, would be to start with what is considered worthwhile and then move toward what is deemed relevant and interesting to students. A judgment concerning the worthwhile would almost certainly fall outside the domain of students, at least initially. Most appropriately, this would require the expertise that is born from long experience with subject matter. There is both a tactical and principled ambivalency involved with the need to choose concerning whether curriculum planners emphasize the relevant or the worthwhile. In a very direct way this is linked to Stenhouse's central premise that knowledge is provisional. Tactically, if one chooses

the worthwhile instead of the relevant, there is the risk of alienating students from the curriculum project. As a matter of principle, the greatest danger in adopting the worthwhile, is the risk of treating cultural knowledge as if it had a legitimacy outside of the life experiences of persons - i.e., students. But to overly emphasize the relevant is to chance involving students in a curriculum experience that does not draw upon the great storehouse of cultural knowledge that is available to them for the discernment and development of meaningfulness in their lives. In this case they might never move beyond the limits of self-understanding imposed upon them by accident of birth.

Stenhouse believes that knowledge of the world changes because learners have the capability to at least partially govern the given reality of the worlds into which they are born (Stenhouse 1975, p. 22). The issue of how this is brought about in the educational setting has to do with the choices just outlined. If students are to learn "to govern the given reality of their worlds", both their personal experience with the world and the broader cultural experience to which they are heirs must blend to form an ever renewing understanding of self. If the hermeneutical way with its emphasis on the worthwhile is chosen as the guide for curriculum planning, then it would be wise for its advocates to heed the admonishment that is implied in the experiences of the HCP and the writings of Lawrence Stenhouse. Sooner or later - and the sooner the better - that which is deemed worthwhile, partly obtained through the goodwill and good counsel of subject matter experts, had better prove both relevant and interesting to students.

A key point of Stenhouse's thinking is that there is always a public criteria for what is true or false, good or bad. This imparts an objectivity to knowledge, but not objectiveness. Truth claims - to use a hermeneutical expression - originate with public dialogue. They have no transcendent basis in reality. This notion is crucial to Stenhouse's demand that a humanities curriculum be conversationally based (Stenhouse 1975, p. 23). Objectivity means, in practical terms, that knowledge is speculative and that the only proper approach to it is through a pedagogical discourse

that incorporates different points of view. As soon as students are mature enough, they should learn about the problematic nature of knowledge. Otherwise, they may come to confuse their own single-minded point of view as the only truth available to them.

Critical to understanding Stenhouse's critique of standard educational practices - and his reliance on a dialogically based alternative - is his concern about the use of educational objectives (Stenhouse 1975, p. 78). Predicted educational outcomes cannot be made with any certainty, he believes, without adopting a belief in the objectiveness of knowledge - a metaphysical construct that both Stenhouse and hermeneuticists like Gadamer reject as antipathetic to the process of a conversationally based education. After all, if curriculum is designed to lead students to pre-existing answers, which by their nature imply a basis in truth that stands outside of the student's own experience, discussion on that subject would become superfluous. Stenhouse, therefore, argues that students should be encouraged to always go beyond the scope of predicted educational outcomes, making instead creative responses to questions about subject matter that they have themselves discovered. Educational models that employ learning objectives might appertain to certain forms of technical training (Aristotle's *poiesis*), but they are poorly used in the study of the humanities. (Even basic skills and information are best learned in the context of a broader conception of knowledge.)

Stenhouse writes, "induction into thought systems of culture and results in understanding are evidenced by the capacity to grasp and to make for oneself relationships and judgments" (Stenhouse 1975, p. 80). A strict adherence to an educational objective is not only epistemologically unsound, but also undemocratic, Stenhouse believes, because it impedes the autonomy of judgment and hinders the development of the individual as a decision maker. This belief proceeds somewhat ironically from the following observation that he has made concerning the human condition.

> They [objectivists] seem to assume we are free and there is a threat that
> education will chain us. But in fact our freedom is limited. By standards
> as near to absolute as we can conceive, men are relatively predictable,
> limited, and uncreative. It is the business of education to make us freer
> and more creative (Stenhouse 1975, p. 82).

Is there something inconsistent in Stenhouse's reasoning? Basically I think the answer is no. But his definition of the general goal of education to be one of getting students access to cultural knowledge, while at the same time judging students, like people in general, to be "relatively predictable, limited, and uncreative" does present a problem. His argument seems to hinge on the need for curriculum to compensate for this natural tendency toward uncreativeness. It is difficult, however, to comprehend how this primary goal of education would ever be achieved without the careful guidance of others who have already overcome their own inherent limitations. In other words, if students are "relatively predictable, limited, and uncreative", their capacity to be autonomous learners will be restricted to the opportunities they have to practice creative understanding and to the quality of guidance they receive in their efforts to assimilate cultural knowledge. Elliott has realized that it is consistent with Stenhouse's thought that creative thinking without a structure of knowledge to sustain it would be chimerical. The practical process of acquiring that knowledge seems equally unlikely if someone is not entrusted with the task of guiding students in the difficult skill of interpretive understanding.

It is also consistent with his basic thinking that an instrumental approach to knowledge would distort the learning experience. But it does not follow that an abrogation of objectivist learning schemes (something that would have a hermeneuticist's support) would also require a rejection of authoritative expertise. How would all but the most naturally creative person negotiate the maze of our many conflicting cultural traditions without the help of experts? And how would meaningful dialogues meant to connect students with those traditions of culture ever begin - except by chance - if it were not for the guidance provided by experts, both persons

and text? And how would the worthwhile be separated from the worthless, the discarded, and the idiosyncratic, if students are denied access to those who have made it their life's work to think about such things? This issue will be discussed again in my critical review of Jean Rudduck's account of the Humanities Curriculum Project, where the effects of Stenhouse's thinking on authority are manifested as misconceived anti-authoritarianism.

Before going on a summation up Stenhouse's vision of the process model of education might be advisable: 1) Knowledge is inherently problematic. 2) Because knowledge is problematic education should become a matter of discourse, i.e., students should be encouraged to talk about the knowledge to which they are introduced. 3) Knowledge should be viewed as relevant to the student's life situation. Potentially, at least, knowledge should be presented to students in a way that encourages them to apply it to an improvement in the quality of their social lives. This makes the acquisition of cultural knowledge worthwhile (Elliott 1983, p. 89). All of these general goals will find a counterpart in a hermeneutical pedagogy.

An examination of the Humanities Curriculum Project throws light on how Stenhouse's ideas found practical application in an educational setting. It also provides a useful contrast with the hermeneutical projects that are analyzed in the next chapters.

Jean Rudduck tells us that there were five major premises upon which the Humanities Curriculum Project was based:

* Controversial issues should be handled in the classroom with adolescents.

* Teachers should not use their authority as teachers as a platform for promoting their own views.

* The mode of enquiry in controversial areas should have discussion rather than instruction as its core.

* The discussion should protect divergence of view among participants.

* The teacher as chairperson of the discussion should have responsibility
for quality and standards in learning (Rudduck 1983, p. 8).

The aim of the Humanities Curriculum Project is clearly stated: "to develop an understanding of social situations and human acts and of the value issues which they raise" (Rudduck 1983, p. 8). Rudduck reports that one of the founding considerations of the HCP was that many students were alienated from the learning process because they were "sceptical of the school's willingness to take account of life as the student knows it" (Rudduck 1983, p. 9). She also tells us that the personal beliefs of teachers often affect the way they teach and understand the humanities, and that these prejudices when imposed upon students also contribute to student alienation from the curriculum. "Adolescents are at a stage in life when they feel that they are emerging into adulthood and beginning to lay the foundations of their own style, their own value positions, their own personality" (Rudduck 1983, p.10). Since the "humanities are relevant to the process of maturing", (Rudduck 1983, p.10) the problem, Rudduck believes, is to present humanistic learning in a way that is accessible to the life style of the student. Otherwise: alienation.

The main emphasis in a humanities curriculum should be on "important human issues of widespread and enduring significance" (Rudduck 1983, p.11). It was decided that the best teaching strategy was discussion rather than traditional methods of instruction. If the material was going to be relevant to the students, they would have to play an active part in the learning process. The teachers were not to be a source of information for student discussion groups because their choices would be colored by their own prejudices and values. Yet students would need a source of information in order to stimulate discussion. It was not deemed practical that they be the only source of information, although student research was to be part of the envisioned process. The project would provide materials "sufficiently pithy and succinct" to aid student discussion groups (Rudduck 1983, p.15). Materials were subsequently chosen for each of the areas selected as topics for discussion, e.g., war and society, poverty, law and

order, etc. These materials were not to guide discussion. Rudduck states that, "The course of the discussion is not dictated by the materials" (Rudduck 1983, p. 17). Teachers, in fact, were to have no "foreknowledge" of the materials they would need to use for any discussion. These were to be drawn upon when their relevance was deemed necessary. The material evidence was never to be used to settle an issue, but rather to "delineate" it. It was to be considered problematic, and was also the subject of critical discussions. "The materials", she concludes, "could not carry the pedagogy but they were an essential support to the realisation of the pedagogy" (Rudduck 1983, p. 7).

The dynamics of discussion groups were also carefully considered. The teacher was to be continually aware of the patterns of conversation within the group. Questions like "Which people take part in the discussion?" and "Are there shared ideas about the task of the group?" guided the teacher's scrutiny of group behavior. The climate of the group was to be cooperative rather than competitive. It was the teacher's responsibility to set a cooperative tone for the group. Despite some indication of not assuming any authoritative role, the teacher was, however, expected to intervene in the process of discussion in order to accomplish certain predetermined goals. For example, the teacher was to: "ensure a clear articulation of the subject under discussion; protect divergence of view; introduce appropriate evidence; and maintain continuity between discussions" (Rudduck 1983, p. 23).

Rudduck admits that it is often difficult to get discussions going. She believes this is true because schools don't encourage discussion-based learning and students are not sufficiently practiced in its conduct. She even suggests that by beginning with instructional teaching, even with the limited aim of giving students background knowledge, one can increase the difficulties in starting up discussion (Rudduck 1983, pp. 24-25). Therefore, the teacher's instructional role should be avoided. In order to insure that the learning process would be both topic-centered and student-centered, she emphasizes the following:

Teachers in our experimental schools came to recognize the need to train themselves to be sensitive to issues and to ensure that the issues were ones that the students were curious about and that they were expressed in a language that the students could grasp (Rudduck 1993, p.25).

Topic choices were to be derived from pre-discussion sessions, and if consensus could not be reached by students, "generous compromise" was accepted (Rudduck 1983, p. 25). The role of the chairperson, i.e., the teacher, was commensurately limited. It was the responsibility of the chairperson - no longer considered a teacher in any traditional sense - "to extend, never to limit, the range of relevant views and perspectives accessible to the group" (Rudduck 1983, p. 27). Of course, the chairperson was never to impose his or her own point of view or ask leading questions. The ideal, it would seem, was a divergence of opinion in the group. And discussion should always be judged by how well it ultimately meet the needs of the group. The chairperson was advised to meet this goal by:

* asking questions or posing problems in relation to resources;

* clarifying or asking a group member to clarify what has been said as a basis for discussion;

* summarising main trends in the discussion;.

* keeping the discussion relevant and progressive;

* helping the group to use and build on each other's ideas;

* helping the group to raise and define issues for discussion and to decide on priorities;

* through questions, providing intellectual stimulus and encouraging reflective self-criticism (Rudduck 1983, p. 28).

The goal of conversationally-based learning was the student's expanded capacity to

experience the world in new ways. They were "to build an appropriate and consistent interpretive map which structures a new experience and relates it to the individual's own experience and situation" (Rudduck 1983, p. 36).

I will now compare and contrast some of these principled goals of the Humanities Curriculum Project with Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy as it applies to educational matters. To begin with, I believe that Rudduck's interpretive account of the Humanities Curriculum Project (HCP) reveals prejudices that are sometimes inconsistent with Stenhouse's own previously stated opinion. The HCP typically treated the student as a self-sufficient learner, one whose life style should not be interfered with by the requirements of a curriculum based on a measure of value that was outside the student's experience. Rudduck reveals that one of the founding considerations of the HCP was "the schools unwillingness to take account of life as the student knows it"; yet Stenhouse himself emphasizes the need for students to have access to cultural knowledge. This seems to constitute a contradiction between two stated goals: 1) to protect the students' life style and 2) to provide access to cultural knowledge. From a hermeneutical point of view, and as a matter of practicality, there is no reason to oppose sensitivity for "life as the student knows it". To disregard the student's prior experience would not only be a tactical error in pedagogical practice but would abnegate the student's cultural background as it constitutes that part of the historical context a student brings to the search for understanding. But what makes a justifiable respect for the background of the student become dubious, however, is the neglect given to the dialectical aspect of learning. That humanistic learning should be accessible to the life style of the student, as Rudduck persuades, should not mean that the life style of the student is not to be compared to or contrasted with other life styles.

The goal of a hermeneutically-based education is to move students beyond "life as they know it". This is accomplished by actually providing an encounter between the student's self, which is grounded in one cultural tradition of understanding, and

cultural traditions that are other than his or her own. Gadamer writes that, "Self understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self" (Gadamer 1994, p. 97).

If classroom discussions are based on issues chosen by the student, those very choices will inevitably reflect the ingrained biases of the student. But Rudduck says that it is also the goal of the HCP to encourage "the extension of the student's understanding of, and sensitivity towards, other human beings" (Rudduck 1983, p. 10). If this means more than just a sensitivity to other members of a classroom discussion group - if the learner is to get beyond the prejudgments that make up the way he or she experiences the world - this will require an exposure of the student to ideas, beliefs, and values different from his or her own.

A text-based curriculum is a straightforward, honest, and effective way of acknowledging that the curriculum means to purposefully expand students' horizons whenever possible. The goal is to make that from which they were once alienated possibly become their own. If young people were not in need of becoming something other than what they are, why should they study a humanities curriculum in the first place? Rudduck says that students should be more sensitive to others, but how is that to happen if the insensitive person doesn't change in some fundamental way? The curriculum should also, Rudduck says, be more "relevant to the process of maturing" (Rudduck 1983, p. 10). This excellent insight signals, however inadvertently, the need for an ontological direction in curriculum planning. The first step in such a reorientation would be to recognize that a true introduction to culture requires that students learn that they are "not by nature what they should be" (Gadamer 1994, p. 12).

There is also some tentativeness toward the role of authority in Rudduck's report on the HCP. The traditional role of the teacher was superseded by the value placed on the autonomy of the learner. Teachers were specifically "never to limit, the range of relevant views and perspectives accessible to the group" (Rudduck 1983, p. 27).

What makes this questionable, from a hermeneutical point of view, is how the teacher, now chairperson, is to extend the range of "relevant views and perspectives" without the use of authoritative expertise, either the teacher's own, or that of an appropriate text. If "never to limit the range of relevant views and perspectives" means only that the fluency and variability of student ideas are to be encouraged and preserved, it is objected that student discussion is limited by the cultural heritage to which the students have been previously exposed. It may well be argued in response to this objection that the "material evidence" packets, rather than fully developed texts, per se, served "to extend . . . the range of relevant views and perspectives" (Rudduck 1983, p.10). But the advantage of a text is precisely its authoritative status. All texts are, in a sense, historically grounded. They represent an extension of a conversation begun in the past into the present time of the student's existence. And it is this historical grounding of the text that gives students exposed to the perspective of the text an extended range of "relevant views and perspectives" - if the text is only appropriate to the subject matter of a discussion. An authoritative text has by its very nature withstood the test of time. It has been read, discussed, and critiqued. Many have come to deem its fitness for further discussion. It may represent a point of view that students themselves do not possess. It is cultural knowledge not available to them from the sources of their present life style.

Rudduck admits that conversations among students are hard to get started (Rudduck 1983, p. 24). What is overlooked by this admission is the historical point of view. Most conversations have already been started. Is there, in all actuality, any issue that has not at some time been discussed and that discussion recorded? Access to these provides stimulus to new conversations. (Perhaps, it is more accurate to say renewed conversations.)

There is also a unified quality to a text that gives it the characteristics of a voice that takes part in a conversation. It is to a text (and perhaps not to a "material evidence" packet) that a student can extend an I-Thou relationship. There can, of

course, be no compromise with the notion that neither packets of "material evidence" nor texts can be exempted from the insight common to both hermeneutical philosophy and the HCP: that all knowledge - even that handed on by experts - is problematic. But conversational learning begins most effectively with listening to what one does not already know. This is the hermeneutical rule. The rule adopted by the HCP emphasizes beginning with what one already knows. That is precisely how the student postpones or altogether avoids coming to recognize himself or herself in other being. Gadamer says that a person is blind and lacks a sense of proportion who "cannot turn his gaze from himself towards something universal, from which his own particular being is determined" (Gadamer 1994, p. 12).

I would like to make it clear that much of what was contained within these "material packets of evidence" actually are texts. A photograph, for example, can be considered a text, because it can be "read" and interpreted. But it has not reached full development until it has passed into the domain of language where its meaning has been influenced by conversationally based understanding. Works of art, to use a similar example, have a history of criticism that surrounds them like an aura. When one first looks at a painting, to be more specific, one's understanding is limited by the knowledge one already possesses concerning its meaning. Consider how restricted anyone's response to DaVinci's *Last Supper* would be if he or she had not read the New Testament account upon which it is based, or about Leonardo's ideas on the intellectual complexity of art. Understanding ultimately depends on the historically conditioned use of language that every reader/critic potentially inherits. Books are already within the domain of language. That makes them easier to understand - even when they are relatively difficult to read. A painting, or any image, that promotes an idea must always rely on language for the explanation and communication of that idea. This observation argues not just for the primacy of language but more specifically provides a justification for a text-based curriculum. Students need access to what others have said about any artifact that is subjected to their critical understanding.

Books - that is fully developed texts - are the gateway to cultural understanding and are, for that reason, the preferred starting point for a conversationally-based pedagogy.

On three points hermeneutical philosophy is different from the principles and practical conduct of the HCP: 1) authority and expertise is considered to be necessary to a conversationally-based education; 2) students are encouraged to see the need for extending the horizon of their experience beyond that of their present life styles; 3) books are deemed an appropriate focal point for student discussion groups.

The last part of this chapter is reserved for a review of the hermeneutical thinking of Elaine Atkins and David Jardine.

Atkins provides support for a general theory of hermeneutical pedagogy. All the topics that I have already discussed find an echo in her article. She argues for a community of discourse (schools) as the basis for the interpretive process. She writes that, "We need to work towards an interpretation of knowledge as socially justified beliefs. In this context the community generates authoritative knowledge through a continued process of intellectual negociation among its members" (Atkins 1988, p. 445). Interpretive activity, in other words, is an inherently social activity (*sensus communis*).

Basic hermeneutical ideas, e.g., tradition, dialogue, fusion of horizons, and application can only be realized, Atkins emphasizes, within a community of discourse. Understanding occurs, she writes, "when we fuse our own 'horizon' of historical meanings and assumptions with the 'horizon' of the work we are trying to interpret" (Atkins 1988, p. 441). But this fusion necessitates a conversational relationship between a text, artifact, or work of art and interpreters working in a community of common interests. She quotes Bruffee's phrase "conversation of mankind" (Bruffee 1982, quoted in Atkins 1988, p. 446).

Atkins claims that knowledge is characterized by "consensus rather than correspondence to a 'Truth' or 'Reality'". Moreover, she believes that "knowledge

communities [should] induct students into the conversation of educated human beings" (Atkins 1988, p.446). Because of her recognition of the efficacy and usefulness of texts, she establishes a conception of dialogue that necessarily extends horizontally to include members of a dialogic community and vertically to encompass texts that have their origins in a historic past.

She is persuaded that a text does not represent a definitive point of view. Her thinking here corresponds with Stenhouse and Gadamer's belief in the problematic nature of knowledge. The text, even though she holds that it embodies a perspective that is only more or less true, must be allowed to command the attention of the reader to the extent that one listens to the voice of the text and considers the point of view that it represents. She understands that students must "open themselves to a text by bringing some of their own questions and prejudgments to visibility . . . and as a consequence are able to widen their horizons, to grow as thinkers and interpreters of their world (Atkins 1988, p.446). Although she does not label it as such, this is what Gadamer calls an I-Thou relationship with a text.

Finally, Atkins reminds us that hermeneutics is not a pedagogy, per se. There are limits to what it can accomplish, she believes, as an aid to curriculum development. It cannot, for example, tell us what knowledge is most worthwhile (Atkins 1988, p. 444). Most importantly, however, Atkins believes that it is the socio-politcal side of hermeneutics that is most important because it holds out the promise for a development of human communities dedicated to solving problems of understanding. (Perhaps she would accept my example of value-making.) Communities of knowledge, of which schools are a salient example, should not only direct persons in the processes of interpretive understanding, but they should become the basis for a renewal of democratic decision-making.

To conclude this chapter I will examine David Jardine's "Reflections on Education, Hermeneutics, and Ambiguity" (1992). Jardine considers hermeneutical philosophy as being essentially educational.

Ideally, each new child embodies the possibility that things can become other than what they have already become. What could be called a conservative reading of this ideal would be one that finds this ideal precisely the problem of education: How are we to educe new life in a way that conserves what already is? The opposite extreme is one that finds this ideal to be precisely the hope of education. How are we to educe the new? (Jardine 1992, p. 116).

This sometimes stubborn opposition between the old and the new is anticipated by Gadamer's notion of a fusion of horizons and the role tradition plays in interpretive understanding. "In a tradition this process of fusion is continually going on, for there old and new are always combining into something of living value, without either being explicitly foregrounded from the other" (Gadamer 1994, p. 306). It is this very relationship between past and present or self and other that makes interpretive understanding possible. It is prerequisite to the development of new meaning.

Jardine observes that the purpose of hermeneutics is to help those who search for meaning to bring forth and recognize their own presuppositions. This he correctly sees to be at the heart of an educational process that emphasizes dialogue. He believes that the old foundations - what Gadamer would identify as traditions of understanding - that have guided our lives must be made open to the possibilities of what he calls "a heralding of the new, of renewal, the possibility of life" (Jardine 1992, p. 120). Only in this way, I would add, can new self-understanding come into being. Otherwise, one is trapped by what one already is.

Crucial to Jardine's understanding of hermeneutics is the educational need for what is other than one's self. At the core of a hermeneutically inspired pedagogy would be the need for an encounter between self and other that makes new life possible, while preserving the cultural traditions from which the possibility of the new emerges. Jardine says that:

Although hermeneutics may begin here, human life cannot be deeply understood through a thorough historical, linguistic, and cultural

interpretation. In the midst of such potentially dusty and deadened talk, new life interrupts. . . . It comes asking for room, hoping for the reenlivenment of human life, needing a place of its own to be born (Jardine 1992, p. 120).

Education, Jardine concludes, must not become estranged from the narrative possibilities of daily life. Here one recalls the warning of the designers of the Humanities Curriculum Project who tell us that students can be alienated from curriculum that does not take their own life styles into account. Although this is sound advice, it is only half of the interpretive equation. Daily life can become bizarrely subjectivised without the encounter between self and other. Without the possibility of self-transcendence, one arrives at what Jardine names "episodic individualism". He describes this as almost solipsistic: "This is my opinion, this is my experience, but then, who is to say who is right? Each of us has our own perspective" (Jardine 1992, p. 123). Without the dialogic encounter between the daily lives of the students, which includes all the traditions of understanding to which they have been exposed, and the cultural traditions to which they have not yet been exposed, the risk of nihilism, or what Jardine coins as "impotent subjectivity" (Jardine 1992, p.123), is likely if not inevitable.

What Jardine refers to as the narrative possibilities of life cannot be fully realized without texts to lead the way from the old to the new. Texts narrate in that they open up the world to understanding in ways unsuspected by the student. Jardine reminds us that Heidegger said we are most grateful for that which has been given to us, i.e., that which originates in something not ourselves (Jardine 1992, p. 125).

There is an unexpected but intriguing part of Jardine's thinking. He speaks of a hypothetical adult refusal to provide an educational foundation for students as a basis for their understanding of the world in which they live. Foundations would at first seem to leave no room for what he calls the "renewal of life". Jardine asks if foundations (traditions) would not impede the possibility of new interpretive understanding for young students as they attempt to make an independent place for

themselves in the conversational life of a community of knowledge.

The conversational narratives that precede them in life are foundational. The points of view of others are foundational. Texts that speak a point of view that is not the student's own can be foundational. They are, perhaps, sometimes confused with what Tomkins most pejoratively considers to be a standard of evaluation apart from the student's life, against which the student's achievement is sometimes measured. Rudduck, judging these as authoritarian, would come close to expelling them from a progressive curriculum.

But children represent renewal. And adults who are filled with the experience that both forms and is informed by cultural foundations cannot completely escape what they have spent their lives trying to understand. Paradoxically, Jardine says, renewal requires that we provide "a foundation that is denied in renewal" (Jardine 1992, p. 120). Adults can not get around the paradox, or make it disappear, by denying that the foundations of culture exist. This observation goes to the heart of the controversy concerning the role of authority in the educational process.

Foundations must not be confused with authoritarianism. Foundations may be authoritative, involving the expertise that has joined into a traditional base of understanding, but they are not authoritarian in the sense of viewing knowledge as something totally external to the student's capacity to experience life. Experience always includes the application of ideas, values, and feelings to our lives in a way that reserves our capacity to reject, accept, or modify these influences. Jardine writes that a proper "hermeneutic response is one that savors its ambiguity and is willing to face the difficulty it evokes without withdrawing into either mute, declarative authoritarianism or involving ourselves in the pretense that we are not adults" (Jardine 1992, p. 120).

In the three ways that I suggest that a hermeneutical curriculum might be distinguished from the practices of the HCP, Jardine collaborates. There is a proper role for authority. There is an emphasis on texts. And, moreover, students are conceived of in ontological rather than political terms. As far as the former is

concerned, they are beings who are not only capable of change and self-development, but who must, when change is warranted, achieve a sense of self renewal that is coeval with a realization of their interdependence with the ideas, beliefs, values, and feelings that make up the foundations of a dynamic culture. This is a process whereby the foundations of culture are meant to be canceled out and preserved at the same time.

The coming chapter provides a more extensive review of the educational literature that is related in both supportive and contradictory ways to the subject matter of these previous three chapters. A few of the articles, Somekh (1995) for example, are not directly concerned with pedagogy, but they provide a context for thinking about classroom practices in relation to broader issues.

CHAPTER FOUR

GALLAGHER AND RELEVANT LITERATURE

This chapter attempts to place the philosophical position of Gadamer into a broader and more inclusive intellectual context by examining hermeneutic points of view that differ significantly from his own. In order to do this in the most concise way, I have chosen to review Shaun Gallagher's *Hermeneutics and Education,* a work that confirms my own in important ways, but also greatly expands upon the more narrow pedagogical position that I assume as the basis for the empirical research reported upon in Part Two of this thesis.

Gallagher's book, therefore, is useful in two ways: 1) He compares and contrasts Gadamer's philosophical position, which he adopts and characterizes as moderate hermeneutics, with the conservative hermeneutics of E. D. Hirsch and Emilio Betti; with critical hermeneutics, most closely associated with the thinking of Jurgen Habermas; and finally with radical hermeneutics, which is almost synonymous with the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, but also associated with the more explicitly pedagogical thinking of Richard Rorty and John Caputo. 2) He also makes an attempt to partly synthesize these positions by showing the necessity of incorporating their most convincing ideas into his own moderate conception of hermeneutic thinking. It may be that Gallagher overlooks what are insurmountable differences between these competing frameworks of understanding, but I consider his efforts to be worthwhile and not without significant scholarly merit.

This chapter will be straightforward in its presentation. I intend to explain those parts of Gallagher's book that are most appropriate to critical reflection on my own empirical work. Of course, I have attempted to keep in mind that even a formal review - which this is not - is unavoidably interpretive. Nevertheless, I have tried, insofar as it

is possible, to emphasize a reproductive account of his thinking, especially where that is most appropriate. But matters proved to be even more complicated because I had to consider just how accurately Gallagher understands the theorists he references, and finally acknowledge that his understanding, like that of all interpreters, must be used in light of the realization that his ideas have been inexorably filtered through his own framework of understanding. I am not, however, often critical of his presentation, per se. For the most part, I find his reading of these other hermeneutical philosophers to be credible. For example, I have no significant criticism of his reading of Habermas, the philosopher in his panoply of hermeneutic thinkers with whom I am most familiar. Even when I tend to disagree with Gallagher, I avoid pursuing such disagreement if it deflects from my intention to explain Gallagher's critical analysis in order that I might eventually set my own work into a broader context of understanding based on his more expansive insights. However, my reader is advised to keep in mind the hermeneutic dictum that all understanding is interpretive understanding.

In the second part of my conclusion, I will briefly revisit Gallagher's critique in order to apply it to a self-critical review of the empirical work that is reported in the second part of this thesis.

The following three sections are labeled *Aporia #1*, which concerns the basically conservative problem of reproductive versus productive understanding in a hermeneutically based education; *Aporia #2*, which considers the paradox of authority/emancipation, an issue that is indicative of, but not confined to, the critical school of hermeneutics; and finally *Aporia #3*, which examines the problematics of conversational modes of understanding, a discourse that mainly concerns radical hermeneutics or deconstruction. These distinctions follow Gallagher's own categories, and I found them useful to maintain for organizational purposes.

Aporia # 1
Reproductive *vs.* Productive Values in Conservative Hermeneutical Pedagogy

The reproduction of our cultural past is a primary goal of the hermeneutical position characterized by Gallagher as conservative hermeneutics. Herein is demanded a commitment by the learner to a reproduction in a "non-arbitrary way" (Gallagher 1992, p. 14) of historically important texts, i.e., texts that serve as important conduits of cultural knowledge. The original meaning of a text is identified with the intentions of the writer and suggests an objectivity of meaning that can be reproduced in the mind of the learner.

Emilio Betti explains the process involved in reproductive thinking by saying that interpretation "is an inversion of a creative process: in the hermeneutic process the interpreter retraces the steps from an opposite direction by rethinking them in his inner self" (Betti 1980 quoted in Gallagher, p. 208). The issue immediately raised by this statement concerns applicability.

If interpretation is a matter of reproducing original meaning, how is that meaning to find application to the life of the student-interpreter? In other words, how is relevance established? This issue, which is so prominent in Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy, is not, however, completely neglected in conservative hermeneutics. Betti has developed what he calls "the canon of actuality". Gallagher quotes Betti saying, "An interpreter's task is to retrace the creative process, to reconstruct it within himself, to retranslate the extraneous thought of an Other, a part of the past, a remembered event, into the actuality of one's own life; that is, to adapt and integrate it into one's own intellectual horizon (Gallagher, p. 209).

Gallagher - and this is consistent with his general attempt to accommodate disparate hermeneutical tendencies wherever it is possible - seems to believe that the problem with conservative hermeneutics is more a matter of failing to emphasize the importance of the application of meaning to the interpreter's horizon of understanding than in neglecting it altogether. He makes this point by quoting Hirsch "The flux in mainstream culture is obvious to all. But stability, not change, is the chief characteristic of cultural literacy" (Gallagher, p. 215). Gallagher further characterizes

Hirsch's thinking in this way, "The most basic and controlling element of cultural literacy is meaning. Any transformation of meaning into significance, that is any application to the students present situation, constitutes a step beyond the reproduction of meaning " (Gallagher, p. 215).

The issue seems to hinge on Betti's words "to adapt and integrate". An already established meaning (i.e., one based on the conservative principle of reproductive interpretation) cannot be feasibly integrated into an interpreter's intellectual horizon of understanding without both a potential change to that horizon, as well as an equally potential change to the original subject matter being studied. Gadamer, in fact, argues that interpretation and application occur simultaneously. "Our thesis is that historical hermeneutics too has a task of application to perform, because it too serves applicable meaning, in that it explicitly and consciously bridges the temporal distance that separates the interpreter from the text and overcomes the alienation of meaning that the text has undergone" (Gadamer 1994, p. 311). A successful completion of the interpretive process of understanding not only requires an acknowledgment that one's present situation is conditioned (but not necessarily determined) by a background of cultural knowledge, but also a further appreciation that the initial stability of cultural understanding is itself adjudicated by the hermeneutical situation of the interpreter. Significantly, this is overlooked by the conservative position. Conservatives neglect, in Gallagher's view, the concept of transformation. A text conveys cultural experience. Experience, which is inseparable from the language that conveys it from generation to generation, is malleable. Furthermore, subject matter extends considerably beyond whatever is circumscribed by a specific text. The immanent meaning, as Hoy has demonstrated, extends the subject matter, the record of human experience, into a future where new, previously unthought of meaning awaits it (see p. 15 of this thesis for a discussion of Hoy's notion of immanence). It is, in fact, possible to say that all texts - and by logical extension all cultural knowledge - anticipates transformation.

Although Gallagher establishes that Hirsch underestimates the importance of the

transformation of cultural knowledge as conceived by the moderate hermeneutic theorists concerning the process of interpretive understanding, he looses the opportunity to develop a critique based on the observation that Hirsch and others operating within the conservative hermeneutic tradition also overlook consideration of the transformation of the interpreter's self-understanding as a corollary of the interpretive process. From Gadamer's ontological point of view (and presumably from Gallagher's), the notion that interpreted cultural knowledge can be as Betti says, "adapt[ed] and integrat[ed] . . . into one's intellectual horizon" (Betti 1980 quoted in Gallagher, p.209) is a radically different notion from Heidegger/Gadamer's ontological idea "that our existence has any foundation at all, apart from our interpretation of it" (Ree 1999, p. 10-11). Our forestructure of understanding, which is roughly analogous perhaps to what Hirsch prefers to call cultural knowledge, is the basis for existence as such in the phenomenal world. It is a rejection of a "steady-state" understanding of self that must really be at the heart of Gallagher's critique of conservative hermeneutics, even though he is mostly reticent on this issue.

Nevertheless, Gallagher does hermeneutics a great service by showing that there is a developable tendency within Hirsch's thinking that may lead to a partial synthesis with the moderate hermeneutic position. Despite the differences outlined above there is a possible conjunction based on the content of the following paragraph, which Gallagher deems typical of a tendency within Hirsch's thinking:

> Two-way traffic takes place between our schemata [framework of understanding] and the words we read. We apply past schemata to make sense of the incoming words, but these words and other contextual clues affect our initial choices of schemata and our continuing adjustment of them. . . . Thus, the reader is not just passively receiving meaning but is actively selecting the most appropriate schemata for making sense of incoming words. Then the reader actively adjusts those schemata to the incoming words until a good fit is achieved (Hirsch 1987 quoted in Gallagher, pp. 217-218).

It needs to be repeated that Hirsch's notion of "schemata" in the above passage is substantially different from Gadamer's ontologically based conception of fore-grounding one's understanding within a tradition. But Gallagher's claim that Hirsch is drifting unavoidably toward the moderate realization that a transformation of cultural knowledge is consistent with an understanding of that knowledge is convincing. Gallagher quotes Hirsch in this telling passage, "[we introduce] elements from our normal schemata that weren't in the original event, and, by the same token, [we] are always suppressing some elements of the original event that don't exist in our normal schemata" (Gallagher, p. 218). A complete synthesis of moderate and conservative hermeneutics is prevented, of course, by their respective understanding of cultural knowledge. The former treats all knowledge as being inherently problematic, acknowledging that understanding and transformation are coeval. The later treats of an objectivity of meaning and therefore holds that the understanding of meaning always precedes the application of that meaning to an interpreter's intellectual horizon. But Hirsch does in the above passage refer to "two-way traffic" - a phrase that is suggestive of Gadamer's "fusion of horizons". And again, his thinking moves toward the moderate position that Gallagher advocates when he observes that "the reader actively adjusts those schemata until a good fit is achieved". This resonates with the moderate notion that the intellectual horizon of both an interpreted event and an interpreter's framework of understanding are mutually changed or modified. Gallagher provides for a kind of reapproachment, perhaps mostly on the practical level, between these two disparate hermeneutic positions. While he is not totally convincing, his argument has sufficient merit to warrant future examination.

Aporia # 2
Emancipation/Authority in Critical Hermeneutic Pedagogy

The reproduction of cultural heritage, along with its originally intended meaning, is antipathetic to a critique of education that begins - as it does with Habermas and other

representatives of the critical school of hermeneutics - within a framework of understanding that Ricoeur has described with his famous phrase as "the school of radical suspicion". As Habermas interprets, this suspicion begins with the notion that the reproduction of cultural meaning actually constitutes a "reproduction . . .of ideological distortions" (Gallagher, p. 241) that reflect hegemonic social forces, e.g., non-linguistical factors such as class, race, and gender. These involve relationships that are characterized by power and dominance and consequently distort free and unimpeded conversational understanding. From a critical hermeneutic point of view, the first step toward an emancipation from such factors is the development of a critically reflective attitude that would ultimately, as Habermas asserts, create the basis for an "unconstrained consensus and the type of open intersubjectivity on which communicative action depends" (Habermas 1971 quoted in Gallagher, p.239). The hegemonic factors that distort conversation have to be swept away in order for a consensus of understanding to occur. Gallagher writes "that by becoming aware of this relation through critical reflection, ideological and cultural domination and the social biases of traditions can be neutralized, and interpretation can be freed of distortion" (Gallagher, p. 244).

Gallagher is, in his own right, skeptical concerning the possibility that complete freedom from distortion is possible. To begin with, Habermas writes that we need to "preserve at least one standard for [the] explanation of the corruption of *all* reasonable standards" (Gallagher, p.304). Gallagher argues that Habermas herein raises the possibility of an objective standard of truth by which hegemonic forces that constrain and distort conversational understanding can be at least recognized (Note that I now employ the word objectivity as used by Gallagher, not following the distinction that I established in my discussion on objectivity and objectiveness in Chapter Two of this thesis). It is logically consistent with Habermas's position that this objectivity be established prior to what he calls a "consensus of intersubjectivity" that could develop among participants to a discourse bent on understanding any aspect of the phenomenal

world. But the objectivity that Habermas hopes for is not to be confused with the notion of an intersubjective consensus. It is an *a priori* value upon which consensus depends.

Habermas's use of the word "reasonable" in the above passage should raise eyebrows. Is he not employing the conception of reason as it was promulgated by Enlightenment thinkers? If so, this would imply that it is possible to step outside of all traditions of understanding in order to ascertain a truth that supersedes all other claims to truth. How else can his notion of objectivity be understood? The only alternative explanation is for him to argue from within his own preferred tradition of understanding and to make the case that it, unlike all other traditions, is not hegemonic. Perhaps the later is most likely. Habermas is, after all, associated with the Frankfurt school of social criticism that is usually characterized by the attempt to wed neo-Freudian and Marxist thought. This presumably would provide a basis for his notion of an "idealized speech situation" that would free conversants from the hegemonic social, political, and economic forces that distort communicative understanding. It would provide, from his preferred tradition of understanding, a criterion by which students could apply cultural meaning to their own lives without reproducing the imperatives of socially repressive forces.

Gallagher quotes Gadamer in order to establish his own position *vis-a-vis* Habermas's turn toward objectivity:

> The critique of ideology [Habermas] overestimates the competence of reflection and reason. Inasmuch as it seeks to penetrate the masked interests which infect public opinion, it implies its own freedom from any ideology; and that means in turn that it enthrones its own norms and ideals as self-evident and absolute (Gadamer 1975 quoted in Gallagher, pp. 270-271).

It is fair to say that Habermas's position on objectivity is not always consistent. Gallagher recognizes this when he reminds his readers that Habermas at one point

observes that "Criticism is always tied to the context of traditions which it reflects" (Gallagher, p. 244). But Habermas does not seem to apply this dictum to his own philosophic position. Otherwise, he would find an inconsistency within his own point of view concerning the possibility of emancipation.

Moreover, Habermas's criterion for judgment is directed toward the hegemonic forces themselves and their embodiment within the linguistic structures of cultural knowledge, rather than other points of view within the process of conversational understanding. Gallagher points out that "The objectivity sought for in depth hermeneutics, however, belongs first to the interpreter and only then to the object of interpretation [my emphasis] (Gallagher, p. 244). And again, "The objectivity of interpretation is seen either as a tool to be used in the pursuit of emancipation or as a result of emancipation, but not as an end in itself" (Gallagher, p. 244). This clarification possibly ameliorates any fundamental criticism of Habermas's notion of objectivity, although it does not free him from reliance upon a single norm for judging what is hegemonic and what is not. After all, there may be more than one way to neutralize hegemonic forces and that realization is itself subject to the vicissitudes of a conversational ethos. It is through language, as it manifests in conversational understanding, that the factors of distortion would be recognized, analyzed, and eventually neutralized. Any theoretical position that might prove helpful must be prepared, by the consent of conversants, to be absorbed by the spontaneous nature of open-ended conversation. The distortions that affect conversation cannot be decided on beforehand. Ultimately it must be recognized - and this is a basic principle of moderate hermeneutics - that it is not possible to separate, in an *a priori* fashion, language, which is the vehicle of our cultural heritage, from the forces that distort communication, nor is it possible to separate language, as it manifests itself within conversational understanding, from the means to recognize and correct those distortions.

Furthermore, these "non-hermeneutical restraints" that distort conversational under-

standing are internalized via the educational process. Habermas writes that learners engaged in the process of interpreting cultural knowledge must be able therefore to:

> turn back on themselves in reflection in order to make sure of their own educative process: in self-reflection we make our own individual or collective life-history transparent to ourselves at any given time, in that we, as our own product, learn to penetrate what first confronts us as something objective from the outside" (Habermas 1970 quoted in Gallagher, p. 245).

The first step in transcending these powerful impediments to self-understanding is to recognize their influence over one's capacity to interpret the cultural world. But those involved with interpretive understanding must seek emancipation from the authority structures that characterize our cultural traditions, so that they might become in Habermas's words their "own product". This would be the ultimate goal of emancipation from his point of view.

A pedagogy aimed at emancipation from hegemonic relationships must somehow give students the means to recognize issues of power and dominance that have become intrinsic to culturally endorsed conversations. They must also be able to recognize that they have absorbed these distorted traditions into their own self-understanding through, in part, the educational process. Specifically, the traditional relationship between the teacher and student must be seen as a "microcosm of power relationships in the larger society" (Gallagher, p. 253). In other words, students must acquire the wherewithal to think for themselves, with the ultimate goal of achieving an understanding of cultural knowledge that reflects the rationality of conversants unaffected by the power relationships embedded in the languages of tradition.

What makes this realization so important for critical hermeneutics is that the first encounter with a power relationship is often the one a student has with teachers who embody and purvey hegemonic values through the implementation of curriculum and strategies of instruction. Gallagher writes:

The relation between teacher and student seems to be precisely asymmetrical and to involve an authority-power structure. Power and radition operate on the side of the teacher; the student is caught in a struggle between authority and autonomy. . . .Critical theory makes it clear that typically the asymmetrical power relations involved are the relations of domination of one class, race, or gender over another (Gallagher, pp. 250-251).

The issue now becomes one of autonomy. The autonomy of the student, i.e., his emancipation from hegemonic relations in general, now depends, most immediately, on his relationship with teachers. His critical reflection must be turned against the "dominant authority of teachers" and the lessons they impose upon students. Gallagher writes, "The full meaning of the lesson, embedded in the language itself, includes both a microcosm of power relationships (those between teacher as authority and student as dominated) and a reflection of the macrocosm of power relations in the larger society (Gallagher, p 253). The first step toward social emancipation would begin in the classroom.

Gallagher sums up the role of critical reflection in the educative process as follows:

Critical theorists propose to lead us away from educational situations characterized by hegemonic distortions by employing critical pedagogical practice, the educational equivalent of depth hermeneutics. If language, the process of tradition, and extralinguistic forces operate systematically and anonymously in educational institutions, critical reflexive pedagogy promises to reveal the hegemonic and reproductive character of such institutions and thereby change educational practice (Gallagher, p. 254).

He acknowledges that his own moderate approach to hermeneutics needs to consider the distorting effects upon conversation that are made by extralinguistical forces. But the impasse that exists between the critical school and moderate hermeneutics envisioned by Gallagher cannot be completely surmounted. Gallagher must still ask if we can ever be completely freed from what Habermas deems distortion He wonders if the paradox of authority/emancipation - with its ramification for

self-understanding - is resolvable upon final analysis. Reason itself, as Gadamer believes, exists only within the confines of a tradition of understanding. It has no real existence apart from the multifarious traditions of understanding. As Gallagher succinctly reminds, "We can emancipate ourselves from something but never from everything" (Gallagher, p. 262). This statement represents the moderate response to critical hermeneutics. Thus, authority is not only inescapable but, insofar as it embodies the presuppositions of one framework of understanding or another, it is necessary for the vivification of reason.

Gallagher argues that the interpretation (and application) of cultural knowledge is often more productive of new understanding than it is reproductive of the old. At least that is its potential. But in its own right, new understanding also presents the learner with new sets of limitations. "Emancipation" from one set of limitations simply produces new limitations. What Habermas considers to be a distortion, Gadamer - and by extension Gallagher - would deem only a limitation. Distortion implies something that must be absolutely overcome. A limitation, which conditions but does not determine understanding, is more appropriately modified or superseded by new thinking. But without that limitation (and the authority that goes with it) to begin with, there would be no starting point for anything original. Moderate hermeneutics can make room for the critical hermeneutic notion of distortion. And it is well advised by Gallagher to be on the lookout for ideas that constrain free and open-minded conversations. But traditions from the moderate point of view are not - as Habermas would have it - antipathetic to productive thinking. Gadamer says, "To think historically always involves mediating between those ideas and one's own thinking" (Gadamer, p. 397).

Habermas believes that traditions distort conversational language. But distortions must be recognized as distortions by some linguistical means. If there is no conceivable standard of judgment outside of the plethora of historically validated traditions of understanding available in order to identify "the corruption of all

reasonable standards", (despite Habermas's act of faith that there is) then one must accept the problematic nature of understanding, reject all notions of objectivity, and be content to situate all understanding within the historically conditioned limits of one tradition of understanding or another. Authority, insofar as it is associated with tradition, will always reassert itself, but only temporarily. Furthermore, any transcendental position somehow outside of tradition would theoretically herald the end of conversation as a means to understanding.

The moderate point of view represented by Gallagher, therefore, reaffirms its commitment to a process of understanding by which one's interpretation of the phenomenal-world is always limited to a relativized position that is assumed from within a particular framework of understanding. Gallagher puts the matter as follows:

> The notion of 'distorted interpretation' is a relative one. An interpretation is distorted only from the perspective of a different hermeneutical standpoint, which itself can be classed as distorted from the perspective of the first interpretation. Furthermore, relative distortions can never be absolutely adjudicated. Habermas holds for such absolute adjudication only by appealing to a transcendental, extrahistorical position, which on moderate hermeneutical principles is impossible to attain (Gallagher, p. 269).

If education cannot escape the realization "that distortion is part of the game", (Gallagher, p. 269) or to put it in terms of moderate hermeneutics that the prejudices of one tradition or another will always influence interpretive behavior, then there is no way to remove completely the issue of authority in education. Gallagher boldly acknowledges that education in general "seems to involve hegemonic relationships in its very nature" (Gallagher, p. 269). How then could a non-hegemonic education be possible? How does one possibly resolve the authoritarian relationship between teacher and student, assuming it is desirable to do so? The answer to this *aporia* is that the critical theorist is obliged to adopt a position closer to the moderate one taken by Gallagher. Just as moderate hermeneutics must more carefully consider the effects of

hegemonic relationships on conversational modes of understanding, Habermas's notion of critical reflection must be modified by a conception of conversational understanding that concedes discourse to be more productive of new understanding than reproductive of old prejudgments, i.e., those pejoratively embedded within tradition. Traditions themselves, while conditioning how and what the learner comes to understand, are themselves subject to the powers of revision inherent to the process of conversational understanding. In the end, emancipation from any tradition will be incomplete, just as all traditions are limited in scope and the effectiveness of domination. Gallagher writes that "Critical conversation [not critical reflection as Habermas conceives it] is characterized by *both* autonomy and authority. This is not a paradox to be resolved, but a fundamental ambiguity to be recognized" (Gallagher, p. 271). The relationship between autonomy, what Habermas calls emancipation, and authority is a dialectical one. If school always involves an unavoidable imposition of authority (see my discussion of "authoritative expertise" in Chapter Two of this thesis) then this is made acceptable by acknowledging that the subject matter and point of view of any tradition of understanding can be modified by conversational understanding. Even something as potentially hegemonic as the relationship between student and teacher can be adjudicated and adjusted according to the openness of the conversation that both participate in. This can actually be facilitated by a commitment to objectivity on the part of the teacher who encourages differing points of view and open-mindedness from all participants in the discourse. Of course this assumes goodwill on the part of the teacher and loyalty to the principles of interpretation as expounded by moderate hermeneutics. One always runs the risk of teachers imposing their own internalized hegemonic ideas, either consciously of unconsciously, upon unsuspecting students. But this is in no way a worse risk than allowing teachers to believe that they are in possession of a standard of adjudication that stands outside of the process of conversation, no matter how consistent that standard is with the notion of an emancipated learner.

Aporia # 3

The Problematics of Conversation

Play as a principle of radical hermeneutics is of immediate concern in this section. Gallagher's third *aporia* begins with the recognition that in radical hermeneutics there is no single, correct interpretive position that applies definitively to any issue whatsoever requiring hermeneutical understanding. Moreover, play is the only acceptable basis for the generation of meaning. Play itself is tantamount to a "plurality of fictions" (Gallagher, p. 284). In Derrida's terminology understanding amounts to a "shifting play of signifiers" (Gallagher, p. 284). Gallagher quotes Derrida, "One could call play the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play, that is to say as the destruction of onto-theology and the metaphysics of presence" (Derrida 1976 quoted in Gallagher, p. 283).

Derrida adds that certain privileged interpretations typically gain the upper hand in the discourses that characterize our attempts to understand the world. There is always an ascendancy of meaning that distorts conversational understanding. This initially reminds one of the critical hermeneutical position on hegemonic relationships. Gallagher makes it clear, however, that although in radical hermeneutics "power . . . relations constitute the very nature of interpretation" (Gallagher, p. 285), that power is not so much extraneous to conversation but embedded in the language games available to the interpreter. Discourse, for all practical purposes, is controlled from within the parameters of the conversation itself. Furthermore, Gallagher informs that these same power relationships, although not absolutely fixed or determinate tend <u>not</u> to be "under the control of the subject's reflection" (Gallagher, p. 285). They have strong influence, moreover, concerning the terms of what discourse is acceptable and what is not. This recognition of intra-conversational hegemony tends to discredit, in Derrida's view, conversation as an effective mode of interpretive understanding and to subvert the productive capacity of discourse to produce alternative meanings.

The *aporia* concerning conversational understanding evolves from the clash

between the radical conception of play and Gallagher's observation that the need for conversational understanding reasserts itself from within the radical philosophical encampment. The *aporia* cogently stated:

> Interpretation must (according to the radical approach) escape the constraints of the ongoing hegemonic conversation of metaphysics, yet (according to Gadamer and Derrida) interpretation can only operate within the same conversation. For Gadamer, emancipation is attained in and through conversation; for Derrida emancipation is the impossible liberation from the constraints of conversation (Gallagher, p. 289).

and,

> Whereas for Gadamer play and conversation share the same hermeneutic nature, for Derrida the more radical notion of play undercuts any appeal to the metaphysical conception of conversation (Gallagher p.289).

Perhaps the distinction can also be expressed in this way. For Gadamer the issue rests with the promise of new understanding. The horizon of the interpreted object merges with the horizon of the interpreter. The expanded horizon, which results from this merger, - Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" - represents a new, synthesized position from which the original object of interpretation can be viewed and self-understanding commensurately expanded. For Derrida the issue has more to do with the heterogeneity. He is not so much interested in the generation of new meaning as he is in a proliferation of possible meanings that offset hegemonic voices within the current and privileged traditions of understanding. Conversation, as such, is less conducive to the heterogeneous goals of playfulness. Its ties to playfulness are less convenient to the radical player.

Derrida's notion of play tends to leave metaphysics unaffected insofar as it provides the historic antecedents of conversational understanding. Playfulness does not permanently affect one's understanding of particular metaphysical ideas or traditions. Since play itself has no historical antecedents it would seem, if Gallagher reads Derrida

correctly, that it cannot modify metaphysical presences within discourse in any substantial way. Metaphysics then reasserts its privileged position within western philosophy. All playfulness can really do is shed doubt on the authenticity of established ideas by arraying heterogeneous interpretations against them. Derrida dilutes metaphysical hegemony in a sea of heterogeneous (playful) interpretations. By claiming a multiplicity of possible interpretations, Derrida allows for an acceleration of his own generally suspicious attitude into a radical doubtfulness on the part of interpreters who follow his lead.

Radical hermeneutics, therefore, is suspicious not only of any philosophical position that would militate against what Lyotard deems "playful pluralism", but it is also dubious about the ability of conversation in general to escape from metaphysical hegemony. Conversation becomes for the radical theorist an inherently flawed process. But it is, paradoxically, the only process by which playfulness can be brought to bear against hegemonic ideas.

Gallagher turns to a critical analysis of the ideas of John Caputo, a radical philosopher allied to Derrida who more directly addresses problems endemic to the *aporia* of conversational understanding. He is especially interested in Caputo's argument that *phronesis*, an essential component of Gadamer's "neo-Aristotelianism", is a fundamentally conservative idea which is "no match for the wisdom one needs to allow the play to play itself out" (Gallagher, p. 305). It is Caputo's position that *phronesis* functions only within an existing framework of understanding. Furthermore, he writes that "Gadamer tends to ignore the subversion of hermeneutic *phronesis* by a diversity of power plays" (Caputo 1987, p. 261).

But to reject the idea of *phronesis* entirely is to concomitantly reject the Aristotelian ideal of "An active being . . . concerned with what is not always the same but can also be different" (Gadamer 1994, p. 314). This kind of a person has an existence within a community of people who come to understand the events of their phenomenal-world through the "application of knowledge to the particular task"

(Gadamer, p. 315). *Phronesis* is practical moral knowledge rather than *episteme* or theoretical knowledge. Moreover, Gadamer makes it clear that "*Historia* is a source of truth totally different from theoretical reason" (Gadamer, p. 23). Caputo overlooks that people situated within a community (Gadamer's *sensus communis*) are also found within a hermeneutical situation, or one that requires interpretive understanding. Of course a community is characterized by paradigmatic structures of understanding. But those paradigms are always undergoing a process of change. The hermeneutical situation is always evolving. Stasis is not the primary characteristic of a community of people, whether a socio-political group, a community of scholars, or students in a secondary classroom, who are trying to understand their own hermeneutical situation. It is flux that characterizes history and makes change not only desirable but unavoidable.

To reject *phronesis* is to also reject the historical basis of understanding. Historically effected consciousness is, in fact, a way out of metaphysical hegemony. It may be imperfect - it is always incomplete, by way of awaiting the reformation of the hermeneutical situation - but isn't that what Caputo really advocates when he writes, "And so I envisage . . . 'a community of mortals' bound together by their common fears and lack of metaphysical grounds sharing a common fate at the hands of flux" (Caputo 1987, p. 259).

Gallagher maintains that Caputo - and other radical thinkers, especially Rorty - will eventually adopt Oakeshott's notion of the "conversation of mankind" (see Gallagher, pp. 308-312) in order to retain a belief in the effectiveness of conversational modes of understanding. Caputo will reject what he sees as the conservative nature of *phronesis*, replacing it with a more generalized, perhaps more abstract notion of the "conversation of mankind" that can free itself from paradigmatic restraints. But if Gallagher is correct - and his argument is at least plausible - in his assessment of Caputo's intellectual motives, then the latter establishes a foothold for his own contention that what for Caputo is a "medium for transplanting Derrida's principle of

play into the possibility of real political and moral liberation" (Gallagher, p. 305) becomes a drift toward the moderate hermeneutical conception of conversational understanding.

It is beyond the scope of Gallagher's analysis to fully examine - and surely it is beyond my own - Derrida's deconstructive philosophy to see if it will bear the addition of Oakeshott's conception. But if Gallagher's deduction is plausible - i.e., that Caputo and Rorty overlook the obvious similarity between the "conversation of mankind" and Gadamer's grounding of conversational understanding within the aegis of an historically effected consciousness - then we are possible witnesses to a serious weakening of the radical position concerning the relationship between play and a deconstructed notion of history.

Caputo writes that "I would say that the notion of free play is . . . a kind of public debate in which we allow ethicopolitical reasons to play itself out" (Caputo, p. 261). Clearly the phrase "to play itself out" is a deconstructive idea and not the same thing, by any means, as Gadamer's notion of historically effected consciousness. Gadamer sees ethicopolitical ideas as bound into one tradition of understanding or another, which inevitably condition but do not determine the interpreter's point of view. Traditions that influence conversational understanding can be themselves altered from within the hermeneutic situation. In this way they have a historic continuity. They do not "play themselves out", but are modified through the effects of open-minded discourse. Caputo also writes about the values that emerge from the flux: a humility of understanding is one example (Caputo, p. 259). But he follows this observation by noting that this is "the first bit of rewriting of the old tables which it [flux] permits . . ." (Caputo, p. 259). The reference, "old tables" - a thinly veiled reference to Nietzsche's Zarathustra - seems to imply that the formation of values has had something like an historically effected origin, but the phrase "first bit of rewriting", which has a strong deconstructive tone to it, puts that inference to rest. Just a few sentences later he refers to Nietzsche's dictum that truth is flux. And this is not a flux that leaves room

for continuity, as the phrase "play itself out" allows one to infer.

But Gallagher is able to rely on the following passage from Caputo's *Radical Hermeneutics* to make his point:

> I take it that, while Derrida provides no criteria for what makes for better or worst fictions, he does describe the conditions under which decisions should be reached. He thinks that things get worked out in a way which is very much like what Rorty (following Oakeshott) calls the conversation of mankind . . . -- by a kind of ongoing debate in which the forces of rhetoric clash and settle into a consensus of whose contingency it is the role of the Socratics and Derridans to remind us, to the point of distraction and infuriation (Caputo 1987 quoted in Gallagher, p. 305).

Gallagher directs his following words specifically to this passage: "Everything hinges on whether the "conversation of mankind" . . . is as different from the Gadamerian notion of conversation as Derridian play is from Gadamerian play" (Gallagher, pp. 305-306). Gallagher points out that Caputo apparently thinks that it is, but that he does not agree. So the original distinction remains. Gallagher writes, "Whereas for Gadamer play and conversation share the same hermeneutical nature, for Derrida the more radical notion of play undercuts any appeal to the metaphysical conception of conversation" (Gallagher, p. 289). Derrida's notion is radical precisely because it breaks with the usual hermeneutic notion of historically grounded understanding. Caputo has not gotten around the dilemma by introducing the idea of a "conversation of mankind", but he has inadvertently forced a second look at Gadamer's conception of historically effected thinking. A moderate hermeneutic critique of the radical hermeneutic position on Gadamer, which argues that his historical thinking is metaphysical, can begin by returning to Caputo's references to flux and the importance that he places on this idea. For example, Caputo observes, "the power of flux to wash away the best-laid schemes of metaphysics" (Caputo, p. 258). But flux cannot logically exist without the passage of time. Therefore, flux itself

is - in its specific manifestations - historically conditioned. That, at least, is the moderate hermeneutic position. The Derridian position is forced to its own detriment into allowing flux the status of an ahistorical force, i.e., one that runs throughout history but that is somehow unaffected by developing historical forces. Caputo would have us believe that flux effects history rather than the other way around. The most extreme reading of Caputo might lead one to believe that flux negates history, or at least Gadamer's notion of it.

But history is not considered a metaphysical concept from the moderate point of view precisely because historically effected ideas, values, beliefs, and even feelings bear the seeds of their own transformation. They provide for their own self-transcendence. (This is especially convincing when coupled with the Gadamerian truism that all knowledge is problematic). Gadamer writes that tradition involves:

> a unique co-existence of past and present, insofar as present consciousness has the possibility of a free access to everything handed down in writing. No longer dependent on retelling, which mediates past knowledge with the present, understanding consciousness acquires - through its immediate access to literary tradition - a genuine opportunity to change and widen its horizon, and thus enrich its world by a whole new and deeper dimension (Gadamer 1994, p. 390).

Gallagher observes that for radical thinkers, "All interpretation limits the heterogeneous textuality of the object of interpretation" (Gallagher, p. 290). But there is a difference between heterogeneity as an ideal and the problematic nature of knowledge. Gadamer is looking for those brief moments of clarity that exist between the establishment of meaning - through the auspices of conversational understanding - and its inevitable transformation. What would make possible the adoption by Caputo and Rorty of the "conversation of mankind" as an addendum to the deconstructionist project is at least a tacit recognition that historically effected understanding is not a metaphysical construction after all.

The moderate response to the *aporia* of conversation hinges, as I have tried to

show, on the radical involvement with conversational modes of understanding despite their suspicion of the hegemonic characteristics of traditional discourse. Gallagher writes that "by defining it, contending it, proposing it, arguing it, and debating it they are drawn into the very conversation they speak against" (Gallagher, p. 307). Moreover, radical theorists like Caputo and Rorty retain, despite some hesitation, confidence in conversation when it is modified by radical notions of playfulness. Any remaining uncertainty depends on the answer to this question, which is posed in surrogate fashion by Gallagher: "Is it possible that the nature of conversation, and education, can accommodate both agonistics and consensus building" (Gallagher, p. 308)? The former emphasizes the reduction of metanarratives to the status of relativistic truths. The latter is more directly related, despite the oblique reference to critical hermeneutics, to the moderate hermeneutical position on imperfect consensus building, a conception that includes the temporal nature of interpretive understanding.

At this point I will turn my attention to Gallagher's critical interest in Rorty, who has appropriated Oakeshott's idea of the "conversation of mankind" in a more fundamental way than Caputo. Gallagher points out that Oakeshott's normative view of conversation makes room for a plurality of viewpoints but includes the recognition that although conversation ought to be free of hegemony some voices, in fact, dominate the historical discourse, while others are excluded. Thus Oakeshott concedes that a conversational mode of understanding is imperfect. There are within the established realms of discourse monopolistic voices that "make it difficult for another voice to be heard" (Gallagher, p. 308).

This assessment is consistent with Derrida's own skeptical views on conversational understanding. But by extending Oakeshott's conception into radical hermeneutics there is now room for paralogy - "a plurality of language games, inventive experimentation, and efficient access to available information" (Gallagher, p. 303) - and the eventual inclusion of voices usually left out of the dominant conversational ethos. Caputo argues for an "ethics of dissemination" (see Chapter IX of *Radical*

Hermeneutics) wherein groups excluded from normal conversation find inclusion - but he thereby concedes that conversation is not inexorably dominated by metaphysics nor the power relationships that are tied to dominant ideas. Rorty shows how a paralogical discourse can be integrated within the terms of what he calls normal conversation. Gallagher traces the developing synthesis in the distinction Richard Rorty makes between "normal" and "abnormal" modes of conversation.

Normal discourse, according to Rorty, who has committed himself to the "conversation of mankind", is "conducted within an agreed-upon set of conventions about what counts as a relevant contribution, what counts as answering a question, what counts as having a good argument for that answer or a good criticism of it" (Rorty 1979 quoted in Gallagher, p. 309). These sorts of conversations are tied to recognized and accepted traditions of understanding. Contradistinctively, abnormal conversation "challenges the metanarratives which guide normal discourse" (Gallagher, p. 310). These tend to be productive of new points of view, which are sometimes begun by those excluded from conventional conversation. Rorty characterizes them as "more interesting" or "more fruitful" of new points of view (Gallagher, p. 310).

One is not to conclude, however, that "normal" and "abnormal" types of conversation are antithetical in any absolute sense. Their true nature is complementary. Gallagher characterizes Rorty's thinking in this way: "These two types of discourse do not compete as two different conversations; they form two aspects of the conversation of mankind" (Gallagher, p.310). It is imperative, moreover, that an "adjudication" occurs between them - in other words, that a micro-dialectical synthesis is brought about. (By micro-dialectical I refer to a synthesis of understanding that occurs within the terms of a conversation, or of language games. For a related idea that helps tie micro-dialectics to hermeneutic thinking see Gallagher's discussion of *societas* and *universitas* on p. 310 of *Hermeneutics and Education*).

Rorty confirms this observation in the following:

Hermeneutics sees the relationship between various discourses as those of strands in a possible conversation, a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites the speakers, but where the hope of agreement is never lost so long as the conversation lasts. This hope is not a hope for the discovery of antecedently existing common ground, but *simply* hope for agreement, or, at least, exciting and fruitful disagreement (Rorty 1979, p. 318).

and,

It is the commonplace fact that people may develop doubts about what they are doing, and thereupon begin to discourse in ways incommensurable with those they used previously (Rorty 1979, p. 386).

and,

The attempt to edify (ourselves or others) may consist in the hermeneutic activity of making connections between our own culture and some exotic culture or historical period, or between our own discipline and another discipline which seems to pursue in commensurable aims in an incommensurable vocabulary. But it may instead consist in the 'poetic' activity of thinking up such new aims, new words, or new disciplines, followed by, so to speak, the inverse of hermeneutics: the attempt to reinterpret our familiar surroundings in the unfamiliar terms of our new inventions. . . . For edifying discourse is *supposed* to be abnormal, to take us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings (Rorty 1979, p. 360).

(By way of explanation, Rorty borrows the expression incommensurability from Kuhn. He means by it the meeting in discourse of two points of view neither of which can be reduced to the other, but do allow for comparability. See my discussion of Bernstein on Kuhn, pp. 32-33 of this thesis).

I can see nothing in these particular quotes that is not included within Gadamer's conception of conversational understanding. The "hope for agreement", the connection between one's own culture and another, and the opportunity to reinterpret "familiar surroundings in unfamiliar terms" are redolent of Gadamer. One has to think

no further than Gadamer's belief that we learn "to recognize one's own in the alien" (Gadamer 1994, p. 14). And even more specifically, the means to "agreement", "connection", and "reinterpretation" is through the auspices of conversational understanding. Rorty writes that "*conversation . . . [is]* the ultimate context within which knowledge is to be understood" (Rorty 1979, p. 389). Also, "Our certainty will be a matter of conversation between persons" (Rorty 1979, p. 157). There is no indication herein that conversation is doomed by the dominance of hegemonic influences.

Gallagher thus goes about building his argument that there is an obvious drift in Rorty's thinking toward the moderate hermeneutical judgment that conversation is more productive of new and expanded viewpoints than reproductive of established (and hegemonic) ideas. Rorty's "abnormal" thinking always muddies the waters of conventional understanding. "Normal" conversation (Rorty's counterpart to Gadamer's notion of fore-understanding and tradition) seems clear enough at times, but the productive clash of "normal" and "abnormal" conversation always stirs up the sediment upon which the clear water rests. The ambiguity sought by the deconstructionists is reinterpreted by Gallagher and provides for new ideas - but those ideas will eventually come to rest, settle, and form new sediment. But the process is never completed - no more than that of the geologic forces that make up the metaphor.

Finally, there is evidence that Rorty's thinking is tantalizingly similar to Gadamer's notion of "historically effected consciousness". The following quotes from Rorty speak for themselves on this matter.

> A "subject" - astrology, physics, classical philosophy, furniture design- may undergo revolutions, but it gets its self-image from its present state, and its history is necessarily written . . . as an account of its gradual maturation (Rorty 1979, p. 391).

and,

> 'Conversation' . . . [is] the ultimate context within which knowledge is to be understood. Our focus shifts . . . to the relation between alternative standards of justification, and from there to the actual changes in those standards which make up intellectual history (Rorty 1979, pp. 389-390).

Rorty's thinking has moved to accommodate *agonistics* and consensus - if consensus is conceived temporally. Compare this to Gadamer's remarks on historically effected consciousness: "Historical tradition can be understood only as something always in the process of being defined by the course of events (Gadamer 1994, p. 373).

Finally, Gallagher turns to Bruffee's idea of collaborative learning, which rejects the conception of knowledge as mere gathering of information and posits instead a process of conversational learning. (Gallagher is continuing to build his case that radical hermeneutics is drifting toward the moderate hermeneutical position). Bruffee has adopted Rorty's notion of normal and abnormal conversation, but his emphasis is interesting. As a practicing teacher he is concerned with the role of normal discourse in education. He recognizes its "conservative function" (Gallagher, p. 312). Students must be able "[to] master the normal discourse exercised in established communities", Bruffee emphasizes (Bruffee 1984 quoted in Gallagher, p. 312). But the established discourse should not, according to Gallagher, become "a permanent anchor in the conversation; it is always tentative and temporary" (Gallagher, p. 312). Again, "Abnormal discourse sniffs out stale, unproductive knowledge and challenges its authority" (Bruffee 1984 quoted in Gallagher p. 312). In what may be one of the salient passages in his critical analysis of radical hermeneutics, Gallagher pulls together his wide-ranging views into this concise statement, which is specifically directed toward Bruffee and serves as an excellent summary:

> Bruffee rightly resists the temptation to say that writing courses [college writing being his own professional interest] must simply teach

critique as a form of abnormal discourse. This would be the easy
conclusion, which might attempt to equate something like
deconstruction to abnormal discourse. Bruffee actually lists
deconstructive criticism as a tool of normal discourse and apparently
thinks of it as an established, professional approach to literary criticism.
Bruffee argues against the deconstructionist concept of writing and in
favor of the primacy of conversation (Gallagher, pp. 312 -313).

Bruffee's thinking helps make the argument that conversational understanding is the

proper means for a mediation between normal and abnormal discourse or, in moderate

hermeneutical terminology, between tradition and the horizon of the interpreter. It is

through abnormal discourse that traditions are modified or transformed; if it were not

for the established - but "temporary" and "tentative" - normal discourses embedded in

traditions of understanding, there would be no basis for the influence of abnormal

conversation. It is the moderate hermeneutic position - now buttressed by Bruffee's

pedagogical approach to hermeneutics - that new ways of thinking are predicated

upon the old.

Gallagher also notes that Bruffee's thinking is remarkably close to moderate

hermeneutics concerning pedagogical authority. Bruffee observes that conversational

understanding does challenge educational authority as it is usually understood. As the

learner develops some degree of autonomy, which is the desired effect of abnormal

conversation, then authority is challenged as a matter of course. The challenge is

inherent to conversation itself when it is seen as a mediation between present and past,

self and other, etc. But Gallagher notes that "pedagogical authority . . . does not

disappear in the conversation of education; teachers retain their authority, not on the

grounds of traditional justification (value, truth, proximity to great minds or authors)"

(Gallagher, p. 314) - but as "conservators and agents of change" (Bruffee 1984 quoted

in Gallagher, p. 314). This is very close to my own definition of "authoritative

expertise" (see Chapter Two of this thesis). A teacher's role under these circumstances

is to not only foster a reproductive understanding of one's cultural heritage but,

moreover, to encourage, if necessary and desirable, the possibility of a transformation

of that heritage - which is, nevertheless, based on an initial encounter with tradition or normative understanding. Gallagher thus states that "authority is inevitable" (Gallagher, p. 314). But authority, whether embodied in the teacher or embedded into a traditional framework of understanding, is always to be questioned by means of the process of conversational understanding that has established the status of expertise to begin with.

Gallagher concludes by modifying the radical hermeneutical notion that interpretive behavior as manifest in conversational modes of understanding should ideally be productive rather than reproductive. Rather, one is ideally poised somewhere between these two extremes. Conversation, in fact, makes "a combination of appropriation and transcendence" possible (Gallagher, p. 315).

Finally, one is left with a desirable ambiguity. One appropriates cultural knowledge in order to transcend it. One never quite reproduces a cultural tradition - no more than I can reproduce Gallagher's thesis without changing it in at least some small way. Every interpretation is productive to some degree or another. Emancipation is always relative to a position one has taken against authority. Authority is "temporal" and "tentative" but so is emancipation. Each successful challenge to authority establishes new authority, new expertise. Normal discourse is extended, and that, in its own turn, awaits a renewed challenge from the ever present voices of abnormalcy.

Gallagher's ideas are supported by Elaine Atkins (1988 - I discuss Atkins's article in relation to Gadamer on pp. 99-101 of this thesis) in her critical evaluation of Rorty and Bruffee. She writes (with direct reference to Rorty) that "we look at objectivity in terms of consensus rather than correspondence to a "Truth" or "Reality" [that] forces us to rely on the common sense of the communities to which we belong" (Atkins 1988, p. 444). The emphasis on a community of learners, therefore, places Rorty closer to moderate hermeneutics. This is especially significant when one considers Caputo's distrust of phronesis based on the observation that "phronesis is in crisis" when communities find themselves "foundering", or "fluctuating" - which he implies

they often are (Caputo 1987, p. 211). One should also consider Derrida's deconstructionist suspicions concerning the "idea of good will" in order to establish the viability of what Gallagher considers to be Rorty's drift toward the moderate position. (The reader will recall that Derrida believes that Gadamer's faith in conversational understanding founders on the presumption of a good will that discussants may not often possess).

Atkins quotes Rorty's belief that students should "[learn] to take a hand in what is going on, learning to speak more of the language which . . . [their] place in history has destined [them] . . . to speak" (Atkins 1998, p. 445). Atkins even suggests that what Rorty has in mind is the notion of *Bildung*, or "the self-formation of the species" (Atkins 1998, p. 445). The notion of culture as *Bildung* is a key to Gadamer's belief that persons can rise to the level of a universal, without abandoning their own particular hermeneutic experience. Community to Gadamer is the crucible in which one learns to make "the language, customs, and institutions of his people his own" (Gadamer 1994, p. 14). But for cultural heritage to become one's own, thereby circumventing hegemonic influences to at least some degree, this must be re-examined in light of one's own particular experience, i.e., those influences must be rethought. from the standpoint of one's own horizon of experience. Gadamer says that the "essence of work is to form the thing [the cultural object of study] rather than consume it" (Gadamer 1994, p. 13). And again Gadamer writes, "The universal viewpoints to which the cultivated man (*gebildet*) keeps himself open are not fixed applicable yardsticks, but are present to his only as the viewpoints of others" (Gadamer 1994, p. 17). This implies that the universal - what Derrida would surely suspect to be metaphysical - can only be made one's own by adapting it to one's own horizon of experience through interaction with others, within a community of interested persons. Atkins reinforces Gallagher's judgment that Rorty and Gadamer seem to share the belief that "Truth" and "Reality" must rely upon the common sense decisions of persons engaged in conversational understanding and that this can be

achieved without the inevitable distorting effects of metaphysical ideas. Both thinkers, it would seem, believe that metaphysical impositions and constraints upon conversation can be sorted out and either used or discarded through the crucible of community based discourse.

Bruffee, Atkins believes, makes much the same point. She sums up Bruffee's educational goal to establish "the community [that] generates authoritative knowledge through a continued process of intellectual negotiations among its members" (Atkins 1998, p. 445). Note the relationship between "authoritative" and "negotiation". Authority is established, she thinks, by the process of negotiation. Atkins writes the following description of Bruffee's conception of a hermeneutically guided curriculum:

> Bruffee's vision of schooling emphasizes self-consciousness about personal and communal beliefs. He . . . asks us to help students examine carefully and deeply the way humanistic texts help us reveal ourselves to one another. And he asks us to teach students to identify their own beliefs and those of their communities, to discover communities of belief relevant to their interests, and to learn to join, maintain and, if desirable, move away from one knowledge community, and into another (Atkins 1988, p. 446).

And again she writes,

> Instead of reading major humanistic texts as accounts of human encounters with absolute truth or reality Bruffee . . . asks us to read them as stories of attempts to solve problems, to work out the potentialities of the language and activities available to us. By interpreting education as a social process, and knowledge as a social artifact, he provides us with a rich framework suitable not only for . . . curricula at all levels (Atkins 1988, p. 446).

The second passage provides a means to satisfy the deconstructionist goal of establishing a multidimensional interpretive milieu in order to offset single dimensional and univocal metaphysical schemes of understanding. The first passage clearly situates the means to this goal within a community of discourse that is Gadamerian in scope.

The inference one draws from Atkins is corroborative of Gallagher's attempts at synthesis.

In conclusion, Gallagher has sufficiently established that the conservative hermeneutic ideal of reproducing cultural knowledge at the expense of its application to the lived experience of the interpreter is both unlikely and also undesirable, vis-a-vis the other schools of hermeneutical thinking. The possibility of re-establishing the original meaning of any tradition is dubious because interpretive activity, by its very nature, transforms the object of interpretation. Gallagher, as a representative of the moderate hermeneutics he proposes, argues that the intellectual horizon of the interpreter always affects, both positively and negatively, to one degree or another, one's understanding of the horizons of past historical periods, other cultures and, in general, other traditional frameworks of understanding. Moreover, reproduction would be particularly undesirable from the point of view of critical hermeneutics and radical hermeneutics since they hold that successful reproductive understanding is tantamount to a perennial reintroduction of hegemonic relationships that distort or overwhelm conversation. Specifically, the critical theorist believes that the hegemonic relationships that distort the possibility of free and unconstrained conversation are extraneous to discourse. They are nefarious power relationships founded on class, gender, and racial differences. Furthermore, the radical hermeneuticist holds that hegemonic relationships take the form of socially privileged modes of discourse that are embedded within the inherited structures of conversation.

Conservative thinkers, however much they may overvalue and overemphasize the reconstruction of original meaning as a goal of interpretive activity, do remind us of cultural traditions that establish what Rorty calls normal discourse, an essential element in the dialectical exchange between "normal" and "abnormal" conversations. The value of conservative thinking is in its recognition of historically grounded traditions, which facilitate conversational relationships with the historical past.

A preoccupation with emancipation from hegemonic relationships is of crucial

concern to the critical school of hermeneutical thinking whose goal is a complete break with authoritative forms of discourse. Their ideal is a distortionless form of communicative understanding that allows conversants to achieve consensual understanding. Gallagher is acutely critical of their notion that it is possible and desirable to escape from all forms of authoritative influence. Their intention to break with all forms of traditionary understanding - with the possible exception of the "need to preserve at least one standard for the explanation of the corruption of all reasonable standards" (Gallagher, p. 304) - contravenes the moderate standpoint on the inevitability of traditional influences, wherein one can never completely operate as an interpreter outside of a horizon of understanding. These horizons set limits to understanding, but they also indicate that our culturally mediated experiences of the world, while limited by forestructures of understanding, are not beyond our ability to adjudicate and modify. There is always a step or two to be taken beyond our present limited understanding. A horizon, as it were, is an invitation to new experience. The vehicle for that experience is a conversational relationship with that which is representative of something other than one's present self-understanding. If the critical school fails to see the limitations that are inevitably present to understanding, if it overestimates the human opportunity to achieve emancipation from all authoritative relationships, then it does, however, serve to remind us of the forces extraneous to conversation that distort the capacity for interpretive activity.

Radical hermeneutics reminds us of the hegemonic qualities inherent to established forms of discourse and describes these qualities as having established an ascendancy of status based upon its own particular point of view. (The rationalism that western culture has inherited from the Enlightenment is a primary example). Radical thinkers argue that these discourses are characterized by power relationship that operate from within conversational modes of understanding. Consequently, it has become incumbent upon radical thinkers - especially those who recognize their own ultimate reliance upon conversational understanding - to acknowledge what Rorty refers to as the

"abnormal" (creative) phases of discourse, which can be thought of as a critical reflection upon the already established "normal" (privileged) aspects of conversation. The result is a discourse that produces new and creative ideas that run contrary to traditional knowledge. This contribution to hermeneutical thinking in general is important. Radical thinkers have recognized how easily our conversations can lapse, sometimes unconsciously, into a dominant mode of thinking, which goes unchallenged as a matter of course. But from a moderate point of view, radical thinkers have not sufficiently considered the dialectical relationship between old and new ways of thinking. It is only with Rorty and Bruffee that this has become a significant consideration. Gallagher points out, however, that this belated acknowledgment has already been anticipated by Gadamer's idea of a "fusion of horizons".

The moderate position represented by Gadamer and Gallagher benefits from the contributions of other hermeneutical schools of thought, with their distinct insights concerning the processes of understanding. My own conception of a centrist reading of Gadamer - which I consider to be remarkably similar to Gallagher's moderate hermeneutics - benefits greatly when set into a crucible of these distinct, or initially distinct, points of view. The moderate position, however, suffers no invidious comparison with these other principled hermeneutical positions. Required to adjust Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy to these other perspectives in order to make accommodation, Gallagher is convincing when he suggests that a synthesis of the four encampments - conservative, moderate, critical, and radical - is possible if an inevitable intellectual drift from the others toward the moderate hermeneutical position is recognized and acknowledged.

There is a growing body of literature that is designed to elaborate on the relationship between hermeneutical philosophy and educational matters. Some of it, as in Gallagher's *Hermeneutics and Education*, is supportive of Gadamer's philosophical

point of view and enhances its usefulness as a pedagogical guide to process education. Other writers are less enthusiastic about his ontological hermeneutics, per se and provide a critical perspective that contravenes Gadamer's thinking altogether. Of the latter, however, there is still the possibility of integrating different points of view with Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy in the fashion of Gallagher's synthetic conception of moderate hermeneutics.

Jim Garrison (1996) develops a theory of listening that weds the pedagogical implications of John Dewey's democratic pluralism to Gadamer's idea of conversational understanding. He begins by reminding us that Dewey supplies criteria for determining what type of society is best. Dewey writes in *Democracy and Education* that societies can be judged by 1) "How numerous and varied are the interests which are consciously shared"? 2) "How full and free is the interplay with other forms of association"? (Dewey quoted in Garrison 1996, p. 1). Garrison explains that "Diversity provides alternatives thereby funding freedom. We should deliberate upon all modes of life intelligently even if ultimately we reject them" (Garrison 1996, p. 1). In other words, one grows as a social being in direct proportion to the availability of fluent and various points of view. Growth is a necessary response to the world because it helps us adapt to new situations. We need to create new understanding in order to cope with the changing and problematic circumstances that characterize life in a democratic society.

Classical political theorists like John Stuart Mill have always stressed freedom of speech as the basis of a democratic society, but Garrison thinks that listening has been overlooked by these philosophers as a necessary complement to this basic democratic political right. It is our ability to listen to others that allows for the sharing of ideas across the gaps of gender, race, ethnicity, and class that separate people and thereby enhances the possibility of shared common interests. Good listening skills are the practical basis for living with others in a pluralistic democracy.

Garrison turns to Gadamer to establish a more precise relationship between listening and conversational understanding. He explains Gadamer's I-Thou relationship, which establishes the moral implications of good listening precisely because it propounds a "dialectic of differences and sameness" (Garrison, p. 6). The multifarious points of view that are produced by a diversity of experience can only be realized and thereby come to contribute to the success of democratic forms of social life by extending to others the status of a Thou. Garrison quotes Gadamer to establish this point: "We cannot stick blindly to our fore-meaning . . . if we want to understand the meaning of another. . . . All that is asked is that we remain open to the meaning of the other person or text. . . . To listen well, we must actively strive to understand the meaning of others in their terms (Gadamer 1994 quoted in Garrison, p. 4). Garrison situates Gadamer's meaning within the context of pluralistic democracy when he calls upon Dewey who writes in *Ethics* to the effect that one is generous in proportion to one's ability to listen to the viewpoints of others (Garrison, p. 2). But more suggestively, Dewey argues that a "generous thought" is a "general thought", or one capable of rendering a consensus of opinion - or the realization of a shared common interest (Dewey 1985 quoted in Garrison, p. 2).

Garrison recognizes, however, that there are significant differences between Dewey and Gadamer. Dewey holds out the hope that one can learn to listen "impartially". This, of course, is a belief typically held by those like Dewey who operate intellectually from within the liberal democratic tradition. Contradistinctively, Garrison sites Gadamer's ideas concerning prejudice, which are, in turn, derived from Heidegger's ontological notion that all interpretive activity is conditioned by a "forestructure" of understanding. Listening within the hermeneutic tradition becomes a matter of negotiating between one's own fore-structure of understanding and those of another.

Garrison writes that "One of the great advantages of ontological hermeneutics is that it acknowledges differences in the history of situatedness between two genders, races, or ethnicity and uses the resulting tensions creatively to produce new

understanding" (Garrison 1996, p. 7). He also writes, "The listener is not simply 'open to what the other means', so that he or she can reproduce it; instead, the listener is open to the meanings that are being developed between oneself and one's partner" (Garrison 1996, p. 8 - inner quote from Stewart, 1983).

The connection between Dewey and Gadamer becomes even more specific through the parallel Garrison draws between Dewey's notion of habit and custom and Gadamer's similar idea of prejudice and tradition (Garrison, p. 10). And although the resulting process of understanding is also very similar, Dewey's emphasis on a social basis for enacting the process of understanding adds a cultural dimension to Gadamer's thinking that, although not entirely lacking in Gadamer's notion of *sensus communis*, can only enhance the pedagogical implications of ontological hermeneutics by placing it with more certainty into a social framework. of pluralistic democracy. Garrison writes, "It is with the disruption of our habitual modes of response [or prejudices in Gadamer's terms] that doubt arises and we require reflective inquiry. It is the uncertain situation that opens up the need to carry out reconstructive inquiry" (Garrison 1996, p. 14).

My own research has focused on developing a pedagogical process that would encompass hermeneutical philosophy and allow students to recognize and examine their own prejudices while listening to others and interacting with texts through a process analogous to listening. Garrison points out that listening - which is a concrete manifestation of the open-mindedness that is necessary for the well-being of a pluralistic democracy - is essential to the process of conversational understanding. But from a practical educational point of view, it cannot be assumed that listening is anything but a skill that must be learned and practiced by the student. My own experience confirms this observation. (The reader is asked to turn to Chapter Seven, Exercise #2 of this thesis to confirm the difficulty I sometimes had in getting students to listen, in this case, to the voice of a text). I am convinced that a structured method of conversational understanding - despite Gadamer's own suspicions about methods,

i.e., the title of *Truth and Method* is widely held to be ironic - is needed to promote this hermeneutic/Deweyan conception of listening, at least within an educational situation. As I establish in Part Two of this thesis, there is no contradiction between the authority necessary for the implementation of a method of conversational understanding and ultimately the self-directed learning that is the goal of process education. Cowan (1994) offers a promising method derived from his experience as a college instructor that directs the student toward a structured response to a text that is based on specific principles of interpretation advocated by Gadamer. (I remind the reader that Gadamer does not distinguish between a conversation with a text and that among persons). For example, in order to guide initial student responses to a text, he advises that students confine themselves to answering the following questions:

-What agreements does the student have with the text under
 consideration?

-What disagreements does the student have with the text?

-What surprises does the student encounter when reading the text?

-What points of clarification are needed in the encounter with the text?
 (Cowan 1994, p. 4)

By having students register agreement or disagreement with a text, they are given the opportunity to recognize prejudgments that they have formed? (Although Cowan himself does not recommend it, at this point the student might note this as an identified prejudice in a section of a journal designed for that purpose). By compelling students to become attentive to surprises presented by the text and to make note of them, they are encouraged to become sensitive to the alien qualities of a text. And by requiring students to record the need for clarification, students are more likely to develop an ultimately self-imposed habit of careful listening, either to the text itself or to someone with expertise who can possibly shed light on what the student does not initially understand.

After careful attention is paid to the first encounter with an object of understanding, students turn to the horizon of understanding that comprises the life-world of the text itself. This includes both the historical context surrounding the text and also the "internal meaning structures that give form to the text" (Cowan 1994, p. 5). The latter could include the kind of inter-textualism associated with Saussure/Derrida (Brown 1996). This meeting of the student's initial response to the text and a "deeper understanding of the text on its own ground" (Cowan 1994, p. 5) is designed to guide the student toward Gadamer's "fusion of horizons".

In effect, open-mindedness needs to be required of students who are engaged with a hermeneutically guided curriculum. A structured method, based on the basic principles of hermeneutic understanding, might be necessary, at least initially. There is further discussion in the second part of my conclusion on the possible efficacy of a structured methodology to guide hermeneutical inquiry insofar as it becomes the basis for educational practice.

The open-mindedness that is essential as the basis for the kind of Dewey/Gadamer dialogue that Garrison conceives is discussed by Steve Bramall (2000) in his article "Opening Up Open-mindedness" in relation to the liberal rationalist tradition, which upholds the autonomy of the learner as an educational goal. He specifically sites the disputation between William Hare and Terry McLaughlin, for whom open-mindedness means "a willingness to form or revise one's view in the light of evidence or argument" (Hare & McLaughlin 1994 quoted in Bramall 2000, p. 3) and Peter Gardner who introduces the issue of incompatibility between open-mindedness and strongly held beliefs. While Hare and McLaughlin hold that it is actually possible to believe in something, for example, a religious idea, while remaining open-minded about it at the same time, Hare recognizes, despite his own position, the theoretical significance of a special case in which an inconsistency develops concerning being open-minded about open-mindedness, itself. Bramall characterizes this as follows: "He [Hare] argues that

we cannot be open-minded about the principle of revising one's beliefs in the light of relevant reasons since any attempt to be open-minded about it would presuppose our commitment to that very principle" (Bramall 2000, p. 4). As a result of this realization, Bramall recommends a modification of the liberal tradition *vis a vis* hermeneutical philosophy.

Bramall couches his transition from an initial interest in the problematics of a liberalized rationality derived from the Enlightenment to hermeneutics by asking the following questions: "Is there a way of becoming open-minded about our commitment to the principle of open-mindedness? How might we test the boundaries of the classes of objects we may be open-minded about? How can we interrogate the methods whereby reasons and evidence constitute the means of verifying the validity of a belief" (Bramall 2000, p. 4)?

In order to answer these questions, Bramall first examines the hermeneutical critique of what is perhaps the most fundamental tenet of Enlightenment rationalism. Gadamer, for example, believes that one cannot assume a transcendental position from which an examination of the ideas, beliefs, values, and commitments of any framework of understanding can be made in an unprejudiced manner. Rationality does not exist apart from the presuppositions that activate it. Bramall characterizes Gadamer's thinking in this way: "The major metamethodological claim made by Gadamer is that all methods of coming to know and understand the meaningful world are located within conceptual frameworks that are rooted in particular traditions" (Bramall 2000, p. 5). Preconceptions are an inseparable part of both our rational - and irrational behavior.

Prejudices, in fact, enable us to produce meaningful understanding (see my discussion of Bultmann in Chapter Two of this thesis). They are bridges between what is already familiar to us and what is presently unfamiliar. But they can also blind us to new and more fruitful experience. This later quality, negative in its implications, necessarily requires self-reflection. If one is to transcend the particular limits of a

tradition, a careful examination of one's prejudices is required in light of ideas that may contradict one's own. Moreover, Bramall writes, "The appearance of a lack of (or end to) prejudice results from failure to recognize a particular (one's own) prejudice. Just because rational method is explicitly concerned with undermining the prejudices of others, it does not follow that it is not itself, in Gadamer's sense, a 'prejudice'" (Bramall 2000, p. 5).

In effect, rationalism, which presupposes a belief in the possibility of an absolute state of open-mindedness, is itself a prejudice. The notion that self-reflective judgments can or should be arrived at through the means of a transcendent rationalism is replaced by a hermeneutic reliance on an "alternative framework [by which] the categories and concepts of understanding are supplied by history and tradition. These traditionally derived categories and concepts supply, as it were, the conceptual glasses with which we see the world" (Bramall 2000, p. 5).

As conceived hermeneutically, "open-mindedness about open-mindedness" becomes a relativized idea. Hermeneutics brings with it the realization that one's framework of understanding, although supplying the foundation for belief, commitment, and value must necessarily allow for a mediation between itself and other points of view if personal growth is to occur. Thus Bramall concludes that "Criticism . . . comes not from testing beliefs against the universal judgment of evidence and argument, but from recognizing the limitations of our current powers of understanding and the particularity of our viewpoint" (Bramall 2000, p. 6)

Toward the end of this article, Bramall draws a parallel between hermeneutics and Dewey's pragmatic philosophy. He quotes Dewey saying that open-mindedness is "a disposition to welcome points of view hitherto alien" (Dewey quoted in Bramall 2000, p.7). The following statements serve to tie hermeneutics, Dewey's pragmatism (as evidenced in the above quote), and the notion of open-mindedness as a rationalist conception together:

First, practical-critical hermeneutic understanding carries with it a motive for attempting to understand that which appears alien. In practical *hermeneutics*, understanding that which appears alien is the means by which we increase our powers of understanding. There is good reason then for welcoming seemingly alien points of view.

Second, practical *hermeneutics* is explicitly concerned with engagements between those with different points of view rather than between those with similar viewpoints but holding different beliefs.

Third, practical *hermeneutics* proceeds through dialogic encounters that aim to overcome the alterity or alienness of other points of view (Bramall 2000, p. 7).

Through a dialogic encounter with others, whose point of view is different from one's own, open-mindedness also facilitates a reflection, not just "on the veracity of particular beliefs but also upon the methods of acquiring, judging, and validating beliefs" (Bramall 2000, p. 4). Like Garrison, Bramall is able to wed Deweyan pedagogy to hermeneutical philosophy.

Of course, the problem of what to do about dogmatic intellectual positions that prohibit open-mindedness is still an issue. Derrida reproached Gadamer over this everpresent possibility in their famous encounter described in *Jacques Derrida, Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, edited by Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (1989). Open-mindedness assumes good will. If good will is lacking, how can we reasonably expect students to engage productively in the process of conversational understanding? (Derrida accused Gadamer of not considering that the good will necessary for an open-minded conversational relationship is not always present). In reviewing Jim Garrison's work, I suggested that some structured methodology might help students with the practical problems of listening to a text, etc. Such a methodology might also help students circumvent their own dogmatic beliefs and lack of good will toward ideas unlike their own. Bramall says above that there is a motive attached to "practical-critical hermeneutic understanding". That is, by establishing, at least, an incipient relationship to that which

is alien, we not only enhance the possibility of self-understanding in a "technical sense" but also the possibility that students might naturally come to desire an extension of self-understanding.

The advantage of requiring students to become engaged with a process of understanding is that it puts them in the position of having to consider unfamiliar ideas. Of course, I am not suggesting that students be forced to change their beliefs. That is morally dubious from a conversational point of view and is also impracticable. But we can ask them, via a methodology such as the one Cowan (1994) suggests, to examine their own ideas in light of ones not their own. Once involved with such a process, there is an increased chance that even the most recalcitrant students will be influenced by the hermeneutic conception of open-mindedness. At the very least, they will become familiar with the previously unfamiliar, with other points of view.

For example, I once led a group of students who were discussing religious ideas. One girl in the group, who described herself as religious, was a key player in a particular discussion. I had given these students a solid introduction to hermeneutical principles of conversation, including the need to be open-minded concerning one's own prejudices and specifically to respect one another's right to speculate aloud without criticism during discussion about their own values. This young woman had grown confident about thinking aloud. One day she grew particularly animated and made a statement that was uncharacteristic of her usual way of thinking. She was instantly aware of the significance to herself of what she had just said. So were others in the discussion group. Taking advantage of everyone's surprise, she commented forcefully, but in a matter of fact way, "I can't believer I just said that". Her self-understanding had the opportunity to adjust publicly to her own open-mindedness with new ideas.

This sort of opportunity for open-mindedness has to be created through pedagogical skills that are still in the infancy of development. Articles like those of Garrison and Bramall provide the intellectual justification for the experimental work that will eventually lead to the formal development of those skills.

In an article often critical of Shaun Gallagher's *Hermeneutics and Education,*
Deborah Kerdeman (1998) finds that Gallagher's reading of Gadamer establishes an
unnecessary and misleading dichotomy between the pedagogical implications of his
hermeneutical philosophy and epistemological (modernist) ideas about learning and the
learner. Kerdeman sets up her critical position by drawing upon Gallagher's own
understanding of epistemology:

> In epistemology the word understanding usually signifies a mental
> process which takes place in the mind (soul or consciousness). It is an
> intellectual process whereby a knower gains knowledge about
> something. This is explained in terms of a straightforward linear,
> dualistic relationship between the subject (the knower) and the object
> (the known) (Gallagher 1992 quoted in Kerdeman, p. 2).

She also contrasts this with Gallagher's conception of the hermeneutical position:

> understanding is essentially a way of being which belongs to human
> existence. . . . Being-in-the-world is not primarily a cognitive
> relationship between subject and object, although being-in-the-world is
> a way of existing which allows there to be cognition. Human existence
> discloses the world, or is in-the-world by way of an understanding that
> functions on all levels of behavior, conscious or unconscious.
> (Gallagher 1992 quoted in Kerdeman pp. 2-3).

Kerdeman points out that Gallagher judges the ontological position to be superior
to its epistemological counterpart. This judgment is not only based on the invidious
distinction that Gallagher makes between ontological hermeneutics and modernist
epistemology traditions concerning the relationship between self and understanding (as
indicated in the above quotes), but also upon the issue of human agency and control,
which are, as Kerdeman correctly recognizes, closely related issues. She writes:

> the proposed dichotomy between *hermeneutics* [from Gallagher's point
> of view but not necessarily Gadamer's] and epistemology is fueled by
> competing claims about what it means to be a human being, what

human agency entails, and the extent to which human beings control the direction of their lives (Kerdeman, p. 3).

Moreover, Kerdeman believes that Gallagher has overinterpreted Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. His most egregious mistake, as she conceives it, is found in his attempt to use Gadamer's conception of hermeneutics to construct a basis for educational experience that "subsumes" other points of view (Kerdeman, p. 6). She argues that Gadamer never meant for his own viewpoints to amount to "one superior vision" (Kerdeman, p. 6). Her claim is based on the emphasis Gadamer places on "difference" (Kerdeman, p. 6) and the fundamental role it plays in interpretive understanding. That is, Gadamer's idea of "difference" - by which he means to acknowledge points of view not one's own - should lead to a reapproachment between hermeneutics and epistemology and would consequently deny superior status to hermeneutic philosophy.

Kerdeman's discussion of human agency and control *vis a vis* Gadamer and her claim that Gallagher has specifically misrepresented Gadamer on this issue merits attention. I have already established that she claims that Gallagher has taken a position which excludes an epistemological understanding of agency and, thereby, violates Gadamer's commitment to "difference" as a necessary facet of understanding. But she also defines the epistemological position on human agency in this way: "The epistemological subject . . . is the source and arbiter of her own thinking and action . . . . . Disengaged from ties to nature, society, and history, the modern subject is . . . an autonomous, self-conscious, unperturable agent" (Kerdeman, p. 13).

Gallagher's position on human agency, as conceived by Kerdeman, contrasts significantly with epistemology. Whereas Gallagher believes that "meaning and purpose" is best associated with "ambiguity and doubt", the epistemologist puts his faith in "formal or detached analysis". She pejoratively quotes Gallagher that "Understanding is not something that I (the epistemological ego) do, but something that I am included in . . . a way of being taken up into the whole (Gallagher 1992

quoted in Kerdeman, p. 15).

Kerdeman sums up the harm she thinks done by Gallagher's original failure to realize that Gadamer's notion of difference does not preclude a consideration of epistemological concepts as follows: "Once Gallagher reframes lived understanding in terms of a dialogical event that is not under the control of participants, he can find no place for human will and determination (Kerdeman, p. 16). She concedes that her suggestion that Gadamer provides the possibility of bringing the epistemological position and the hermeneutic together is surprising. After all, Gadamer writes in *On Education, Poetry and History* that we are "not masters and rulers of our life situation" (Gadamer 1992 quoted in Kerdeman, p. 16). But she takes his notion of prejudice as evidence that agency, which she identifies with control over the existential situation, provides room for an epistemological counterpart, which Gallagher overlooks. She quotes Gadamer, "His [everyone's] prejudices -- his being saturated with wishes, drives, hopes, and interests -- must be held under control to such an extent that the other is not made invisible or does not remain invisible" (Gadamer 1992 quoted in Kerdeman, p. 17). In other words, although prejudices may condition our understanding as interpreters, we can come to recognize them and finally control them when necessary.

To sum up, by identifying Gadamer's idea of controlling prejudices with a more epistemological view of human agency, she provides a justification for her claim that an integration of the epistemological point of view and the hermeneutic one is possible. She has characterized the "epistemological subject" as "the source and arbiter of her own thinking and action" (Kerdeman, p. 13). Being open-minded may put limits on self-understanding but does not "obliterate the self" as Kerdeman seems to think is the case with Gallagher's thinking and the position he takes in *Hermeneutics and Education*. She writes, "being open both requires and sustains agency, realized in persons who intend, enjoin, judge, direct, and take responsibility for their actions. Each of us must choose and deliberate for ourselves; no one can choose to 'open up'

another or be open in her place" (Kerdeman, p. 18).

Kerdeman's thesis is unusual in the literature concerning hermeneutics. But she should not be dismissed simply because she wants to retain what she considers to be the strongly recommended features of an epistemological perspective. Her thinking is original and suggestive. However, it would be difficult to take her at face value. Kerdeman overlooks, for example, the incompatibility of many hermeneutical and epistemological concepts. The difference between the epistemological idea of self, which is grounded in Descartes's subject/object dichotomy, for example, is a radically different and probably incompatible notion from Gadamer's conception of self-understanding as an historically effected and therefore dynamic phenomenon (see Gadamer 1994, p. 97). And at best one might re-employ the epistemological values of human agency in a Gadamerian fashion, but not without emphasizing the dynamic nature of self-understanding in the open-minded *quid pro quo* that exists in the confrontation with otherness. In fact, she does not seem to be completely familiar with Gadamer's ontological conception of self-understanding. I recall the reader to his dictum "to recognize one's own in the alien" (Gadamer 1994, p. 14); or to consider Gadamer's rejection of metaphysical presence, and his emphasis on "the absolute *a posteriori* character of experience, including experiment" (Gadamer 1994, p. 125). That is, our understanding of the world, even though scientific experiment is furthered by dialogue that occurs as *a posteriori* conversation.

Her claim that Gallagher's misreading of Gadamer leaves "no place for human will and determination" overlooks much that Gallagher emphasizes in *Hermeneutics and Education*. For example, he writes that "Educational experience depends on our involvement; without our involvement there would be no such experience. However, this involvement cannot be equated with instrumental attempts to control the educational process as a means to a certain end" (Gallagher 1992, p. 187). For Gallagher, agency provides for the recognition of limits, particularly to the goals that can be set for education. In a broader sense, Gallagher advocates that human agency is

limited by the hermeneutic situation itself. The following quote from Gallagher clarifies his understanding of how one is involved in the hermeneutic situation but is not, by the very nature of things, completely in control of that situation:

> Education [as a hermeneutic situation] does not occur if one stands back and acts as an external observer. . . . To be educational, experience requires self-transcendence, and involvement that gives education its moral dimension.
>
> In learning anything, we learn about ourselves; in a projection toward possibilities we come to understand ourselves. Self-appropriation is always effected through self-transcendence. To understand oneself does not mean to take an objectifying reflective view of some centralized, transcendental ego, but to interpret oneself in light of one's involvement in that which gets interpreted (Gallagher 1992, pp. 187-188).

Gallagher's view of human agency is consistent with Gadamer's notion of hermeneutic understanding. One is neither completely in control of the interpretive situation nor completely controlled by it. Upon analysis, it is difficult to accept Kerdeman's argument that Gallagher has misconceived Gadamer in any essential way.

The reader is referred to Chapter Six in this thesis, "Julie's Journal", for an example of the problem of agency in education (see pp. 226-227). Julie had been treating tradition as if it were under one's intellectual control, as if it were an object that could be manipulated in an epistemological fashion. (Kerdeman would argue that Gadamer, perforce, would grant Julie more self-determination and control than Gallagher allows through his "misunderstanding" of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics). In my conclusion (see p. 327) I revisit this incident and remind myself that I should have advised Julie to consider that from a hermeneutic point of view one is conditioned by those traditions that encompass self-understanding; but any tradition can also be altered through application to new conditions and original experiences. Kerdeman overlooks this basic ontological insight. One cannot stand outside of any situation that demands to be understood. One is always found within a situation. We are both empowered and limited by the hermeneutic situation.

Bridget Somekh (1995) discusses the contribution of John Elliott to action research, especially his attempts to apply Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy to his understanding of institutionalized educational practices. Borrowing from Herbert Altrichter, she lists the general characteristics of action research as they have emerged over the last decade and a half:

1. Action research methodology bridges the divide between research and practice. . . . The first main difference between action research and other forms of research is that it is carried out by people directly concerned with the social situation that is being researched.

2. The findings of action research are fed back directly into practice with the aim of bringing about change.

3. Action research has a highly pragmatic orientation. It recognizes that there is a trade-off between the benefits of giving practitioners the central role in research (e.g. they alone have the power and ability to bring about change in the field of action) and the resulting limitations in terms of the time they can devote to research and their lack of certain kinds of specialist knowledge (e.g. skills of data analysis).

4. Action research is grounded in the culture and values of the social group whose members are both participants in the research field and researchers. It may be instigated by an individual, but its momentum is towards collaboration, because the emphasis on social interactions and interpersonal relationships has the effect of drawing other participants into the research process. . . . Because action research incorporates a high degree of reflection upon both the conscious and unconscious meaning of individuals' intentions and actions, and their impact upon others, it contributes to the further development of the group's values.

5. [In action research] it is impossible to carry out analysis and interpretation of the data without doing so in the light of prior knowledge (Somekh, pp. 2-4).

Somekh discusses the specific contributions Elliott has made to these basic principles. To begin with, action research is localized (see #1 above); it situates

teacher/researchers within the circumstances of their own jobs, and they are, therefore, deeply involved with the process of understanding, becoming agents of change within the school and its attendant systems. Somekh quotes Elliott as describing this process as "the realization of educational values in a teacher's interactions with students" (Elliott 1991 quoted in Somekh, p. 4). Somekh notes that "action research reports are nearly always written in the first person" (Somekh, p. 8). She says that the practitioner "[is] a *de facto* component of the situation under study" (Somekh, p. 9). The researcher's self-understanding results from self-reflective activity, which includes "an active process of self-scrutiny and self-challenge" (Somekh, p. 9). This insight, which contributes to point #4 above, is influenced by Elliott's understanding of Gadamer's hermeneutics, wherein self- understanding is coterminous with one's self-reflective involvement within the group (Gadamer 1994, p. 459). In short, what researchers know about themselves reflects what they have come to know about their own relationship with the group.

Somekh points out that Elliott has developed a significantly different view of social change from that of the critical school of hermeneutics represented by Habermas and Carr and Kemmis. Of this critical point of view, she writes, "Without . . . special preparation they argue that individuals are not capable of undertaking action research because their judgment is contaminated by uncritical assumptions which are culturally determined (Somekh, p. 10). Somekh quotes Elliott approvingly when she writes "I cannot see why practical reflection, which is interested in how to act consistently with the values embedded in our social traditions, need not require us to think critically about values (Elliott 1993 quoted in Somekh, p. 10). He is aware that there are impediments to conversational understanding embedded within the traditions that in actuality condition our thinking, but that these "routinized behavior[s] and unquestioned assumptions [that] are a serious barrier to change" (Somekh, p. 10) can be subjected to critical reflection through the efficacy of conversational understanding, and that some control can be gained over the hegemonic forces that would otherwise

dominate us. Somekh refers to this as "the power of agency within institutions" (Somekh, p. 10). Elliott argues that prejudices, even those deeply embedded within tradition and backed by powerful social forces, can be recognized and subjected to the process of change in a fashion that is coterminous with action research itself (see points #2 and #5 above). The key to this includes the extension of dialogic relationship to the representatives of the power structure that are usually thought of as being opposed to the educational reforms associated with process education. She quotes Elliott who writes, "The task of educational action research is not so much to resist as to transform [government reforms] by reinterpreting the democratic values which underpin them, albeit in distorted form" (Elliott 1993 quoted in Somekh, p. 11).

If Gadamer's notion that texts are properly interpreted via conversational understanding is the right prototype for all phases of action research, as Elliott believes - even with the representatives of cultural and social forces that tend to distort dialogues concerning education - then it must also guide a teacher/researcher who is trying to understand pedagogical events that focus on the more immediate relationships with students. Somekh quotes Elliott who writes, "For Gadamer, insights are developed in the space between the objective text, or artefact, and the subjective frame of reference the interpreter brings to it" (Elliott 1985 quoted in Somekh, p. 12). In Part Two of this thesis, I discuss my own attempts to understand students who are studying humanities (art, literature, religion) with me as teacher/researcher. Insofar as my own work qualified as action research - and I did not conceive it as such at the time - I believe that I coincidentally implemented the admonishment inherent in Elliott's statement that there should be a "creative interaction between text and interpreter" (Elliott 1985 quoted in Somekh, p. 12). That is, the educational event that unfolded and that I recorded in my notes and subsequent thesis was, in effect, a text that required the same moral commitment on my part as would any other interpretive activity. It was necessary that I constantly monitor my own prejudices and hence come to realize how they would inevitably affect the way I was perceiving student behavior

and how I would respond to their participation in the interpretive process that characterized the educational project that I had started with them. This was necessary not just for the sake of fairness to the student, but also because my own self-understanding as a teacher was being developed by the process. Somekh's reminder that Elliott is influenced by Gadamer's reinterpretation of Aristotle's conception of *phronesis* - and all that implies morally - is a welcome part of this article. Somekh writes that "Our practice is a continual construction and reconstruction of our values in action" (Somekh, p. 12).

Stephen Kemmis represents the critical school of hermeneutics. This discussion will center on his conception of emancipation. I discussed the critical point of view on emancipation earlier in this chapter. That discussion was based on Gallagher's judgment that the critical hermeneutic position does not sufficiently consider the possibility of an unobtainable emancipation from hegemonic, extra-linguistical social forces, which, admittedly, distort the possibility of conversational understanding. Gallagher writes that "Outside of theory, emancipation can never mean that an individual human subjectivity gains complete control over the human situation" (Gallagher 1992, p. 273).

The idea of emancipation implies a consideration of the nature of authority. The critical school overlooks that authority, or what I have preferred to call authoritative expertise, always renews itself in one fashion or another based on the current understanding of what is meaningful and what is not. Gallagher writes, "Education seems to involve hegemonic relations in its very nature, that is, authority relations between teacher and student or system and student" (Gallagher 1992, p. 269). Gallagher's argument is based on a paradox. The only way beyond hegemony (against which emancipation is aimed) is through conversation, and since conversation can never approximate the ideal speech situation that Habermas advocates, hegemony, or

to use a more generous word, authority, reasserts itself based on new and expanded understanding (Gallagher 1992, p. 270).

Stephen Kemmis directs his argument initially and tangentially against certain post-structuralist thinkers, namely Derrida and Lyotard, whose intellectual position, insofar as it transposes into curriculum studies, he characterizes as follows:

> Specific curricula do not simply represent the world for students; the authors of curriculum texts (whether curriculum writers or the authors of the 'live' performance of curriculum in the classroom) actually fabricate the world they write of by constructing narratives about it; and it can never be entirely clear what students will read from them (Kemmis, pp. 207-208).

Also, Kemmis argues that the radical hermeneutic position militates against social solidarity. This idea runs like a subtext through the above quote but is made more explicit in the following:

> The post-structuralists . . . take the view that representation that can never be innocent or value-neutral, that representation can never be more than the fabrication of simulacra which distort (as well as shape) our perceptions (representations can never 'correspond' to reality), and that interpretation changes radically depending on who is doing the interpretation, when, where, and from what perspective (Kemmis, p. 207).

The implication of these radical beliefs extend, however, into the nature of conversation itself and the possibility of shared understanding among students who participate interpretively within the parameters of a curriculum. Of course, in all practicality, one cannot expect students engaged in conversational understanding to agree or to come to the same conclusions. That is an ideality but not a likelihood in real-life situations. What should be possible, however, is that students (and hopefully teachers) develop an actual solidarity in relation to the external forces that distort the process of conversation. Kemmis concludes that the radical hermeneutic position does

not lend itself to solidarity among those who are ultimately opposed to the hegemonic powers that distort free and open communication within an educational community because agreement among conversants toward the extra-linguistical forces that constrain conversational understanding is considered highly unlikely. Those forces have already permeated the minds of the conversants to the point where conversation itself is powerless to dispel them.

Kemmis, as a critical theorist, makes a distinction between two levels of the educational world. He relies on Habermas for the ideas of "system" and "lifeword". The first of these two educational realms includes the hegemonic reality of *"systematisation, regulation and control"* (Kemmis, p. 212). From this proceeds predefined role relationships between administrator, teachers, and students (in descending hierarchical order). Here domination or commanding authority predominates. Kemmis calls this the "system" aspect of the social world (Kemmis, p. 212). In short, this would be a source of the hegemonic power that Habermas believes distorts free and unimpeded communication. The lifeworld, by contrast, is "localized, concrete, and historically specific" (Kemmis, p. 212). This is where spontaneous face-to-face relationships predominate over predefined role relationships. Here the teacher potentially encounters the student as one interpretive being to another. Here open-mindedness is ideally the order of the day.

The goal of critical emancipation, according to Kemmis, is to resolve the disproportionate amount of power the educational "system" possesses in relationship to the "lifeworld" where students should ideally learn to think for themselves, freed from the hegemonic distortions of language that proceed from a bureaucratized "system". Kemmis believes that the established system can and must be combated if educational change is to occur. He writes:

> In times when education systems increasingly oblige us to act as employees, and as operatives required to implement a barrage of new curriculum policies and packages, rather than as professional educators

who share a commitment to the educational development of our students and our world, it may be up to us to make the necessary connections with one another if we are to share the critical and self-critical task of improving education. This means forming new kinds of solidarity (Rorty 1989) with others in the face of the hyperrationalized mass systems by which education is meant to be 'delivered' to students today (Kemmis, p. 213).

As opposed to radical thinkers, Kemmis, in keeping with the critical approach of Habermas, offers that people can come together within the "lifeworld" in order to communicate about educational change. This occurs when there is a politicalization in the "lifeworld". It is a fundamental solidarity among people who wish to practice open-minded conversation. But it entails more than being open-minded to other points of view. It presumes that conversants can free themselves from hegemony through the means of conversational understanding. That is, through the means of conversational understanding, they can come to recognize, reject, and resist the hegemonic authority that the "system" practices as a means of control over their educational lives.

This is not just change within the confines of a localized educational setting, but a change that expands into a broader social setting. Kemmis writes:

> Educational plans, policies and practices are always framed by contexts which stretch from the intimacy and immediacy of local circumstances to reach and intersect with broader social frames, nationally and internationally, communally and globally. They are the products of struggle, and they give rise to still further struggles for better education for a better world (Kemmis, p. 213).

Kemmis characterizes his own sense of solidarity as a "first-person plural stance". This is a practical way to make up the necessary connections within one another if we are to share the critical and self-critical task of improving education. But he does not, in doing this, oppose the world of the "system" to the "lifeworld".

> Though there may seem to be a great distance between the educational researcher in the university and the parent of the child in school, or between the curriculum developer in the state curriculum development

agency and the adult learner in the part-time course, in the institutional
world of education, they live in worlds created by and for one another
(though the influences between them are rarely equal). Within the
real-world settings of education, however, the co-participants in these
settings (whether the classroom or the home or the office of the
curriculum developer or the fieldwork site of the educational
researcher) have personal relationships with one another which, though
always modulated by the institutional frameworks in which they meet,
are nevertheless direct, immediate and human (Kemmis, pp. 215-216).

Notice his words, "they live in worlds created by and for one another (though the influences between them are rarely equal)". Kemmis recognizes the perennial existence of "system". Its influence is certainly hegemonic. But what makes his understanding of Habermas different from Gallagher's is that a productive conversational relationship can exist between "system" and "lifeworld". Conversational understanding does not only concern what conversants within the "lifeworld" say to one another. Dialogue extends productively between the two realms.

If postmodern institutions are characteristically transient, those who live within the "lifeworld" and who have typically found themselves on the losing end of hegemonic relationships, can take advantage of that instability to "generate not only critical responses but also new forms of action to address the problem" (Kemmis, p. 218). For Kemmis, as opposed to radical hermeneutic theorists, conversational understanding is potentially emancipatory. Critical hermeneutics offers an alternative "to an endlessly reflexive engagement with texts which, in 'interpreting' them, simply adds to or rewrites them" (Kemmis, p. 221). But Kemmis's work also supports Elliott's notion that dialogic understanding is not necessarily precluded by the existence of hierarchical structures above the school level, and that representatives from these higher institutions can be included in the dialogic process. Somekh (1995) quotes Elliott, "I cannot see why practical reflection, which is interested in how to act consistently with the values embedded in our social traditions, need not require us to think critically about values" (Elliott 1993 quoted in Somekh, p. 348). Kemmis like Elliott seems to

reject the Marxist notion of "false consciousness" in favor of a belief that dialogic communication with hierarchic forces, which are often opposed to progressive reforms in education, can be affected by a common commitment to democratic values.

Brown (1996) describes a method of practitioner research that relies on the work of Habermas for its theoretical design but utilizes post-structuralist hermeneutics (radical hermeneutics) to elaborate on the practical activity of self-understanding within an educational setting.

Brown writes, "In Habermas' work, social evolution is seen as being brought about through such a process of attempting to reconcile social practices with descriptive practices" (Brown, p. 261). In other words, changes in the use of descriptive language can alter the way one behaves in the lifeworld and, therefore, affects the social relations that make up that world.

> I work from the premise that the practitioner researching in his or her classroom brings about changes both through acting in the classroom itself and in producing writing commenting on this classroom practice. That is, descriptions of classroom practice, made by the practitioner, effect changes in the reality attended to by this practitioner. I suggest that actual professional practices and the ways in which these are described can function dialectically in influencing each other (Brown, p. 262).

The actual practice of writing has a formalized structure or model that Brown describes as "a chain of stories" (Brown, p. 262). The writing process itself, as I have mentioned, is grounded in the radical hermeneutic tradition of Saussure/Derrida. Brown refers to de Saussure's belief that "a text does not have meaning in itself but rather derives its meaning from its relation to the words around it. To understand the meaning of a text we need to understand how the individual words interrelate (Brown, p. 262). This "guiding principle" ultimately leads to Derrida's notion of "*differance*"

(Brown, p. 262) which manifests in practitioner research as a "strategy [which] promotes a multiple play of meaning derived through juxtaposing the various written accounts offered" (Brown, p. 263). Or as Brown succinctly says "writing can be used to tell a story about what is going on" (Brown, p. 263). But he offers a caveat to his own proposal:

> Nevertheless, although such an approach has a liberating feel to it, there is a sobering aspect to this account of post-structuralism that we need to guard against in examining the relationship between a text and that which it seems to describe. . . . any accounts offered by individuals *speak* the society from which they come and have, built within the language itself, layers of assumptions endemic in that society's view of the world. . . . The social values we may wish to bring in to question can be embedded deeply within the fabric of the society's way of talking about things (Brown, p. 263).

There is some similarity in this quote to Gadamer's notion of fore-structures (traditions) that condition the way one comes to understand, or perhaps more specifically, how one comes to misunderstand new possibilities in the phenomenal-world. Despite the possible similarity here to Gadamer's conception of a historically effected consciousness, Brown's thinking is closely aligned with Habermas's critical hermeneutics and provides a needed reminder concerning the hegemonic distortions of language that can pervade even the most well meaning discourse. Furthermore, Brown does not advocate that teacher practitioners try to situate their own self-analysis within a discernible tradition of understanding. The dialogue between pieces of writing and commentary from colleagues and tutor is in that sense self-contained. I did notice, however, that values external to the situation do make incursions into practitioners' writing. One teacher/researcher who Brown quotes writes of "the old pedagogy of chalk and talk and authoritarianism" (Brown, p. 267). The article does not explain the source of this judgment, whether it derived from within the dialectic that makes up the type of conversational understanding that he advocates, or is extraneous to it. But I suspect that it is external to the writing process and represents the tradition of process

education that the practitioner/researcher has brought into this self-exploratory process of writing as an *a priori* value.

The goal of Brown's method is the collection of data that will create for practitioner/researchers (teachers) an expanded understanding of the teaching situation that they are inherently part of. Brown writes that "the teachers are requested to choose a small piece of work, . . . written in the past, which they see as having some resonance with their chosen theme" (Brown, p. 264). The theme presents a concern the practitioner/researcher has about his or her own practical activity as a teacher. Following this, teachers are asked to choose or set-up a second episode in their teaching that involves this same theme and will serve to produce a second piece of writing. They are then asked to write a one sentence statement that sums up the "title" of his or her work up to that point. This is then submitted to members of a group, other teacher candidates, each of whom composes a paragraph that examines how the two main pieces of writing relate to the practitioner/researcher's chosen theme or title. Next, the writer considers how these paragraphs might affect his or her own understanding of the theme. A statement follows "about their proposed theme, and how they see themselves working on it in a way, which makes explicit reference to the comments made by their subgroup colleagues" (Brown, p. 264). This revised assessment is also based on a tutor's response to the researcher's developing narrative.

The process that Brown advocates involves an interpretive relationship between practitioner/researchers and tutors rather than one between a practitioner/researcher (myself) and secondary school students. It is different in many ways from the more free-floating process that guided my own research, and its possible applicability is more indirect that direct. This technique of self-examination, however, could have provided a needed check on the kind of responses that I made over time to student discourse, both written and oral. It might have been possible to select a few students, perhaps on a rotating basis, to examine narratives that I composed concerning my own relationship and interaction with discussion groups. The changes in my own narrative

could then be compared with the "critical/analyses" that guided my understanding of student discourse and would certainly have brought my own work into closer proximity with post-structuralist thinking.

Brown's method also leads to a somewhat different kind of open-mindedness than has been described so far in this thesis. It is an openness to self-understanding as it unfolds "through selecting and composing sequences of pieces of writing (Brown, p. 269). This process, which has a dialogic dimension (others are critically involved with one's self-understanding), opens up one's situation to new and constantly evolving insights or possibilities. Specifically, the practitioner of this process remains open to the relationship between self and situation.

Furthermore, self-development is not tied to a historically conditioned past in the Gadamerian sense. Brown writes, "The product of practitioner research does not result in statements of practical implications common to all. . . . [And] the self/situation has an essential time dimension understood by the individual through engagement in their situation" (Brown, p. 269). This allows a multiplicity of meaning to develop out of one situation. There could possibly be as many potential meanings as there are practitioner/researchers per situation - but generated from within the situation.

In this chapter, as I have previously stated, I have tried to expand upon my particular commitment in this thesis to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Some of these articles complement his work, others offer distinct alternatives. Although my empirical work, which is reported in Part Two of this thesis, reflects Gadamer's philosophy, the second part of my concluding chapter suggests that my initial work could be understood in ways that reflect other hermeneutic points of view.

Part Two then is an attempt to apply hermeneutic ideas to actual teaching situations. It must not be overlooked that the practical experience presented in the next three chapters helped to inform my initial theoretical work. Part Two can best be

described as praxis: hermeneutic theory influencing practical behavior and, in turn, practical knowledge, gleaned from an actual application of ideas, influencing the development of a hermeneutically guided pedagogy.

PART TWO

INTRODUCTION

Part Two of this thesis is concerned with a series of experiments that are meant to "try out" a hermeneutical pedagogy drawn from the more theoretical discussions of Part One. There are introductions to each of these chapters, but this is an overall explanation concerning how these chapters were actually derived.

These "experiments" should be understood in hermeneutical terms. They are an attempt to gain experience, not to test hypotheses or gather and analyze data in an empirical sense. Part One did not entirely precede Part Two in its conception. The latter, in fact, significantly influenced the former, especially concerning my understanding of the proper hermeneutical use of authority. Often, my interpretation of a teaching event depended upon a rereading (and a rewriting) of an earlier chapter.

Chapter Three, which is in many ways pivotal to my understanding of the possibilities of a hermeneutical pedagogy, was originally meant to be a typical review of the prevailing educational literature that is apropos to my subject. But as I studied the literature, I realized that both my reading of hermeneutical philosophy and my practical experiments with a hermeneutically guided pedagogy differed in important ways, for example, from the thinking and activity of those process educators associated with the Humanities Curriculum Project. This chapter turned out to be most useful in highlighting those differences and thus providing a clear basis for future discussion.

Although my general goal was to establish a useful pedagogical application for the basic principles of philosophical (speculative) hermeneutics, these initial trials, as it turned out, were specifically influenced by the need to explore the issue of authority in a teaching process influenced by hermeneutical philosophy. This issue was clearly raised by comparison with the pedagogical practices of the Humanities Curriculum Project that was discussed in the preceding chapter. It was upon re-examining my

initial field notes that I saw this as a *leit motif* of the narrated experience that was emerging from my experiments in hermeneutical pedagogy. My present interpretation, therefore, both influenced and was influenced by the critique presented in Chapter Three.

The central problem of authority also involved two related issues. First, would a text-centered curriculum unduly undermine the students' autonomy as learners? Secondly, would the hermeneutical process of interpreting texts lead to changes in their self-understanding? Concerning the latter, students were told that they could expect their basic values to be sometimes challenged by the historically conditioned subject matter about which the text was written.

Chapter Four was largely researched after the first three chapters. It not only provides a general review of the hermeneutical literature but establishes a useful check, albiet in hindsight, on my more experimental work. One of the specific issues raised by this extended reading is the problem of open-mindedness. This is touched upon in the second section of my concluding chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EFFECTS OF HERMENEUTICAL PHILOSOPHY ON A HIGH

SCHOOL DISCUSSION GROUP

In this chapter I will explore the proper role of the teacher in a curriculum based on hermeneutical principles of interpretive discourse by examining responses from a seminar I conducted with six students from a local high school. These students volunteered to participate in this seminar after being told that it would be based on hermeneutical philosophy and the text chosen for discussion would be *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, which was written at the beginning of the last half of the nineteenth century but readily speaks to the contemporary reader. The time between the writing of this book and the present era is not so great as to require too much specialization in order to overcome its alien character. It has just enough unfamiliarity to provide a creative encounter for the reader of the present era, and its influence on the present explains its status as a traditionary text.

This is a book with which I am familiar, having taught it to high school age students many times over the course of my teaching career. I am conversant with the history of the criticism that surrounds this text, and I have studied the historical period that gave rise to its conception as a novel. In relation to these students, therefore, I have sufficient knowledge to qualify, I believe, as an expert. That is, I know things by virtue of my experience with this text that students could not be expected to know. My role as "expert" sometimes required, for example, that I provide a context for students, one that might be needed for their understanding of ideas found within the novel and that would include the historical situation in which it had been conceived and subsequently discussed. For example, students might have little knowledge of the Russian Orthodox Church. Whenever I deemed it necessary, or upon request from

students, I would begin a discussion session - or even interrupt one in ad hoc fashion - in order to provide them with requisite information. It was also within the scope of my expertise to suggest books that would provide them with an introduction to the subject matter.

In these several ways, then, I digressed from the methods employed by the planners of the Humanities Curriculum Project. I also kept to a centrist's ideological orientation by appointing the text to be read by the seminar group - although the nature of the discussions themselves were set not so much by the students as by the subject matter (*Sache*), which derives from the potential unity of the text and the student's own background. Of course, the infusion of my own expertise concerning the novel created the risk of unduly influencing the students' thinking. However, I made every effort to be as fair to as many points of view as I could during the course of my formal presentations. My own contributions to group discussion, both as expert and discussant, were open to critical review by students. Anything I said was open to questioning. Students often challenged me.

Finally, I suggested to students that their lives should be open to change. I stressed Nietzsche's concept of self-overcoming and Gadamer's notion of *Bildung* and the effects of cultural knowledge on self-development. In keeping with my own "centrist" views, I explained that culture of whatever sort does not constitute an objectiveness in relation to their lives. They could just as well expect cultural knowledge to alter as it was applied to the circumstances of their lives, as they could expect to be changed themselves. But it was made clear to them that by taking part in these seminar discussions their self-identity might be questioned - not by me - but, rather, by the subject matter emanating from the horizon of the text as it was applied to their own present self-understanding.

Besides the general goal of gaining experience with a hermeneutically guided pedagogy, I also set the specific goal of experimenting with the development of what I conceived to be a dialogic journal, which would eventually be used to guide students

in the process of discussing and interpreting books. Because these students were essentially volunteers to this project, I could not, as it turned out, require written journal exercises. They agreed to attend seminar sessions and the lessons that accompanied them, to read *The Brothers Karamazov* as I assigned portions of it to read and discuss, and to follow the hermeneutical guidelines for dialogic interpretation. J. - all students are herein designated by the initial for their first name - used this opportunity to fulfill requirements for a senior year thesis. She made extensive journal entries that were submitted to me for response. Although these are the subject of the next chapter, the reader might want to note her participation in the seminar sessions in preparation for the written dialogue that developed between us in her journal and paralleled the spoken dialogue of classroom discussions.

Thus, the practical phase of my work began with the planning of a journal that students could use to guide their interpretive activities. Each section was planned to correspond to and test a basic idea or principle of hermeneutical understanding. For example, one section of the journal was reserved for prejudices, or as my students chose to call it, Preconditions. This section was separate from but closely related to others. A part entitled Traditions was meant to be a repository for insights which might first find their way into Preconditions.

A word needs to be said about the process that went into the writing of my narrative. I took notes during the discussion sessions. These notes were an attempt to record the events at hand but were also what I now describe as pre-interpretive. That is, as I recorded student conversations I was, at the same time, trying to understand the meaning of the phenomenon I was recording. This necessarily brought my own prejudgments into play. As I reread my notes - usually within a twenty-four hour period - this interpretive activity continued unabated. Moreover, I considered my notes to be a text that was subject to the same principles of hermeneutical interpretation as any other text. For example, as I came to a recognition of my own prejudices via this process, certain realizations entered into consciousness. To give a

specific and salient example, it became clear that my views on what I would come to designate as "authoritative expertise" had deeply influenced the pedagogical practice that I was trying to understand. This did not lead me to abandon my belief in its essential necessity to the interpretive process. But the simple recognition of this as prejudgment did cause me to become sensitive to the difference between hermeneutics as I understood it and the pedagogy of the Humanities Curriculum Project. This was not only a source of my critique of that project, but was also a warning to me - based on the skeptical point of view toward authority that "left-wing" educational tradition takes - that in the name of "authoritative expertise" I might inadvertently act in a truly authoritarian manner. This realization led me to comb my notes for evidence of such occurrences. These are noted in my narrative whenever found.

At my first meeting with the seminar students, I talked about hermeneutical criticism, especially emphasizing the role of dialogue in understanding. I explained that the basic format of the class was to be one of open discussion. It was made clear that I would generally introduce each session with a lesson on some facet of hermeneutical philosophy. Students were promised ample opportunity to ask questions about hermeneutics. These and other guidelines for the seminar were discussed. The scope of the guidelines was designed to be broad enough so that the students did not find themselves being forced to discuss something they deemed irrelevant to their own lives.

The students were - as I first conceived the division of labor - to be made responsible for reading and discussing *The Brothers Karamazov*. My own role would be to teach hermeneutics, conducting discussions when necessary, and, finally, recording results and drawing upon them for the knowledge I wanted to gain as a researcher. Perhaps with a little foresight, I might have anticipated how dubious this division of labor would be for students who were capable of contributing to an understanding of the hermeneutic process itself, based on their own practical experience with the ideas that I was introducing them to. They were, from the first

seminar, unwilling to limit the scope of their discussion to an interpretation of the novel. Practically speaking, the moment I introduced a hermeneutical idea to my students, that idea became part of the subject matter and as much the "object" of conversation as the novel itself.

I had involved myself, ineluctably, with six young people who not only wanted to read a book but also to think about their own lives - and that included a process that held out the promise of a relationship between reading and self-understanding. It is axiomatic in hermeneutical thinking that there is no standpoint outside of this process from which one can objectively observe it. All of us were bound together into a common project of self-understanding. I found that the novel spoke to me as it did to the students. I had read and discussed it before. Those memories effected my participation. The words of other students hung in my memory. The criticism I had read and writers with whom I had conversed came to mind and, thereby, entered the conversation. The students had lives. They had read other books. They too were thrown, as Heidegger says, into a world in which one's life is historically conditioned. They took standpoints from traditions. One brings oneself not only to the reading of a text, but to the wholeness of an interpretation that inescapably involves the fullness of a dialogue between members of a community of discourse.

Session 1

At the introductory meeting I had asked that everyone read at least Part One, Book I and Book II by the next session one week later. The first instance of student participation in applying the hermeneutical guidelines to the discussion occurred after I had talked with them concerning the "claims" made upon the reader by the text (Gadamer 1994, pp. 126-127, 359-362). I told them that they were to expect the text to address them in some way. In my notes I recorded that I used a tone of voice to emphasize that what is "said" by the text will seem important. I asked if anything anyone had read so far had made such a claim. Two students, J. and W., thought their

reading had. Contrary to what I expected, they both deemed the experience to be negative, that is, in some sense they had been claimed by something they rejected or thought not to be true. J., sensing something else to be more important, wrote in her journal:

> Another thing that I would like to make sure you understand is my thought that one does not have to agree with something to have it make a claim. It is hard to explain. If the book brings up something that I haven't thought about before, it can effect me greatly even if I do not agree. It can make me think just the opposite, but it has effected me just as much as something I would agree with. It has made me think and has effected my life and the way I look at things. I don't understand why that would not be a claim. . . .

Specifically, J. and W. were impressed by the fact that the character Alyosha was described as having once been at a point in his young life where he could just as easily have become a believer as a nonbeliever.

Comment/Analysis

Although the students took this opportunity to learn a lesson about reading in general, they also insisted that the claim made by the text upon the reader - the importance of which Gadamer emphasizes - need not be one with which the reader immediately agrees, if at all. Whether this contradicts Gadamer's conception or not, I treated it as a "local clarification" of his general idea in deference to their insistence. I had never considered the negative quality of a claim in the way J. and W. said that they had experienced it. I had assumed that the text's claim would be, in its first manifestation, a "positive" one, which might be corrected, if necessary, by subsequent reading. J. and W. disagreed, and the ground rules of hermeneutic conversation required that their idea be given a fair hearing. Neither teachers nor writers of philosophical books are exempt from this rule. I did caution the students, however, that their idea might not be consistent with Gadamer's thought. Whatever the

outcome, this "clarification" seemed inconsequential in most cases.

I could have simply "settled" the issue by resorting to an argument from authority, by combing *Truth and Method*, for example, until I possibly found an answer to the question that was being posed. Can one be addressed by a claim one immediately disagrees with? An appeal to authority was one possible response to their insight. It's a possibility that I do not think ought to be rejected, but I am uncomfortable with it as a general practice of comprehension.

I said to J., who was most interested in this issue, that through such a "negative" claim a text might reveal a precondition, or prejudice, in her own thinking. Although I thought this was almost certain, I left it up to her to decide. Thereafter, I retained, in deference to the students' insight, the concession that one might be either negatively or positively addressed by a text. J. had tried to understand the idea as I had presented it, but having applied it to her own situation - which included the interpretation of a novel that promises self-understanding - she found that the idea needed to be adjusted according to her own experience. And finally, by submitting her insight to the seminar for consideration and discussion, she met the hermeneutical criterion for challenging any rule. Conversation is the ultimate sanction of any idea. J. and W. had listened to my interpretation of Gadamer's injunction respectfully before speaking their own mind. This was their right, and it was my duty to uphold that right even though I had not anticipated their conclusion.

If mistakes are made within the terms of the dialogue, the dialogic process - if its rules are carefully observed - provides for self-correction. If it is true that the subject matter (*Sache*) guides conversation, then no teacher can rightfully assume that he or she always knows best. That is an assumption that would be authoritarian and would necessarily assume, in the old Cartesian fashion, that truth is the creative product of an isolated, substantive consciousness emanating from individuals who are capable of knowing what is true without having to discuss it with anyone else. This assumption distorts hermeneutical conversation and sets an atmosphere of argumentation because

it stimulates the desire to impose what one already knows, or thinks one knows, onto a conversation, thereby circumventing understanding and abating new experience. I recognized that something as simple as a direction can turn out to be a disguised command, admitting no room for discussion. Had I insisted upon Gadamer's notion of a "claim" in a dogmatic fashion, the consequences were likely to have had a negative effect on future conversation between students and myself.

I do not consider the events that I am describing to be data in the scientific sense of the word. I was, in contrast to the tenets of the hypothetico-deductive method, deeply involved in the hermeneutical process of understanding. My own prejudices are a necessary and unavoidable part of this narrative. I tried to take note of shifts to new or modified positions compelled by the insights derived from my own expanding experience, keeping in mind that new and more adequate positions are still perspectives that are themselves subject to further review - by myself and my readers. As I reread my notes I was reminded of a character in a Forster novel who ventures "How do I know what I think until I see what I've said" (Hugo 1979, p. 4)? The reading of my notes - taken during these "field trials" - became an interpretive activity as they were transposed into this narrative.

This first critical challenge to my authority led to the distinction I have made concerning the difference between authoritarian and the "authoritative" use of expertise. My attitude toward authority has always been complex and perhaps contradictory. I have believed that students must be required at times to do things they would not normally do, and this requires authority. Yet, ultimately, students must make up their own minds as to what is important to their lives and what is not. This particular episode confirmed my belief that a hermeneutical philosophy could preserve the idea of "authoritative expertise", while, at the same time, negating the conception of an educational authority that dispenses the "right way of doing things".

Session 2

Because introductory lessons were not always immediately applicable to discussions, they are not always included as part of my narrative. When mentioned, it is done briefly enough to set a general relationship between the lesson and some facet of the ensuing discussion.

W. said that parts of the book are hard to understand, so she and E. had tried reading aloud to one another. This was intriguing in light of Gadamer's notion of writing as alienated speech:

> As we have said, all writing is a kind of alienated speech, and its signs need to be transformed back into speech and meaning. Because the meaning has undergone a kind of self-alienation through being written down, this transformation back is the real hermeneutic task. The meaning of what has been said is to be stated anew, simply on the basis of the words passed on by means of the written signs (Gadamer 1994, p. 393).

Comment/Analysis

Reading out loud to one another might provide the first step toward a discussion about any work of literature, especially if it is dialogue being read aloud. Bakhtin writes about the dialogic voices within the novel. Theoretically, these voices could be extended by anyone attempting an act of hermeneutical interpretation. The voices within the novel - as an aspect of the text itself - are part of an attempt to answer some underlying question to which the text is a proposed answer. This answer is often incomplete, suggestive, and never to be judged definitive. E. and W.'s reading aloud to one another suggested a gambit in an attempt to open up a fictional conversation that had begun in the second half of the nineteenth century and might then be extended to and developed by high school students in Morgantown, West Virginia, U.S.A., in the nineteen-nineties. This would be ultimately more than just a localized discussion about important religious and philosophical issues. Rather, it would comprise part of a greater conversation that extends from century to century, across linguistically

different cultures. It would not be bound to any one context. It would be a discussion begun in the past that still has relevance here and now, in its own projected future. This hypothetical conversation would concern a novel whose original essence was to become something else. Even such localized conversations, however humble in origin, promise a potentially universal experience. Gadamer, in the following passage, compares a work of art to a festival, which has its beginning in the past but is repeated thereafter.

> The dimension of time and its experience permits us to see the return of the festival only as something historical: something that is one and the same changes from time to time. But in fact a festival is not one and the same thing; it exists by being always something different. An entity that exists only in always being something else is temporal in a radical sense: it has its being in becoming (Gadamer 1994, p. 124).

It is conversation that brings about this change that is a novel's original essence. By reading aloud to one another, students would not necessarily repeat what is already written. The goal would be to set up a resonance between the original words of the text and the readers' extended understanding of those words. It is, of course, not to be assumed that the reader knows more about the subject matter than is included in the meaning that adheres to the text itself - no matter how erudite the reader might be - but rather that the reader experiences the topic differently, something that is a function of having an existence in a separate horizon of understanding. What one hopes to achieve is not a displacement of the original dialogue by one's own but its extension into one's own horizon of experience. The educated person is receptive to new experiences, a goal that gains efficacy through a creative relationship with texts written in the past.

. There must be a first step toward any creative synthesis, and reading aloud is a good place to begin. Later, with some hindsight, I was able to extract from this spontaneous student activity and find in it something unexpected. Having already

begun to plan a journal section on guided dialogues, I conceived of beginning the exercises by reading aloud dialogue indigenous to the text, to see if one couldn't coax a practical extension of the traditionary text into a student's present horizon of understanding. When I say an extended dialogue, I mean that new words and new ideas would emanate from the student interpreters concerning the subject matter introduced by the text. Literally, a new dialogue - but at the same time an extension of the original - would be conceived by the student.

Session 2 (Continued)

During this session, students asked for help to clear up references to Russian history with which they were not familiar. They were intrigued - almost astonished, as I noted - with "Ivan's Article" in Part One, Book I. The "article" is a highly complicated one that requires a rather broad context in order to provide anything beyond minimum comprehension. One has to know, for example, something about the Russian Orthodox Church, its history, its relationship to the Tzarist state, and, perhaps, something that contrasts it to Catholicism and the western understanding of the proper relationship between church and state. I stopped the seminar with their permission and provided them with as much information as I could, barring lengthy preparation.

Comment/Analysis

This illustrates another proper role for teachers, like myself, who believe - confirmed by hermeneutical principles of understanding - that "subject matter" is important and that, therefore, the time will come for students to settle down and listen to what someone with superior knowledge has to say. It also demonstrates that even within the parameters of process education, more formalized methods of instruction can be incorporated without any overall loss of the self-directedness that is so essential to the goals of process learning.

During the discussion that picked up again following my ad hoc lecture, students acknowledged their unfamiliarity with the idea of a universal church. It was incredible to them that as late as 1870, a character in a serious novel could advocate that any church should subsume the functions of the state without a derisive response from the narrator. The preconditions that constituted their own understanding were becoming apparent. Nothing from within their own experience had prepared them for this. Yet Gadamer says that the place for hermeneutical understanding is somewhere between the past and the present. The strangeness of a text, one written from an alien point of view, provides the tension that is necessary for expanding one's own horizon. The tenseness was certainly there. In part, they were repelled by the impracticability of the idea. They conceded that it might have once been more feasible than now. I noted how unexpected it was that they did not seem to question the unfairness of the idea to nonbelievers. Maybe that was just an oversight on their part. But yet this idea interested them, and perhaps it laid claim to their interests in some way, even though their own political tradition of understanding holds that church is a personal matter, and any other socio-political arrangement would be - and has always been - oppressive. I pondered that they might have been taken, if even for a moment, by some vague hope for human unity that derives from Christianity or some other universal condition that recognizes a connection between one's own self and something greater. Student discussions should stimulate ideas in the teacher that might legitimately come to influence him or her in either the role of discussant or expert. I can see no objection to pointing out to students the unrealized implications of what they say and write.

Session 2 (Continued)

J. went on to express her interest in Alyosha's conscious decision to live for immortality. The narrator of the text had commented that Alyosha could just as easily have been an atheist as a Christian. J., who expressed her own struggles with faith and

disbelief, said that it had not been that way for her. She said that she had tried to believe at crucial times in her life and could not. Again, she said that she had been claimed by something she could not believe. Afterwards, she made this entry in her journal concerning Alyosha:

> Alyosha is said to have chosen the path of God and could have easily gone the path of atheism. Before, I believed that no one had a choice. I certainly had none. Once I thought that there might be something other than the Christian form of God, I was unable to go back and simply believe. At times, I wanted to greatly, but no matter how I tried, it was impossible for me. I had never thought that a person could just as easily take one path as another. I guess, when one is young and has no set beliefs, one can go either way. Once an idea is set, though, I don't understand how it could change. I know that it is difficult for me to comprehend because it is so impossible for me. Anyway, this did spur an interest for Alyosha in me.

I wrote back to her on the margins of her journal:

> J. - Who can say what will happen? Our idiosyncrasies and that which is uniquely ourselves, from my experience, are hard to change. How much of that is really what we are? But our ideas do change and frequently. One trouble I have had is in running from one extreme to another - like a rat on a beam in a barn who can't get off. Some people have the gift of being able to hold on to old beliefs while accepting a broader understanding of them. You are starting with not believing, by having trouble believing. Maybe, that will always be part of you although I've seen a lifelong and almost militant atheist change to fundamentalism after a series of intermediate steps. Maybe your lack of belief will be enveloped by some broader context. First, maybe clarify, perhaps, through your explorations of this novel, just what it is you can't believe in. There are a lot of religious ideas floating around, not just Christianity. For example, most people who reject the notion of God start with the assumption that they have to reject an omnipotent deity. Would it make a difference to you if you conceived God as being less than perfect or not yet complete somehow? Try applying that to Ivan's experience. What if someone said to Ivan, "But God is not perfect"? Would that make a difference to what he says in the novel? Try establishing a dialogue relationship with him, if you want. If you want to continue discussing this with me, you could do it through

further journal entries or by bringing it up during seminar.

E. added to the discussion that he had become interested in the part of the novel ("Peasant Women Who Have Faith") where miracles are attributed to Father Zossima. He said that he saw them not as true miracles - he meant ones in which the laws of the physical universe are overturned - but more likely that Father Zossima was a kind of wise counselor, whose insight into human behavior made him seem to work miracles. I cautioned him, however, that Father Zossima did believe that God (not himself) could intervene in the natural process. I suggested to E. that a prejudice was evident here in the way he saw things. I took the opportunity to point out to him the notion that insight or light shed on one aspect of a thing often leaves something else behind in the shadows.

He wrote the following in his journal - in a section designated for Preconceptions:

> When Father Zossima spoke to members of the crowd at the monastery, they thanked him for his blessing. I did not consider what he did a blessing. It seems to me that what Father Zossima possesses is insight into human behavior more than a direct link to God. This was also evident in Zossima's quick evaluation of Fyodor Karamazov's character, which Fyodor considered to be a miracle. A preconception of mine that led me to this explanation is that I attribute logical reasoning over miracles for certain happenings such as this.

I wrote alongside these words in the margins of his journal - as was my usual practice - that basically repeated our discussion on the matter from seminar:

> E., this raises interesting questions. When light (insight) is shed on one thing, darkness falls on another. This has to do, I think, with preconditionings, as you have correctly seen, but in this way: where a believer (or nonbeliever!) would focus on the miracles - whether they happened or not - you have understood things from another perspective altogether. One standpoint does not necessarily preclude the other.

Comment/Analysis

Just a cursory glance at this dialogue shows that the text was beginning to make claims on their emerging interests. I saw this as a confirmation of Gadamer's contention that the horizon of the past is always operative in the present period. I warned myself, however, against dogmatic assumptions, even about hermeneutical philosophy. I also noted, at this time, that a fear I had previously entertained had not happened. Namely, that the conversation would go in competing directions because of disparities between journal entries and seminar conversations. What went on in the private journal entries did not distract from the conversational quality of the seminar discussion sessions, but rather complemented it. There was almost a seamless relationship between the two. The journal writing seemed to give students the opportunity to consider more carefully what was said during seminar.

After reading over the notes I took during this session, I noticed that the students needed some information on the relationship between socialism and Christianity. Father Paissy, in the chapter entitled "So Be It! So Be It!", asks of the character Miusov if he took them (the monks at a Russian Orthodox monastery) for socialists. The students had asked me to explain this statement. I briefly commented, but in looking back, I was not satisfied with my explanation. If it is the role of the teacher to supply such information, it is also his or her responsibility not to impose any particular interpretive point of view. This leads into a tough dilemma from a pedagogical standpoint. When students need to know something, whether they get the information from their immediate teacher or from someone else, it is bound to come with an interpretive slant. This is axiomatic. I reminded myself once again to make sure that they understood this. So as I prepared a more considered response to their query, I was careful to question myself about the prejudices that underlie my own understanding. In this situation these needed to be pointed out and made the explicit subject of discussion if necessary.

Session 3

I began this session with an explanation of historic Christianity - with the hypothesis that it has provided socialism with its basic ideas - but shorn of a belief in God. I stressed in my short presentation that both socialism and Christianity share a profound commitment to human equality. I told them that later on in the book Father Zossima says that the rich will someday ask their servants to sit at their tables and eat with them. I also reminded them of Christ's advice to the rich young man who wanted to follow Him: that Christ told him to take what he had, sell it, give the money to the poor, and only then follow Him. When the rich young man could not do that, he turned away from Christ sorrowfully. This precipitated Christ's trenchant comment that "It is easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven". I explained that these insights represented my own values coming to light and that someone with a different set of prejudgments might understand things differently. I emphasized that there was nothing else in the historic past as likely to have prepared the way for socialism as Christianity itself. Both, for example, presume a linear view of history, an eschatology, etc.

Comment/Analysis

My immediate purpose was to provide a context of understanding for a part of the dialogue that had claimed these students' attention. I wanted to integrate a broader context into the classroom discussion, which had for a short while centered on a question one character in the novel had asked another: "Do you take us for socialists"? the monk, Father Paissy, asks Miusov. In the novel, before Miusov has a chance to answer or explain himself, there is an interruption in the story line. However inadvertent on Dostoyevsky's part, this provides an opportunity for future readers to pick up where an incompleted dialogue leaves off. Future readers of the novel (these students are future readers) who ask about the meaning of what these two characters have already said to one another, raise a question that will be partly influenced by the

context of the novel and partly by a framework of understanding that comes from their own era. What had happened in Dostoyevsky's era that made such a question possible? Why does Miusov tell his little story about the police officer who told him that the French police most feared revolutionaries who remained Christians? Does the story apply, after all, to the monks at the monasteries? It is, in fact, told by a man who despite education and travel is presented as something of a fool. Surely we are not to take his question seriously. But although the narrator has not led the reader to take Miusov's statement at face value, Father Paissy has indeed opened himself up for being presumed a socialist. And Father Zossima, the morally normative character in the novel from Dostoyevsky's own point of view, confirms Miusov's suspicions. An excellent lesson in interpretive understanding is given here. Students learned not to assume that just because a character is not taken seriously by other characters - and possibly not by the author himself - that we too should dismiss him as unimportant. All along Miusov has clamored for some real attention from the other characters, and they have consistently ignored him. But these students, a century later, think to pay closer and more serious attention to his words. He gets his attention finally from student-interpreters who notice some importance in what he says. Perhaps it took an intervening century for the insight they now have to mature. I began to realize how important it is to point out to students the ever present possibilities that are available to them for having original insights.

Hermeneutics often requires that an interpreter delve beneath the surface of any text in order to find the question(s) for which the text is a proposed answer. All presentations are, in effect, texts that are spoken aloud. After listening to a presentation, students should be invited to discuss with the presenter the possible meaning of his or her ideas, beliefs, and values. Sometimes in this way, students may be stimulated to ask original questions about the subject matter that were not anticipated. Their interpretation of the subject matter may very well be influenced by the point of view of the presenter. But based on hermeneutical principles of inquiry,

their interpretive activity should also include the opportunity to accept, reject, or modify the presenter's point of view.

Therefore, a presentation as a mode of communication is tantamount to any other kind of text. It invites interpretation. But when a presentation is directed toward young people, it should include an acceptable level of objectiveness, i.e., fairness whereby the presenter is aware of the prejudices that make-up his or her own position *vis a vis* the subject matter and makes those prejudices known to the listeners. There is, therefore, a difference between presentation as understood within the hermeneutical tradition and lecturing as a profession of belief.

Also, if students don't respond to the presentation with their own insights - as was the case in this incident - then it is entirely appropriate to suggest the kinds of questions they might have thought to ask. For example: Would there have been a historic need for Marxism and other socialist variants if the commitment to social equality had not been lost when some Christian churches became allied with governments, ruling classes, and the status quo in general? Or, was Marx unfair when he said that "Religion is the opiate of the people"? These kinds of questions would be meant to stimulate discourse or, at least, to suggest the kinds of questions that can be asked of the subject matter. In ordinary educational parlance, they are meant to model or shape student behavior. Despite the objectionable behaviorist tone of that statement, I believe that providing examples of this sort is welcomed by students. Teachers need to show students what is possible - a basic pedagogical goal from any perspective. Such guided inquiry also provides students with the opportunity to consider what prejudices underlie even hypothetical questions.

Guided inquiry, however, should never take the place of self-directed student involvement with the text. Self-initiated student effort should always take precedence, unless it is egregiously misdirected. Students have the right to make mistakes, which is just another way of saying that they have the right to speculate. The hermeneuticist's goal, after all, is for students to achieve an increased capacity to experience life, not

just to acquire knowledge, per se.

What was most important at this juncture of the session, however, was that the students took it upon themselves to request that I supply them with contextual information. A possibility for understanding grew spontaneously from the interpretive activity of young people. These students, however, were not in possession of the information necessary to construct a context sufficiently broad to understand the issues raised by their reading. They required expertise from some source, whether it was from me or elsewhere. These are complex matters. If one opts for a hermeneutically guided pedagogy, authoritative expertise is needed to help students piece together past contexts as well as present traditions of understanding.

Students cannot be left to their present level of cultural knowledge in order to gain an expanded experience of life. If that were so, there would be no need for culture - or culture as it is understood by hermeneutic philosophy. Gadamer writes, "Whoever abandons himself to his particularity is *ungebildet* (unformed)". It ought to be a goal of humanistic education to get students "to turn their gaze from themselves" (Gadamer 1994, p. 12). When these students asked me to help provide a broader context for their understanding of this passage, they were, whether they knew it or not, seeking to turn away from the ubiquitous temptation to adopt a purely subjective explanation to what is at hand. My goal as a teacher who propounds a hermeneutically influenced pedagogy was to help them avoid the trap of subjectivism. By connecting to something larger than themselves, they have taken the first step toward overcoming their present limitations. It ought to become a truism of hermeneutically based learning that understanding does not occur in a vacuum. It requires that those who would try to understand anything must borrow from the storehouse of cultural experience.

I have tried, so far, to keep pedagogical matters and subject matter closely aligned. My purpose has been to show the interrelationship between the two. What one teaches and how one allows the learning process to unfold are so interrelated that they can only be artificially separated. A teacher who conducts lessons within the parameters of

the hermeneutical tradition cannot stand apart from some involvement with the subject matter. Consider the students' interest in the part of text concerning Miusov and Father Paissy. Any attempts that the students made to extend this particular piece of dialogue into their own self-understanding had to take into consideration the nature of the original conversation. Any attempt that I made to help students do this required more than a technical skill with encouraging proper discussion conduct. I had to have familiarity with the subject matter itself in order to facilitate conversation. This was an important theoretical yield emanating from my experience with Session 3.

In summarizing the pedagogical implications of what had happened up to this point in the seminar, the reader is invited to return to my brief remarks at the beginning of Chapter Two on ideology and education where I adopted the distinctive definition of left and right made by Silvan Tomkins. My suggestion that hermeneutical philosophy is a naturally centrist position has been, I think, confirmed in the foregoing case. The students' own experience with the text, that is their interest in a specific dialogue, was not impeded by the need for a more informed approach to the subject matter. Most importantly, the students saw the need for more information and requested that it come in the most convenient method possible: that I present information on the issue under consideration.

At least four sections of the hermeneutic journal had been suggested by the end of Session 3: Preconditions, Traditions, Claims, and Dialogue Extension.

Session 4

This session was interrupted at first by W. who got almost hysterical during part of the discussion. Issues raised by discussing *The Brothers Karamazov* almost always elicit student comments about their own experience with religion. W. fixed on some personal experience she had had with Catholicism - something about having to go to church with her dogmatic grandmother. She was concerned about some of her relatives who did not, she said, try to see all sides of a situation because of their own

narrow religious viewpoints. I responded to her by mentioning that we live in a time that has inherited both pros and cons concerning religious belief, but this idea got mixed up with her personal problems once again. At one point she asked, in what I thought was a surprising and unwarranted defensive tone, if I thought she was a "teeny-bopper" because of her hair style? I was, at this point, nonplused by her disconnected remarks.

Comment/Analysis

Whenever one begins the process of self-understanding with young people, this sort of thing can happen. Sometimes it can be dealt with by patience on the part of the teacher. This patience would also be required of fellow students. One is advised by those influenced by behaviorist psychology - which includes most teachers in the United States - not to reinforce the unwanted behavior. W.'s personal digression disrupted the discussion. What she was talking about did not seem relevant. Common sense dictated that something had to be done to divert her from a disrupting course. This gave me, however, an unexpected opportunity to think about how the goals of a hermeneutically guided inquiry might require an entirely different response.

I considered that even the most subtle reinforcement - being positive about anything she says that is acceptable in order to shape her behavior appropriately - might still have the effect of excluding her from the conversation because it would circumvent her stated concerns made in the presence of the group. Negative reinforcers are more honest, get the job done quicker, but have the same undesirable outcome. The student gets pushed away from a potential part in the conversation.

Since I am not a psychologist, this seemed beyond anything I could hope to cope with appropriately. How, I wondered, could one manage a psychological approach to hermeneutics? How could I put W.'s outbursts into the framework of hermeneutic thinking? Of course, the idiosyncratic part of her outburst had to be put aside in the end. That was axiomatic. I do not mean to say that there is no such thing as a personal

psychological response to the world. Such a response can be - should be - brought into the domain of a shared language of experience with others if it is to be part of a collectively interpreted process of understanding. Her "complaints", those not insuperably idiosyncratic, would have to be subsumed by a more universal context of understanding in order to become a constructive part of the discussion, which, after all, centers on the issues raised by reading a text. Our main purpose here was to interpret literature in a way that allowed for the personal development of the student.

Was W.'s "hysterical" interruption of the discussion simply the result of not being able to connect her experiences to anything beyond her own subjective personality? Might her complaint about dogmatic relatives be somehow put into a larger perspective that included the text and the issues raised by its interpretation? Some psychological problems might ultimately be problems of language or its dysfunction, specifically, the failure to connect one's most personal and subjective responses to a broader world, to something larger and more inclusive that could be readily understood by others. Since language is the bearer of tradition, perhaps what she said could be channeled into a tradition of understanding.

My long range plan for W. was to get her to connect, if possible, her very personal complaints to the historical culture being made available through this interpretive project with *The Brothers Karamazov*. After all, her "complaints" had been raised during a discussion about this text.

Session 4 (Continued)

W. suddenly expressed - her moods were mercurial and sometimes shifted almost without any transition - an interest in Grigory and Marfa, characters whose relationship is discussed in Book III, Section I. Her statement was more orthodox from an interpretive perspective and more easily incorporated into the discourse. At the time, I was relieved by the opportunity to divert her to a more manageable concern. She said that Grigory was an oppressive person, using "chauvinist" to

describe him, but she also noted that Marfa was presented by the narrator as the stronger of the couple. The text, it seemed, did not live up to her initial expectations. The projected meaning from the text itself can be too easily dismissed or overlooked altogether if the student does not learn to pay careful attention to the words that comprise the narrative. In this case she remained open to them long enough for the language of the text to disclose the world to her in a new way.

Comment/Analysis

W.'s comments had brought me to the practical conversational problem of contextualism as it is discussed in Chapter One. While reviewing my notes after this particular session, I remembered and noted an incident at my university where the idea of contextualism was raised to justify an interdisciplinary approach to the study of art history. Contextualism was offered as a common sense approach to interpretive understanding. Nothing could be more reasonable, it was suggested, than to understand a work of art from within the context that cradled its inception. But the most obvious objection was not even raised: What is the relationship - if any - between the context of a past era and one's own present historical situation? If the past exists apart from everything that we have experienced, how can we really know it at all? Is it really only a matter for the professional antiquarian? Is history just a hobby after all? The dilemma Nietzsche expounded in "Untimely Meditations" is hard to get around (Hoy 1978, p. 133-136). He feared that in order to study the past objectively, one must necessarily abandon one's present frame of reference. Only in that way, he thought, could one possibly know what might really have happened in the past. The same is true of a work of art. The chasm of time that separates us from the works of art of the past seems to be an insuperable one. If we don't recognize this, we run the risk of imposing our own particular context on another era's works of art.

The obverse, Nietzsche thought, was, of course, just as troubling. If all contexts are equally separate, then the present era is as hermetically sealed as any other. We can

expect little or no insight from the past in trying to comprehend our own era. This would imply that each generation would have to begin culture all over again. But our skepticism about the relevance of the past is never so extreme. Why? Because when we read books the past automatically becomes operative in the present time through the historically effected consciousness of the reader (Gadamer 1994).

I concluded that W. might not be justified in imposing a twentieth century feminist philosophy onto a nineteenth century novel. But she could be directed to consider that issues raised in the past might be more applicable to her own era and its special framework of understanding than to the past era in which they originated. Grigory may be the boss. The narrator tells us that Marfa recognized his spiritual superiority, which was grounded in stubbornness as much as it was in anything else. But the narrator also tells us that she is smarter. The situation is described this way in the novel:

> Marfa Ignatyevna was by no means foolish; she was probably, indeed, cleverer than her husband, or, at least, more prudent than he in worldly affairs, and yet she had given into him in everything without question or complaint since her marriage, and respected him for his spiritual superiority. . . . He had never beaten her but once, and then only slightly. . . . Grigory saw how his wife danced, and, an hour later, at home in their cottage he gave her a lesson, pulling her hair a little. But there it ended: the beating was never repeated, and Marfa Ignatyevna gave up dancing (Dostoyevsky n.d., p. 97-98).

How then might W. understand this passage? Is she stuck with trying to impose a contemporary understanding on it - one not wrong in itself by any means but anachronistic? Or, must she simply put aside her initial anger at Grigory's oppressiveness, content herself with Marfa being smarter, and end by realizing that, after all, it was a long time ago?

These are the kinds of questions upon which a hermeneutical pedagogy must be based. These questions derive from student attempts to enter, as it were, into a conversation with texts that may - or may not - speak to the present age. In Russia

during the latter part of the nineteenth century, the "woman's question" was being discussed in radical student circles (Yarmolinsky 1986, p. 122-123). And there were other women characters in the novel itself who might shed light on the questions that W. might possibly ask about Grigory and Marfa's relationship. All the subject matter necessary for a broader context - and inter-era dialogue - was available in this case. It was only a matter of pointing W.'s attention in that direction, while keeping in mind that instruction is designed wherever possible to promote dialogic understanding.

There was still the problem of W.'s idiosyncratic interests. She would, throughout subsequent sessions, become an example of dealing with purely subjective interpretations, especially those mixed with psychological motives not properly part of the interpretive process. With W., I learned that it was best to include other students in the conversations I had with her during seminar. She was less defensive with them, and often they were more able than I was to see through her excitable temperament into issues that did yield to hermeneutical principles of application. W.'s personal relationships, after all, were not unique. Experience would lead me to believe that many, if not all, personal problems could be connected to larger more universal concerns. Her problem seemed to be one of alienation. The specific form that her self-exploration had taken was inappropriate to the goals of the seminar - unless her personal life could find connection to something not limited to idiosyncratic expression. The idiosyncratic can be understood as that which has not been (or could not be, in extreme cases) communicated to the meaningful understanding of others. As a teacher it now seemed my responsibility to help her make such a connection to one tradition or another of literature that would help her to expand upon a sense of self-understanding already at work.

Psychologist Ira Progoff describes alienated persons as feeling "separated from social and spiritual structures that ordinarily support individuals in the conduct of their lives" (Progoff 1975, p.247). Frameworks that provide beliefs, values, ideas, and even feelings emanate from social and spiritual structures to influence self-understanding in

both negative and positive ways. It is part of the duties of a teacher working within a hermeneutical tradition of pedagogy to guide students toward some increased level of self-understanding. That is the hermeneutical goal, rather than the acquisition of knowledge, per se. This presupposes that the student is not what he or she should be. Everyone, teachers and students alike, throughout their lives should be striving to overcome their own limitations through what Stenhouse refers to as the acquisition of culture. This often requires the proper intervention of teachers who are expert in these matters.

Session 5

I began this session with a presentation on traditions as a basic hermeneutical idea. It was the first time I had ever tried to explain this idea to young students in a formal setting. I struggled to make it comprehensible. It was difficult to find any solid ground. Finally, I opened the topic to questions, and from there on things got much better.

J. asked if we were conditioned by tradition, how did we come by the freedom to change those same traditions? It may be that the word "conditioned" has taken on the connotations of its extensive use in behaviorist psychology. Since its use is common in hermeneutic literature, it needs to be reclaimed from the specialized meaning that is the result of the influence of behaviorism.

To answer J.'s question, I began with the idea of time as the basis of human experience. Because there is a past, we have an inheritance from that past. People before us have spoken to one another, and because we have the results of those conversations recorded as texts, these extend down through time to us. Each text, I went on to say, is an answer to some underlying question. It is not the only answer, nor is it the final one. The text means different things to different ages, but there is an accumulation of meaning over time. Conversations become historically effected, as Gadamer argues.

I specifically addressed J.'s question about how one could change a tradition that

one was part of by explaining that as long as there has been recorded conversations, people have been able to both affirm and criticize the traditions that condition their thinking. Our experience with language has shown us that we can alter the traditions that have conditioned or affected our lives. I used the experience with race relations in America to show how the negative aspects of a tradition - which are partly carried along through time by the language of texts - can indeed be talked about and changed, hopefully for the better.

The discussion, curiously enough, switched back to W. who had grown up partially within a tradition of Roman Catholicism about which she is, at best, ambivalent in her feelings. W. told the group that she would never raise her children in what she deemed to be the narrow and restrictive traditions of Catholic Christianity. But today she wanted to tell a story, an Irish folk tale, which was part of her family lore. She did so in an attempt to illustrate the answer to a problem raised by J. and E.- both of whom disagreed with a statement I had made during this conversation concerning language. I had said that without language we would not be fully human. J. had objected saying, "What if one somehow never acquires language because they're deaf? Are they not human? I replied that this was a special case. I mentioned Helen Keller, but before I could develop my example, W. began her story. She only remembered part of it, but it went something like this: There was a man both deaf and mute (not blind) who committed a murder. The community (Irish) debated how responsible he should be for what he had done, since without language he may never have come into the knowledge of right and wrong. . . . The students waited for my response. I asked the group, apropos of W.'s folk tale, to consider if the knowledge of right and wrong could come about through pure reason, detached somehow from a historically viable community. I told them that this seemed to be a relevant question when one considered Ivan Karamazov, a character whose basic contact with other people came through the ideas he professed, most of which were highly abstract and seemed to have been developed in relative isolation. Thus, he had come to ask the question, a

favorite of twentieth century existentialism, "If God does not exist, is all permitted"? I suggested that morality is learned through community, which entails tradition and the language that carries tradition through time. W. seemed to agree with me through the telling of her story.

The topics had jumped around on this day and were perhaps too unfocused. It was difficult for a while to control their questions long enough to have a directed discussion. Another of W.'s diatribes against her dogmatic relatives erupted who, according to W., answer questions of the sort normally asked in these discussions by saying, "It's in the Bible". This gave me an opportunity to bring some focus to the conversation and led to the explanation of one's relationship to tradition that I had been looking for at the beginning of my introductory presentation.

I thought of an example from Martin Luther's explanation of the Sixth Commandment in his Lutheran catechism that might provide an opportunity to get W. beyond her usual negative and unproductive response to her Irish-Catholic background. I hoped to connect the problem of dogmatism to broader issues, while simultaneously reapproaching J.'s query about how one changes a tradition that initially influences one's understanding.

Martin Luther interpreted the proscriptive commandment, "Thou shalt not commitment adultery" of the Hebrew scripture in a way that emphasized what is the morally positive thing to do, rather than what is only morally proscribed. In doing so, he had to first uncover the question underlying the Biblical text: Why should one not commit adultery? Perhaps the Hebrews only thought in terms of thou shall not, but the historical distance or time from the one event (Exodus, Moses on Mt. Sinai, etc.) to the other (Protestant Reformation) had allowed the original question/answer to mature. One refrained from adultery in order to cherish and honor one's partner, Luther said. The original insight, which was bound to the ancient Jewish cultural situation, had matured. It was not only a difference in emphasis but a qualitative change deriving from a new interpretive experience.

To forward the example, I read from the Lutheran catechism: "You shall not commit adultery". Luther asks, "What does this mean"? He answers himself by writing, "We should fear and love God, and so we should lead a chaste and pure life in word and deed, each one loving and honoring his wife or her husband" (Luther quoted in Cunningham & Reich, 1998, p. 114). This interpretation was not explicit in the Bible. But it is a plausible rendering. If the text is an answer to a question, it is the essence of some texts to mature under the influence of new questions. Since it is impossible for the words themselves to change, we have interpretation. New questions imply original responses. Texts are heuristic by their very nature.

I asked W. to imagine that her dogmatic relatives were actually present in the seminar. Imagine asking them, I suggested - using the example from Martin Luther's catechism - why God would have put his commandment in proscriptive form. What was God's reason? Might she not realistically imagine them answering that God knew that without the proscriptive quality to the original commandment there might have been no opportunity at a later date for human couples to honor and cherish one another? The original text could be interpreted as having been a minimum injunction. "Is that scenario totally inconceivable"? I asked W. Or, at least, could she not picture them having to consider more thoughtfully the issue they usually answered with an insouciant, "It's in the Bible"?

Let's assume, I went on to tell W., that her relatives have begun to listen to this example. We would remind them that the New Testament came after the Hebrew scriptures, but before the Protestant reform movements had given Martin Luther the opportunity to interpret the Ten Commandments from the vantage point of his own time. And, of course, he was not going to repeat even the Word of God from the Old Testament without the interpretive insights of the New Testament. These words, as I had tried to establish, would have to be understood in a slightly different way, not because Martin Luther was perverse, but because his own context of understanding was different from that of the ancient Hebrews. His was an expanded opportunity to

understand. The original question underlying the Biblical text might also have been about how families could become the cohesive social unit of the Israeli nation. The time and experience that has been required to set these old questions in a new light does not necessarily vitiate the words of the commandment, but just casts them into the context of a larger understanding.

I asked W. if she now thought that her recalcitrant relatives would be able to understand the potential interpretation plays in understanding even the Bible? I finished by advising that there really was room for her to speak with them about many matters if she would only set reasonable expectations. W. did not explicitly agree, but she seemed willing to consider my remonstrance.

Comment/Analysis

Note: It was fortuitous that I had a copy of the Lutheran catechism available for this lesson. On this particular day I had lectured my college classes on the Protestant Reformation and had an appropriate reading on hand in a textbook.

The two episodes involving W. were encouraging. I was able to find a way to suggest that in the case of her dogmatic relatives there was a way to relate to them that might circumvent what she perceived as narrow-mindedness. I hoped to put W. into a relationship with her own background that was not purely personal. Her folk homily concerning the deaf murderer was the first real indication that what she thought of as her Irish heritage was more than the happenstance of her grandmother's Catholicism. Here was a folk story of sorts, extant, and still serving to convey the problematic nature of moral judgments. It was one that was removed interpretively from the Biblical injunction that inevitably influenced it. The ancient Hebrew tradition of justice has always been interpreted as "an eye for an eye", but this more modern "Irish" interpretation calls for a consideration of the individual circumstances that surround a murder. This illustrated the possibility of the fusion of two horizons from a hermeneutic point of view, but, more importantly, the relating of the folk tale marked

the beginning of more effective participation by W. in group discussion.

While looking over my notes on this session that concerned my remarks on time and inherited cultural experience, I thought of a wonderful and poignant letter written by Machiavelli, during his exile from Florence, that describes how he would put on his official's gown, retire to his library, and open up the ancient books so beloved by this thinker of the Renaissance. He tells with what great reverence he read them and asked of their authors questions by the light of his little candle. I now incorporate the following part of his letter to Francesco Vettori when I am trying to make this point with students:

> . . . I put on regal and curial robes; and dressed in a more appropriate
> manner I enter into ancient courts of ancient men and am welcomed by
> them kindly, and there I taste the food that alone is mine, and for which
> I was born; and there I am not ashamed to speak to them, to ask them
> the reason for their actions; and they, in their humanity, answer me . . .
> I become completely part of them" (Machiavelli 1979, p. 69).

Session 6

At the outset of this discussion, J. offered that there were as many points of view as there were people. I used this as an opportunity to discuss the issue of subjectivism and related ideas such as the role tradition plays in understanding. During the student response to my remarks on subjectivism, I mentioned briefly to J., in specific, that radical subjectivism is nihilistic from a hermeneutic point of view. If everything is the same, if one judgment no better than another, then there is no value at all. Nothing is raised above anything else.

Both E. and J. thought that it was obvious that values come from tradition. They seemed to think, however, that because traditions change, sometimes at a very rapid pace, we need something to hold onto. Where that something might come from, E. did not say. Later, I hoped that he might discuss this in his journal. I left him a written note in his journal reminding him of what he had said, suggesting that he might want

to try to develop his initial insight. I pointed out that the German philosopher Nietzsche was concerned that before the new value makers emerge, the old values lose their ability to effect us. He feared nihilism. Giving E. this information was my attempt to show him that a great philosopher shared his concerns. (I know now that students need a place in their journals to take daily notes that can be developed later on in privacy.)

J. grew interested once again in the statement that I had made concerning language. In an earlier session, I had mentioned that language is the carrier of tradition. Moreover, that without language we would not have a world as such. "Language", as Gadamer says, in a dramatic reversal of what we usually think, "speaks us" (Gadamer 1994, p. 463). She inquired about this again and asked to discuss, with the group's approval, the short story, *The Lottery*, by Shirley Jackson. The story illustrates, she thought, how traditions persist without language and the thinking associated with language. In a journal entry she made following this session, J. wrote, prefacing her remarks about language with an explanation about her own questioning attitude:

> I really like the idea that the questions are everlasting while the answers come and go. Books give answers to think about, but often I find that the questions are what really makes me think. I have always believed that it is the questions, not the answers that matter. Also, I'd like to say that when I disagree with something, it doesn't truly mean that I just like to try to find flaws in an idea instead of merely accepting it. I'm still kind of unsure about the language thing. I sometimes think without using words in my mind. Isn't that what dreams are based on? Pictures to convey thought instead of language. And what about paintings that can convey more about humanity than words alone? But I see your point as well . . . I think. I'd like to talk about it more and try to understand it better. I found the idea about the circular pattern between self and tradition to be a great truism. I like and believe that we are the sum of our experiences. That our parents, friends and the society we live in shapes who we are and what we believe.

A dialogue was beginning to form up between her and me that was both part of the

seminar sessions and separate from those sessions. This gave J. a chance to work both publicly and privately with her ideas. I wrote the following response in her journal:

> I said . . . that language makes up our world - and hence ourselves. But remember that we are not helplessly conditioned by this world. In turn we effect the world. That's the circular pattern between self and tradition that you believe to be true. There is no escape from the effects of language, but language always entails dialogue like the one we are having now. As long as someone bothers to talk we have an amount of freedom commensurate with any one speech act. You say that dreams and pictures convey a truth apart from language. I agree to a certain extent. But when we try to understand a painting or dream, do we not use words? You mentioned *The Lottery*. Is this not a story (words) about the frightening lack of language among the people of the town? Isn't that a possible interpretation of the story? Here, I want to interrupt myself. I should not be trying to convince you that what I believe is true. Perhaps I have caught myself practicing old habits of a teacher. Some of my sentences are declarative statements and are designed to convince. What I should be doing is simply talking to you. I wish I could think instead of good (sincere) questions to ask you about your objections to what I have said about language. Maybe I could have started out differently?
>
> Let me begin again by telling you that I am in love with the novels of Charles Dickens. They are an abiding passion with me. Someone has said that instead of thinking that he created his immortal characters - Uriah Heep, Mr. Pickwick, Fagin - one should think that they created him. That is, in some sense, there is something essential in the personality of the writer we call Charles Dickens that comes from his characters. He used language, but perhaps in a greater sense, language used him. What do you think"?

Comment/Analysis

It may be that to be fair to a student's own judgment, I will have to develop a section of the journal for misgivings concerning the hermeneutic process and hermeneutical ideas. I cannot expect them to accept hermeneutics without question. Their misgivings were always a part of the dialogue. All that can be fairly asked of students is that they try out the prescriptions given them. The teacher must keep an

open discussion at all times, even concerning the basic ideas of hermeneutical philosophy. My discussions with J. often contained her basic concerns with certain hermeneutical ideas. The role of the expert teacher in a hermeneutically guided curriculum must be carefully and openly defined in order to prevent teachers from adopting a conventional authoritarian posture in relationship to the interpretive process that is being shown to students. It is quite possible to even require students to experiment with a hermeneutical process of understanding, without forcing the expostulates of that process upon them. The key to this is in giving them the opportunity to discuss and criticize hermeneutics as they try out the process.

Session 7

I began this session with a presentation on *Bildung* and the acquisition of culture as it is understood from a hermeneutical point of view. This is the best way to present the idea of universals. The issue of personalism, or subjectivism, continued to go unresolved. In my presentation I drew upon the following quotes from Gadamer's *Truth and Method* - reading them aloud when appropriate:

-- In this sphere he [humankind] is not, by nature, what he shall be (Gadamer, 1994, p. 12).

-- Whoever abandons himself to his particularity is *ungebildet* ("unformed"). . . He cannot turn his gaze from himself towards something universal, from which his own particular being is determined (Gadamer 1994, p. 12).

-- To recognize oneself in other being (Gadamer 1994, p. 13).

-- To recognize one's own in the alien . . . (Gadamer 1994, p. 14).

C. said he liked the idea of the other as the alien we return to. I responded by suggesting that literate beings are, in part, what they are because of a written past. One reads a book written in the nineteenth century, for instance, and although it is unfamiliar in some ways, there may be something recognizable in it. It is both alien and

familiar at the same time. When learning is most optimal one returns to one's own horizon of understanding and incorporates the unfamiliar in a new and original way. I incorporated these ideas into my presentation looking for something that might especially interest the students.

Influenced by C.'s statement of interest, I decided to elaborate on the idea of *Bildung*. I began by discussing Nietzsche's ideas about self-overcoming. This particular discussion has never failed to interest students throughout my years as a teacher. It is a cornerstone of a hermeneutically inspired curriculum that students recognize the need to acquire cultural experience for their own sake. As they learn, it should become apparent to them that they are "unformed". And it is through a relationship with the cultural experience which-is-other-than-themselves that they will be able to grow into new and more satisfying life experiences.

These young people were capable of understanding and appreciating complex ideas. I discussed Nietzsche's *Human, All To Human* and his *ubermensch* idea. One or two of them had German, and they understood the phrases I put on the blackboard. They listened carefully, asked a few questions, and seemed fully satisfied with the short discussion that followed the presentation on Nietzsche.

We went on to discuss *The Brothers Karamazov*. C., who is articulate but not very consistent in attending seminar, began by observing that Fyodor Karamazov said at one point, "Oh, yes, I was lying" but continues to lie in the most obvious way. C. thought that this character doesn't see into himself. I directed the students back to the text itself. The conversation needed to focus on the specifics of the text for awhile. I referred them to the following lengthy and psychologically complex paragraph:

> Above all, don't lie to yourself. The man who lies to himself and listens
> to his own lie comes to such a pass that he cannot distinguish the truth
> within him, or around him, and so loses all respect for himself and for
> others. And having no respect he ceases to love, and in order to occupy
> and distract himself without love he gives way to passions and coarse
> pleasures, and sinks to bestiality in his vices, all from continued lying to

other men and to himself. The man who lies to himself can be more easily offended than any one. You know it is sometimes very pleasant to take offense, isn't it? A man may know that nobody has insulted him, but that he has invented the insult for himself, has lied and exaggerated to make it picturesque, has caught at a word and made a mountain out of a molehill - he knows that himself, yet he will be the first to take offense, and will revel in his resentment till he feels great pleasure in it, and so pass to genuine vindictiveness. But get up, sit down, I beg you. All this, too, is deceitful posturing (Dostoyevsky n.d., p.43).

I asked them to explain this paragraph - about lying to oneself, taking offense, enjoying taking offense, developing resentment, and finally passing into vindictiveness. M.. said that all this is simply an opportunity to act on resentment and to be a buffoon. I asked why Fyodor would want to act like a buffoon in the first place? What would be his motives? Why in this world of ours do people like to take offense? They were not able to get a grip on this question. Once again I judged that their conversation needed to be expanded beyond their relatively limited understanding of ideas.

Since I had discussed Nietzsche already this session, I entered his idea of resentment into the conversation (Kaufmann 1968, p. 371-78). This notion has a convenient contemporary culmination in a book by Robert Solomon, *The Passions*. I have found it to be useful in the past because it is a book that tends to stimulate conversation. But the risk one runs by introducing an idea from "outside" the interpretative process is not inconsequential. There is always the chance that an extraneous idea can overwhelm and distort the process of interpretation by forcing it upon unwilling students. I had to be careful to distinguish between ideas that would be useful to the conversation and ideas that I simply liked.

There is, however, a line of interpretation, a tradition that runs from Dostoyevsky to Nietzsche and from Nietzsche to Robert Solomon. Nietzsche said that Dostoyevsky is the only psychologist from whom he had ever learned anything (Kaufmann 1968, p. 340). Solomon's analysis of resentment is replete with Nietzschean insights. So I felt confident that I could introduce certain ideas by relying on the maxim that any idea

that is introduced into an interpretive process best derives from the tradition to which the text contributes.

The tradition to which I am referring revolves around the single word or concept - "resentment". Solomon argues that resentment is used, as all emotions are, in order to correct what are perceived as imbalances in status relationships between individuals and different groups of people. People who are resentful have a secret that they scarcely admit even to themselves. One resents someone else primarily because one suspects that the other is superior in some important way. Since it is hardly possible to admit this to oneself, not without further shock to an already fragile ego, the emotion gets disguised. It poses as something else, perhaps a more palatable emotion. Anger, indignation, or contempt are effective substitutes (Solomon 1976, pp. 351-358). The individual then devises a strategy built around an emotion that can be used to correct the psychological equilibrium that is upset when one perceives or imagines oneself to be somehow inferior. Contempt, for example, is an easy emotion to manipulate.

I directed students to think about the resentful people with whom they are acquainted. Some people, I suggested, are easily threatened by those who are well read or formally educated. It disturbs them, for example, when other people use polysyllabic words or espouse abstract ideas. They are not likely to admit that they are upset because someone else knows more or is better educated. So instead, the resentful person develops anger toward them because they "show off", for instance. Teenage students who are inherently interested in status relationships are usually eager to investigate this idea. The elder Karamazov says the following about himself:

> When you said just now [he is speaking to Farther Zossima], 'Don't be so ashamed of yourself for that is at the root of it all', you pierced right through me by that remark, and read me to the core. Indeed, I always feel when I meet people that I am lower than all, and that they all take me for a buffoon. So I say, 'Let me really play the buffoon. I am not afraid of your opinion, for you are every one of you worse than I am'.

> That is why I am a buffoon. It is from shame, great elder, from shame;
> ... (Dostoyevsky n.d., p. 42).

He proves himself to be a master at playing the game of buffoonery. He has, in fact, just finished making a fool out of an old enemy in this way. I pointed this out to the students after explaining Solomon's ideas about the uses to which emotions are sometimes put.

They readily adopted this idea and put it to use immediately. C. said that Fyodor demeaned himself in the process of playing the buffoon. I agreed but added that he, nevertheless, ended up on an equal level, at least, with his adversaries - not below them. J. had first thought that Fyodor was simply insecure. She now thought that by making the statement that he is better than everyone Fyodor shows his own insecurity. M. said that J. is probably right because he noticed that Fyodor acted to raise himself above them. J. noticed how contemptuous people are toward Fyodor, so this must mean that they think him to be beneath themselves.

J. went on to say that Fyodor thought that it was necessary to explain himself - that he was somehow just playing at being a buffoon. She explained that he was conscious of what he was doing but despite that couldn't help himself. It had become a habit - an idea Father Zossima confirms. She believed too that he could bring others' status down or himself up through his buffoonery. C. said that it goes back to the "traditional thing"- that we are not taught how to solve such emotional dilemmas in an efficient way. J. interposed with the insight that in bringing others down, you bring yourself down in the process. I asked if it was possible to raise yourself without lowering others. J. quickly answered that you could do so by raising yourself up by raising other people up at the same time. J. seemed to be connecting to the moral structure of the novel in my opinion. Looking back, I noticed how in this particular discussion the students as conversants were beginning to identify with the problems present in the novel - notice that C. said that usually "we are not taught how to solve such dilemmas". He implied that the traditions usually available to us don't teach us to solve

such problems.

The students thought of an analogy: that improving one's moral behavior is like running a race. I objected - using my rights as a participant - to say that in a race someone loses. J. referred to the text and Father Zossima's exposition on "active love". I reminded C. that he had said that our traditions don't teach us how to do these kinds of things. We looked at a section in the text where father Zossima lectures Madame Hohlakov on active love. We read this section aloud. The conversation began to lag behind its own possibilities, so I thought to tell a story apropos to what was being discussed and then asked students for their thoughts.

The story I was interested in telling - I chose it for its personal quality - was about an exasperating uncle of mine who without fail made a great deal of show in paying for restaurant bills. The practice eventually became an issue with me, and I obstinately put an end to it, perhaps hurting my uncle's feelings in the process. What should I have done? I turned it over to the students. C. asked about the family tradition. I told him that the family wisdom (I used the word wisdom to distance my response from the word tradition) was to accept that he was that way, and he didn't mean any harm. No one else in the family seemed to mind but me. Why? It was a consensus among the seminar that I felt put down. That is, in Solomon's terms, I felt my status to be lowered.

Family wisdom toward a local problem is not, of course, the same thing as an interpretive tradition, so in order to see if this was an issue capable of universalization I asked students to take the underlying issue - resentment - and see if they could put it into a larger context. The group discussed this with me, digging through *The Brothers Karamazov* in order to find what Father Zossima might have advised. I certainly felt that I learned something about my own motives. There was a general agreement that I could have responded to my uncle with humbleness and love. But, instead, I allowed myself to be threatened, and that got in the way of a better response. All of us were beginning to recognize ourselves through a discourse based on this traditionary text.

All of us began to see its relevancy.

Comment/Analysis

Through the story I told about my uncle, I wanted to put the discussion of rather mundane events into a larger context, if possible. Without the universalization that a larger context provides, autobiographical details are forgotten when a particular life comes to an end. The personal must be communicable. It should be capable of expanding beyond the flotsam of a particular life. Personally based stories provide relevance.

I noted that the nature of any discussion is not absolutely in the hands of either student or teacher. The subject matter itself is a guiding force in the discussion. "Conversation", Gadamer says, "has a spirit of its own" (Gadamer 1994, p. 383). And that spirit is guided by the subject matter (*Sache*) itself. Gadamer refers to this as the "norm of the subject matter" (Gadamer 1994, p. 394) and clarifies his meaning by writing: "Understanding is drawn on entirely by the subject matter" (Gadamer 1994, p. 394). Therefore, it is incumbent on the teacher to have an expertise with the subject matter in order to facilitate the process of interpretive understanding. Students, in turn, should be introduced to as many facets of the subject matter as is practical.

Since these students had little familiarity with *The Brothers Karamazov*, I felt it necessary to direct on occasion their attention to certain parts of the text. There were issues raised in the text itself that were relevant to questions that they had formed concerning their own lives. This is also justified by the practical need to get students started or focused, and to give to inchoate discussions a push toward fuller development. The teacher who is properly trained in the hermeneutical principles of conversation will not force his or her own point of view onto students, knowing that to be a mistake that subverts the interpretive basis of hermeneutical pedagogy.

This lesson also confirmed that the introduction of concepts from extraneous sources (the Nietzschean idea of resentment, for example) do not necessarily

overwhelm the original discussion, but, in fact, can help students to gain insight into the broader issues surrounding the text. Ideas that originate from outside the conversation must be absorbed, however, by the processes operating from intrinsic positions within the conversation. Ideas must simply be considered as representations of voices no more important than the indigenous voices of student interpreters.

Finally, these seminar sessions always had an air of good humor. Students often kidded during the most serious discussions. There was little show of egotism to mar the fellowship of conversation. J., at one point, criticized her own idea that Fyodor was a buffoon because he was merely insecure, in light of M.'s observation that Fyodor's buffoonery was aggressive and calculated to hurt others. I did caution her about giving up on her own ideas too easily, but realized, no sooner having said this, that J. did not give up her own ideas without a good reason and that my admonishment was patronizing.

These sessions came to a close abruptly. The school year wound down and I was too soon out of time. J. did submit to me a lengthy journal that I found to be of immense interest. That journal is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

J.'s JOURNAL

J.'s Journal developed out of her participation in the seminar discussion group that formed the subject of my narrative account in the last chapter. Her journal unfolded parallel in time to those discussions. She submitted the journal in its finished form in order to fulfill requirements for a senior honors project. She was the only student in the seminar who had this obligation. A few of the other students gave me some desultory written dialogue, but it was mostly disappointing in both quality and quantity.

Periodically, J. would submit to me sections of her journal to read and respond to. I would return the journal, and she would read my comments, using them to further her self-understanding as she saw fit. There was no mandatory obligation for her to modify her thinking and writing according to my comments. Sometimes, however, she returned to comments I had previously made, and in her final typed version included a direct response. Although this is usually evident from the context, I have transposed such passages into bold type so that they stand out. Her freedom to respond or not was a practical matter - students often respond badly to imperious criticism - but also had a theoretical basis originating with the interpretive principles of hermeneutical philosophy. One should not unduly interfere with what a student thinks - as opposed to how they choose to express themselves, a real consideration under circumstances where students are learning how to write compositions, for example - for fear of interfering with their self-generated capacity to experience the world in new and meaningful ways.

This does not mean that I advocate that teachers should not criticize students' ideas, beliefs, values, or even their feelings, but rather that such criticism cannot

effectively originate from a position of commanding authority. Criticism, I have found, can be made effective through an "authoritative expertise", which is best expressed as part of an open dialogic encounter between the expert and the student, who should be treated as only temporarily having less expertise with the subject matter. In part, criticism proved necessary because of the complexity of the subject matter emanating from *The Brothers Karamazov*. Without a teacher already familiar with the subject matter that surrounds the historically conditioned understanding of this text, gains in self-understanding would have been limited by the lack of cultural knowledge J. initially brought to the interpretive process of learning.

My purpose in the practical sections of this thesis as a whole was more heuristic than analytical. I wanted to know what a hermeneutically inspired educational experience might "look like". I was, of course, guided by presuppositions that derived from my own interpretive understanding of hermeneutical philosophy. I went into this experience with J. and others believing that a dialogic understanding with texts, and those who talk with one another about texts, is of primary importance to a student's self-development. But the notion of "authoritative expertise" derived from my experiments *a posteriori*. This idea, in fact, represents a serious adjustment of my attitude toward authority in general.

My primary instructional role in this endeavor was to advise J. about the hermeneutical process of interpretive understanding. To further a dialogic encounter with the text, I designed sections of a journal based on Gadamer's precepts of understanding. J. used these to guide her journal entries. She was free to be critical of these guidelines, as long as she "tried them on" as the basis of her criticism.

My participation in J.'s interpretive project was an active one at times. When deemed necessary, I served as a subject matter expert under the same conditions that applied to the seminar group as a whole. In short, I was bound to maintain as much objectivity as possible, sometimes disseminating points of view that would conflict with my own personal values. I began to envision a type of presentation that had as its

essential basis a built in objectivity that requires the presenter to discuss as many sides of an issue or topic as possible. This was an important theoretical yield from the experience I had with the seminar as a whole.

My evaluation of J.'s experience with journal writing validates the idea of a text-centered curriculum. The text as a central feature of the curriculum holds out to the student the possibility of a connection to that-which-is-other-than the student. This is what is generally understood in hermeneutical thinking as a universalization of experience, which finds resonance in Stenhouse's notion of the acquisition of culture. Specifically, this allows for an application of the ideas, feelings, values, and beliefs resident in the text to the emerging life experience of the student. Importantly, the text militates against idiosyncrasy by connecting the student to universals - by which I also mean points of view that prove communicable and potentially shareable among conversants.

Finally, it was through my work with J. that I began to conceptualize specific parts of the dialogic journal. Her writing was encompassed by sections entitled Traditions, Preconditions, Claims, Discussions, and Conversation with a Character.

Throughout the following, my interpolations are entered in italicized print just as they appear in J.'s actual journal. She submitted her journal in this way, but the words in italics are mine. It should be noted that my interaction with her is not what I would call a fully developed dialogic relationship. I modified my entries into her journal, limiting their scope and significance for fear of overly influencing her self-understanding. Sections in this chapter with the heading, "Comment/Analysis", are, as in the last chapter, my thoughts submitted retrospectively. While written in a terse, straightforward style, these sections are meant to elucidate the main features of what I conceive of as a hermeneutical pedagogy. At times my comments represent an experimentation with ideas previously conceived. At other times my remarks originate with an act of discovery, i.e., something J. had written gave me a new insight into the possibilities of a hermeneutically inspired educational project. Sometimes I speculate

on a teaching strategy that at the time I did not think to explore or simply did not have the time to explore. A straight line following these comments indicates where J.'s work begins again.

The reader should be aware that J.'s work was submitted as a journal, not a piece of formal writing. Structure, grammar, even spelling were of secondary importance at most. J. began her journal work with the following overview of hermeneutical philosophy.

Overview of Hermeneutics

The philosophy of hermeneutics became popular in the nineteenth century, though it is thought to have been based on the earlier yet similar philosophy of Biblical (textual) exegesis. This philosophy came about during the reformation of the Catholic church when the concept of individual interpretation took form. These ideas of personal interpretation and interaction with a text grew to become the basis of hermeneutics. The word "hermeneutics" itself is derived from the base word Hermes, the Greek messenger. In turn, the philosophy is considered the interpretation of the messages that we receive through our lives.

Hermeneutics is based on the ideas of an individual interacting with the environment. Everyone is effected and shaped by the tradition of the society in which he or she lives. Traditions are considered any experience which is passed from one generation to the next through language, and, although one is created by these traditions, one is also able to alter them through interpretation, allowing civilization to change and grow.

In hermeneutics, these ideas are most often applied to the text. We take our beliefs, which are formed from the traditions we experience, to the text. They shape how we understand and interpret the book, and the book, in turn, shapes and changes our beliefs. Yet in order to interpret and understand it, we must not impose ourselves on it. The "I - Thou" belief must be implemented, and the text must be treated with

respect. One must listen to what it says. If we stop listening, we become tangled up in our own subjectivity, and stop growing.

Hermeneutics considers the text to be a timeless conversation with which we interact. It consists of a group of answers and the questions that lie beneath them. Although the answers sometimes become outdated, the questions are eternal. When we interact with these questions, we form our own questions or answers that relate to our own lives. It is all part of the "Great Conversation", a name often given to all of philosophy.

Comment/Analysis

I was satisfied with J.'s explanation of hermeneutics. It was derived from the short lectures I delivered as part of the seminar sessions. Evidently, she had understood the basic hermeneutical ideas sufficiently enough to begin the writing process. As it turned out, these ideas, although difficult to comprehend in their full complexity, could be condensed and presented to students in a succinct and efficacious manner. Typically, I would pick out an idea - prejudices, for example - explain it in simple and economic language, and allow for a question and answer period. This is what I often refer to as the "lesson". A discussion of *The Brothers Karamazov* would always follow. There was no requirement that the discussion be limited to the topic of the lesson. I looked for the opportunity to point out examples of how these ideas might apply to the interpretive process, but the students were free to determine the basic nature of the discussion.

Introduction to the Journal

In the following journal, the ideas of hermeneutics are applied to the book *Brothers Karamazov*. The text is viewed as a conversation of traditions that can be applied to any point in history. We apply the book to our lives and the experiences we

have had, and, in doing so, we interpret and expand the text to our own personal existence.

The journal is divided into the following sections: Traditions, Preconditions, Claims, Discussion, and Conversations with Characters. Traditions are the experiences that have shaped my beliefs, preconditions being these beliefs. The preconceptions that I hold are vitally important in reading and understanding the text. They are the basis of my interpretations, and can both help and hinder my ability to understand. In identifying them, I am able to see how exactly they effect my reading, and, in turn, I can control them making sure that I do not impose them on the book but, instead, allow the book to apply itself to them. Claims are the ideas brought up by the book which have effected and changed my preconditions and beliefs. The discussion section includes my thoughts in response to what others have said about the book, as well as thoughts about hermeneutics itself. These discussions primarily took place with Mr. Taft, Eric McCorde, and Whitney Buchman, although I also talked with Chris Huy, Nick Guyman, Paul Showalter, Nurry Miller, and Ed French [Note: Except for myself these are J.'s peers]. Discussions are vitally important in understanding the text as well. They are what allow us to discern between the subjective, the random events of our life that cannot be applied to all of humanity, and the objective, the ideas that others are able to identify with and can be applied to the whole of humanity. The last section is interacting with the text in the most direct form; actually speaking to a character. To do this, one drops into the state between sleep and awake, and envisions the character. Keeping the whole of the character's life in mind, we are then able to understand him or her to the fullest extent. The next step is to actually carry on a conversation, asking questions of the text.

In all, the journal helped me tremendously in understanding the text and how I interact with it. I became more aware of my influence on the book, and the book's influence on me.

Comment/Analysis

The general outline of the dialogic journal, as I initially conceived it, is included in J.'s introduction. J. also provided a heartening synopsis of her own concerning the hermeneutic process of interpretation. Her last sentence, in particular, summons up the nature of the interpretive process as I meant for it to be understood.

Traditions

I will first discuss what it is exactly that I think traditions are (and preconceptions since they are so closely linked). Then I will explain what my personal traditions are and how they have effected my reading.

Traditions are the basis of preconditions and beliefs that make up oneself, as well as all of society. *I think of preconditions making up traditions.* All of humanity is based on traditions. They are not simply eating turkey for Thanksgiving or going to Black Water Falls every summer. No, traditions are everything that give us our point of view. Every minute action that takes place around us shapes us. And, in turn, that action took place because of the actions that shaped it.

I think each of us has a resistance to tradition to varying extents. I use the word resistance because tradition is a type of assimilation into our society. I don't know what determines how much resistance we have. Perhaps the need for human companionship and love makes us give in more. I, for one, am very susceptible. I sometimes step back and look at myself and see how weak I am. I see how little of me is really me. *Heidegger speaks of the authentic and inauthentic existence.* I sponge up the traditions and points of view of my friends unconsciously to "fit in". Their beliefs become mine. I know that it is the basis of our very existence to pick up traditions and make them our own, but when they shift as easily as mine I get angry. *This is interesting. To pick out the traditions and make them our own. Do you mean ones that were not once part of our lives, or are we somehow alienated from what we*

are part of? I wrote this poem once to describe my weakness (however, it may be more appropriately applied to preconditions than to the traditions that form them).

Chameleon

I shine with brilliance
yet none see me
i blend with the red leaves
i cower upon
all i know
is how to hide
i am a chameleon

wherever i go i hide
i merge with my surroundings
i give a little cry
i change so quickly
one shade to the next

once i changed
i disobeyed my mind
and angry red i turned
with shades of gray behind
yet a predator saw me
and picked my bones with hate

o how i wish i could stand that pain
the pain of self
but no
i merge once again
the stone on which i sit
none can see me
none can know me
none can hurt me

if there were no stone to sit upon
no shady leaf to hide beneath
would i be invisible?
or would i be at all ...

i hate myself, though there is no me to hate
i search deep to find me
yet there is none but those behind me

Part of me hates my shifting beliefs, yet another part of me loves it. I can see other people's stances better; I can understand them by thinking what they think. Yet at the same time, I have some beliefs that I hold firm on. Why some and not others? *I have had the same struggle. I have come to try not rejecting one belief in favor of another, but rather to have new beliefs that incorporate, at least in part, the old.*

Comment/Analysis

Journals are a place where people are meant to think and write tentatively. In journal work, especially, students should actually be encouraged to speculate. Some critics might object by saying that students don't have enough knowledge to make speculation profitable. But I would respond by pointing out that their speculation will run up against the reality of a text, which acts as a check on uninhibited thinking. The same is true with an interlocutor. What distinguishes a dialogic journal is that, unlike private journals, it is meant to be read by someone else. The other person, as a fellow conversant, also sets limits to the writer's thinking by the simple fact of just being there as an embodiment of a willingness to listen and discuss. Once a dialogue is entered into one is no longer working in solitude. One's thoughts will be modified to one degree or another by the very nature of conversational understanding. These checks make objectivity - i.e., the fairness that considers the truth claims of other points of view - possible in the interpretive process. Two roles had to be juggled. I was an "expert" in so far as I had superior knowledge of the hermeneutical process of interpretation and of the subject matter, but I was also a conversant or a partner in J.'s dialogue. It was admittedly sometimes difficult to separate these roles.

J. was beginning to identify certain problems and issues in her own life. As she read *The Brothers Karamazov* - or pondered hermeneutics - these issues would

hopefully become connected to the universal concerns that are contained in the cultural records of humankind. In other words, others have pondered similar problems. But she might someday be stimulated to think these issues through in original ways that will add to the sum total of our cultural storehouse of experience. That is a possibility that is present in her mature development at least. But for the present, she had begun to search for ways that would help her contend with the unwanted influences that compelled her to "fit in". She believed that she should be standing on her own. That was how she defined the problem, and I felt obliged to respect her insights even though I might have different thoughts on the matter. There are poetic traditions, in specific, that she would need to be introduced to.

The presence of a poem in J.'s journal was a pleasant surprise. The object of a hermeneutical dialogue is ultimately self-development. The way this is accomplished is to change oneself by taking advantage of the opportunity to alter one's beliefs, thoughts, and values. J. had identified something dissatisfying concerning her own life that she wanted to change. Her poem potentially became an effective part of the process of change in her life. Although poetry can be the result of a deeply personal experience, it is also a properly transpersonal element in a tradition of understanding that reaches beyond the particulars of any one life. I considered referring J. to those traditions of poetry that would be relevant to her own concerns, but time and her other interests did not permit this to happen.

My response to J. was much too timid. This is an example of a situation in which I did not exercise my proper role as an expert in challenging J.'s parochial use of the idea of tradition. After initially seeming to basically understand this central hermeneutical idea, she confused it with much more "localized" and "personal" experience (G. Edwards, personal communication, May 22, 2000). She was concerned, as people of her age sometimes are, with establishing a personal identity. She felt that she too easily adjusted to the social pressures around her. She conformed, as her metaphor of the chameleon shows, to forces that she would rather be

independent of. It was easy, however, to see how she might confuse these influences with the idea of a tradition. Indeed, the flotsam and jetsam of everyday life bear resemblance to what Gadamer considers prejudices - less formal, more nebulous. And prejudices (what J. insists on calling preconceptions or preconditions) are the building blocks of traditionary understanding. I also considered that even very personal experience can be incorporated into a broader tradition of self-understanding.

I had explained to J. - via a presentation that I had made to the seminar group as a whole - that although traditions of understanding condition the way we experience the world they do not determine it. We can affect the traditions that encompass our being in the world. This brings us to a second observation concerning J.'s understanding of traditions: she thought in terms of having a tradition rather being involved with a tradition (G. Edwards, personal communication, May 22, 2000). Figuratively speaking, we are to our traditions as a fish is to water. We exist intellectually within a tradition of understanding. Traditions give us an intellectual and emotional life. J.'s thinking probably represented a Cartesian conception of the self that would have been advisable to have discussed with her at this time. Although it must be remembered that J. would retain full right to reject a more postmodern self-understanding, even if this would radically alter her relationship to any tradition of understanding. J. may also have confused one's capacity to change or modify the traditions that grant one understanding with the qualities one associates with any object that can be fixed. That is, if something can be fixed, it would usually be supposed that it can also be possessed. Entering into this line of thinking with her would have led to difficult ontological arguments that J. may not have been prepared for. Besides, the time I had available for the seminar was limited. In these comments I can sometimes, unfortunately, only suggest what I might have done.

I did mention to J. that Heidegger distinguished between the authentic and inauthentic self. I had hoped that she would ask me about this but she didn't. Belatedly, I found a quote from Martin Heidegger that would have fitted perfectly in

this situation and would have influenced me to intervene in her thinking about this matter without being unduly obtrusive:

> We take pleasure . . . as they take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as they see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as they shrink back. . . . Everyone is the other, and no one is himself. The 'they', which supplies the answer to the 'who' of everyday Dasein, is the 'nobody' to whom every Dasein has already surrendered itself in being-among-one-another (Heidegger 1962, p.164, 165-166).

It would have been a short step to establish a feasible tie-in between an authentic sense of self and the role of tradition in self-understanding. J.'s poem was valuable for its depiction of the conflict between the one sense of self and the other. Her description of the emotional states that accompany this conflict was compelling. Some relief from what I believe was a sincere expression of angst might have been achieved if J. had been able to situate herself within a tradition of understanding that is historically rooted. This could have provided her with a more generalized and stable way of looking at her world. When faced with localized pressures to conform, J. would have had the advantage of not having to rely on her own inner, subjective resources. She would have been supported by a framework of understanding that is itself authoritative.

Traditions (Continued)

Even those who say they are "nonconformists" are just conforming to a different part of our society and the traditions behind it. The only true nonconformists are people who are considered by society to be insane. What an interesting place it would be if there were no traditions. The self in the raw with nothing to base itself on...We would all be insane then. But no, we will always have traditions. We guard them so strictly. We send people to prison or even their death for committing acts that society

and, in turn, the traditions behind society label as "evil". Are they really evil? Only the one who commits the deed can decide that. And why have traditions instilled this sense of good and evil? To stop us from destroying ourselves? Is instinct the root of the seemingly so complex tradition that I always thought set us apart from animals? Perhaps there is more to it.

No two people share the same tradition. *Why not?* **The root can be the same, such as the Bible, yet everyone interprets it differently; therefore, no one holds the same exact traditions. I guess it is kind of the same as what you were saying about people interpreting** *The Brothers Karamazov* **in a totally different way than it was intended. In a way traditions are carried on through communication, and changes in tradition are carried out through MIScommunications (otherwise known as interpretations).** *But we can talk out our differences and hope, at least, to come to an agreement.*

I read an essay recently called "The Lottery" that involved traditions. It was about a town that stoned a person to death every year. No one questioned why it was done - a tradition or ritual. Now, my question is WHY did no one question it? I still don't understand what spurs the breaking of tradition, or in this case, the lack of breaking tradition. What spurs one to question?

Now that I have explained my thoughts about tradition, I will discuss some of my own traditions.

Comment/Analysis

J. mused, in a rather random fashion, on the relationship between nonconformity and evil. At one point she suggested that it would be interesting if there were no traditions. She sensed that the self would be a very different thing if it had "nothing to base itself on". This idea took her to a radical understanding of subjectivism. She coined a phrase to describe this: "self in the raw". But by talking this through, she came to a recognition that traditional influences are inescapable and necessary. The

freedom to speculate without worrying about right or wrong was paying off for her.

J. mentioned reading a short story, "The Lottery" by Katherine Mansfield. This was a reference to a class discussion about the nature of traditions. She and other students continued to question how it is that one can come to the point of questioning the traditions that condition our understanding in the first place. They seemed to think that if such traditions exist, they would determine what it is that we can understand.

J. made the statement that two people could not share the same tradition. I asked her why not? It seemed obvious to me that she was wrong. She was forced to rethink her statement in light of my objection. She went on to say that the "root" can be the same, but everyone interprets differently. This illustrated the need for authoritative expertise and the imperative that it operate judiciously and in a way that aids the student's thinking process rather than intrudes upon it.

J.'s remarks in this section were largely conventional ones. I could not expect her to transform her thinking into postmodernist terms and categories. She discussed issues like conformity and nonconformity. Her ideal was one of an independent personality, her own, either in league with others or opposed to them. The only acceptable goal that I could have set for her as a student - considering the self-imposed restrictions that I had set on my role as teacher/expert - would have been to ask her to consider the difference between a postmodernist sense of selfhood and the Cartesian, which seemed to be the one that she presently believed in. Hermenutical philosophy does, in fact, presuppose a sense of self-understanding that fundamentally distinguishes it from the Cartesian. It can be fairly argued that I erred in not bringing up this issue at this time. (I did, however, discuss with the seminar group as a whole Nietzsche's concept of self-overcoming. A short presentation on this subject occurred within a week of this entry in her journal. But that is not necessarily the same thing as a conception of self-understanding that finds realization within a specific tradition of understanding). This problem was compounded by my commitment to the principles of hermeneutical philosophy, which are, from J.'s point

of view, my ideas not her own and a principled position to respect J.'s autonomy as a learner. If I erred at this time, I am glad that I did so on the side of J.'s independence as a learner.

Through my presentation on Nietzsche I had tried to prepare J. to expect that she would change in some ways through the process of interpretive reading. This implied, I thought, a dynamic relationship with a tradition represented by the text one is reading. I had assumed that this would naturally occur whether the student was conscious of the process or not. But I did not specifically consider that self-development, which can occur within the confines of the Cartesian notion of self, is not the same thing as a postmodernist notion of self-understanding.

In light of this, it is interesting to consider that Heidegger did not view the authentic self as a necessary correction to an inauthentic experience of self. Moreover, his philosophy identifies the latter with Cartesianism. Ree writes:

> Inauthenticity was not an ethical defect of the weak-willed, but a necessary structure of our existence as self-interpreting entities who cannot help interpreting ourselves inappropriately: that is to say, in terms of the world (Ree 1999, p. 24).

J.'s conception may be incomplete, but it is not necessarily wrong. It may limit the effects of the interpretive process - from a hermeneutic point of view - insofar as that process is meant to incorporate her self-understanding within one traditional framework of understanding or another, but it will not abrogate, in my opinion, the overall effect of the process.

Traditions (Continued)

Tradition 1: The biggest problem I have had with Alyosha is his inability to question or doubt. It is a firmly held tradition in my family that one should always question. I think I attained it mostly from my father; he is a scientist. Questioning is

essential to his work. He was part of the whole hippie movement. But what started all of their questioning? History is so complex. Every tiny action contributed to the questioning. It is like the butterfly effect. A butterfly flaps its wings in Australia and causes a hurricane in Florida. Traditions are caused by a chaotic mass of all of the events on the timeline.

Tradition 2: My traditions and the preconditions that result from them dealing with religion greatly effect my reading. My mother is Catholic, yet is not a very strict one. My father is an atheist or maybe agnostic, my brother is an atheist, and my friends are Jewish, Bahai, Unitarian Universalist, Methodist, atheist, agnostic, or have created their own God. My neighbors are all extremely strong Christians, and I have been condemned to hell more than once. As you can see, I have quite a selection of traditions to choose from. Each belief has its flaws and merits. I have a little part of each that I believe. I like to hang with the Unitarian Universalists because they don't force you to think anything. I also read the *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-Tzu, (which I think is probably more of a philosophy than a religion), which effected and created some of my traditions as well. I really like the idea of the Tao itself. I do not think I practice this philosophy actively however. Many other books on religion have also added to my beliefs (though I have not yet read the Bible itself). They have been as influential as people to me. The interesting thing is that even though I may not believe in the God that the texts are based on, most of the ideas I can understand and believe just as easily.

Tradition 3: Another tradition that definitely effects the way I see the book is that I am an American. Because the book was written in Russia at the turn of the century, there are most likely countless subtleties that have passed right by me; I have very little understanding of the culture in which it took place. One thing that I'm sure I am unable to appreciate to its fullest is the distinction of class. This was mentioned several times, especially in connection to Father Zossima and Alyosha. When Father Zossima goes to speak to the people, he passes the rich up and goes to whoever was there first. I have

a feeling that his actions were more unusual than if it had happened in present day America. *Good point; but his tradition is Christian as well as Russian, one that derives from a joining of Christianity and Russian Nationalism. This is referred to as Slavophilism.* **From hints like these, I can make a pretty good guess that I am missing many other cultural subtleties.** *But this book passed into the western canon. It has influenced who we are. As foreign as it is, you still comprehend much of it. What I really notice about the American tradition of liberal democracy is that it emphasizes individualism. Everyone knows this but few think how pervasive and influential this is on our culture.*

On the other hand, I have realized that although the cultures differ, at the root of it all, people are just people. I spent 6 months in England when I was young, and 6 months in Belgium a year ago and learned that despite our differing customs, we all had the same basic hopes and dreams. It is the individual that really differs. However, because I was unable to recognize the outward signs of the culture, I was unable to understand the individuals as well as I could have. And so it is with the characters in *The Brothers Karamazov.*

Comment/Analysis

J. was interested in how she acquired the traditions of understanding that affect the way she thinks. She was subtle in her analysis, but I thought that she continued to be mistaken concerning her understanding of the hermeneutic conception of tradition. Nevertheless, only occasionally did I respond during these particular entries. At the time I thought that she needed the room to talk out her ideas without an interlocutor or an "expert" intervening prematurely.

My paramount concern: that J. was trying to reconstruct the traditions that affected the way she had been led to experience the world. If she did not fully grasp how people are situated within a tradition, it could be reapproached later on. For philosophy's sake, however, it can be mentioned that although we do not hold on to a

tradition as J. suggests, there is a sense in which we can participate in the modification of those traditions. This immediately raises the question of agency. Certainly J. had a strong sense of agency. Those who engage in the process of understanding the preconditions of a tradition in which they find themselves open up the possibility of changing facets of that tradition. Cognizance implies some degree of control. In Tradition 2, J. says, "Traditions are caused by a chaotic mass of all of the events on the timeline". Her use of the word "chaotic" implied that traditions are malleable. Besides there being an aspect of discovery in J.'s attempt to clarify her own traditions of understanding, there was also a characteristic of making or participating in the making of those traditions. Certainly she sensed that there is some degree of choice involved in the process of self-understanding.

Moreover, J.'s knowledge of her own condition, no matter how fragmentary, was a necessary starting point for any future understanding. Her empirical approach to self-understanding was not only unavoidable if her autonomy as a learner was to be preserved, but it also had precedence in Heidegger's analysis of understanding and interpretation. In the following, Heidegger is referring to the interpretation of a text, but his words apply equally well to the self as an object of study:

> When one is engaged in a particular concrete kind of interpretation . . .
> one likes to appeal [*beruft*] to what 'stands there', then one finds that
> what 'stands there' in the first instance is nothing other than the obvious
> undiscussed assumption [*Vormeinung*] of the person who does the
> interpreting (Heidegger 1962, p. 192).

J. was simply looking at the "forestructure" of her own interpretive understanding of life. She did not yet know how to put these together in order to form a proper tradition of understanding. She also did not know how to distinguish between prejudgments and what Heidegger calls "fancies and popular conceptions" (Heidegger 1962, p. 195). Furthermore, she did not yet understand how deeply our experiences permeate our self-understanding, but she had made a beginning by delineating and

subsequently inspecting aspects of her personal past. As a hermeneuticist, I believe that she will eventually find that she has been more subject to tradition's influence than it has been subject to herself as a self-directed agent of that tradition.

The "forestructures" of her experiential understanding will not remain the same. Her thoughts, ideas, feelings, and values have a future that is conditioned by past self-understanding but not determined by it. This is similar to what Heidegger deems a "projecting upon possibilities". (Heidegger 1962, p. 187). In another passage Heidegger writes:

> Entities within-the-world generally are projected upon the world - that is, upon a whole of significance, to whose reference-relations concern, as Being-in-the-world, has been tied up in advance (Heidegger 1962, p. 192).

It only remains for J. to see how deeply encompassing the world really can be. J. will at times experience, in the immediacy of her own consciousness, a kind of agency. This will always present itself as a possibility. She will like feeling that she is in charge of her own destiny. But ultimately, if the ontological tradition of understanding is more right than not, the "fore-structures" of her own experience will be projected from "within the world" onto a future that will disclose to her new possibilities of being. She will feel herself pulled along as an intellectual being whose essence it is to become something else. Tradition, with herself as a part of the whole of that tradition, will do the pulling.

The pedagogical issue concerning what I perceived as J.'s mistaken understanding is twofold. How should I have approached J. philosophically concerning her conception of tradition? This is easily answered. Since dialogue is at the heart of the hermeneutical process, all of its own presuppositions as a philosophy must be submitted, when required, to the imperative of conversational understanding. This is necessary for the sake of consistency. I could have talked it over with J. and respected her intellectual decision as a learner.

But if the philosophical question is relatively easy, the practical pedagogical question is more difficult. At what point should I have raised the issue with J.? Should I have brought it up immediately and run the risk of interfering with her "rights" as an autonomous learner? Is that not exactly what the designers of the Humanities Curriculum Project warned against: teachers imposing their own point of view? Or should I have waited and brought it up at a later time? This, of course, would delay J. having to deal with a crucial issue that was at the heart of her self-exploration.

At this point, I want to emphasize that I am not presenting my reader with an accomplished pedagogical practice. In fact, I did neither of the above. What was gained from this episode with J. was an awareness of a specific problem that challenged my own thinking about how a hermeneutically guided pedagogy should be conducted.

Preconditions

Something that effects me usually does so because of my preconceptions. The way I view things is based on my preconditions, and something that effects me changes the way I view things. Sometimes the new idea introduced breaks a precondition and creates a new one in my mind. On the other side, by either agreeing or disagreeing with an idea, it can strengthen and define the preconceptions I already have. I consider ideas that effect me in any of the preceding ways to be a claim on me.

I'll start with my preconditions on religion - they probably effect my reading most. I believe in the slim chance that the Christians got it totally right. I consciously try to force myself to keep this option open so that I may see that side of things - it is difficult. When someone says "God", however, I do not think of the Christian definition. I think of life, energy, nature, the Tao, love, hope, the spirit, belief, or humanity. If it is truly any or all of these, or if it exists at all, I have not yet decided. So when Father Zossima speaks of God, I relate it to one of these other definitions in

order to understand. His words may refer to Christianity, but they can easily be seen to refer to other things. Whether this hinders or helps my interpretation of the book I am not sure. I think it mostly just changes it some. Does it really matter what is behind the ideas? - it still can have the same meaning. *You are on to something very basic. The text is part of a dialogue. It speaks to you and you, in turn, speak back to it. It (the text) is also the answer to some question the author has asked of his world. . . . I follow Ivan and Alyosha as they talk. Another question occurs to me from what Dostoyevsky thought to ask: I ask, 'What if God were not considered perfect'? A new answer is then required.*

My mother is Catholic, though not a very strict one, and my father is an atheist or maybe agnostic, I'm never quite sure. Religion has always interested me because it's such a large part of humanity. I think that every religion has something to offer, and I believe in a part of all of those that I have encountered. I'm officially a Unitarian Universalist; not that that says anything about my views on God. It does, however, bring to mind another precondition that I had in relation to Alyosha. I believe in doubt. For me, as well as most U.U.'s the questions are more important than the answers. I think that to devote oneself to something unquestioningly as Alyosha did, limits the mind.

I do not believe that the system of the church taking the place of the state would work. I answered why in the claims section.

I do not think that one has to believe in immortality and God to have virtue.

I believe that doubt is a good thing. Therefore, I respect Alyosha's goodness but because he does not doubt (at least from what I have read so far) I wonder if he actually thinks about his belief. To doubt is a sin I guess, but without doubting, one's belief seems superficial. To doubt is to take the position of unbelief. Without knowing all sides of an issue, one cannot take a true stance. *Would Father Zossima condemn doubt in the same way the Christians you know do?*

I just read Ivan's statement about the suffering of children and of why God would

allow that to happen. It really ties into a preconception that I hold - How could God, our father, and the epitome of good and love condemn one of his children to hell or let us suffer in any way on earth? So my preconception that if God existed and fit the Christian definition, he would not condemn us to hell.

Everything you tell us about hermeneutics or anything else effects the way I see the text. It shifts my preconditions more than I would have thought.

Also, I think that by identifying my preconditions, I am able to see other points of view more easily. Although preconditions are the very basis of my interpretations, I think that in realizing what they are specifically, I am able to make sure that they do not blind me as much. *Yes it is meant to work that way.*

My preconditions on utopias are very strong. From my readings, I have learned that to have a utopia, a great deal must be given up, creating situations more appropriately named dystopias. Yet, although I have such negative thoughts towards these harmonies, I believe that it is still a possibility. In all of the utopias I have read about, it is a forced situation. Maybe if humanity evolves on it's own such a harmony would be plausible. *I've always had an ambivalent attitude toward utopias, also.*

Comment/Analysis

J.'s views on Christianity were skeptical. She noted her own doubts and stated, almost diffidently, that she drew on other traditions but Christianity in order to understand. There was, of course, the danger that she might force fit ideas by imposing a non-Christian understanding onto a Christian idea. It is quite acceptable, however, to weigh the non-Christian against the Christian. But at first she needed to comprehend Christianity from within its own framework of understanding. In other words, she should listen carefully to the intra-Christian dialogue that Father Zossima conducted with Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The rule is: first one must listen.

I thought that she was right when she said that Father Zossima's words "can refer to other things" - that is, to non-Christian ideas. But I felt that I should put her

observation into a hermeneutical perspective. Just how can his words refer to something else without distorting the words or the ideas behind his words? The issue, in part, goes to the heart of the arguments that surround the problem of authorial intentions. My comments to J., however, took another direction. Keeping didactically to a low key, I said to J., "Another question occurs to me other than what Dostoyevsky thought to ask". My purpose was to lead J. toward the principle of hermeneutical inquiry that involves the dialectical structure of dialogue. By entering into a dialogic relationship with a text (or a person) one asks questions, at the optimum level of creativity, that the text under consideration did not raise or could not raise because of the limitations of its horizon of understanding. (Hindsight leads me to believe that it would be useful to have succinct informational packets explaining basic hermeneutic ideas available to students, which could be referred to when needed).

Where J. was influenced by Taoism, I let her know that I am influenced by gnostic ideas, which would lead me to ask of Alyosha and Farther Zossima's dialogue, "What if God were not considered perfect"? My purpose in doing this was to show her, by personal example, that an interpreter cannot help but bring certain ideas into play while forwarding the process of understanding, even though it is better to understand the voice of the text - in this case the dialogue between Father Zossima and Alyosha - on its own terms before one joins what is said by the text to one's own concerns. I was trying to give J. a glimpse into my own experience with the hermeneutic process in order to clarify the ins and outs of that mode of inquiry.

J. is greatly concerned with the issue of doubt. This is part of the subject matter that forms a bridge between herself and this text. She has had the experience of being condemned by Christians for her doubt. Alyosha - in contrast to herself - represents someone who simply believes. She is fascinated by him, but critical of his lack of doubt at the same time. "I believe in doubt", she says. Doubting is the subject of an experience that she has had. I simply asked her if Father Zossima would condemn her as her Christian acquaintances had? This issue struck me as too important to her

self-understanding to be interfered with by me in any way.

J. listened to Alyosha in a sincere fashion. She recognized her own prejudices through an encounter with ideas that were distinctly different from her own. She reserved final judgment, which allowed her to enter into an I-Thou relationship with this character.

It was interesting that J. noticed that her own preconceptions about suffering fit with those of the character Ivan. She was explicitly aware that this commonality of interest led to an understanding. This confirms Bultmann's argument on the necessity of presuppositions for understanding.

Claims

Note: J. was interested in the idea that a text can lay claim to a reader's attention. She made rather lengthy entries in this section. In fact much that she recorded here belongs elsewhere in the journal, in the section reserved for traditions or prejudices, etc. I allowed these entries to stand, however. This work was experimental and, therefore, not to be judged as a report on a finished pedagogical product. If further justification is needed for this decision, I refer my reader to Gadamer's discussion about the claims that a tradition can make on someone who is open to its influence (Gadamer 1994, p. 359-362). Also, the following page numbers were used by J. to direct me to the passages in the novel she was referring to.

page 19-

"If they don't drag me down [to hell] what justice is there"? (Dostoyevsky 19). These words frightened me. Not the thought of hell itself, but the thought that people need hell so much. Without the fear of hell, would people still be as good as they are? It is sad to think that they possibly would not be. But then again the fear of hell is a much different thing than an actual hell. Perhaps the fear itself is the "justice" that Fyodor looks for. That fear is perhaps in itself hell. Does it even matter whether there is a hell or if it is a mere figment of people's imagination? The belief in sin and damnation is enough of a hell for those who sin and consider themselves damned. It is

entirely self-inflicted. But what of those of us who don't believe in hell? What justice then? There is this thing called morality that inflicts its justice on us - but why?

Comment/Analysis

J. was stimulated by the text to ask questions perhaps not present in its original make-up. This was an excellent example of the hermeneutical conception of immanence. The immanent meaning of any text is situated in the possibility that the subject matter, which is common to both text and reader, can be applied to a future reader's self understanding. This process began when she asked questions that were at least partly based on her own life experience. This is the basis of effective interpretive activity from a hermeneutical point of view.

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page 20-

"Faith does not, in the realist, spring from the miracle, but the miracle from faith" (Dostoyevsky 20). I love that statement and find a great depth of truth in it. This was said in reference to unbelievers, and I think it is utterly true. I would like to add that it works both ways. An unbeliever cannot bring himself to believe in even a miracle, yet the believer cannot bring himself to not believe. Often, it is not even a choice of believing or not. Many times, one has little control over that sort of thing I think. Truly, the believer and the unbeliever are much more alike than either would like to think. They are both set in their way of thinking.

On page 21, Alyosha is said to have chosen the path of God, and could have as easily gone the way of atheism. Before this, I believed that no one had a choice. I certainly had none. Once I thought that there might be something other than the Christian form of God, I was unable to go back and simply believe. At times, I wanted to greatly, but no matter how I tried, it was impossible for me. I had never thought that a person could just as easily take one path as another. I guess, when one is young,

and has no set beliefs, one can go either way. Once an idea is set though, I don't understand how it could change. I know that it does though, for many older people embrace God before their death. I guess that it is difficult for me to comprehend because it is so impossible for me. Anyway, this did spur an interest for Alyosha in me.

J. who can say what will happen? Our ideas change. Mine have and radically, over the course of time. But I tend to hold on to old ideas while coming to accept a broader understanding. You start with not believing, or by having trouble believing. Maybe that will always be part of you. Maybe your lack of belief will be enveloped by some broader context. Maybe Ivan's experience has something to say to you. Using this novel as your starting point, maybe you should begin by clarifying what you don't believe in. For example, most people who reject the idea of God start with the belief in an omnipotent deity. Would it make a difference if you started with the idea of God as being less than perfect, or not yet complete somehow? Try applying that to Ivan's experience. What if someone said to Ivan, "But God's not perfect, Ivan!" would that make a difference to what he says in the novel? Try establishing a dialogue relationship with him, if you want. If you want to continue discussing this with me, you could do it through further journal entries or bringing it up during seminars.

In response to what you said - I don't mean that beliefs can't change - mine are changing all the time. It is much different in my mind than how it came out on paper. Let me give it a second go. I guess that in the case of God, it's not that I can't change my beliefs, it's that I can't believe anything. No matter what, there is always doubt. Doubt in the Christian God, doubt in the lack of a Christian God. I can't believe in any of the stuff in between either. No spiritual being, no nature, and no nothingness either. I have hope that it exists, yet, I cannot believe in any of it. I am floundering in a void of lack of belief. A mere seed of doubt and I cannot believe. But at the same time, I'm not so sure. I have

no proof that the world is round and not flat, yet I believe that it is. But at the same time, I have no reason to doubt that it isn't. Or maybe it isn't just doubt that hinders my belief. I also think that I am suspended between realism and spiritualism. I am too logical to believe in anything spiritual, and too spiritual to believe in only the physical.

Comment/Analysis

J. was impressed by the description of Alyosha as a young person who could have been either a believer or an atheist. The idea gripped her, but for some reason she had trouble accepting it. There was, I think, an underlying tension between herself and the text, which was necessary for original understanding. That J. doubted religious truths was something more than an isolated notion emerging from an adolescent mind. This was a personal issue with her that had universal resonance. I wanted J. to concentrate her attention on trying to establish a sense of an emerging religious tradition.

At one point, I introduced an idea of my own into the conversation. What if God were not omnipotent? This was meant to be an invitation for us to discuss the novel from a new point of view. A teacher can comment on the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the way a student comprehends and uses the hermeneutic processes - or even admonish the student who may be simply doing a bad job of reading the words of the text. But when the teacher becomes a true interlocutor - a Thou to the student's I - the teacher must be prepared to relinquish the role of expert insofar as that is possible, and enter into a partnership of equality with the student. Herein, both are conversants. It is, in actuality, not only the student whose self-understanding has the opportunity to expand along with the acquisition of interpreted experience. Insofar as the teacher is sincerely engaged in the process of dialogic understanding with the student and the subject matter, his or her own self-development is potentially involved. This is one of the distinguishing features of a hermeneutical pedagogy. The teacher is intimately a part of the learning process.

J. wrote to me, "In response to what you said - I don't mean beliefs can't change - mine are changing all the time". I sensed that she did not think that I understood her correctly. She wanted me to believe that hers is a radical doubt, one that is, perhaps, at the basis of who she is. In a well crafted sentence she made the statement, "I am too logical to believe in anything spiritual, and too spiritual to believe in only the physical". The paradox was not lost on me. I immediately recognized my own self-understanding through hers. It was a moment in the dialogue in which we potentially recognized one another's common experience.

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page 37-

"No, not about Diderot. Above all, don't lie to yourself . . ." (Dostoyevsky 37). What Father Zossima says to Fyodor is true, and although Fyodor is considered a buffoon, and most likely is, I identify with his predicament. Insecurity is at the root of it. The need to be accepted, and loved. But his way of dealing with it is to lie. The result is that people look on him even less favorably, and it becomes a circular predicament, continually getting worse. Eventually this makes him fall to such a state of self-loathing, that he begins to play the part of the buffoon, knowing no other way to get attention (the closest thing he can find to acceptance). Such self-loathing also causes a lack of self-fulfillment. One cannot ever feel good inside, so one must find other ways. This results in material and superficial pleasures. This may not be his reason for acting this way at all, but I once fell into a similar trap, and those were my reasons.

OK. But be careful not to use personal experience to supply yourself with an explanation. Take the text to your life, not vice versa. Of course, if you want to test the truth of something against your personal experience, that's all right to do. But make sure that your personal experience is being set into a larger context. You are a part to a whole. Personal experience is OK if it can inform the whole at the same

time the whole (literature) explains you - your experience - as the particular. This is circular: whole (literature) to part (personal experience) and back again. What has to be avoided is imposing purely subjective experience on a work of art. That's a sure way not to grow.

P.S. There is a natural self-adjustment between the whole and part. My experience has been that I never feel myself to be more authentic than when this happens. I think that this is a making of the self.

You're right. I'm sorry about imposing myself on the book. I have the bad habit of molding the characters to fit what I want to see. I know I was in the wrong the minute after I turned it in. But I've been thinking about this. I mean, to understand an idea, one must apply it to something in their life. Otherwise it is meaningless. Just an idea floating around that has no weight - an idea that does not make a claim. So in order for an idea to claim me, it has to be relevant to my life. I apply it to my life, not my life to it. But aren't they very similar? No matter what, when an idea claims me, I make an interpretation based on my life. So how does one tell the two apart? How does one know which of their experiences are totally subjective and cannot be applied to the whole? I mean, all I have are my other experiences on which to base whether my experience is irrelevant or not. *No, you have the experience of others.* **I do know that what I wrote was twisting the text to my own life, and looking back on it, I feel like an idiot for having written it. But at the time I wrote it, it seemed okay. I will watch myself more carefully from now on. Sorry. If I do it again please tell me. I don't want to do it.**

I have been struggling with this also. I've gotten this far: Our lives have universal aspects which can be shared with others, i. e., communicated by language. (Remember, the universal means to get beyond ourselves). But our lives have purely subjective, or idiosyncratic aspects, e. g., the accidents of certain lives which cannot be communicated. Have you ever met someone who made no sense at all? You

recognize nothing about them. They have no recognizable style. Don't you want to get away from them as fast as you can? That's because what they are can't be communicated.

I don't think I have ever met someone like this. Everyone has reasons for doing what he or she does, and those reasons can eventually be understood. The only people I can think of nearing your description are those considered insane. And, although the impulse to get away is strong, because they seem to make no sense, if I force myself to stay awhile and listen, even their nonsensical rumblings have reason behind them usually. If you could give an example...

There is, in an art book I know, an analysis of style. Style, it says, is something recognizable. We see something done in a certain style, and it is familiar, understandable. But occasionally there is something so different from anything that we recognize that we grow uncomfortable with it. Of course, new styles emerge. But I think lots of idiosyncratic 'stuff' happens. We find a person whose personal style is so bizarre (a word which means a departure from the norm) that we cannot communicate with them. My response is to go away. Maybe your tradition is more tolerant than mine. I have no real tolerance for bizarre ideas. Always for me, there has to be some tradition to which something (someone) belongs. I suppose that this is both good - and bad.

Comment/Analysis

J. recognized something that is true about life from the strange, but partially familiar, behavior of Fyodor Karamazov. I reminded her that she should think beyond her personal experience, by taking the text to an understanding of her life, not vice versa. But in taking an opportunity to reinforce some basic axioms of hermeneutic understanding, I may have pushed the limits of what was proper in exercising the rights and responsibilities of authoritative expertise. J.'s almost profuse apology alerted me to the possibility of a subservient relationship developing.

But J. took my admonishment and thought it through in her usual independent way. She had written, "So in order for an idea to claim me, it has to be relevant for my life. I apply it to my life, not my life to it. . . . When an idea claims me", she goes on to say, "I make an interpretation based on my life. So how does one tell the two apart? . . . all I have are my own experiences on which to base whether my experience is relevant or not". I replied to this last statement that she had more than herself to rely on in such cases. Importantly, she had the experiences of others to compare with her own experiences. I wanted to remind her that thinking does not occur in isolation (*sensus communis*). I also wanted to continue orienting her toward a more universal way of conceiving her personal life. I had to be careful though and not overstep my bounds.

One of the benefits of my conversations with J. was the opportunity to reconsider my own understanding of hermeneutics. I thought through the issue of universals once again and how I might phrase an explanation. This did not make it into J.'s journal but has become part of my notes for future reference:

> Considerations of relevance must take into account whether one's private experience is potentially universal in scope. Relevance does not come from purely introspective thought. It is not just a decision based on the question: Does this insight from such and such a text apply to my life? The question has to be slightly altered to encompass the full range of the hermeneutic understanding of experience. That is, one must also ask how one's life experience modifies that insight so that it finds applicability within the next set of circumstances that make-up one's own life. The universal is communicable. Insight is gained when the happenings of one's inner life draw from and, in turn, contribute to the common stock of cultural experience. If that were not true then insight would originate from within oneself and communicability would be possible only to the extent that it relies on someone else having accidentally had the same thought.

I was confident, however, in having communicated to J. that the connection between the larger cultural context and one's own personal life is a reciprocal one. As

J. sought to situate herself within a tradition of understanding, she would be able to assume that the tradition itself would not be left unchanged. This, of course, means that culture is not something objectifiable. Nor can the student's personal experience with the text - the vehicle by which cultural issues are brought to the student - be relegated to a purely subjective experience.

Often a dialogue with J. caused me to reflect upon hermeneutical philosophy. I could not separate my teaching from the philosophy that supported it. Just as Stenhouse would have all teachers be researchers, I would have them be philosophers. Reading her journal prompted me to reconsider my ideas in light of her own concerns.

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pages 53-56-

I had never considered the church ruling instead of government. It is true that the two together never can work well. It is the conflict of emotion and morals (the church) against logic (the government). The church ruling alone, would be a fine idea in a world where humans made no errors. First off for it to ever work, 100% of the people have to believe fully and undoubtingly in God. If they did not, the system would simply not work. Secondly, greed would come to some, and despite their belief, they would twist the word of God to fit their own greed. The system would then become corrupt, and with that, the people would no longer believe and it would break down. Overall, it is an interesting idea in theory, but in practice it would never work - very similar to communism. *Is The Brothers Karamazov simply ideological? Are we meant, then, to reject this? If it's impossible how do we take it ?*

Comment/Analysis

The idea of a universal Christian church had stimulated much discussion during a regular seminar session. It was a very alien idea, something contrary to everything these students had been taught to believe, considering the liberal democratic political

tradition that guided most of their thinking. J., however, like the other students - much to my surprise - did not reject it immediately. She considered it carefully before deciding that it wouldn't work. This meant two things. First, she was listening to the voice of the text. Secondly, she had applied her own experience to the idea, which led to her rejection of it. But I asked her to consider it further by saying, "Is the novel simply ideological"? Must one, I asked her, - compelled by modern ideas - inevitably reject this idea? Even in its impossibility, can this idea not find some useful application to our modern lives? The teacher's duty is not to supply answers, of course. In fact, I had nothing of my own in mind here. I hoped that J. might although it turned out that she didn't. My role was always to try to actively stimulate her thinking.

The idea of a universal church had claimed J.'s attention quite unexpectedly, even though, as we have seen, she could not accept the idea at face value. J. might have been well advised to search her own value system carefully to see if she could identify the prejudgment that lead her to even consider this idea, rather than dropping it without further thought. This might have led to the section entitled "Traditions", where she could have amended her present framework of understanding in light of this claim laid by the text upon her momentary attention.

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page 65-

Father Zossima bowing down to Dmitri. All I can say is, how could something like this not effect the reader? I have little idea of what it means, but the reaction it produced was extreme. The elder knew it would effect him, but why? Earlier in the book, it was mentioned that the bigger the sinner the more love and interest did Father Zossima show towards them. This may be why he did it, but it only leads to the greater question of why the elder loves sinners so much. Maybe it is because they do not follow blindly the path of good, due to fear, or love or hope, but "stray". In sinning, they break away from the blindness and conformity toward God and society - they become individuals and outcasts. But that doesn't mean that those who are good and

righteous aren't individuals. So the whole idea may be false. *I'd like to see you write more on this. There is a tradition that stems from the New Testament. Jesus said, "There is more rejoicing for the finding of one lost sheep than the 99 that were never lost".*

A person becomes "lost", so if they are found they are then a believer who thinks. They have knowledge of unbelieving, yet come back despite their knowledge. While those who never question, never stray, believe blindly. *I never thought of this.*

Comment/Analysis

A person who is "lost" and then believes has gone through a crucible of doubt. Although this insight might be a commonplace with theologians, J. has thought of it on her own - but under the influence of the text. The fact that others may have had the same insight does not diminish the value this had for J. as a learner. When she comes to realize that others have had the same kinds of ideas that she has had, J. will begin to identify with one tradition of understanding or another. This is a proper goal of a hermeneutically inspired pedagogy.

My last comment to J. was a tactical one. By admitting that J. has thought of something new to me, I hopefully added an element of trust to our relationship

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page 71-

"He is haunted by a great, unsolved doubt. He is one of those who don't want millions, but an answer to their questions". A representative statement for all of humanity! I want answers too, but those that are given - mainly religion and science - do not satisfy me. In reality, however, it is questions not the answers that I need. Any answer, even if it were the right one, would kill my curiosity and will to live. I love Mitya because of his doubt. It takes so much more courage to doubt. When the

security blanket of belief is torn away, one is left exposed to the harshness of uncertainty. Will Mitya ever find an answer that he is content with? Will I? *Yes, you'll find answers but perhaps not definitive ones. The trick is to find something you can live with.*

Yes, finding something I can live with is most likely the way to find peace. But sometimes I wonder if it is really better to find that answer. Yes, once we are at peace we are then able to understand ourselves better, but at the same time, with peace, the search dies. I want to keep thinking about new possibilities. It is a continual struggle with me. All of my life I have been taught (living in the home of a scientist) to question, and never be content with answers. But at the same time, I have been reading books that say the exact opposite - *Be Here Now* and *Tao Te Ching*. They tell me that only when I quiet my mind enough, and stop trying to find the answers, will I understand. *I don't know how we can understand without answers, no matter how tentative. Maybe the answers come differently to someone influenced by Taoism.* That contrast has been a big part of the book for me. Ivan the questioning vs. Alyosha the unquestioning. *You seem to be getting closer to defining a tradition through your ongoing speculation.* "When you have quieted your mind enough and transcended your ego enough you can hear how it really is. So: when you are with a candle flame you ARE the candle flame and when you are with another being's mind you are the other being's mind. When there is a task to do you are the task" (Baba Ram Dass) F. Zossima has accomplished this. But which path is better? Father Zossima's seems better, but he is fulfilled, and content. I don't know if I want that. I. never want my birthday to come because the anticipation is so much better. What do you do when you are content anyway? All right, I'm rambling now - I'll stop. (How could I have possibly gotten this far away from what you said?) *See Tao - a New Way of Thinking.*

Comment/Analysis

One of the leitmotifs of J.'s journal was doubt. She returned to this concern over and over again. Each time her thinking - under the influence of the novel and the stimulation that it provided her - became more sophisticated. The study of *The Brothers Karamazov* became a focus for her personal concerns. She was connecting to issues of universal concern. Others had doubted. Certain Christian acquaintances had once told her that doubt was punishable. But J. could not accept this. She also found a point of view in the novel that she did not expect. Father Zossima, the morally normative character in the novel, in some way embraced doubt. It was the doubter Dmitri that he bowed down to. This was relevant to J.'s life - but not because it helped her resolve the question of religious doubt. J. said that it was not answers that she was looking for in the first place. Rather, this incident in the novel stimulated new questions for her to ask. J. knew that she may never solve this problem to her own satisfaction. "I love Mitya because of his doubt," she wrote. And also, "I want to keep thinking about new possibilities".

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page 85-

Although I know that it was merely a reflection of the times, I cannot help but get mad at the subservient manner of Marfa Ignatyevna and the beating that Grigory gives her. *Literature is not merely a reflection of the times. Oh, that also. But if it really gets you mad, the issues of those times are still present.*

page 97-

The confession of a passionate heart - an anecdote. This confession of Dmitri reveals quite a lot about him. I am confused. He took such easy offense and came so close to raging such great vengeance on Katerina - but why? He is much like his father

in this respect. I think it is because he could not deal with someone he liked not liking him, and being hurt, knew no other way to cope with it than to hate her. But he says "that hate which is only a hair's breath from love, from the maddest love!". Hate and love are exact opposites are they not? But it seems that at least for Mitya they are close to the same. Perhaps he loved her originally, and her rejection caused him to hate. I know that feeling of passion that could be either love or hate, but I don't know how to explain it or what causes it. *I recommend Solomon's book , The Passions. I have a copy I'll loan you.*

Comment/Analysis

I often recommended books to J. That was, from a hermeneutic point of view, a way of extending her conversation to voices from other texts and representing other points of view. (Solomon's book was written from an existentialist point of view). If J. were to explicitly apply that or any other theoretical book to her interpretive conversation about *The Brothers Karamazov*, it would become necessary for me to explain that theoretical knowledge must become no more than another voice within the discourse and must never be allowed to develop an imperious relationship toward the subject matter. This notion comes from my own understanding of hermeneutical philosophy and cannot, as far as I know, be found in the writings of Gadamer or any other hermeneutical thinker.

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page 116-

I really like Smerdyakov. He was an outcast in the first place, and therefore has the ability to think without the fear of people accepting his ideas. What a freedom! *What price does he pay for his freedom?* I think there is a great deal more to him than has been revealed so far. I love his relationship with Grigory. They are exact opposites. Grigory is blind. He follows without thinking - both Fyodor and the

Christian faith. He is such a hateful old man, one has to despise him and his twisted use of Christianity against others. He is the epitome of the believer in hell-fire and damnation . . . Smerdyakov's attempts to make him see another side are pointless. I have tried to do the same with staunch negative believers I know. *Is there any good in him that you can see? W. has expressed interest in his character.*

Comment/Analysis

In the paragraph that began, "I really like Smerdyakov . . .", J. expressed a strong prejudice. I asked J. to consider any good that she might possibly see in Grigory since he is a foil for Smerdyakov. J. had not at this point finished the novel. Certainly, her opinion would be affected by subsequent events within the story. But it was not my place as either expert or as interlocutor to reveal those events. J. would make up her own mind. What I anticipated happening was that J.'s own values, which come out at first heavily in favor of Smerdyakov and against Grigory, would be challenged. Gadamer argues that it is through the alienness of a text that one's own prejudgments are revealed. This perforce allows for self-examination. Once one's prejudices are recognized it is almost certain that they will not be mistaken for truth in the absolute sense of the word. J. would be forced to reconsider what she had assumed to be the truth.

I reminded J. of W.'s concern with Grigory expressed during seminars because I didn't want her journal writing to become divorced from classroom discussion.

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page 138-

Well, I guess it is finally necessary to look at Ivan's quote that seems so central to the book - "If God is dead, all is permitted". From these words, I have gathered that he believes that God gives us virtue and morality in order to decide what is right and what is wrong. We discussed in class how traditions are the root of our morality. That

society teaches us our virtue, and this teaching goes back to the beginning of humanity. *God was part of the discussion about right and wrong until the eighteenth century. Part of The Brothers Karamazov is about examining what it means not to have God in the discussion.* But what started it in the first place? Instinct? God? Perhaps God began the chain of tradition that will last as long as humanity. Maybe God is not giving us morality in itself but the need to be tied to others. The thing that holds us all together, and makes us be interested and influenced by the views of others. What is that super-glue that makes us interested in other people? I say it is love, and the need to be loved. In this case, God would either give us love or even be love in itself. In being tied to others, our morality would be a necessity. But how does belief tie into all of this? If the belief of God dies, is all permitted? I think not! Yet in the book, Fyodor says that if he doesn't burn in hell, what justice is there? Do some people really need that incentive of heaven and hell to behave themselves?? To experiment with this idea, I talked to a staunch believer in the Christian faith and found that she believed that those who did not believe in God had no morality. That is definitely something that I do not believe. Maybe it is not the belief in God that matters, but belief in itself. Everyone believes in something, giving them meaning and purpose which in turn leads to morality? No, I can already think of exceptions.

You might want to start dialogues with Ivan or Father Zossima. Dostoyevsky gave us Rakitin as an example of a character who says he believes in morality without God.

Comment/Analysis

J. tackled the most famous quotation from *The Brothers Karamazov*. "If God is dead," Smerdyakov says - referencing Ivan's ideas - "then all is permitted". J. thought about this issue effectively. I held back in my role as interlocutor and gave J. room to think on her own. I recommended an exercise to her that I call dialogue extension. I conceived of this exercise under the influence of Bakhtin, the Russian critic of

Dostoyevsky, who had noted voices bearing different points of view emerging from *The Brothers Karamazov*. Directions on writing dialogue with "wisdom figures" in Ira Progoff's (1975, p.127-141) *At a Journal Workshop* also influenced the development of this exercise. J. followed my suggestion and entered a short conversation in the journal section entitled "Dialogue" that she did not think successful.

That J. sought out a Christian fundamentalist acquaintance with which to discuss issues of morality showed the broad-mindedness that her approach to the interpretive project had taken. She grew sophisticated in her interpretive activity. Also note how in her last two lines that she says something and then immediately corrects herself. This points out the value of journal writing. It encourages speculation, which is a necessary part of hermeneutical discourse.

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page 218-243

Rebellion and The Grand Inquisitor - I have read over this section again because I want to understand in full what Ivan believes. He hates the suffering that is so unjustified, and even if we do reach a harmony, the ends do not in his eye justify the means. It is so true. But at the same time, he brings the Grand Inquisitor on the scene. Although he hates the suffering, he will never let it go. Harmony with its lack of suffering and absolute control destroys humanity. That, I believe, is why he said that for the love of humanity he would not want harmony. I may be wrong (it was a difficult section to read), but to me the Grand Inquisitor represented a type of harmony, and the prophet represented knowledge and humanity which result in freedom and rebellion, which, in the eyes of the Inquisitor, inevitably leads to suffering. But because suffering is coupled with freedom, everyone sides with the prophet.

Although I dislike the Grand Inquisitor and could never side with him, he made a lot of interesting points.

The idea that the people would rather have physical bread instead of bread for the spirit is true enough, such as the situation in Russia now - the idea of democracy means nothing to people who are starving. But what he does not consider is that both could be attained. Or could they? It is true that we have both, but in many places it is a choice of one or the other. Personally, I think some of the suffering third world countries would be better off with a dictatorship of some sort. Freedom of mind is nothing and does not work well for suffering people. A dictator gives security and food where once there was none. In this respect, I agree with the Grand Inquisitor. But the dictatorship is just the first step. It unifies the people until perhaps they are able to have both freedom and food. *This diatribe is directed against Catholic Christianity.*

It was interesting that Ivan told this story at all. It is obviously against the control of the church, yet isn't that exactly what he was promoting earlier in the book??

The Grand Inquisitor chapter is very complex. I wish I had time to discuss it in detail, but that is what it requires. I sometimes think that what is so brilliant about this work is the questions it raises. As an answer it is often, to me, unsatisfying or contradictory. It may be up to us to pick up where it leaves off.

Comment/Analysis

This chapter, "The Grand Inquisitor", is one of the most examined and discussed pieces of literature in the Western canon. To even begin to understand its meaning requires access to an extensive body of criticism. This was frankly beyond the scope of what could be expected of J. in this situation. I did inform her that it is usually understood that Dostoyevsky's diatribe was, in part, directed against Roman Catholicism. This fact formed part of the context in which the chapter was written. J. and I discussed this and she was satisfied with not pursuing it specifically. I thought at the time that it was too complex for her present level of development, especially given

the limited time left for this project. This was a decision that fell within the scope of my own judgment as a teacher/expert. Of course J. needed to be consulted. If she had chosen to pursue her initial interest in this chapter, I would not have interfered. She did need, however, to be made aware of its general importance to the history of literature even though that realization may not have been significant to her self-development at that time.

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pages 339-416

Mitya's Book - Mitya's insanity is so true. Grushenka alone has become so all important to him that he has lost sight of everything else. It seemed because he has become so caught up in his own problems and life, he cannot see other people. He is so self-centered that he cannot see their viewpoints - even when he tries, it is a twisted perception to fit his own situation. This self-centeredness is most obvious in Dmitri because of his extreme desperateness, but I believe they all have it to a certain extent. His blindness is so obvious to the reader looking in, but to him, I am sure it all seems very logical. Alyosha and Father Zossima seem to be the only ones who can break away. They forget themselves and in doing so have unclouded perceptions of those they relate to. But how do they do it?? I guess it is just one of those things you do or you don't do.

Comment/Analysis

J.'s thinking in these passages testifies once again to the usefulness of a text-centered curriculum. The ideas inherent to this novel frequently stimulated J. to think originally. Ideas pursuant to the text only run the danger of supplanting original thinking on the interpreter's part when the problematic nature of literature is forgotten or goes unrealized. J. noticed that Alyosha and Father Zossima were able to have "unclouded perceptions of those they relate to" by having escaped self-centeredness.

This idea came to her through her own interpretive interaction with the text. Furthermore, it is not possible to make a distinction between whether J. was thinking for herself or whether she was thinking within a tradition that had antecedents in this novel. From a post-Cartesian perspective, the notion of the solitary person thinking for his or her own unique self is one of doubtful validity. Does anyone in the intellectual world of understanding actually create anything worthwhile, i.e., of lasting validity, without a framework for their thoughts? Texts provide that framework. One may think originally, but that is not the same thing as the romantic notion of the solitary genius. All original thinking occurs within a dialogue of understanding that is inclusive of the achievements of others. By beginning her own thinking process within the framework of a text, J. placed herself within a social and historical dialogue that implicitly recognized that her own thinking began with the thoughts of others. Her thinking, albeit on even a "junior level of professionalism" (Renzulli 1977), was both derivative and contributive at the same time.

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pages 583-595

Smerdyakov's third interview - he took Ivan's statement that if there is no God then all is allowed in the most literal sense and used it as reason to kill Old Karamazov. Did his sense of morality think that his deed was not evil? Did he just use Ivan's words as an excuse to do it? Where does our morality come from? If it comes from love, and love is God, and he had no love for humanity then Ivan's words are true. But later, he commits suicide. Why? Because he truly did care and love? Or merely because he had nothing left to live for? *Smerdyakov has only Ivan's words to go on. Ivan has something more than this. He is morally and intellectually more developed than Smerdyakov, who does not suspect the complexity of the issue Ivan has raised*.

Katerina seems to me to be the ultimate sacrificer. No matter what she does she is sacrificing and suffering - a masochist in the truest sense. *How many times in the novel*

do you find the expression self-laceration? It is often coupled with the word pride.
Pride is always pejorative. Does this line of interpretation interest you?

Comment/Analysis

Here I stepped back into a straightforward dialogic relationship with J. I said things to her that I believed to be possibly true about the novel. I had from the beginning made it clear to J. that any statement I might make as an interlocutor would be made in the spirit of dialogic understanding. Since dialogue is speculative, these statements of mine were simply being tried out with J. as my interlocutor. This is an example of my interest not being that of a teacher but that of a fellow interpreter. J. never seemed to have any trouble distinguishing between my various roles.

J. commented on Katerina. There is an expression in the novel that is used to describe her self-laceration. The term is often used in conjunction with the idea of pride. I mentioned my interest in this to J. and asked her if she had any interest in exploring this line of thinking. One might object that I was influencing J.'s thinking, rather than allowing her to think for herself. But in the intellectual world, dialogue is actually meant to influence what another person thinks. By asking J. if she is interested in discussing the idea of laceration, I am just doing what dialogue is meant to do. Just because I am a "teacher" does not mean that I cannot be a voice in the dialogue. If in speaking I impose my own viewpoint, disregarding the basic rules of hermeneutical conversation, then I am, of course, misusing my authority and am culpable of subverting the hermeneutical process. Such misuse can happen in any teaching situation. But not to speak of one's own insights and interests can rob the student of something that might possibly be important to his or her own interpretive understanding. In this case, J. did not respond but moved on to issues that she had chosen for herself.

Safeguards can be built into the hermeneutic process of interpretive understanding. It should be made explicit at the beginning of any formal dialogue between a teacher

and student that all participants in the ensuing conversation should be treated by the interpreter as having the same initial status - a teacher's voice being no different from any other that characterizes or attempts to discern the meaning of a text. The student must be guaranteed the right to question whatever voices are present in the dialogue. This rule is a check on a teacher's possible tendentiousness.

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pages 689-695

The biggest problem for me with holding a conversation with the book is that it cannot answer back. Although it spurs my own mind to new ideas, it is not truly interactive, and cannot elaborate on that which I don't understand or reply to that which I question.

I think that a text does answer back. To begin with, you come to a text with certain expectations. Sometimes those expectations are not met, or are dashed. That is a kind of answer. But, moreover, if the text is the tentative answer to an underlying question, then you - from your own horizon of understanding - find yourself asking different questions and posing new answers. Your voice is an extension of the text. What you say can elicit response from the text. It might have something to say to your new insights - pro or con. Even you - as an extension of the text into a new horizon - are now asking questions and posing possible answers. If the text doesn't speak again, it has spoken initially and that guides your own dialogue. Perhaps, the text has nothing more to say and now awaits you - from your horizon, your point of view, conditioned in part by the text - to speak. If the text no longer has anything seemingly to say, maybe that is a tacit recognition that it is your turn to speak.

Comment/Analysis

J. said that the biggest problem with holding a conversation with a text is that it can't answer back. I took this as an opportunity to address her concerns about the

interpretive process (please keep in mind that if my explanations seem terse, J. and I also discussed some of these same issues during class time). Since J. was relatively new to hermeneutical inquiry, I used whatever opportunities that presented themselves to teach the basic principles of the interpretive process. The alternative would have been to thoroughly teach the fundamentals of hermeneutic inquiry before the writing process began, a practice which, in my experience, does not hold students' attention.

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Note: In the following passages J. is responding to an exercise that I assigned the seminar group. The words "Reconstruct what went on in class" are a repetition of my initial directions.

11-3-96

A work of art opens up or discloses the world. It reveals something about the world. Interpretation of the painting, *Peasant's Shoes*: The shoes in their roughness and used looking state represent the woman who wore them. They are rough and coarse - a poor woman's shoes; the unending walking and work that took place with them. Their worn state makes me think of the wearer in a worn state. A life of hardship, yet perseverance. They are well made and strong just like the one who wears them. They continue on like the poor, working. Their roughness yet strength are like the poor as well. I think they represent the poor. (Although my view has shifted since, this is what I wrote originally).

Reconstruct what went on in class: We all looked at the picture and each, in turn, read our interpretations. They were all interesting, but I loved Whitney's most of all. What she said was totally different than anything that I would have thought of on my own. Yet still, it made perfect sense and was a truly wonderful interpretation. While the rest of us thought of the shoes and the person who wore them, she thought of the person who no longer wore them. With the shoes she left the work that they

represented. They were left, for us to see, while the wearer escaped the life they describe. So for Whitney, it was not what was in the painting that mattered but what was not there. I really liked this way of looking at it.

You also mentioned that some interpretations can be just plain wrong. I don't understand. Why are some wrong?

Then Whitney started talking about termites, and, at first, none of us really understood what she was getting at. Eventually we found out that it is not the termites that she was justifying but, rather, the ability to have creative responses that are derived from personal experience. *I agree to an extent, but there is still my own belief that personal experience must be universalized or it is merely idiosyncratic.*

After this, Chris asked if we were arguing - I said no. I was trying to understand Whitney's idea and question the flaws I found in it so that she could either rephrase to correct my misunderstanding of her idea (which she did) or to help her see the flaws for herself, and, therefore, revise her idea to correct the flaws. I think arguing is when there is no desire to understand the opposing view, and often, anger is the basis. I felt neither of these.

Also, you gave us juice and crackers. Thanks!! *Probably the only useful thing I did all day.*

Comment/Analysis

J. mentioned her first interpretive response to an exercise I gave to the discussion group as a whole. I had showed them a painting by Van Gogh. The subject was a pair of well-worn shoes common to Dutch peasants in the late nineteenth century. As part of this exercise in understanding, I read aloud an interpretation of the painting written by Heidegger. My purpose was to give them an example of interpretive remarks. Afterward, each student was given ten minutes to write his or her own response to the painting.

Although J. included her response from the group exercise, she based her journal

entry on an interest she had in what W. had to say concerning Van Gogh's painting. As J. related, W. began her interpretation by talking about termites (see Chapter Four also for my discussion of W.'s idiosyncrasies). J. knew much sooner than I that W. was really talking about the right to have a creative response based on personal experience to a work of art. W. often said some very strange things, and my own predisposition is to speak in a conventional manner. It was, consequently, difficult for me to communicate with her. But as in the past, patience paid off - with J.'s help. W.'s idiosyncratic interpretation had turned out to be more the result of her failure to connect her thoughts and feelings to some recognizable framework of understanding than her being hopelessly subjective, per se.

J. had pressed W. for understanding. C. even questioned if they were not arguing (there was a rule against argument that had been set at the beginning of the class). But J. continued to question W. - both all the while vociferously denying that they were arguing - until she got from W. an understanding of her statement about termites. W. believed that she had a right to a creative response, and although she certainly had in mind something akin to a personal or subjective response, at least her statement - under the influence of J.'s persistent questioning - became an intelligible one.

I was interested in J.'s stated motives for her close questioning of W. She said - in a slightly ambiguous sentence beginning with "I was trying to understand W.'s . . ." - that she was trying to correct either her own misunderstanding or the flaws in W.'s idea. Either way, J. felt that their might be something worthwhile in W.'s interpretation. This kind of conversation can put understanding ahead of egotistical argumentation and is the ideal toward which hermeneutical philosophy reaches. There was also the possibility that J. thought that W.'s interpretation might be wrong even though she had questioned a statement that I made to the group concerning the likelihood that some interpretations simply turn out to be incorrect.

There is a commonly encountered misconception held by many students who are brought up in social democracies that everyone is entitled to an opinion of their own.

Having a right to one's own opinion often translates into the idea that one opinion is as good as another. There is - concealed by this fundamental article of subjective equality - a destructive tendency that leans toward nihilism. If everyone is protected from critical review - if everyone, in effect, is granted a fundamental correctness in what they conceive - then no real value, especially in the realm of interpretive thinking, can occur. After all, value necessitates a raising up of one thing over another.

The important insight of hermeneutical philosophy is that the locus of value making is in the conversations - sometimes spread out over the centuries - that people have with one another. Some ideas fall by the wayside and never gain any lasting credibility because to discuss one's ideas publicly is always to risk a critical rejection of those ideas. Even with a plethora of ideas as the ideal, sooner or later some ideas will not stand the test of conversation. Common sense will prevail. Some ideas, of course, once thought moribund will be revived. Perhaps this only means that they were once put aside for the happenstance of later consideration when some new way of looking at things would become practical. But, nevertheless, some ideas inevitably will be rejected.

When J. introduced the possibility of a flaw in W.'s thinking and proposed to pursue truth through a line of questioning, she accepted - whether she realized it or not - that some ideas can be proven wrong. What is crucially important to hermeneutical understanding is that an idea has been expressed and critiqued in open conversation. This is a middle way between objectiveness, wherein one idea might supersede all others, and subjectiveness, wherein all ideas must be held equal to one another. What seemed especially significant was for J. to realize that her questioning attitude would sometimes lead to the conclusion that one point of view or the other might turn out to be wrong - despite her former reticence to admit this as a possibility.

8-4-96

I cannot tell if it was that the book had a particularly large amount of insights into humanity, or if I was just looking for them more than usual. Whatever the case, it effected me and the way I look at things a great deal. Not really because of the answers it gave but because of the new questions it brought up. The thing that got me most was probably the selflessness of Alyosha and Father Zossima. But it was not the book that spurred this obsession of mine. I had it long before, but I do think the book expanded upon it. I think that is true of anyone reading the book. It is the topics that we have been thinking of that are brought out in the book. Claims are only claims because they can be applied to a prominent part of one's life. *Claims can be applied. Good idea.*

Comment/Analysis

I have excluded some of the small talk that went on between J. and I via the journal. For example, at one point she makes mention of a character from Star Trek. I quipped "Oh, you damn Trekies, I never know what you are talking about". At another time she mentioned that her mother believes that God is developing along with humanity. Since her mother is a catholic I joked that "I hoped her mother didn't mention this to her priest". By this time in our relationship, she and I often teased one another. This good humored teasing added an essential dimension to our conversations, both written and oral. I have since reflected that humor was an important part of my relationship with J. because it helped me not to take myself too seriously. I suspect that it worked similarly with J. In some indirect way humor encourages speculation, which is the *sine qua non* of journal writing. And speculation, in turn, encourages thinking and writing that stops short of an uncompromising approach to knowledge and understanding. Humor works to limit finality in one's thinking and, therefore, opens up discourse to other points of view. Perhaps more than anything, it helps to establish a non-threatening atmosphere, which allows a student to

write freely without fear of censure.

In this entry J. also fulfills Bultmann's dictum concerning presuppositions as the basis for understanding. In mentioning the selfishness of Alyosha and Father Zossima, which she admires, she writes that this was an interest that she already had and that the book expanded upon a pre-existing interest.

Conversation With a Character

This section was difficult for me, and I still think that I impose too much of myself on what the other character says. So even though I was poor at it, I did it anyway.

I will start with a conversation with Father Zossima:

"Was Ivan right"? I ask.

"Yes there is suffering, but it is just another part of this beautiful miracle of life. Embrace every setting sun and every breeze that crosses your face. Love every person you happen to meet, for they are just another part of this miracle. Relish and love everything around you, even the suffering. Even it is a part of this beautiful thing called existence. And if you embrace it and love it, it will no longer be suffering. Love everything - love the bitterness as much as the sweet, because every moment, it reminds you that you are taking part in the miracle of life. And when you love everything, you will be filled with that same love, and will, with everlasting excitement, realize that you are taking part in a miracle. I know you don't believe that heaven or hell exist after we die, but the journey begins here on earth. Take part in the wonder of love, and you live in heaven. Reject it and it is your own downfall - your own hell. Love and God is in your heart".

"Is God love"?

"That is for you to find within yourself".

Smerdyakov:

"Why do you interest me so? I hate you. You are the epitome of everything bad in

the human race," I say.

"Why aren't my reasons noble? Why are they considered low? Why should I have to live with the injustices dealt me? Don't I have the right to do what I do? Yes I twist Ivan's insecurities to my advantage, but if I cannot overcome him, or at least be his equal in the open, I must have something. You have no idea how degrading it is to be his servant. I, his bastard brother, his intellectual equal, the status of mere servant. I am bitter, but give me one reason why I shouldn't be".

"You should love him and be glad for him and his accomplishments".

"Ha! Why"?

"Because you are only making yourself miserable through your envy and jealousy".

"It is worth it to pull Ivan down too".

Comment/Analysis

The idea of extending the voices within a novel as a way of encouraging the application of the novel to an understanding of one's life is discussed in Chapter One. This was not to be a propitious example as J. recognized, but it is an idea, however, that I think is worth experimenting with in the future.

This ends J.'s journal entries. The following chapter took place with different students under an entirely new set of circumstances, but they were implicitly, at least, influenced by my experience with J. and this seminar group in general.

CHAPTER SEVEN

JOURNAL EXPERIMENTS

In the summer of 1996 and again in 1997, I taught a class in the Governor's Honors Academy (GHA) entitled The Great Conversation (Melchert 1995). The curriculum was multidisciplinary. Historically it began with the early Renaissance period and culminated in the modern period. Although I was given permission to conduct limited research for the purpose of this thesis, I was admonished, for reasons never explained to me, that such research as I conducted would remain covert. I did not tape classroom discussions, but that did not seem consequential because my main interest was in having the students develop their interpretive activity through journal entries.

Classroom sessions were two and one-half hours in length. They occurred approximately four times per week. The subheadings used below (Exercise #1, Exercise #2, etc.) include an account, strictly speaking, of two phases of an educational process. The first phase was a semiformal introduction to some subject matter. This also included a strategy to implement some particular facet of the hermeneutic process of interpretation in relation to that subject matter. The second phase involved active student participation in the interpretive process. Their journal entries and my response to those entries are specific to the latter phrase. Exercises often overlapped more than one session.

Selected student journal entries are reproduced, followed by analytical response sections labeled Comment/Analysis. These were designed to glean either practical pedagogical information from these experiments or, perhaps more consequentially, a "theoretical yield" (Monte 1980, p.60) that would point the way toward a pedagogy that derives from the interpretive principles of hermeneutical philosophy. At the very least, I hope that this approach will prove to suggest future lines of inquiry that are beyond the scope of this present thesis.

Once again the reader is obliged to distinguish between this critical analysis and my indigenous response to student writing that is highlighted through the use of italics. There was not sufficient time, unfortunately, to establish extended dialogues with students. Circumstances limited the opportunity students had to reply to the day to day responses that I made in their journals. However, I do think the reader will get an impression of how a hermeneutically guided pedagogy might be conducted.

My responses within the journals were done during the evening after class and returned to students at the beginning of each day's session. The object of developing this specific kind of journal was not an end in itself. Certainly the idea of a formal, pre-established journal is suggestive. It would have been of great pedagogical benefit to have had a journal already in place when this project was first undertaken. But the journal that is referred to in these pages, which unfolded during the course of these experiments, was a research tool - not a pedagogical objective, per se.

A brief description of the students involved in the GHA follows. Two students are chosen from each of West Virginia's fifty-five counties and are, ideally, the outstanding juniors from their own school districts. Practically speaking, the counties are not always able to send their very top ranked students for various reasons. The qualifications for application to the GHA are, however, rigorous by the prevailing standards. A minimum grade point average of 3.5 or a standardized test score that places them in the upper ten percent of students taking that exam is required. Students may never have had less than a C in any high school course. The total number of students involved in both sessions was thirty.

The quality of the students who attend GHA is high overall but sometimes uneven. Students from relatively remote or rural high schools have not often had the opportunities of students who represent school districts that are more populated and whose schools are better funded. This disparity was not glaring but was sometimes evident in the contrasting quality of student oral expression, background knowledge, and writing ability.

West Virginia is one of the poorest states. It is also one of the most rural. Many students come from conservative religious backgrounds. One notices this traditional religious influence in their interpretive activities. There were, however, a few students from non-Christian backgrounds. In 1997, for example, I had a student who had been born on mainland China whose religious attitude is best described as tolerant but skeptical. Another student, who was a native of West Virginia, had religious views that were only Christian in the broadest sense of the word. There were no students of the Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu faiths.

The majority of the religiously oriented students were polite toward nonbelieving students during discussion sessions. But they were, especially in their written responses to works of art, often adamant, not just in the broad outlines of the Christian faith, but towards very specific issues. Any expression of nonbelief, such as Sartre's (1956) "Existentialism is a Humanism", was practically incomprehensible to them. With a few remarkable exceptions, it was difficult to get them to even consider his basic ideas.

The account of the 1997 sessions is more conclusive in some ways than is that of the 1996 sessions. The interpretive process was by then guided by a journal under design specifically for instructive purposes. It was divided into sections labeled: Prejudices; Traditions; Horizon Other; Horizon Own; Horizon Expanded. There was more follow-through from classroom exercises - journal writing was more structured and dialogue more extensive. This represented a considerable expansion of the journal experiments that guided J.'s Journal, which was discussed in the last chapter.

I chose two exercises from the 1996 Governors Honors Academy and six exercises from the 1997 Academy that held forth the most promise for yielding insight into the possibilities of a hermeneutically based pedagogy. A growing concern for the length of this thesis contributed to limiting the number of exercises reported on.

Exercise #1

Students were given two passages for consideration. Both were taken from H. D. F. Kitto's *The Greeks*, one representing Ecclesiastes and the other *The Iliad*. A commentary by Kitto was added, but students were not asked to read it initially. Although these selections were both prior to my designated chronological time frame, there was ample justification for beginning a discussion of the Early Renaissance with a Biblical and classical text, considering that these readily represent the two main tributaries to the stream of western cultural development. From a pedagogical point of view, this gave students an opportunity to compare and contrast these two macro-traditions.

The first passage - *Iliad*:

> As is the life of the leaves, so is that of men. The wind scatters the leaves to the ground: The vigorous forest puts forth others, and they grow in the spring-season. Soon one generation of men comes and another ceases (Kitto 1957, p. 61).

The second passage - Ecclesiastes:

> As for man, his days are as grass. As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more (Kitto 1957, p. 61).

Kitto's Commentary:

> The tragic note which we hear in The Iliad and in most of Greek Literature was produced by the tension between these two forces, passionate delight in life, and clear apprehension of its unalterable framework. Neither the thought nor the image is peculiar to Homer: the peculiar poignancy is, and it comes from the context. We do not find it in the magnificent Hebrew parallel. The note here is one of humility and resignation: Man is no more than grass, in comparison with God. But the Homeric image takes a very different colour from its context of heroic striving and achievement. Man is unique: yet for all his high quality and his brilliant variety he must obey the same laws as the innumerable and indistinguishable leaves (Kitto 1957, p. 61).

I began my introduction to this lesson with a discussion of the Greco-Roman/Biblical synthesis that helped form western civilization. I briefly set a context, Greek and Hebrew respectively, for the two readings. Students were placed into small groups in order to discuss differences and similarities between them. I asked them to then make their first journal entries by addressing the question: "Which passage are you most comfortable with and why"? This exercise was planned as an introduction to the hermeneutical idea that one's values are influenced by specific traditions of understanding. By comparing two points of view concerning the brevity of life, I hoped that students would be led into an examination of their own values, a first step toward putting together a cognizance of their own tradition of understanding.

Student responses seemed at first to be largely unremarkable. In my responses to their journal entries, I cautioned some to read, that is "listen", more carefully. Some I would eventually direct to read Kitto's commentary in order to acquire a sense of what is meant by interpretive understanding. It is crucial that students be given models of interpretive endeavors.

There was some tendency for students to combine the meaning of the two passages. M.H. (see below) did a good job of fixing her own response within a Christian tradition. A common prejudice was the high value placed on individualism. Also, students tended to search the passages for uplifting themes and reassurance, eschewing the melancholy, which they interpreted as anti-Christian. This often comes from strongly held Christian values. Evangelical sects tend to argue that the good news of Christ's resurrection and the promise that holds for eternal life contravenes anything that would tend to psychologically depress the believer.

Consistent with my experience with J.'s journal, I identified three roles that I necessarily played in interacting with these student interpreters. First, I was an expert in the sense that I taught students the principles of hermeneutical interpretation. But my expertise also extended into the subject matter. The problem that consistently presented itself was how to use my knowledge of the subject matter to stimulate

student interpretive activity without actually imposing it in a way that would compromise a student's independence as a learner. A rule of thumb that emerged was to state my criticism in a straightforward way, but to allow the student the freedom to pursue his own thinking if he deemed that best. The third role was that of interlocutor or conversant. Herein I took on a status of equality with the student in order to further the conversation. Often this unavoidably blended with my other role as subject matter expert.

Journal entries were made in the section designated for exploring one's traditions.

Student Journal Responses

M.H. - I like the Hebrew better. In the Hebrew it speaks of how short and perishable our lives are. How small and insignificant human beings are to the entire scheme of things. Although the Greek uses the same metaphor, it uses it to speak of the ever enduring spirit of humankind. That no matter how much time goes by, there are always men to carry on the thoughts and ideas and values of the men before. The Hebrew shortens and minimizes the human existence while the Greek gives a more positive and permanent view of man

I like the Hebrew better because of my Christian upbringing because I think we are only here on earth for a short time waiting only to go on to better things - to greener pastures .

This is a good job of fixing your own tradition of understanding in relation to the passage. What if someone said that by thinking of those "greener pastures" you waste your time here on earth, and it's better to live your life exuberantly than to live for a promise? (I don't mean to contradict you, but just to question the depth of your meaning).

What did you mean by exuberantly? I'm living my life happy and content, but I am still waiting to go to heaven. The two don't have to be separated and disconnected.

Do you think that you draw your exuberance from your beliefs? I can see what

you mean - believing in the other world doesn't preclude living a full life. But what about those who can't believe as you do? Can they find full and meaningful lives here and now, or will they naturally despair? A good friend of mine who was an atheist died this year. At his memorial service there was to be no mention of life after death. But a mutual acquaintance who is a minister read a passage from Ecclesiastes. There was a conflict in my own mind if this should have been done. It would have meant something quite different for my friend than it did for the minister.

Comment/Analysis

M.H. did not respond to my query. I would have liked her to have considered her response to the passage from *The Iliad* and compared it to her openly stated preference for the Hebrew. I could not help but sense her admiration for the Greek *Weltanschauung.* My response, however, was too roundabout. My questions reflected my own experiences rather than hers. I had a chance to pick up on this issue later when M.H. responded to "Existentialism is a Humanism" by Sartre (see below).

K.H.- I think that the emphasis from *The Iliad* is talking about a man's place in life. Everyone is special in their own way. Some are remembered, and some are forgotten. This is gentle and makes a peaceful statement, but humans are considered inferior.

However, the verse from Ecclesiastes is more or less talking about life in general. It comes and goes and the world still goes on. No one pauses and takes a moment of silence every time there is a death. Everyone doesn't cheer when someone is born. There is a certain insignificance of life expressed. This is a harsh way of putting things, but it is straight out facts.

I would mostly agree with Ecclesiastes in the Bible because I come from a religious background. Also, I like to hear things straight out, rather than someone dress them

up.

How can you tell from the Greek that "everyone is special"? I am asking you to look at the words of the text carefully. Do you think the Greeks "dress up" what they have said? How so? Do you approve somehow of life being insignificant? If so, how does that fit with your religious views?

The Greek writing says that the forest will put forth new leaves. This is a little easier to take than the Hebrew writing. The Hebrew writing [says] that men shall be forgotten and that they are very unimportant. No, I don't approve of life being insignificant, but compared to God we are nothing. He is the creator and we are the creations. The Greek says that we will be gone, but it doesn't say we will be forgotten. The Greeks dress it up by making it seem easier to take. It isn't as harsh. The Greek passage means that man, even though he is unique, is nothing more than leaves compared to God.

Your last line doesn't seem to follow with what you say at first. But you have to my satisfaction answered my question about how it all fits in with your religious beliefs. Your beliefs are, in part, a tradition from which you come to understand things. Any tradition has certain presuppositions (or supposes certain things to be true). These beliefs help us understand. But what we read sometimes challenges our beliefs. The Greeks somehow found the courage to lead a full life without hoping for an afterlife, as Christians understand it. What do you think of that statement? The gods for them might be important for this life but were not very important for the next. That seems an odd idea to most Christians.

I think it is good to challenge religion sometimes. It is good to question it to check the reliability of the source. My religion [two words indiscernible] closely with God. It is very strict and requires us to give up a lot of worldly pleasures. We believe to make it to heaven, that you must live as close to perfect as possible. Then we will all go to heaven to be with God. God is a very important part of the afterlife.

Comment/Analysis

K.H. is not unlike M.H. Both were somewhat attracted to the passage from *The Iliad* but chose Ecclesiastes as the passage with which they were most comfortable. They clearly realized that this preference came from their religious convictions. This meets the hermeneutic goal of recognizing one's prejudices. Ideally, I would hope that the words and sentiments from Ecclesiastes would serve as a check on their own beliefs. I see no evidence that there was any immediate re-examination of their own Christian tradition of understanding, but they had to consider those values in light of another way of experiencing the transitory nature of existence. K.H. said that it is good sometimes to challenge religion, even though he has not done so. Of course, it is not my goal that these young people alter their religious beliefs, but at the very least they now are a little more aware that other horizons of experience do exist

There are three possible outcomes when making a comparison between one's own beliefs, ideas, convictions, and feelings and those of another value system: one can reject the other set of values; one can accept those values, rejecting one's own in the process; or one can modify one's own in light of what constitutes new experience. K.H. outwardly rejected the Greek view of things. Yet the passage from Ecclesiastes did not exactly represent his own framework of understanding. His is a Christian tradition only partly informed by Judaism. The elegiac mood of the writer of *The Iliad* may never be part of his own point of view, or even modify his own way of experiencing the world, but he has become familiar with the possibility of this message about existence that has been handed down from the Archaic Greeks, and perhaps in some unforeseen way it will come to influence his understanding of Christianity in the future. At least the idea is now available to him. It would not be the first Greek value incorporated into Christianity. That in itself is a tradition of understanding worth recognizing. Subsequently, I have found that this exercise is more effective if I don't tell students at first which passage comes from the Bible and which comes from Homer. In this way their prejudices do not set in prematurely

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A.T. - Making a choice between the Greek passage on life and the Hebrew passage on life is very difficult for me. The Greek attitude is one of strength and moving on to the next generation. I feel that life should be exciting and fully lived. The Greek passage shows that strength and doesn't dwell on the unpleasantness of death. In a way, I like that because I want to be a strong person and feel that way. There was life, it has passed, now there's new life. Don't dwell.

On the other hand, death brings a feeling of finality. The Hebrew passage focuses on the beauty of life, such as that of a flower. The joys of life are important. I can relate to this passage because I have often thought of loved ones that have passed away and thought, "They'll never go through their front door or sit on the couch watching television again". It's so final.

Both show life as a frail thing. Leaves on a tree or flowers in the field. I can relate more to the Hebrew ideas, but envy the Greeks. While there must be sorrow and grief, there must also be strength and the understanding that life must end and there will always be new life.

Like some other students you seen to want to combine the two traditions. I personally think that's a good idea. What do you think of Kitto's commentary? Do you think that his distinction between Greek (heroic striving) vs. Hebrew (humility and resignation) is right?

Yes, I feel that Kitto is correct in his commentary on the Greeks and Hebrews. It would be more helpful if he would expand on his commentary.

He does in the whole of his book.

I wonder, though, why the Greeks, who emphasize strength, used leaves as a symbol of a man's life instead of a tree. Trees are strong and grow to be large and intimidating. They do die and crash to the forest floor. A new tree will then take its place. The forest is always being reborn and regenerated, as is mankind.

The leaf is to represent frailty, as I have been led to believe. Life is frail and fragile, but a tree, no matter how large, can be cut down.

Do you believe a tree would have represented the Greek way of thinking better than the leaf, or do you feel the leaf is a more proper representation? Why?

I never thought of that. If the leaf seems like a frail symbol consider the other words he uses: "vigorous", for example. I think there are strong words in the Greek passage that have no counterpart in the Hebrew.

Comment/Analysis

A.T.'s distinction between the Greek and Hebrew may have been influenced by Kitto's own interpretive remarks. My directions were to read the two passages, compare their meanings, and make a journal entry thereafter. She may have read ahead on the xeroxed handout that I had distributed. Yet her writing had an air of originality to it. The theme of strength repeated itself. I pointed out in as circumspect a manner as I could that she might want to reconsider Homer's metaphor of leaf and tree (I reminded her that the Greek passage typically employed strong words like "vigorous"). I also left her with the suggestion that the two passages might be somehow combined. Her own comparison of the two passages was not characterized by the religious dogmatism that influenced other student responses; so I thought that this suggestion might take hold of her thinking in the future. This, of course, represents a prejudgment about what is to be preferred on my part. I should have made this more clear to her. When a teacher operates from a position of expertise this sort of admission should be obligatory.

The Governor's Academy only lasts three weeks. There was a humanities curriculum beyond the concerns of my research to be taught. No out-of-class assignments were permitted. These circumstances ended my conversation with A.T. on this matter. She did not choose, although she always had the prerogative, to make further replies in her journal. Whether this was because I had unduly interfered with an

indigenous line of thinking or she just lost interest, I could not tell.

Exercise #2

Students were assigned to read Sartre's "Existentialism Is A Humanism". I provided them with a context for this work by briefly discussing the Spanish Civil War and the German invasion of France in 1940. I also discussed his short story, "The Wall", in order to specifically demonstrate that a text can be thought of as a tentative answer to some question that the author has asked concerning the meaningfulness of one's life-experience. I suggested that the question underlying the story-text was something like, "To what degree is one responsible for the actions one commits in this world"?

I had anticipated that students might have some initial trouble reading Sartre's essay. The ideas would be unfamiliar, and there would be little in their reading experience to prepare them for the ideational world of the essay. Carefulness in the introduction seemed necessary. I tried also to establish a broader historical perspective for their understanding of the essay. I explained the humanist tradition - which Sartre claims for himself - by starting with Pico della Mirandola's *Oration On The Dignity Of Man*, which was written in the fifteenth century, and then outlined this tradition, bringing it forward into our own century. This background material was meant to give students a sense of what Gadamer calls Historically Effected Consciousness (Gadamer 1994). At this time I also introduced students to "The Problem of the Virtuous Nazi" - a moral conundrum that forces the student of Sartre to examine his thinking for logical contradictions.

I also gave them the following practical instructions, which were meant to guide them as they read, discussed, and made entries into their journals:

>*As you read this essay can you identify any prejudices that keep you
> from understanding what Sartre has to say?
>*What prejudices of your own might help you actually understand his

point of view?

*Listen carefully to what the essay has to say. Your turn to speak your own point of view will come after that.

*Make a brief summary statement concerning how you first felt about the essay.

* Also include any change of feelings since your first reading and oral discussion of the essay.

Class discussion of Sartre's essay went slowly. It was difficult to get them to give his thoughts a fair hearing. When they read the words of the text, their own prejudices immediately set in. The result was often a desire to confound his ideas and to prove their own prejudices right. For example, a majority of the class argued that if Sartre retained any sense of right and wrong after he says: if there is no God (as he himself believes) then there are no values to guide human behavior, then he contradicts himself and should not be taken seriously as a thinker. The point is not that the students were right or wrong in making this observation, but rather that they used this to assert their own prejudgments in lieu of having to consider Sartre's. They could not get over the impediments their prejudices presented to a morality that was not God-given. One student worried that people who did not read Sartre carefully might misuse his work or turn it to their own selfish purposes. She conceded that there might be something of value in his work for the mature and careful reader. What a few students finally gained from this exercise was an awareness of the prejudgments that conditioned their own thinking. They came to understand that there are other ways of experiencing the world, even if those are antipathetic to their own.

A few students did try to integrate Sartre's emphasis on individual moral responsibility into their own Christian framework.

Students were directed to make their entries in a section of their journal entitled Prejudgments.

Student Journal Responses

B.C. - Sartre did not believe in God, but he still wanted the moral values of the Christian style. He also thought whatever one man does, he will be responsible for other humans on Earth. "In fashioning myself I fashion man". He said that nothing existed before a man was born. Sartre, in my opinion, is too "wishy-washy". He does not stay with one thing; he wants the best of both worlds. Existentialism is not clearly understood because of Sartre wanting to take from Christian values and his own and combining the two.

I was always taught that "you are always responsible for your own actions". So, it was hard for me to understand, if you do something, you are not only responsible for yourself, but for everyone else that follows. I now understand the moral imperative of Sartre's essay.

I'm not sure that I agree that he still wants to keep Christian values and just not believe in God. He explicitly denies this when he refers to others who do the same in very negative terms. He argues that no set of values is permanent. Yet he does reject fascism (Nazi). Has he retained Christian values, or does he have some other justification for doing this? Superficially, it seems as if freedom is an a priori value for him. But I really don't think so. What other reason could he have for rejecting the Nazi besides being a "closet" Christian? My question is based on the problem of the virtuous Nazi that I told you about in class.

Were there many people that followed Sartre's views? If so, how did they place in society?

Yes. He had a wide following in France. What do you mean by place in society? They were generally intellectuals. Sartre ultimately tried to blend his philosophy into Marxism - and an older tradition of French rationalism. What I find compelling about his philosophy - even though I cannot accept his uncompromising atheism - is its grounding in common recognizable experience. Remember his illustrative story about the young man who couldn't make up his mind whether to stay home and take

care of his sickly mother or to go away to fight the Nazis.

B.C. did not respond after this.

Comment/Analysis

Sartre's essay and student responses presented difficulties. I could never quite decide if the students were simply having a hard time reading the essay, or if a fair reading of it threatened them with a compromise of beliefs so essential to their understanding of the world that objectivity was unattainable. As a conversant and as an analyst, I learned some valuable lessons about the Christian traditions that permeated their lives. For example, students had difficulty understanding Sartre's notion of radical responsibility. Their framework of understanding taught that one ultimately turns one's sins over to God, who, as Christ, atoned for those sins.

B.C. had trouble grasping how it is that one must assume responsibility for fashioning an image of man. This, of course, comes from Sartre's application of Kant's Moral Imperative to his own work. On one level B.C. consistently misread this idea because she took it too literally and missed the subtle mixture of particularity and abstraction that is at the heart of this famous moral dictum. B.C. did say in her second paragraph that she had come to understand what Sartre meant, and she said so by making an explicit reference to her own Christian teachings, which expound a very different idea. B.C. accused Sartre of hypocrisy, saying that he wants to do away with the idea of God but retain Christian values. Sartre explicitly denies this, but B.C. did not take notice. Such misunderstanding is not willful or shallow. B.C. could not accept or, perhaps, could not even fully comprehend that values might have an origin outside of God. This was to be expected. It is the most likely outcome when two very different traditions of understanding encounter one another. But this does not preclude, as I have said, an advancement of self-understanding on the part of B.C. Her own beliefs did not go completely unchecked. The broader world is one in which the dogmas that conditioned her own world view did not go unchallenged. B.C. must

account for ideas contrary to her own in one of three ways: she can reject those ideas; she can accept them completely; or she can use them to modify her own thinking in some way.

It is not a proper goal of a hermeneutically guided curriculum that students should be expected to give up even very dogmatic ideas. A teacher, depending on his or her own predispositions, might entertain such desires, but these are abrogated by the hermeneutical principle of objectivity, which must respect even those ideas that claim for themselves exclusiveness. Any paradox here can be gotten around. The rule of thumb that has evolved from my experience with a hermeneutical pedagogy is that no particular beliefs are beyond the critical reach of conversation. The person (student) who introduces dogmatic thinking into a hermeneutically guided discourse is bound by the rules that guide interpretive conversation to examine ideas contrary to his or her own. The first rule of hermeneutical discourse is to listen fairly to another's point of view. But no more than that can be practically expected of any participant. This is arguably easier to achieve in the atmosphere of a group than it is in the relative intimacy of journal writing because of the social pressure to obey the rules. Unfortunately, this concession to the rules of conversation was, for the most part, not achieved in this lesson, neither in class discussion nor in the journal exercises.

During oral discussion I asked students to ponder the problem of the "Virtuous Nazi". In short, students were told a hypothetical story about a Nazi war criminal who was put on trial for crimes against humanity. In this fictitious case the Nazi acknowledged full responsibility for his actions, meeting, it would seem, Sartre's criterion for acting in "Good Faith". Was the Nazi then virtuous from Sartre's point of view? The issue was complicated by Sartre's seemingly contradictory condemnation of Nazism. Students sometimes made reference to this in their journal entries.

In light of B.C.'s objections to what she saw as Sartre's "hypocrisy", I asked her to reconsider his thinking in light of the problem of the "Virtuous Nazi". To my disappointment B.C. simply asked if Sartre had a wide following. I answered this *non*

sequitur directly. If I had it to do over, I would press my question about the "Virtuous Nazi" in order to encourage B.C. to continue her part of the discussion. As an "expert" - whose responsibility is to guide students into a process of interpretation - it is a teacher's responsibility to encourage students to talk even when they might be personally unwilling to do so. As a practical matter, however, it might have been less intrusive on her right to think for herself if I would have asked her why she asked this question about Sartre's following. Not having done this may very well have interrupted an original line of thinking on her part.

J.M. - I believe Sartre developed his atheistic thought that there is no God because for some reason he was really upset with the world. He has no concrete evidence to say there is no God, but yet he is emphatic there isn't. I believe to be true his feeling that men usually want to do things that are good for the whole of men (there are many exceptions). His idea that absolute freedom has been bestowed on man in that every individual has the effect to influence the whole of mankind is a paradox because he also says that this power is dictated by the feelings of all men, and, therefore, the person really has no choice and no absolute freedom. Sartre may have denounced that there may even be a God because of his past experiences, but this does not make his possibly biased philosophy of existentialism true.

The main prejudice I thought as I read the text was that there is a superior entity that created the world as we know it. Truthfully, my idea of God might not be in the traditional sense, but with a favorable amount of interpretation it can be made to fit in slightly with the Bible. I have no proof, as Sartre has none, but that is what I believe and still do (old prejudice). Maybe it's because the idea of God being there is more appealing than there being no God. What a prejudice to have. I'll explain my theory sometime - I really am not sure of anything positively.

I have marked above a passage I believe to be very interesting. No one else so

far has attempted a logical analysis of Sartre's thinking. But I want to understand you correctly. Let me try to paraphrase what you have said. "If one has the power to effect others, and if this power is dictated by the feelings of other men (the paradox you refer to) then no one can have absolute freedom". Are the words "this power is dictated by the feelings of other men" taken from the essay? If they are, I can't find them. If not, why did you write them? Help me with this.

The words "This power is dictated by the feelings of other men", are not directly stated in the passage, but one could get the same idea from the phrase, "And when we say man is responsible for himself (total freedom to do as one wills) we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men (his choices are dictated by the whole of mankind)". This is quoted directly from the passage. Another part that I think implies that man would have total freedom with existentialist thought is, "Man . . . is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing. Man is nothing else but that which he makes himself". But then Sartre talks of man's choices being controlled by what's best for mankind, man can make no choice but one that in the long run benefits all. The sentence, "To choose between this or that is at the same time to affirm the value of that which is being chosen, for we are unable ever to choose the worse", illustrates this point. This is where I recognized inconsistencies. Sartre says at first with existentialism you have more freedom to choose what you want to do than you have ever conceived, but then later says that freedom is limited by your responsibility to mankind. So, the freedom to choose is never really there. Sartre has an O.K. idea, but he advertises it as giving one great freedom of individuality and then throws the curve of responsibility to all mankind.

O.K. Where you said, "This power is dictated by the feelings of other men", I took you to mean that the flow of feeling ran from others to you. In that case it seemed like the opposite of total freedom. As I reread I see that this is precisely what you meant after all. This is well conceived. I am trying to think how Sartre would

answer you. He believed that we choose our feelings. A man named Robert Solomon wrote a book on this, The Passions. He argues that we use our emotions basically to enhance our self-esteem. For example, I might hold someone in contempt in order to feel superior to them. I am, like everyone else, responsible for my feelings - but only my own feelings. I choose to feel contempt, and by doing so, I allow that choice to everyone also. But I am not bound by the feelings of others. They are responsible for their own feelings as such. If they choose to feel contempt then their choice applies to me, is directed at me, but it does not necessarily determine my response. Their choices only hypothetically involve me. I legislate for the world by my choices, but no one lacks the freedom to do otherwise. And the same for me. I do not have to take their feelings into account at all. I may freely ignore them, I may give them the "right" to act as they do, but there is no act that cannot be overturned. I freely choose to consider their feelings or not.

.   No further response from J.M.

Comment/Analysis

J.M.'s response was much more cerebral than B.C.'s. I underscored a sentence he had written and paraphrased it. I repeated a phrase he had used, and asked him if this was taken from Sartre's essay. J.M. admitted that it was his own phrase but went on to justify its use and elaborated on his intended meaning. Once I was sure what J.M. meant to say, I felt that I could register an objection to his interpretation (I was now acting in the mode of an interlocutor). One must be careful in doing this kind of thing because a stoppage in the flow of conversation often occurs when a student thinks that he has been caught in a mistake. Yet it is disingenuous and patronizing to allow a student to harbor what one deems to be an outright misreading without an honest challenge. This must be done, however, in the spirit of hermeneutic conversation, not as an attack - even a veiled attack - on what the student honestly thinks.

I reminded J.M. of the philosopher Robert Solomon - whose ideas I had discussed

in class with the entire group. By introducing Solomon's understanding of how emotions were used to construct social relationships, I planned to circumvent student objections to Sartre's atheism, which confounded them and in some ways seriously impeded this exercise. During a short class discussion students readily and positively responded to Solomon's notion on how emotions are used in order to enhance self-esteem. That Solomon takes a Sartrean position on the complete freedom to use emotions in this manner did not seem to concern the students because his work is not encumbered with Sartre's explicit and uncompromising atheism.

C.M. - I see Sartre as a Christian who doesn't think there is a God. He sees a world without God as a world of ultimate freedom and where everything is permitted.

Sartre speaks of a lot of individualism and freedoms in this text. I came in thinking of relationships where people feed off each other and that through God there is only freedom and not the opposite. My views have not changed but I have found how much more these things are needed.

O.K. But Sartre doesn't permit Nazism. Even if he is only a "secret" Christian - a secret kept even from himself - would that be the same thing as wanting everything to be permitted? What about his favorable reference to Kant and his Moral Imperative. Go back and look at what that means. He says we must act, keeping in mind that when we make a choice it is as if we are making it for everyone. If, for example, I choose to drink and drive then everyone is, from an abstract point of view, permitted to do that. I can't possibly say I can drink and drive but nobody else can. If everyone drinks and drives what kind of a world would we live in? If I choose to be a Nazi, then that is choosing a world in which Nazi thugs rule. That is a choice against the very ground of our being - that is, we choose to undercut the very freedom that makes existence possible.

As a true Christian there are limitations in life. Sartre not being a true Christian,

without God, has no limits. This is also what he says - saying everything is permitted. Not believing in a Nazi form of life, he sets morals and beliefs but yet becomes hypocritical in that he has no religion, no God, no purpose and still doesn't permit Nazi. I agree with what is stated at the top. If a Nazi world was active, it would contradict the beliefs of Sartre.

I'm not sure if this makes a lick of sense, but Sartre definitely has an arguable view of life, yet he seems a couple sandwiches short of a picnic. Meaning he misses the words which make his writings believable, practical, and meaningful. These thoughts also come from a person (me) who has prejudices which might blind me from these previously listed.

Your first two lines grabbed my attention ("As a Christian there are limitations . . . "). Have you read Hamlet? Hamlet changes by the end of the play - just by chance I will discuss this play starting tomorrow, so you'll soon know what I'm talking about. In Act V he says these lines: "There is a divinity that shapes our ends/ rough hew them how we may". and "There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all". In this play Hamlet comes to accept that ultimately God is in charge of the world, not himself. Hamlet realizes that he can't control everything. Isn't that what you are getting at by saying that Sartre, not being a true Christian, has no limits because he has no God to limit him?

When Sartre says "all is permitted" he is consciously quoting a character from Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov, Ivan Karamazov, who goes insane by the consequences of his atheism. Sartre took from this book what Dostoyevsky, a very Christian writer, did not mean for him to take. Being affected by a Christian book did not make Sartre a Christian. Applying something from Sartre's essay is not likely to make any of us an atheist either. I have found his arguments about making choices to have an effect on my own thinking, especially where he says that we legislate for the whole world. Remember my anecdote about drinking and driving. I can't choose

just for me to drink and drive and not allow that for every one else.

No further response from C.M

Note: The section of the class on *Hamlet* is not reported herein.

Comment/Analysis

C.M., like some other students, sensed a contradiction in Sartre's thinking. He is, she says, a Christian without God. C.M. correctly separated her own understanding of individualism from Sartre's. Although he discusses intersubjective relationships in the essay, Sartre does not consider what C.M. thinks to be the crucial influence that others have on one's decision making. C.M. seems to imply that if Sartre did, he would not have been able to propound a theory of radical human responsibility. C.M. adds that from a Christian point of view, there is only freedom with God, i.e., only God can free one from the bonds of sin.

Once again, as an analyst, I gained much from hindsight. At the time, I did not think to ask C.M. if her comment, "relationship where people feed off each other", represented a truly Christian concept. Is the phenomenon of the isolated individual making moral decisions not consistent with scriptural tradition? I mention that I should perhaps have said this in order to show how I might have stimulated C.M.'s thinking through my familiarity with the subject matter.

Teaching should be considered a furthering of the hermeneutic project of inquiry. It goes far beyond a mere preparation for specific classroom activities. It is an activity that should be connected to subject matter (*Sache*). In one sense teaching is an extension of all other critical activity. I see no compelling reason why a teacher should relinquish his or her rights as a critic or interpreter. A teacher's expertise with the subject matter is a facet of his or her effectiveness as an educator as long as that expertise is carefully circumscribed by the rules of hermeneutically guided interpretation.

I asked C.M. to go back and consider Sartre's favorable reference to Kant's Moral Imperative. I judged that there had been an omission in her reading. This judgment was likely based on my own preconceived notion of what was the right way to read the essay. The traditions that condition the way any teacher understands the world will find their way into the remarks he or she makes to students. And, of course, it would be harmful to a student's autonomy as a learner if I confused my own ideas with the truth or forced them upon a student as a truth-claim superior to their own. But as long as students have accepted that the teacher's ideas are as tentative and speculative as their own, their autonomy as learners goes undiminished.

C.M.'s framework of understanding, however, was not going to allow her to gain much more from this essay. I had hoped that she and other students would be able to recognize their own prejudices by reading a work foreign in many ways to their own way of thinking. This was partially successful, although as a whole they were more prone to examine Sartre's prejudices than their own. Their own points of view were so strongly held that I found it difficult to get them to examine their own prejudgments by reading Sartre. In keeping with this realization, I focused on C.M.'s contention that by "Sartre not bring a true Christian, without God, has no limits". I thought I might try to affect a less threatening examination of her own values by offering her something more comparable, something more congenial to her own tradition of understanding. That is why I suddenly shifted to a brief discussion of *Hamlet*, which was part of the regular curriculum that I was teaching for the academy. It would give her an expanded look at these issues from a perspective closer to her own tradition. I started by telling her that for Hamlet the world becomes, during the course of the play, one in which "there is a divinity that shapes our ends". Still, he must act and assume the consequences for his actions.

This allowed me to approach the subject matter less directly, avoiding the pitfalls that kept her from giving Sartre's ideas a fair hearing. My next thought was to introduce C.M. to Dostoyevsky, also a Christian writer. Sartre in this essay has

already quoted Ivan Karamazov's, "If God is dead, all is permitted". I inverted what I took to be the cause of her underlying anxiety. If Sartre can read the Christian writer Dostoyevsky without becoming a Christian, she should be able to read an atheistic writer without an undue fear of losing her faith. I then reminded her of an example that I had used successfully in classroom discussion to illustrate Kant's Moral Imperative. How can one choose to drink and drive without establishing an image of humankind that allows every one to drink and drive? The tactical thinking behind all this was to help her outflank her own prejudices, not with the object of having her discard those prejudices but to examine them from a point of view that is both different from and comparable to her present framework of understanding.

———————

D.M. - When I read Sartre's essay I was totally opposed to it. I come from a strong Christian family and was raised to believe that we are put on earth for a purpose. If you would just follow your heart it will lead you where you need to go. Sartre's view that we just bubbled up into this world and must define ourselves contradicts this view. As much as I would like to keep an open mind and critique Sartre's piece, my upbringing forbids it.

One prejudice that I encountered was present from the very beginning. Once I realized that existentialism was a religion, a prejudice began. I view all other religions as being wrong and only mine correct. Once I found out existentialism was a religion I read very less intently, and my mind became blocked to what Sartre had to say.

This is a very honest reply. It's important that you know about yourself. There are, however, existentialists who are Christians. One is Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish writer of the last century.

Now, after our discussion about if we would shoot someone harming the sculpture or not, I can see where Sartre's theology would come into play (D.M. refers to a classroom discussion that is related in full later in this chapter). He would say the

guard happened to be in the right place at the right time. Now he must make a decision that would help define himself and the human race. This decision will set a precedent that will help the rest of the human race make a decision when a similar decision occurs.

What you have done seems fair enough. Here you apply what you learned from Sartre to the hypothetical problem without changing your beliefs. In some paradoxical sense you have stayed the same but changed also.

Comment/Analysis

D.M. attempted to apply a lesson from Sartre's text to a hypothetical story that I had used in a class lesson that was designed to promote the clarification of prejudgments. Students were asked to consider the case of a man who is hired to guard the *Pieta*. The man is also a committed Christian. In the course of his job, someone attacks the *Pieta*. His dilemma is: will he shoot the man vandalizing this great piece of Christian art - which has inspired so many people? - or will he follow Christ's injunctions to love one another and, therefore, not shoot? Gadamer argues that understanding derives from the application of a text to a unique situation, one not originally present to the text itself. It is out of the new situation that understanding is born. D.M. considered the moral problem that I had presented to him. It required that he explain to fellow students what he would do if he were in the guard's place and the same situation occurred.

In the class discussion of this moral dilemma, which occurred prior to the journal assignment on Sartre, one student had said that he would risk killing the perpetrator for the sake of the statue, or rather what it represented. Others said that no statue, no matter what it represented, was worth killing another human being. There was much animated discussion over this issue. Out of this hypothetical situation, D.M. realized that at the moment of decision, perhaps - just perhaps - moral ambiguity reigns. One simply chooses, and that choice, in a strangely abstract yet very particular way,

becomes a choice for all of humankind. His words are worth repeating once again: "I can see where Sartre's theology would come into play. He would say the guard happened to be in the right place at the right time. Now he must make a decision that would help define himself and the human race. This decision will set a precedent that will help the rest of the human race make a decision when a similar situation occurs".

Sartre - and it is the same with any other author - might not agree with this conclusion, but that no longer matters. The goals of the discussions and of the student journal writing were guided by the principles of hermeneutical philosophy. It was not intended that students grasp Sartre's words in an objective fashion, i.e., in the sense that the meaning of these words exist apart from their own experience of the world. D.M. has extended his capacity to experience the world by applying an idea gotten from a text, one not originally or essentially part of his own tradition, to his own framework of understanding.

This was a lesson that began by encouraging students to examine their own prejudices. In D.M.'s case he went beyond the recognition of his own prejudgments. He came to an understanding of the subject matter through application (Gadamer 1994). This outcome could not be anticipated when the assignment was given. The specifics of dialogic understanding cannot be determined beforehand. It is in the nature of conversational understanding to lead in unexpected ways.

In a fully developed journal exercise, D.M. would have been directed, however, to cross-reference his entry in a section labeled Applications.

M.H.- I felt he never really got his point across. I totally didn't agree with his conviction that there isn't a God, and frankly it totally confuses me to think that someone wouldn't believe in Him. Maybe that is why I didn't really understand the essay. I also felt he contradicted himself in several of his thoughts. He stated that man is free to make choices, but he condemned the Nazis for the choices they made.

Maybe he should have practiced what he preached.

I would say my belief in God was a prejudice that I brought into the text that was challenged. I always try to keep an open mind and go into things without a decision already made, but his comments about God really angered me. I can't forget my Lord for even a moment. It would be like saying the air we breath didn't exist, so I have a real problem with anything based in the nonexistence of God.

This is an honest reply. All I ask is that you keep your prejudgments in mind. They guide what you can understand.

Sartre writes from a tradition that is worlds away from your own. Is there anything he has said that might change you in any way? NOT YOUR BELIEFS! But the way you see things in your own world - one based on a belief in God. Has this essay (or my discussion of Sartre) broadened your perspective at all?

Maybe reread the essay sometime in your spare time.

I understand what you are saying. There was not really anything in the essay that changed me. Well I do agree that we should be responsible for our own actions (choices), but I also believe that if you ask God's forgiveness he will give it to you. You will still have to deal with the earthly consequences, but with your Father up in heaven your slate will be wiped clear. P.S. Explain the difference between "you" and "your beliefs".

I hadn't realized I made such a distinction until you pointed it out. Maybe I meant your belief system leaves room for a wider response to daily events. At least you now know that your beliefs exist in a wider world. . . . From your point of view, not a truer world, but one that encompasses the ideas of a man like Sartre. So your beliefs do not change, but you are on a daily basis more keenly tuned to the idea of full moral responsibility - but on your own terms.

distinction between earthly responsibility and God's forgiveness. Although God freely forgives anyone of anything, one must still deal - as she puts it - with the earthly consequences. She had applied an existential understanding of personal responsibility to her own Christian self-understanding.

A final note on this exercise: Students mostly responded to the salient points of Sartre's essay, which were unavoidably highlighted during my initial introduction. The essay was perhaps not wisely chosen. It was difficult for them to comprehend on a basic level although most gained insight into their own tradition of understanding, which was a primary goal of reading and interpreting this essay. This difficulty prompted too much explaining on my part. My own prejudgments were inexorably present during the course of the explanations I gave and affected the approach students took toward understanding the text. If the text had been more appropriately chosen, less explaining would have been called for. It is best to limit initial introductions to any text to the establishing of a broad context of meaning rather than pointing out basic issues inherent to the text itself.

Furthermore, the question of what texts are most appropriately chosen for any particular curriculum is a thorny one. There are no ready-made answers. Of course, in a text-centered curriculum it would usually be beyond the experience of students to select their own texts. Perhaps guidelines could be developed that are consistent with hermeneutic principles of inquiry. Criteria for the choice of texts would be an important aspect of any hermeneutically-based curriculum.

In fact, several students applied Sartre's ideas of radical responsibility to their own Christian notion of moral understanding. This had not been part of the assignment. Somehow, this expanded response grew out of a constellation of factors including the text itself, their own tradition of self-understanding, and a dialogue in which my own part as an "expert" proved to be essential.

In a summary discussion of this exercise to students, I tried to make the following general points about the principles of the hermeneutical process of inquiry. These

points either recapitulated actual student accomplishments, or they were meant to remind students of something they had overlooked or failed to achieve. The following observations were, to one extent or the other, meant as lead-ins to future lessons:

* Expectations based on our own tradition of understanding are challenged or set by what we read. We may or we may not modify the prejudgments which make-up our traditional way of understanding.

* Something new might come from our reading. I used the example of moral ambiguity in the *Pieta* exercise. I suggested that Sartre's ideas might apply to understanding the ambiguity that came to characterize the class discussion of this dilemma.

* Some texts contribute to the development of one's self-understanding.

* One's way of experiencing the world can be influenced by a text despite its strangeness or objectionable character to the reader.

GHA 1997

The criteria for selection of students did not alter for the 1997 academy. Once again I was to teach a chronologically based class on the study of culture and values that began with the early Renaissance. There was enough liberalization in the curriculum for me to introduce the study of painting and sculpture. Student discussions were encouraged by the administrators of the program although students were required to take a pre-test/post-test that measured how much basic information they had gained about the subject matter. Journal writing was endorsed. But any overt recognition of my research goals was once again discouraged. I began these sessions by discussing hermeneutical philosophy in its specific details.

Exercise # 1

I now had a clearer understanding of what I wanted students to accomplish. The

particular sections of their journals were better conceived and my guiding directions were much more specific. In particular, I began by presenting a basic overview of the hermeneutic principles of interpretation. I emphasized the rules governing the I-Thou relationship between reader and text. I've never found it difficult for students to accept the idea of having a conversation with a text. I explained that the text is a written expression of the spoken word, and as such each text has its own voice. Like the voice of any person with whom one converses, it addresses you and sometimes makes a claim upon one's attention. I emphasized that the activity of reading (interpretively) requires civility. I used this observation to launch a brief explanation of Martin Buber's conception of an I-Thou relationship as it applies to interpretive understanding.

The first practical activity was to show students a slide of Kienholz's *State Hospital*. I provided an explanation of this sculptural ensemble in order to set a context for its conception (not for its understanding, which would require an application to the students own context - one that may be very different from that of this work of art). These students were too young to know of the scandalous conditions of state run mental hospitals before their well meaning but tragic dissolution in the 1970's, which led to thousands of former mental patients being let loose to fend for themselves, swelling the ranks of America's homeless. However, an explanation of the conditions that characterized patient care in the state run hospitals before this occurred and the moral outrage people came to feel toward those conditions helped form the context for this work of art.

The following are examples of initial student responses to my directions to write a paragraph or two telling what this work of art might mean. Students had the context that I had provided them, but I made no mention of the symbolic structure of the work, per se. These entries were directed toward an open section of the journal that had no particular designation from a hermeneutic point of view.

Student Journal Responses

P.A. - I believe this artwork was done to make a statement about not only the harshness of state hospitals and what needed to be done, but also the deterioration of society. The people are strapped down with belts and almost like they are cocooned there. It appears as if the person on the bottom is thinking about the person on top but feels as if he can't do anything for him although he would like to. It symbolizes how people abuse power and exert meanness, uncaring. The hospital attendants had [indecipherable] of these patients' lives and destroyed them. We have complete control of the world. The question is: do we destroy it, or improve it?

    M.B.-* vast deprivation of all necessary elements; food, water, medicine,
        attention, love;

    * the coldness portrayed by the harsh iron bed frames and bars;

    * the vulgarity of the bed pan, the strapped wrists; an emotional work
      by Kienholz which illustrates an [indecipherable word] connection
      being through family members, friends, etc., to state hospitals,
      perhaps only through books, pictures, stories.

The sculpture tears at the heart and soul: the physical stress, not to mention the psychological of the two subjects portrays a disillusioned system of treatment for the mentally unstable. One is moved by the harsh, feeble surroundings of the ratty mattresses, the bedpan, and the soiled straps. Perhaps a desperate cry for help. (Note: M.B. switched from making a list to a more formal paragraph structure. Nothing in my directions had anticipated the kind of list he initially made).

———————

Note: There was no class discussion either before or after this first writing assignment. Directly following the allotted time for making this entry, I formed the

students into small groups and asked them to discuss the meaning of the sculpture. Afterwards, I directed them to record in their journals any new ideas that had come to mind during the group discussion phase. My purpose was to provide them with a tacit comparison between the thinking done in seclusion and that which formed in the midst of a conversational atmosphere. They were admonished to follow the conversational precepts about sincere listening, etc. This coincides with the hermeneutical idea that values are socially derived (*sensus communis*).

P.A. - The metal of the beds and the mattresses represented the coldness of the people. The bedpan is so close it's as if help is right there but out of reach. Meredith [another student who took part in the group discussion] believes he [the artist] must have had a relative or something in the hospital to set him off. I don't. I think he is talking more about how people in general need to take care of others, not just abuse in hospitals.

M.B. - Several good points were made. I didn't realize the speech bubble was what it actually was. Someone talked about the blank faces. I thought that was interesting. Someone also said the bedpan represented help that was so close yet out of direct reach. We all made note of the obvious. Also the person on the top was in the thoughts of the person below.

Comment/Analysis

I wanted to give students the opportunity to compare what they thought on their own with the results of conversational thinking. P.A. compared her sense of a more universal understanding with another student's more particular, biographical understanding. These kinds of comparisons obviously don't occur when thinking is isolated. As obvious as this is, it is often overlooked in the competitive atmosphere of schooling where argumentation rather than dialogue is often encouraged through

debate like exercises (This may be more the norm in American than British schools).

Exercise # 1 (Continued)

Students asked if I was going to give my own interpretation. I felt that the polite rules of conversation should override any pedagogical reservations I might have in doing this. This was also an opportunity to illustrate some hermeneutical ideas that were apropos to the current lesson. I pointed out that part of my understanding of this sculptural assembly included consideration of the thought bubble that lead from the figure on the lower bunk to the one on the upper bunk. Students had noticed this during group discussions. I pointed out that the outline of the thought bubble, which was formed from neon glass tubing, greatly resembled a fish. This, I suggested, was a reference to the Biblical story of Jonah and the Whale. It certainly seemed reasonable that Kienholz was familiar with this story. That would mean that this work could, in part, be interpreted from a Biblical position of understanding. At least, I was of the opinion that a familiarity with the Bible could extend one's understanding of the work. I asked the students to consider this Biblical story and interpret what the thought bubble might mean. Students answered that it was a sign of hope in the midst of some very depressing imagery. Most students were quick to recall that Jonah was saved when the whale spat him up onto a shore - a Biblical symbol always interpreted as a sign of hope. If Jonah was saved from his predicament, so likewise there must be hope somehow for these victims of mental illness or, at least, release from institutionalized mistreatment.

Comment/Analysis

It was by chance that the students asked for my own interpretation. Depending on the extent and quality of the students' discussion, I was prepared to give these remarks if needed. I demonstrated how I had used a Biblical tradition with which I was familiar to interpret a modernist sculpture. I emphasized that this was by no means a definitive understanding of this work of art. My own interpretation did not necessarily supersede

their own. This also presented me with an opportunity to demonstrate that the hermeneutical criterion for meaning always unfolds in the midst of conversational activity. In other words, if enough people approve of my interpretation, it will gain influence from the result of public scrutiny. I made a special point of telling them that my interpretation did not spring into being from my own solitary thinking. Of course, there was the Biblical tradition, a textual tradition that spoke certain "truths" to me. But just as important were previous conversations with students like themselves. In fact, much of the interpretation I had shared with them had derived from such conversations. Interpretive thinking has conversational origins. Each succeeding group of students is a new generation that has entered into an extended conversation with a teacher as well as with other students and texts. The teacher is a nexus for this conversation from one group of students to another.

Students benefit from being shown what is expected of them. By this I mean not just the technical aspects of a process that they are expected to practice, but just as importantly, they must be shown the intellectual level of the discourse they are expected to attain. They need good examples - but ones presented in unobtrusive ways.

Fortuitously, I also came to recognize a prejudice of my own during this discussion of my understanding of this work of art. Several students had used the word "alienated" to describe the dehumanized figures in the sculpture. For me, the sense of alienation came from the nature of mental illness, whereas for most students, the alienation originated with the maltreatment of the patient. For them it was more of a social problem. For me it had to do with the nature of mental illness as a phenomenon in its own right. I suggested that my framework of understanding, with its psychological emphasis, not only meant that I experienced this work of art differently from some of them, but that difference might have, for example, very different political ramifications. By comparing their point of view with my own, I was forced to reconsider not only my values but the traditionary basis for those values. The epiphany

was in the specific discovery that I might be more interested in the nature of mental illness than in alleviating suffering. This discussion, as it turned out, taught students - and myself - much about the hermeneutical process of understanding. Not the least valuable lesson was one concerned with how one person (a teacher, in this case) learns from others (students) through an open comparison of ideas. In particular, it illustrated how discussion can led to a recognition of one's prejudices. What was serendipitous was the added insight into why it really matters that the process of understanding, in its conversational manifestation, be taken seriously.

Insofar as teachers are professionally involved with a particular discipline, their own interpretive understanding of that discipline's subject matter - and indeed their very self-understanding - cannot help finding its way into the discourse they have with students. Why are people motivated to come into the profession of teaching if they are not interested in the subject matter that is inherent to their chosen discipline? Teachers and students are one another's natural conversational partners. It is a loss to both parties if the opportunity to discuss art, religion, philosophy, and literature is not taken advantage of.

Exercise # 2

I began this second exercise by recapitulating the hermeneutical idea of prejudices or prejudgments and their effect on understanding. Secondly, I discussed the role of tradition and historically effected consciousness in the process of interpretive understanding. As an entry piece, I read Machiavelli's letter to Francesco Vettori:

> When evening comes, I return to my home, and I go into my study; and on the threshold, I take off my everyday clothes, which are covered with mud and mire, and I put on regal and curial robes; and dressed in a more appropriate manner I enter into the ancient courts of ancient men and am welcomed by them kindly, and there I taste the food that alone is mine, and for which I was born; and there I am not ashamed to speak to them, to ask them the reasons for their actions; and they in their

humanity answer me; and for hours I feel no boredom . . . (Machiavelli, 1979, p. 69).

I concluded my exposition with some brief remarks about the conversational relationship with a text, but I emphasized how one's understanding of something could be deepened by extending the framework of understanding that potentially encompasses the object of study.

The exercise centered around a painting by Botticelli, *Pallas and Centaur*. I discussed, as succinctly as possible, the Pazzi conspiracy in 1478 against the Medici family, expounding on the events that helped make up the background of that historical event. My purpose was limited to establishing a historical context for the painting itself. I deliberately excluded from this exercise the horizon of understanding of the students. By restricting the scope of the exercise, I hoped to better explore student involvement with one particular facet of the interpretive process.

The painting itself is replete with symbolic associations and is, in fact, largely allegorical. It was commissioned for the Medici family and represented their own perspective of the events that overtook them in April, 1478. It can, of course, be understood as propaganda, and it was by several students. I also employed a sketch by Leonardo DaVinci of the actual hanging of a Pazzi conspirator after his capture and torture by the Medicis. Its purpose was largely for emotional effect.

The figures in Botticelli's picture have classical origins: Pallas Athena, emblematic of reason, perhaps more specifically wisdom, and also of war; and a centaur figure, conceived by the Greeks as half-man and half-beast, used to symbolize the beast like qualities of one's enemies, e.g., the Persians, but also the beast quality within us all.

With this information available to them, I asked students to tell me what the painting might mean. This lesson was purposely limited. A full interpretive process would require an application of their understanding of the painting to a problem emanating from their own situation.

Students were first asked to discuss the painting in groups with the idea of

establishing, if possible, a consensual understanding. Out of this discussion the students were to formulate a group statement that reflected this consensus. They were also told to keep track of personal views that derived from group discussion. Secondly, after recording their statements, students were directed to read the following paragraph from Machiavelli's *The Prince.*

> You must, therefore, know that there are two means of fighting: one according to the laws, the other with force: the first way is proper to man, the second to beasts; but because the first, in many cases, is not sufficient, it becomes necessary to have recourse to the second. Therefore, a prince must know how to use wisely the natures of the beast and the man. This policy was taught to princes allegorically by the ancient writers, who described how Achilles and many other ancient princes were given to Chiron the Centaur to be raised and taught under his discipline. This can only mean that having a half-beast and half-man as a teacher, a prince must know how to employ the nature of the one and the other; and the one without the other cannot endure (Machiavelli 1979, p.133).

After this reading I directed students to make a journal entry that reflected any expanded understanding of the painting *Pallas and Centaur* that they might have gotten from Machiavelli's text. Note: A word of explanation needs to be made concerning the use of paintings instead of written texts in some of these exercises. A text is defined as any communicative event that carries potential meaning to a listener. Theoretically, however, there is one important distinction between a painting and a written text. The former, insofar as it is not a linguistic event, must pass into the domain of written and spoken language in order to be understood. One does not usually interpret a painting by employing the means of another painting - not unless one considers one work of art to be interpretive of another. In that case the communication of meaning is limited to one between artists. None of this impinges upon the hermeneutic process of understanding that has guided these exercises so far.

The following journal entries are respective examples of: 1) group or personal

responses derived after participation in the group and 2) individual responses that may reflect an expanded understanding based on reading Machiavelli. The students numbered their replies accordingly.

Student Journal Responses

G.S. - 1) In conclusion I said that Botticelli's "propaganda" was successful in that he convinced us who was the good guy and who was the bad. I assumed that both families were equally conniving, cunning, etc., but because of the skillful painting and its subliminal message, we take the side of the Medicis, thus scorning the disgusting Pazzi. I think the Medici were probably pleased with Botticelli's painting. I would be.

2) By reading Machiavelli several things were revealed to me. The significance of the centaur's half-man/half-beast form was made clear to me, and I realized what it indirectly represented. I also realized the thin balance between man's nature and a beast's nature which must be maintained in order to be successful.

In the painting the Pazzi family is identified with the centaur. Pallas Athena seems to pet the beast. What is a pet but a beast that has been tamed? A pet is an animal we sometimes employ for our own purposes. Machiavelli tells us that the centaur was a teacher of the ancient Greeks. It was from the centaur that one learned the ways of force. The ways of man, laws, are not always sufficient. So in a sense the Pazzi (identified with the centaur) teach the Medici the ways of the beast. To know only the ways of men, that is to only know how to use laws, is not sufficient. A wise prince knows when to employ force. Part of Pallas Athena's wisdom is to know when to hang one's enemies. This the Medici learned from the Pazzi the day they were attacked in church.

I thought that the centaur, Chiron, taught also the way of wisdom and schooled the heroes in more ways than how to use force. He was considered the great tutor of the time from what I have read. I have also been lead to believe that Chiron was a different race of centaur all together, and he was only of that race. This doesn't have

anything to do with the painting, I was just wondering because I love Greek Mythology.

On another note, in your last two sentences, I don't understand how the Medici learned because the Pazzi learned instead when they were hanged.

You may know more about centaurs than I do. I am reasoning from the tradition Machiavelli writes about. I mean to say that the Medici learned that men like the Pazzi must be answered with force - not law. That is what the painting seems to be saying (after I apply Machiavelli to it). The lesson flows from the Pazzi to the Medici. If I punch you in the nose because I want your lunch money, you learn a lesson. Next time you hit me in the head with a board because I am beyond reasoning (law = reason). If the principal suspends me, of course, I too learn a lesson. If you extrapolate that part of my analogy to the painting, you might make a case that it is the Pazzi who receive a lesson in the way a bully gets a lesson when he is suspended. But that's not my interest. Whatever light of understanding I shine on the painting will leave something in the dark. You can see how one interpretation does not preclude another.

Comment/Analysis

Frankly, I thought that G.S. did not add much to his understanding by reading the passage from Machiavelli, so I didn't have much to base my first response on. I made a statement that contained my own interpretive understanding. My statement was rather detailed. I knew that I was taking a chance of losing G.S.'s attention or of inundating his own thoughts with my rhetoric. Since there was little initial indication that G.S. was much involved with the material, I thought I might be able to stimulate his interest by making a straightforward statement based on my own viewpoint. This strategy was meant as a gambit to stimulate further conversation.

I was able to draw a response from him based on his interest in Greek mythology. What he actually did was question Machiavelli's notion of Chiron's role as a teacher to

Greek youth. That he did not initially respond to Machiavelli's paragraph might have something to do with this disagreement. Secondly, he asked me a direct question about something I had written. He wanted me to clarify what I meant when I said that the Medici learned a lesson from the centaur, now in the allegorical guise of the Pazzi. This question paved the way for a second response from myself to him. He did not, however, respond. My reply was no doubt too long and too complex.

G.W. - 1) Yesterday, we looked at *Pallas and Centaur*, Botticelli. Allegorically, it portrayed the Medici family ruling with both justice/wisdom. (Athena)/and war over the Pazzi family, foolish and shameful.

We noted their weapons and their positions, while Athena proudly displays her ax (I guess that's what its called) in an authoritative manner, the centaur held his bow, a long-range, almost cowardly weapon, at his feet.

2) Machiavelli's *Prince* (Ch. 18, paragraph 2) sheds a bit of light on the work. Here he states that men rule and fight in two ways: lawfully and forcefully, the former being as men and the latter like animals. He states, though, that the animal qualities are not undesirable. Rather, he writes that one trait without the other is insufficient.

The symbols are a bit confusing since in the painting the foolish Pazzi are depicted as the very centaur that Machiavelli has just indirectly praised. However, the Pazzi, in Machiavelli's opinion (perhaps) would be purely a centaur, using only their force to overtake the Medici. (I underlined this sentence in G.W.'s journal in order to draw his attention to it when he read my response). Thus Pallas is the balanced figure, both wise and warlike.

We also discussed the fact that the Medici seem right since they were provoked into violence while the Pazzi had the opportunity to empower more peaceful and just means, but opted for the animalistic attack.

I am responding to your comment that I have underlined. The Greeks learned

the ways of force from the centaur. In the painting the centaur is identified with the Pazzi family. If the centaur is a teacher of force, then it is not too much of a stretch (I think) to consider the Pazzi as teachers too, in some sense of the word. What then is the lesson that the Medici learn from the Pazzi? Can it be other than the one that Chiron the Centaur taught the ancient Greeks? Force is sometimes necessary. The figure of the centaur in the painting then is not one that is all bad as you suppose. The Pazzi have, in effect, done the Medici the same good turn Chiron the Centaur did for the youth of the ancient Greeks. Why are the Medici wise, as they are depicted in the figure of Pallas Athena? Because they have learned a great lesson from the attack on them by the Pazzi. This is not such a strange way to look at things.

No further response from G.W.

Comment/Analysis

These entries were made in the Interpretations section of their journals. I had explained to students that Machiavelli was in touch with a similar tradition of understanding that had inspired the conception behind Botticelli's allegorical depiction of these events - that tradition being part of the revival of classical thought that was common to Italian Renaissance writers and artists. This was an exercise designed to show students how one's understanding of a work of art increases as one gets in touch with the tradition that surrounded it. Meaning extends commensurately with such an acquaintanceship. My own interpretive remarks may seem heavy handed and didactic at times, but it is sometimes necessary to demonstrate to students a close reading of a text. I was, however, concerned with the lack of student response. Was I missing a clear message that I was reverting to an authoritative instructional style, which discouraged students from thinking on their own? Or was the unavoidably hurried nature of this classroom situation not conducive to full student involvement? I had carefully counseled students that my own statements about meaning were never to be considered anymore than just one more voice in a conversation. It is hard for me to

convey the sense of open-ended conversation that characterized relationships between myself and students. This trust was always the context for journal entries. Although I am confident that students felt free to engage me as an equal on issues of interpretation, it would have been more conducive to student involvement in this exercise if I would have assumed the role of interlocutor rather than that of subject matter expert. There is a formality to the language that I employed that denoted anxiety about how students were using the excerpt from Machiavelli. This is not the tone that a fellow conversant in a hermeneutically guided dialogue would be advised to take. If I, as a teacher, was concerned that they were not reading the passage from Machiavelli with sufficient perspicacity, then I should have been more explicit that I was addressing them as an expert - a role that also entails a considerable sensitivity to objectivity. A teacher can move with sufficient fluidity between one role and another without jeopardizing student confidence in the teacher, but to leave student's with an ambiguous signal invites a suspicion that you are just pretending to be in a conversation with them and that your real goal is to convince them of your way of thinking. In short, I am critical of the way I handled this lesson but consider it instructive.

Exercise # 3

The first part of this exercise was designed to get students used to taking a historical perspective on cultural values, demonstrating both change and continuity - as well as the subtle and interactive relationship between different historical periods. These are ideas with which educated (cultured) persons need to be familiar.

The second part of this exercise was based on Michelangelo's *Pieta*. I began with an etymological examination of the word *Pieta*, pointing out that it is related, through its Latin roots, to both the English language words pity and piety. This gave students the opportunity to begin searching the Christian tradition, which most of them share to one extent or the other, in order to clarify certain values. For example, I asked

students who might be the subjects of the pity to which the sculpture's title refers. Typical answers were the crucified Jesus and Mary - as the earthly mother of Jesus. One perceptive student said that it is all of us who are to be pitied because we required Christ's sacrifice for the atonement of our sinful natures.

Next, I had students brainstorm Christian ethical behavior. I helped by reminding them of "The Sermon on the Mount", which I subsequently read from St. Matthew's Gospel.

The climax to this lesson was a hypothetical story, based on an actual event. In fact, it was an event that was at the center of this lesson, not a work of art, per se. I asked students to imagine someone who has been hired as a museum guard. His/her special assignment is to guard the *Pieta*. This hypothetical person is armed and has been given the authority to shoot anyone who would try to vandalize the statue. But in private life, this person is a committed Christian, who often asks, "What would Christ want me to do"?, before taking significant actions in life.

One day someone breaks across the rope barrier that separates the *Pieta* from the crowd that is viewing it. This vandal has a hammer and begins to pound the face of the Virgin Mary. There is no time for an alternative course of action. The guard, a sincere Christian believer, must shoot to stop the desecration or risk its certain and perhaps irrevocable destruction. Students were asked to put themselves in the guard's place, replete with the guard's values and beliefs as their own. Would they shoot or not? (Of course, as a hermeneuticist I realize that no one can leave their own values behind and completely assume a role that is alien to their own thinking. But this objection does not seem to vitiate the quality of the exercise).

The journal entries that follow represent the application of a modern Christian perspective in the form of an event that surrounds Michelangelo's *Pieta*, which, in this case, symbolizes a traditional Christian understanding of piety. By participating in this exercise students could take stock of their present religious values and perhaps modify them in light of this unique conjunction of the familiar and the strange. Even though

there is a common Biblical basis for the embodied values of this famous work of Christian art and the student's own contemporary Christian framework of understanding, over four hundred years separate these students from the time of Michelangelo. The hypothetical story was designed to bridge the historical distance between Renaissance Italy and the present world of these young people. Values centuries old may change in significant ways when newly interpreted. Gadamer writes, "understanding always involves something like applying the text to be understood to the interpreter's present situation" (Gadamer 1994, p. 308).

The following entries could have been put in either the Interpretation or Applications section of their journal.

L.Mc. - Well if I were in the guard's place I don't know if I would want to kill someone over a statue, especially when images are against God's commandments anyway. However, it is my job to protect the statue, so I believe that basic instinct would kick in and I would do what it took to stop him. And afterwards, when I see what I had done, I know I would feel regret and deep shame.

When you say that images are against God's commandment, that is a Protestant prejudice or prejudgment. You bring that belief into your experience with the story I told you. Not to say it's wrong, but just to remind you that it is already something you hold to be true. It can effect your understanding positively or negatively. In the sixteenth century, during the Protestant Reformation, when Protestants took over Catholic churches, they removed the images. That's something easy for you to understand because your own tradition, a Protestant one, has conditioned you to believe that icons (or religious images) are wrong. It makes it difficult for you to understand why Catholics venerate images.

Comment/Analysis

Since L.Mc's. response was brief, I concentrated on analyzing his journal entry in order to understand more about his values. He registered a strongly held prejudice

upon which a decision not to shoot the fictional vandal might be based - images are against God's law. I pointed this prejudice out to him and then briefly discussed its historical origins (He could have cross-referenced his reply to the Prejudices section of his journal). Despite his religious beliefs, however, he had said that he would probably shoot the vandal - but he also said that afterward he would feel ashamed. Something must account for this apparent contradiction. I already knew a little about his cultural life. L.Mc. lived in a rural area. His family hunted, and he had told me that his mother had recently bought a 357 Magnum that he was looking forward to shooting when he got back home. In rural West Virginia there is a strong value placed on doing your job. This is what he meant when he said that his instincts would take over and that he would probably shoot the vandal. It was a regrettable oversight on my part not to notice the significance of the conflict in his values. On one hand, he believed that he should not shoot - images after all were against God's commandment from his point of view, and, on the other hand, he had been hired to do a job. I lost a valuable opportunity to encourage him to think more carefully about his own framework of understanding when he was, in fact, within a short step of realizing that he was of a divided mind on an important issue.

I ended my reply to him with an implicit attempt to get him to consider that his religious opposition to images was not shared by Catholics. He did not respond. I would learn that it was best to ask students direct and specific questions which they could not easily evade. Not responding, however, was always an acceptable option, a rule to this effect having been adopted at the beginning of the class.

In response to a later exercise - in answer to a question asking if he recognized any significant prejudgments that might condition his thinking - L.Mc. wrote, "Basically my religious beliefs". And at the end of the class when I asked students if their basic beliefs had changed under the influence of their interpretive activity, he wrote " . . . basically has not modified my fundamental beliefs, however I am more open-minded to consider anyone's thoughts than I was".

L.L. - Shoot the man or not? No I wouldn't shoot him . . . I think using a gun would make the whole meaning of the statue be lost forever. People would look and remember the madman instead of Jesus and Mary. Jesus didn't teach violence, so he wouldn't want it incorporated into a statue representing him.

What if someone argued that the basic truths of Christianity, including love and compassion, were carried by its artwork as much as by anything else? There is a tradition of Catholic Christianity that takes icons very seriously. They are aids to prayer, vehicles that bear the soul to God. If this were your tradition, would it make a difference to your response?

L.L. didn't reply to my query. A direct question of this sort should have elicited a reply. Again, the overly busy nature of the GHA made it impossible for me to consistently check to see if students were responding. They, too, were hampered by the hectic pace of their schedules. L.L.'s reasoning as to why she would not shoot the attacker did make me stop and reconsider my own imaginatively conceived decision - that I would shoot the vandal. I realized with a little reflection that the overriding value I was placing on the statue was art historical not religious. Should it not be a legitimate goal of any curriculum that the teacher also has the opportunity for self-development in response to questions raised by an encounter with the subject matter?

Exercises # 4, 5, 6

In the last three exercises I experimented with sections of the dialogic journal that were more specific than the broader and more inclusive sections that I had so far conceived. The first three of these sections - Horizon Own; Horizon Other; and Horizon Expanded - are closely interrelated. They roughly follow the steps that comprise the interpretive experience, the last coinciding with Gadamer's idea of a

fusion of two horizons, which is the goal of the most successful interpretations. That these sections are interrelated does not mean that the student had to start with Horizon Own, and then proceed to Horizon Other, and then finish with Horizon Expanded. In actuality, all three sections are likely to occur simultaneously during the unfolding of the interpretive project. I only delineated these sections to facilitate the process of interpretation as an exercise under observation. My experience, however, led me to use the section Horizon Other first because it most resembled the initial reading of a text. Also, students did not necessarily make entries in all three sections concerning the same reading.

Horizon Other

This section can be thought of as being analogous to practicing good listening skills in a conversation. It is here that students recorded their comprehension of the text's point of view toward the subject matter. The students were directed to record their comprehension of the text under consideration - after carefully reading it. A teacher's role is justifiably authoritative in such an exercise because students commonly misread. By that I mean that they sometimes read and comprehend the text in untenable, often idiosyncratic, ways. While it is true that reasonable people may disagree on what a text has to say, some readings are simply wrong. The criterion for incorrectness cannot be absolutely established, but doubt can be cast on a reading through a conversational encounter with others. Herein also lies the need for an expert in the subject matter, one who can lead the student toward a more credible knowing of the text's point of view. Lacking experience, students require direction. A close reading of a text is, after all, the first step toward a fully developed interpretation.

Horizon Own

In this section students recorded significant prejudices that they uncovered during the reading of a text that espoused a point of view unlike their own. This exercise was

intended, when most successful, to lead students beyond a mere recognition of specific prejudgments. I wanted to reinforce their realization that one's experience of the world is bounded by prejudices and that while prejudices actually made experience as such possible, they also set limits to anyone's self-understanding. This exercise, moreover, was meant to encourage students to get in touch with their present self-understanding - that is, who they now are as opposed to who they might become.

Horizon Expanded.

This section of the journal was reserved for what might be thought of as a synthesis of Horizon Other and Horizon Own. It was where students were to record "fusion experiences", or what Gadamer describes as a fusion of horizons. A true fusing of one's horizon with another is a relatively rare experience in any scholar's life. It is more so for young students. It is a form of sentimentality, I believe, to expect that students are going to be operating at this level as a matter of course. But there will be times when students will affect, perhaps only on a level of expertise commensurate with their age and accomplishments, an actual synthesis between their present self-understanding and the self-understanding of an other as represented by a text.

To be precise, something less than fusion was acceptable in the section. If the student began to move beyond his or her limited understanding of the world, even if it was only a tendency in his or her thinking, it would be properly recorded herein.

Student Journal Responses

Note: The following entries do not often pertain to the same text. They show a student's response to different exercises. For the sake of the autonomy of the student - and the integrity of the hermeneutical process - I did not require that they proceed in a sequential manner nor that they make entries in all sections. The nature of the curriculum, which was a survey of the western cultural experience, prevented a more systematic study.

Horizon Other - (N.S. is addressing his comprehension of Alexander Pope's "Epistle on Man"). N.S. - Pope presents mankind as another one of God's creations, at his mercy. The only difference between us and nature is that we know the Truth, which is whatever exists. The last statement of the poem, from which I took the preceding sentence has a huge double meaning, but I'm not sure which one the author believes. "Whatever IS, is RIGHT". He could mean that everything that we know of is correct, since everything we know exists. Or he may be saying nothing is true, since we understand nothing. This may be more acceptable since lines 9-11 of #10 mention all the things we understand. So we are the same as the animals, we have no truth.

The essay as a whole is a context for his statement, "Whatever is, is right". I think the essay leads me, at least, to believe that your first interpretation is the best one, i.e., that "everything is correct". If we understand nothing (your second possible interpretation), then man has no place in the world whatsoever. This Pope clearly does not believe. Our place in the world is very different from the animals' precisely because we are given to understand some things, if not everything.

Comment/Analysis

N.S. gave two interpretations. The one seemed to me to be somewhat consistent with Pope's text. The other was a misreading and frankly confused. I don't think that correcting a blatant misreading compromises the ultimate right of the student to think for himself. This exercise was not looking for originality on the student's part although a difference of opinion between the student and the teacher, if persistent, must be preserved for ongoing consideration. If after listening to my criticism the student prefers what the teacher considers a misreading, then it is probably best to defer to the student for the sake of his or her right to think independently. This sort of issue is best decided on a case by case basis. It might be wise under certain circumstances to submit a disagreement between the student and the teacher-as-expert to the group for consideration, thereby recognizing the social basis for making value.

Horizon Own - N.S. is responding to Sartre's essay "Existentialism is a Humanism". (Note: I gave the students a guide question for this exercise. What was the hardest thing for you to accept in the text under your consideration? I judged that this question would lead students into their own horizon of understanding. In this specific case I excluded comments on Sartre's atheism because they had proved such a stumbling block that students failed to consider much else that he had to say.)

N.S. - The hardest thing for me to accept was Sartre's agreement with a quote from Descartes. Sartre is saying through this, "that we should act without hope" (page 486, bottom of 3rd paragraph). He considers his view optimistic but doesn't believe we should hope. Sometimes hope is the only thing we have: without it, we die.

But what are all the possible ways that we can understand what he says? Sartre wants us to act without having to hope. Why? He looks at this world - or his world - and sees that there are no assurances. After all, only God could make such assurances. What we do in this "Godless" world can always be undone [by others]. If hope was a prerequisite for acting, then we might not act at all. What did you think he meant?

I think he meant hope is unnecessary for life here, but I still don't understand this quote much. Sure, there are no assurances in this world, but isn't hope for things like that? If we are assured of something, why would we need to hope? Hope gets us through when we have the tiniest doubts. In the most technical sense of the term, I'm not sure there is a God or an afterlife, but I have hope and faith that there is.

Comment/Analysis

N.S. had clearly defined his position on the usefulness of hope in contrast to Sartre's contention that one must act without hope. His differences with Sartre were ultimately religious - despite my injunction to keep away from the atheism question.

Evidently, his religious objections to Sartre were too strong for him to ignore.

This entry gave me the opportunity to rethink a recurring dilemma. In the role of expert I am concerned with the student's relationship with the subject matter. Is the student, for example, blatantly misreading the text? Or have unexamined prejudices blinded him or her from a fair-minded comprehension of some facet of the text? But as interlocutor to the student, the teacher's own ideas, feelings, and values enter into the dialogue - on a basis equal with those of the student. The teacher's relationship with the student changes as his or her relationship with the subject matter becomes more personal. This particular group of students did not seem confused by my need to shift from one role to the other. It would be better, however, if these two roles were carefully explained to students. Practically speaking, it often turned out to be a matter of emphasis.

Horizon Expanded - N.S. - Sartre has made me think more than anything else that we've read. If I learn to do something from this work, it will concern making better decisions. The first thing that comes to mind is not always the best thing to do. God has given me all the freedom there is, so my choices are my own.

Freedom is a double-edged sword, however. With any freedom that you are given, you have double the responsibility. The reason I never really understood that is because in the whole scheme of life, my position is rather low. I have no kids, no job, no rights, and no power. My overall responsibility is low because there are very few people that are affected by my daily actions. However, bigger decisions affect a lot of people, like my decision to come to the GHA. Everyone was affected. . . . I'll be careful about my decisions from now on.

You seem to be keenly aware of consequences. You have certainly given it some thought. You once mentioned something called the Butterfly Theory. Is this a big part of your framework of understanding, or your tradition of understanding . . ?

Comment/Analysis

On the surface this entry contained nothing remarkable. But N.S. and some of the other students had been thinking about a theory of cause and effect called the Butterfly Theory. As they explained it, a butterfly flaps its wings in the Pacific and, as a consequence, a chain of physical events begins that causes a hurricane in the Caribbean. (I suspect that they got this idea from the movie Jurassic Park). I took this to be a metaphor about cause and effect. But reading Sartre made N.S. more sensitive to the responsibility he bears for his own actions. While this falls short of a fusion between his original thoughts and any influence from existentialism, there is, at least, a new emphasis in his thinking.

Horizon Other - T.B. (In this entry T.B. is responding to Pope's "Epistle on Man".) I think that Pope was saying that if we ask, or complain, why we were not more - why we were not made as gods - that we must also praise that we were not created less. We cannot blame Heaven, but must accept that we rise in degree to what we are. And we cannot ask why we are not more because if we were to become angels perhaps, then we would expect the rank of a god. We cannot blame God - I liked the part where it said "Why has not a man a microscopic eye? For this is plain reason, man is not a fly". Man is neither too weak nor too great, and so whether we are blessed or cursed for being beast nor god is an unanswerable question.

I also think that rather than saying we cannot see truth, in #10, it is saying that we can see it, but refuse it by questioning why we are not more or less. In saying "Whatever Is, is RIGHT". I think proves this. Because we can see what IS we accept it. I don't really think it's trying to be better that Pope is condemning but rather asking why we're not better.

When you write ". . . rather than saying we cannot see truth. . . it is saying that we can see it but refuse it by questioning why we are not more", I get interested but

am, at the same time, not quite sure exactly what you mean. Are you making a distinction between the limited knowledge we are meant to have and the unlimited knowledge that is the whole that we are not meant to possess? Please write back and help me get your point.

I think in Pope's writing he is saying that we should or, at least, that we have the whole ability to see the truth that is before us. It seemed to me that he was saying that we can see the many truths before us but don't see it because we won't accept that we're not a god or wondering why we're not something more. And we aren't supposed to question our place in the world but rather to accept it.

How do we know where to let off? I suppose it is the ultimate question that we are not meant to have the answer to. Have you read the Book of Job? God says to Job, who has complained of not understanding the calamity that he has suffered, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the world"? A friend of mine says that the reason some people come to reject God is because they can't conceive of an all knowing, all powerful God allowing evil to happen. Therefore, there must not be any God at all. They reject the idea of God all together. Whereas, my friend argues, if they conceived of God as being limited in his ability to intervene in the world, for example, they would not be forced into atheism.

I can understand that some would say that, but really it doesn't make sense. Basing your belief in God on whether His power is limited or not is pretty silly. I think anyone who had this way of thinking simply doesn't want to believe that there is anything greater or more powerful than they are. Yes, the world is imperfect - but more often any type of creator does not [make] a work as good or better than himself. To do so would, in most cases, be impossible and rather dumb. If I were a creator, I wouldn't want to surpass my own qualities . . . and God made a perfect world anyway - it was man that messed it up.

There was a Medieval theologian, Anselm, who formulated what is called an ontological argument about God. I quote from David Knowles's The Evolution of

Medieval Thought. "*The definition of God, in whom all Christians believe, contains the statement that God is a Being that which no greater can exist. Even the fool in the Psalm who said that there was no God, understood what was meant by God when he heard the word, and the object thus defined existed in his mind, even if he did not understand that it existed also in reality. But if this being has solely an intra-mental existence, then another can be thought of as having real existence also, that is, it is greater (by existence) than the one than which no greater can exist. But this is a contradiction in terms. Therefore, the Being than which no greater can be conceived exists both in the mind and in reality*". *Ponder this for awhile. You may be interested in such difficult ideas. Also look up St. Thomas Acquinas's proofs for the existence of God. There is a reference book called The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Most libraries should have it.*

Comment/Analysis

T.B.'s initial comprehension of Pope was acceptable. In her second paragraph she made a statement that was both interesting and unclear to me at the same time. In my first response to her I quoted the sentence that had caught my attention and asked her directly to explain what she meant to say. (I am in this case acting in my role as interlocutor). Her explanation provided the clarity I had hoped for, but it did, at the same time, pose a problem. How does she know when the quest to know transgresses God's prerogatives? She did not reply to my question.

At this point (now acting more in the role of expert) I introduced an "alien" idea, with a hermeneutic purpose in mind. I asked her to consider that God was not perfect? In this way I provided an idea that was alien to her traditional frame of reference, which was conditioned by orthodox Christianity. She would never surpass her present level of self-understanding if this sort of question was not presented to her. It is not, of course, the proper role of a teacher to intentionally undermine anyone's belief system. But a teacher must run that risk - with all the attendant level of responsibility - in order

to get the student to examine his or her prejudgments. The same risk is taken by anyone who chances to read a book that is other than what one is accustomed to reading. Usually the student is more likely to surpass a present level of self-understanding by remaining, at the same time, within his or her original tradition of understanding and by developing a more sophisticated relationship to that tradition. Note the nature of T.B.'s reply beginning with, "I can understand . . ." Her retort - she was clearly not going to give this "alien" idea enough latitude for it to make significant inroads on her basic beliefs and values - incorporated an anticipated orthodox Christian answer. She said that it is man who has messed up the world (she referred to the taint of original sin) not God. But this standard idea now had to be understood by her for the first time within an expanded context. Her old understanding may never again be quite the same. Her world is now one that has to make room for contradictory ideas. In the future she will recognize that there are other very different ideas in the world that must be allowed, at least, to parallel her own.

The rest of my response to T.B. found me in the role of expert. I ended the dialogue by making suggestions to her for further reading. These recommendations were made with her present tradition of understanding in mind. I had limited myself to broadening her own tradition of understanding from an intrinsic standpoint.

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Horizon Own - T.B. - (I had asked students which of Sartre's ideas were hardest to accept). Sartre's hardest idea for me to accept is probably that there is no human nature (aside from his atheistic views). Sartre says that "there is no human nature because there is no God to have a conception of it". But I believe that even if man was exposed to absolutely no religion, that he would still be comprised of a certain set of morals. Simply because I don't believe people are born evil or uncaring. I believe that the average man, ignorant of religion, would still know right from wrong.

How do you account for the differences in values between cultures? There is an

Eskimo culture in which old people walk off on an ice flow so that they won't become a burden on their family. Their families let them do this. In our culture it would be our duty to stop them. All cultures have morals, or a sense of right and wrong, but the specific understanding of right and wrong varies greatly. We - to use your word - would think the Eskimos as not caring for the old people. Yet they consider this an altruistic act.

Still, I think they do have human nature. Yes, different cultures develop traditions and ways of life, which are totally unlike. Certainly not everyone has the same morals as a whole. I think they develop those morals as a result of their life conditions/experience. But I also believe that even with the most simple of values, people are compelled to have feelings and empathy, if only in very small amounts, simply by human nature. To say that people have no nature is basically to say that they are born without feelings. And then life develops the individual natures of each person into a more complex person.

Comment/Analysis

T.B. put aside her religious beliefs long enough to consider how people would behave morally without a belief in God as a value-giver. She developed her own position towards this issue contra Sartre. She wrote, "To say that people have no nature is basically to say that they are born without feelings". Feelings (perhaps she means empathy) she argued are the innate basis for moral behavior. In effect, she critiqued Sartre and defined her own intellectual position at the same time.

It was not clear to me if T.B. was familiar with the problems associated with moral relativism. In the first paragraph of this entry, she wrote, "But I believe that even if man was exposed to absolutely no religion, that he would still be comprised of a certain set of morals". She had probably not considered the moral variability among different cultures. I thought it appropriate to introduce this idea in order for her to have a more complete view of the issue. Part of a teacher's role as expert is to put

students in touch with the cultural storehouse of ideas and experience available to them. By urging new ideas I meant to nourish dialogue. She responded credibly.

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Horizon Expanded - T.B. - Reading Sartre's work made me think more about how much control I have over my own life - perhaps rejecting the idea of how much influence society has over me. However, my views on the influence of God and his importance remains unchanged. I almost agree with the statement of "man is nothing else but that which he makes himself" and I may reference that thought in the future.

Do you mean that you read Sartre from a Christian point of view? Christianity has a concept of free will not completely different from Sartre. Some of the class responses seem to indicate that God causes things to happen in our lives. Certainly God, from a Christian point of view, has given us values and perhaps the ability to know right from wrong. But still we chose. How could you apply "man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself" to your Christianity? Remember my discussion of Pico della Mirandola? He said that we could rise to the level of angels or descend to the level of the beasts. This implies that we do not make these levels up as we go, but know what they are beforehand.

No further comment from T.B.

Comment/Analysis

I tried to get T.B. to consider how the reading of even an antipathetic text can lead to a modification of her own Christian framework of understanding without violating the sensibilities that are inherent to that point of view. Her last statement was reassuring - "I may reference that thought in the future". This was not just a matter of being more open-minded. It entailed the greater matter of self-understanding and an openness to the disclosures of language. - T.B.'s entries were made just before the end of the academy. Her reticence to respond to my final remarks may be partly attributed

to this. It is possible that she and others were anticipating going home and were tiring of the demands made on them by the class. One last exercise, in fact, yielded little in the way of new information. Therefore, I shall end my remarks in this chapter with T.B.'s entries. In a general way I shall revisit the noteworthy of this and previous chapters in my concluding remarks where I hope to provide some theoretical unity to my experiences with a hermeneutically based pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

It has been my intention to produce a study that is heuristic. There are several points of interest that I suggest, based on the outcome of my research, worthy of future inquiry and discussion. Three issues represent the core theoretical yield of my research. First, that a hermeneutically inspired pedagogy depends on the usefulness of what I call "authoritative expertise". Secondly, that it is consistent with Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy to employ a text-centered curriculum. And thirdly, that a hermeneutically grounded curriculum should anticipate that a challenge to self-understanding is a normative goal of a curriculum whose purpose is to have students acquire cultural knowledge.

By pointing out my disagreement with the pedagogical practices of the Humanities Curriculum Project, I would hope to clarify the direction of future studies. The most salient difference between my own conception of a process based pedagogy and that of the HCP concerns the notion and use of authority in an educational project. Rudduck writes:

> the inescapable authority position of the teacher in the classroom is such that his or her view will be given an undue emphasis and regard which will seriously limit the readiness of the students to consider other views. It is difficult to absolve teachers from the charge that they are attempting to use their position of authority and privilege as a platform from which to propagate their own views (Rudduck 1983, p. 12).

At the heart of the issue is a concern for the autonomy of the learner. If authority "displaces one's own judgment" (Gadamer 1994, p. 279), as it surely does in its pejorative form, then I am in agreement with Rudduck's assessment. But I have shown that authority limited to the purveyance of expertise works to the contrary. It is the expert, i.e., an authority on subject matter who provides the student with access to

cultural knowledge. Stenhouse states that there is "a commonwealth of knowledge" and that the job of the educator is to hand on to students the "bodies of knowledge, arts, skills, language, conventions, and values that others possess" (Stenhouse 1975, p. 7). There must be someone knowledgeable about these matters, someone present to the student, in order for this to occur effectively. Of course, limitations should be placed on the educator's role as expert. These restrictions proceed from the self-understanding of the hermeneutic process as it is described in Part I. To begin with it is requisite that the expert recognizes that all cultural knowledge is problematic. He or she must must embody the dictum that there are no definitive interpretations. Stenhouse sets out the foundation for circumscribing the function of expertise, and, therefore, authority itself in the educational process when he declares for the "provisional" nature of knowledge and indeed its "ephemeral character" (Stenhouse 1975, p. 17).

The expert who works within the parameters of a hermeneutically based curriculum must have knowledge broad enough to encompass all the contending facets of any issue relevant to that curriculum. If students are assigned to read, for example, Alexander Pope's "Essay on Man", then the teacher-expert must be able to lead students into the broader questions concerning the nature of evil that begin with the Book of Job and culminate, let's say for the sake of our example, in the writings of Dostoyevsky and the existentialist writers that he so deeply influenced. He or she must be able to direct students to diverse and contending points of view without unduly influencing the student in one direction or the other. One's own opinion, while not completely irrelevant, must be carefully circumscribed. Even the lecture as a mode of transmitting knowledge must adapt to the hermeneutical ideality that knowledge is inherently problematic. Whatever the expert conveys to students should be accompanied by the spirit of the question, which is meant to open up for the student the possibility of experiencing the world in new and exciting ways.

I propose that a new notion of presentation replace lecture as a mode of conveying

information to students. Teachers would learn to present to students more objectively. Their presentations to students on any issue relevant to the subject matter under discussion would include an exposition of as many points of view as practical. All experts, of course, would not fall under this desideratum. But for classroom teachers, it would be imperative that they avoid the accusation of bias. In short, the presenter must be able to move beyond his or her own point of view - insofar as this is possible - when discussing subject matter with students. At the very least, they should have enough awareness of the basic principles of hermeneutic interpretation to make their own prejudices known to students.

There is one issue related to "authoritative expertise" that might have confused students involved in these experiments. Throughout my interaction with them I sometimes assumed the role of interlocutor. It proved helpful that I entered discreetly into their conversations as an interlocutor, with all the rights reserved for any other discussant. As a practical matter, however, the role of expert and interlocutor sometimes overlapped. Although students seemed to readily distinguish the two, it is probably best to carefully delineate between these at the implementation of the curriculum. (I have planned for the future to use different colored pencils to make this distinction palpably clear when responding to student writings).

It needs to be emphasized that the interlocutor may properly present his or her own point of view, whereas the the expert is obliged to present the several sides of any situation. The expert is defined by his or her superiority. But always in the relationship between interlocutor and student there must be intellectual parity. Any display of superiority on the part of an interlocutor (teacher or not) tends to intimidate the other party involved with the conversation. Such behavior also creates the risk of transforming a discussion into argumentation.

It may be fairly asked why it is ever necessary for a teacher to become an interlocutor. The answer is based on practicality. The teacher is (or should be) an experienced conversationalist who is readily available to the student. To begin with,

therefore, it is a simple matter of convenience. But it is also a matter of not wasting the teacher as a resource. Other students, of course, are also on hand. They may be less intimidating than a teacher, but that is not always the case. Adolescents can be egotistical and often impatient with those who don't agree with them. A future step in my research is to experiment with students as interlocutors, using myself as an expert who mediates (hermeneutically) between students involved with one another in interpretive conversations.

Also, as a logistical matter, someone has to be present in order to convey to students the fundamental tenets of hermeneutical inquiry. It is difficult to imagine how hermeneutical concepts of interpretive understanding could be conveyed to students without this expertise being made available on an almost daily basis. I believe that my research has shown that the presence of authoritative expertise, when handled correctly, is not an inherent impediment to self-directed student learning, but is, rather, a necessary complement to the unfolding of a hermeneutically guided interpretive project.

A second feature that distinguishes a hermeneutically guided curriculum is that it emphasizes text-centered learning. Historically conditioned traditions of understanding are carried by language, which concentrates the ideas, feelings, beliefs, and values of those particular frameworks of understanding into texts. Texts attain a traditionary status because they are foci for distinct ways of experiencing the world - although their distinctness often blurs under the influence of the interpreting conversations that both surround and permeate their existence as works of art. But there is another characteristic of a text that has important ramifications for those advocating hermeneutically guided curricula. The historically effected consciousness of a text is founded on the priority of a question over an answer (Gadamer 1994, p. 365). Texts can be understood as tentative answers to questions that have been asked in such a way as to open life up to some new manner of understanding. Texts disclose the world. As a complete phenomenon they are, in a sense, tantamount to a question that

is meant for "the unconcealment of what is" (Heidegger 1964, p. 676).

But questions are, as Gadamer warns, not boundless. They are "limited by the horizon of the question" (Gadamer 1994, p. 363). Each question is guided by the prejudgments of the person who asks the question. Those prejudgments imply a certain limited way of looking at things. It is by discussing texts - and thereby adding to our historically effected understanding of the texts in question - that one comes into a recognition of the prejudgments that underlie the horizon of the text, as well as those that make up the horizon of the interpreter.

Let us for a moment direct our attention to the dialectical aspects of conversation. Gadamer is careful to establish that questioning is the proper and actual basis for dialectic (Gadamer 1994, pp. 363-365). Authentic conversation, i.e., a conversation that potentially opens up the world to new experience and, therefore, lays the basis for expanded self-understanding, is precisely dialectical because it is more properly characterized by an exchange of questions rather than an exchange of ready-made answers. Answers close off access to new experience. This is why dialogue, from a hermeneutic point of view, must be based on an acknowledgment of the problematic nature of knowledge. If a final and definitive answer were ever provided as an outcome of the interpretive experience, then conversation would logically come to an abrupt halt - or devolve into mere argumentation. New experience begins with a question and ends, but only temporarily, with an answer. There are always new questions, formed from new points of view - which are themselves historically conditioned - getting ready to be asked. The purpose of a dialectically based conversation is to expand the horizon of the interpreters just enough to allow room for the transformation of the original horizon of the text under discussion. This permits an application of the text to the lives of the interpreters, changing not only the historical understanding of the text but the self-understanding of the interpreters.

Dialectic in its conversational mode is also characterized by "pro" and "contra" stances toward any issue of understanding. Normatively, there is a give and take

between conversants. This amounts to a juxtaposition of prejudgments - on the one hand, prejudgments representing the horizon of the text, and on the other hand, representing the horizon of the interpreter. This is the antithesis of argumentation. One conversant listens carefully to see if the words of another, whether person or text, reveal a world of experience that is, in some way, one that they had never thought of. The advantage of a text, as a party to any interpretive conversation, is in its ability to provide an initial stimulation to discussion. In short, when texts are understood to be speculative - and this is frequently overlooked by even the best readers - their function is to pose questions to the reader (Gadamer 1994, p. 369). It is supposed that most of the questions that have filled our cultural storehouse of knowledge are ones that most adolescent students would never think to ask on their own. If texts are left out of a discussion based curriculum, or even if they are de-emphasized, it is no wonder that conversations are difficult to start (Rudduck 1983, p. 23), not merely because schools haven't encouraged students to practice conversation-making, but because students haven't had access to the recorded experiences of their own cultural past. These are experiences upon which their own interpretive conversations might be established. The initial part of any potential conversation can be thought of as being lodged within a text. This is what Stenhouse calls our commonwealth of cultural knowledge. This must be made available to the student. Without this cultural background, students are forced to then rely upon the commonplace understandings of their own daily lives. Proper and effective stimulation is left to chance. It is as if students were left to reinvent a history of conversation, rather than to apply what is already known to the relevant issues of their lives.

In one more way, a hermeneutical pedagogy, as I conceive it, would be distinguished from the practices of the HCP, wherein the self-understanding of the student was not consistently challenged. Self-understanding, as such, was not an explicit goal of that educational project, and thus my criticism is based more on the omission of that goal than a commission toward something I disapprove of. What

strikes me as shortsighted, however, was the tendency to assume that "life as the student knows it" would provide a good starting point for a student's education (Rudduck 1983, p. 9). This, while an excellent insight in its own right, is only partly true. From a hermeneutical point of view, an authentic sense of self emerges, partly self-directed and partly imposed by the obdurate conditions of the phenomenal world, from the cauldron of new experience. It is through this process that one is partly freed from the preconditions of understanding into which one was "thrown" at birth. It logically follows that the primary goal of education is to provide students the wherewithal of cultural knowledge necessary to modify or reject (but also to freely accept) the culture into which they were accidentally born. This means that education as a process directed toward self-understanding should not only consider life as the student knows it, but also life that is very different from anything the student has yet experienced.

Rudduck specifically notes the need to present humanistic learning in a way that is acceptable to the life style of the student. This she believes would make the learning process relevant to the process of maturing. She advises that educators should "make them [the humanities] accessible to students whose style, values, and personality are different from those of the teacher" (Rudduck 1983, p. 10). In this way she ties relevancy to the immediate life-situation of the student, rather than to a future that possibly opens up a fresh way of experiencing a world, which may have been inconceivable before the possession of cultural knowledge challenges the indigenous background of the student and the life style that emanates from that background.

Nietzsche's Zarathustra says this about the nature of self and helps, thereby, to establish a tradition in which one's simple existence is deemed insufficient: "And life itself confided this secret to me: 'Behold', it said, 'I am that which must always overcome itself'". (Nietzsche 1968, p. 227). And "Man is something that shall be overcome" (Nietzsche 1968, p. 124). If relevancy in education is confused, however inadvertently, with an appeal to the status quo of the student's self-understanding, then

no self-overcoming is possible. The idea of relevancy should not be linked to what the student is, nor to a static view of that student's socio-cultural background. Relevancy can instead become a guiding principle that directs the student toward an open and undetermined future. And insofar as any student is part of a particular culture, whether that culture is defined in terms of social class, ethnic origins, or religious belief, a change in the way he or she experiences the world implies a commensurate change to the world they were born into. Therefore, a hermeneutically inspired curriculum does not hesitate - in principle - to provide students access to texts that may very well challenge their inherited point of view toward the world.

A more specific problem was first encountered in my review of J.'s Journal. There a significant difference presented itself between the Cartesian notion that one's self-conception might change through the process of interpretation and the more specifically hermeneutical idea that one's self-conception might change by being encompassed by a fluid tradition of understanding. This distinction reaffirms the by now well discussed difference between an ontic based view of the world and an ontological one (Ree 1999, p. 11-12). No student should be restricted to an everyday notion of self. Ontological philosophy provides an alternate conception. As Jonathan Ree writes, in reference to Heidegger's notion of an authentic self, "[We are] receptive openings on to the world". And furthermore, "we are no more than shifting networks of interpretation" (Ree 1999, p. 34). In all fairness, the matter must be put to the student in a completely honest way, one that clearly identifies the hermeneutical position itself as a prejudgment of that philosophical position.

Any curriculum that aspires to a basis in hermeneutical philosophy must take these ideas - and differences between ideas - seriously. If our conception of what self means has changed in the postmodern era, then the educational practices directed toward self-development and self-understanding must keep up with these changes in order to meet these new conditions of understanding.

Whatever position students take on this issue, I do not want to minimize the

difficulties that the suggestion that they should change their self-understanding in significant ways presents to them. My own work, reported in the previous chapters, emphasizes how difficult it is to get young people to consider changes in their ideas, feelings, judgments, and values. It is a narrow and fragile divide between challenging students to consider changes in the way they experience life and running the ever present risk of alienating them from a curriculum whose purpose it is to provide them with the means for making those changes possible. My own approach to this dilemma was to err on the side of caution when necessary. After all, it is ultimately up to the student to decide if change in his or her life style is warranted. And the nature of such change is sacrosanct according to hermeneutical principles - even when those choices do not agree with hermeneutical philosophy.

Of course, a hermeneutical approach to the educational process brings with it the obligation to teach according to the basic beliefs of the hermeneutical tradition. For example, "the intentions of the author", an idea which I discussed at length in Chapter One, are reduced from the status of potential meaning to no more than the writer's self-interpretation - or a first reading of his or her own work. (The romantic idea of literature as self-expression becomes a non-issue.) Likewise, a commitment to a belief in the problematic nature of knowledge is obligatory. And, too, the belief that there are no definitive interpretations of the human condition necessitates a conversational mode of education, wherein any one particular idea, feeling, or value must find its worth in relation to others that may be quite dissimilar. Ultimately, comparing one's own point of view to another, with an eye toward the modification of even cherished beliefs, becomes the ideal. Other examples such as these are discussed throughout my thesis. These become the standards upon which the curriculum must be based.

It is important to note that much of my analysis has been devoted to tactical issues. I hope that my readers will consider my efforts to provide a concrete method for encouraging dialogue worthy of further examination. Above all, I wanted to leave an impression of the form that a hermeneutically inspired pedagogy might assume. If that

seems a bit nebulous for a research goal, then I confess that I believe that impressions are as valuable to a tradition of understanding as are ideas, feelings, and beliefs. My goal all along has been to contribute to the tradition of process based education, which is, in my judgment, an inchoate tradition whose outlines are just beginning to take shape.

My research suggests other areas of inquiry more practical, perhaps, than philosophical. Most pressing is the need for a fully developed hermeneutical journal. This was, at first, one of my research goals. Other matters, however, eventually took priority, and the scope of my thesis was necessarily narrowed. I can conclude that such a journal - one directed toward the realization of hermeneutical principles of inquiry - should be designed to lead students step by step into the interpretive process. For example, guide-questions might provide the students with directions that would lead them into an examination of their own prejudgments. Students might be asked in what ways they are sympathetic to an essay or a poem. A recognition of a sympathetic reaction could then be traced to specific values that predispose them to that favorable reaction. Conversely, adverse reactions could be traced to values that led to unfavorable reactions to the work. Since prejudgments are the building blocks of traditional ways of understanding, the journal would provide students with the opportunity to cross-reference the clarification of a value to another section designated for an exploration of traditions. Step by step students would be able to construct an explicit knowledge of his or her own framework of understanding.

Lastly, I want to reaffirm that philosophical hermeneutics is an essentially centrist position. It stands midway between what Tomkins defines as "left-wing" and "right-wing" ideologies. This evaluation is reflected in Shaun Gallagher's conception of "moderate" hermeneutics (Bramall 1997, p. 466). The following section will begin with a review of Gallagher's (1992) conception as put forth in *Hermeneutics and Education* and end with suggestions on how his ideas might have modified my own research.

II

The second phase of my concluding remarks entails an attempt to expand beyond the relatively narrow focus of the first part, which was founded almost exclusively on an interpretive understanding of Gadamer's philosophical position as put forth in *Truth and Method.* I want to make clear that my method of analysis as well as the experimental pedagogy I reported on was based on my understanding of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Specifically, I tried to understand the educational events that I had initiated by treating them, including my own record of those events, as a text. As best I could, I used criteria gleaned from Gadamer's conception of interpretive understanding to guide my critical analysis. This present section reflects insights taken from Chapter Four, which was largely done after the experiments reported upon in Part Two.

This last section is based on Sean Gallagher's conception of moderate hermeneutics, which is itself Gadamerian, but also includes consideration of other hermeneutic points of view, as outlined in Chapter Four. In light of Gallagher's synthesis - which I consider to be at least partly successful - my own initial perspective on hermeneutics has expanded to include a recognition of radical hermeneutics, especially, but also a general cognizance of critical and conservative viewpoints.

I will choose several incidents already reported on in Part Two and re-analyze them in light of this broadened conception of hermeneutic thinking. Although my specific focus will be based on Gallagher's moderate hermeneutic position, which, as I have already stated, is close to my own centrist reading of Gadamer, I will try, when it is appropriate, to address other hermeneutical principles, especially those pedagogical insights that are found in Derrida, Rorty, and Caputo. My initial comments and the following "critical analysis" will be largely directed to the closely related issues of authority and the role of play in a conversationally based scheme of education. When I

revisit two illustrative events from Part Two of this thesis, it will aid my reader to be current with the distinctions that Sean Gallagher draws between Derrida and Gadamer concerning these issues.

Gallagher points out that play, conversation, and interpretation are one and the same thing from a moderate hermeneutic point of view (Gallagher 1992, pp. 48-49). What makes these educational activities nearly synonymous is that they are all characterized by the self-transformation of player, interpreter, or conversant. He quotes Gadamer who writes, "To be in a conversation . . . means to be beyond oneself, to think with the other and to come back to oneself as if to another" (Gallagher, p. 49). And, "The work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it" (Gadamer 1989 quoted in Gallagher, p. 48).

What is crucial for the moderate position toward self-tranformation is that the process of interpretive understanding, while having no conceivable end point, does have a discernible beginning. As Gallagher says there is no "zero point". Self-understanding "involves venturing into the unknown, going beyond ourselves and experiencing the unfamiliar. . . . The unfamiliar that we experience in play is first of all interpreted in terms of the world" (Gallagher, pp. 49-50). Another way of putting that is to say that meaningfulness comes to one initially in the form of fore-structure or tradition.

This realization is closely related to the question of authority. The interpretive games that we play have norms of all sorts. Gadamer writes that "Every single individual who raises himself out of his natural being to the spiritual finds in the language, customs, and institutions of his people a pregiven body of material which, as in learning to speak, he has to make his own" (Gadamer 1994, p.14). These norms constitute a game (= interpretive process) that must be mastered by the player (= interpreter). It is precisely this imperative that makes way for authority. All transformations in self-understanding require what I have called "authoritative

expertise". Someone, a teacher, for example, or something, a text of some sort, serves to guide students toward an understanding of the cultural heritage that is stored within the various traditions of understanding available. Mastering these gives students a start on establishing meaningful experiences - but only insofar as they are initially situated within some framework of understanding. Sooner or later students may want to go beyond the limitations of particular traditions that have previously conditioned their experiential understanding. They may modify, perhaps even reject, their frameworks of understanding through contact with other points of view. But a complete emancipation from authority altogether is never possible. In this sense authority - as a necessary component of the interpretive process - renews itself again and again.

Conversely, Gallagher establishes that the deconstructive conception of playfulness (= interpretive activity) is significantly different from its more moderate counterpart. And this is also true of the concomitant idea of authority. A review of Gallagher's understanding of Derrida's hermeneutics reveals that in his judgment "all interpretation limits the heterogeneous textuality of the object of interpretation" (Gallagher, p. 281). This insight is not meant to recommend interpretation, as such, to Derrida's own readers because, and Gallagher continues, "A deconstructive reading aims at allowing the full play of the heterogeneous textuality of the text" (Gallagher, p. 281). As I have previously said, there is a quantitative aspect to Derrida's viewpoint on interpretation. Derrida (and this is a matter of emphasis rather than an absolute distinction) advocates a multiplicity of interpretations that are meant to cast doubt on established and therefore privileged understanding. Given the deconstructive purview of the hermeneutic situation in general, the possibility of modifying traditions, which from a moderate point of view only temporarily hold sway, is overlooked.

Gallagher admits, however, that deconstructive attempts at interpretation do, of course, involve a productivity that goes beyond reproduction (Gallagher, p. 281). But he also notes that "Interpretation [from the deconstructive point of view] tends to reproduce the larger and more encompassing metaphysical framework which

conditions all understanding" (Gallagher, p. 282). Because of its commitment to multiple meanings - e.g. the multiple meanings of a text - deconstruction, in order to be logically consistent with its own principle of suspicion, must be suspicious of its own interpretive activity. The resulting outcome is that meaning, which is produced by a deconstructive reading of a text, for example, does not modify what it contradicts, but simple stands along side of it as an option. The metaphysical traditions that Derrida is so anxious to attack, while contradicted and reduced in importance and influence by the shear weight of alternative interpretations, both real and potential, remain intact. Interpretation as a practical activity is therefore guided by an emphasis on a heterogeneous productivity of meaning that aims to counterbalance metaphysical claims to substantive truth.

Likewise, for Derrida playfulness takes on an aspect that is significantly different from Gadamer's conception of play. The radical conception of playfulness, like interpretive activity in general, emphasizes the idea of an "open system" of understanding that is meant to produce a "plurality of meaning" (Gallagher, p. 283). One does not play at interpretation in order to effect a modification of a tradition of understanding. From a radical point of view that would simply serve to prolong hegemonic conceptions of reality. Moreover, from a radical standpoint, one's self-conception is not tied to any particular intellectual position or tradition of understanding - as the moderate position would have it - because a plurality of meanings would imply a plurality of self-concepts that would shift according to the interpretive stance one has taken toward a text at any one time. Gadamer's notion of "historically effected consciousness" is replaced by a conception of playfulness that is partly reactive in character.

This reactive quality, which typifies radical hermeneutics, presupposes the existence of something that is suspected of being insurmountable. Gallagher clarifies this point by characterizing the radical project in the following manner:

The play of signifiers embraces interpreter and the interpreted and constitutes a larger process beyond the control of writer or reader. We cannot gain an exterior control on this larger process (= textuality, play of signifiers); at most, we can operate within it, beginning wherever we find ourselves, and try to reveal it by subverting it in a deconstructive manner" (Gallagher, p. 282).

A significant idea in Gallagher's passage grows up around the difference between the deconstructive "reveal" and what would be the moderate notion of modification or transformation of a tradition of understanding. There is also in this passage nothing of the Gadamerian sense of belonging to a tradition that helps to provide self-definition. The radical hermeneuticist interprets from a position outside of a tradition, which is always tarnished by metaphysical associations, and tries to offset its influence on interpretive behavior and self-understanding. Derrida writes in *Grammatology* that "One could call *play* the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play, that is to say as the destruction of onto-theology and the metaphysics of presence" (Derrida 1976 quoted in Gallagher, p. 283). Gallagher correctly understands the absence of the "transcendental signified" to be coterminous with the act play.

My intention now is to suggest how Gallagher's insights might be applied to a re-examination of the research reported in Part Two. I want to re-emphasize that his moderate position includes, to some extent, an incorporation of competing hermeneutic points of view. Therefore, if a more expansive vision of what a hermeneutic pedagogy might look like is to be established, even in inchoate form, the other hermeneutic schools - but especially radical hermeneutics - must be effectively acknowledged and, if possible, integrated into the moderate project. I will allude to them specifically whenever it promotes my goal of presenting a broader perspective than my own original "centrist" position on pedagogical matters.

I begin with Chapter Five and draw upon my report on W., a student with whom I had initially a good deal of trouble communicating and who subsequently elicited from me more than a little self-reflection. The reader should turn at this point to Session 4,

beginning on page [187] and review what occurred. To begin with the class was discussing *The Brothers Karamazov* when W. interrupted the conversation, with what proved to be a chronic complaint concerning her narrow-minded relatives. The word "interrupted", while judgmental, was appropriate at the time because her statement did not seem in harmony with the discussion as it was unfolding. In an attempt to bring W. into the conversation in a productive way, I made some relatively commonplace remarks about this being an age of uncertainty concerning religion. She responded angrily (in retrospect I would characterize her response as frustrated), asking if I took her for a "teeny-bopper" because of the way she wore her hair. I reported being disconcerted by her remarks. Afterward, in my critical analysis, I stated that my goal was to bring her idiosyncratic "outbursts" into connection with "a more universal context of understanding" - which I conceived to be a proper hermeneutic goal. I felt that I could not properly interpret her words because of their extreme subjectivity. I specifically hoped to get her to employ a language that conformed to some recognizable tradition. I wrote that "My long range plan for W. was to get her to connect, if possible, her very personal complaints to the historic culture being made available through this interpretive project with *The Brothers Karamazov*". After all, it was a discussion of that text that elicited her remarks in the first place.

I am certainly not ready to recant my analysis. All subjective experience needs to find broader cultural connections if it is to be effectively communicated to others. But I am now in a position - that is, I have intellectually repositioned myself sufficiently - to see this event as it unfolded and my initial interpretation of it from a somewhat different perspective. My revised perspective is essentially one that includes a sensitivity to deconstructive insights.

First, W.'s response ("Do you think I'm a tenny-bopper . . ."?) could be taken as an attempt to deconstruct my comments about belief and doubt, which were, in hindsight, partially reflective of the overall expertise that I contributed to the class discussion of the novel. Caputo in defining his "ethics of dissemination" writes:

> Its model is the Socratic work of showing up the contingency of every scheme. It delimits the authority of all programmers, planners, managers, and controllers of all sorts. It compromises the prestige of the expert, releases all the loose ends in every system. . . . And it does all this not by any show of strength of its own but by letting the system itself unravel, letting the play in the system loose (Caputo, p. 260).

W.'s outburst could have meant that my remarks about us living in a time that has inherited both pros and cons concerning religious belief, despite similar and reiterated ideas drawn from *The Brothers Karamazov,* were not sufficient to explain what she had to say concerning her narrow-minded relatives. My own behavior as a teacher at that point could be justly interpreted by radical hermeneutic thinkers as authoritarian or hegemonic. Simply put: I did not play along with W.'s words. (Refusing to play with a student's words is a plausible way of defining deconstructionist concerns about the constraining effects of authority as it can manifest itself within conversation). From the radical position one considers not just my willfulness in disregarding W.'s voice within the conversation but also the hegemonic quality of the rationalistic ideas that had come unseen to dominate the discourse as I understood it at the time. Although I did not realize it at the time, I was trying to force W.'s experience into a preconceived way of understanding, despite all my attempts to the contrary. My critical notes contained the following comment first quoted above: "My long range plan for W. was to get her to connect, if possible, her very personal complaints to the historical culture being made available through this interpretive project with *The Brothers Karamazov".* Of course, I was not conscious at the time of having anything specific in mind. The hegemonic tendency is much more subtle than that. To return to Gadamerian terms my prejudices were much more deeply embedded than I realized. There is nothing wrong, in principle, with wanting W. to try to find relevance or applicability, if possible, through a potential experience with the novel. But maybe my words had been, as it were, too meaningful. They indicated the idea that there is something like an

historically derived ambivalency concerning religion. Most scholars might agree. But they did not leave room for W. to play with an idea that was surely beginning to form up in her thinking. Was W. tending toward a clear-cut rejection of uncertainty with religious matters? Would she read the novel in some new and unusual way? Or would she follow others who see the novel - despite Dostoyevsky's intentions - as a defeat in discourse for religious belief all together? Even if she would eventually choose to follow the normal discourse (Rorty 1979) on this matter, it would have been better to encourage her to proceed deconstructively, allowing her to practice some alternative way of experiencing religious doubt in light of her own experience vis-a-vis the novel.

Gallagher interestingly points out that Bruffee (1984) "lists deconstructive criticism as a tool of normal discourse" (Gallagher, p. 313). In other words he advises that deconstructive criticism should be subsumed within the category of thinking processes usually associated with conventional discourse. Rorty defines normal or conventional discourse as "that which is conducted within an agreed-upon set of conventions about what counts as a relevant contribution" (Rorty 1979, p. 320). Although I don't agree with Bruffee that deconstruction should be properly thought of as a tool of normal discourse, it certainly is an essential intellectual tool perhaps more usually and accurately associated with abnormal discourse. Rorty himself defines abnormal discourse as "having sense only as a protest against attempts to close off conversation" (Rorty 1979, p. 377). W., as evidenced by her "teeny-bopper" statement, was engaged in deconstructing the conventional discourse concerning *The Brothers Karamazov* as textuality. She was also reacting against the prevailing classroom conversation concerning the novel. By encouraging her to proceed with her thinking, using whatever language she choose - at least initially - I would have fostered ideational fluency and productive thinking within the conversation. Neither radical nor moderate hermeneutics could do anything but approve of that. Her ideas would then have had a chance of entering the give and take that characterizes conversational learning. (That other viewpoints are modified most efficiently within the parameters of a conversation

is an endorsement of conversational learning somewhat overlooked by radical hermeneutical theorists). If she preferred to connect her thoughts at some point to a tradition of understanding, from a moderate point of view, so much the better. Whatever path W.'s thinking would have taken, my role as a facilitator of conversational learning should have been to encourage the abnormality of her thinking, not to insist prematurely - if at all - on conformity to some traditionally identifiable way of experiencing a religious problem.

This shows that deconstructionist techniques can be incorporated into a broader hermeneutic project without necessarily abandoning the moderate hermeneutic educational project. It also demonstrates that the role of "authoritative expertise", as expounded in this thesis, should be expanded to include a broader conception of hermeneutics and is not necessarily inconsistent with radical hermeneutics, at least in practice. The following passage from Rorty furthers this insight: "The product of abnormal discourse can be anything from nonsense to intellectual revolution. . . . But hermeneutics is the study of abnormal discourse from the point of view of some normal discourse - the attempt to make some sense of what is going on at a stage where we are still too unsure about it to describe it" (Rorty 1979, p. 320).

Later on, in response to a different situation, I would write concerning W. that, "Experience would lead me to believe that many, if not all, personal problems could be connected to larger more universal concerns. Her problem seemed to be one of alienation. The specific form that her self-exploration had taken was inappropriate to the goals of the seminar - unless her personal life could find connection to something not limited to idiosyncratic expression. The idiosyncratic can be understood as that which has not been (or could not be, in extreme cases) communicated to the meaningful understanding of others" (see p.192 of this thesis). What I was doing in this particular bit of analysis is precisely what Derrida warns about. By insisting once again that interpretation be tied to a broader tradition of understanding, I continued to limit the possibility of producing a "plurality of meaning". This, of course, can't always

be helped. Sooner or later the logistics of any interpretive project will begin to limit the number of meanings that can be practically incorporated in order to achieve a project's goals. But the usefulness of deconstructive principles is to remind student-interpreters and teachers that other meanings, some of which may at first seem nonsensical, are available and have viability. It also points out that meaning, whether it is embodied within a tradition or not, becomes arbitrary whenever it excludes other possible viewpoints. This realization provides a practical principle of pedagogic behavior that is equally useful to both radical and moderate hermeneutics

To further this line of analysis I invite the reader to turn to Chapter Six, pp. 254-256. Herein, J. makes a journal entry that refers to W. The students in the discussion group (of which J. was included) were assigned to interpret in class a painting by Van Gogh, *Peasant Shoes*. In this section J., after recording her own interpretation of the painting, sets that aside in order to comment on W.'s interpretation of the same painting. She writes, "We all looked at the picture and each, in turn, read our interpretation. They were all interesting, but I loved Whitney's [W.'s] most of all. What she said was totally different than anything that I would have thought of on my own. Yet still, it made perfect sense and was a truly wonderful interpretation " (see p. 254 of this thesis).

But during the classroom discussion, W. had again used language that made no sense to me. J. obviously picked up on my frustration and wrote reminding me that I had indicated previously that some interpretations are incorrect. She said, "You also mentioned that some interpretations can be just plain wrong. I don't understand. Why are some wrong" (see p. 255 in this thesis)? Her very next paragraph - *apropos* of the question she has asked about incorrect interpretations - explains what happened during discussion in the classroom in response to the assignment I gave them to interpret the Van Gogh painting: "Then W. started talking about termites, and, at first, none of us really understood what she was getting at. Eventually we found out that it is not the termites that she was justifying but, rather, the ability to have creative responses that

are derived from personal experience" (see p. 255 of this thesis). J. was astute enough to apply the statement that I had made previously concerning incorrect interpretations to this occurrence. I responded to J.'s skepticism in the following way: "I agree to an extent, but there is still my own belief that personal experience must be universalized or it is mainly idiosyncratic" (see p. 255 of this thesis). Although it is still my position that personal experience needs to be universalized, I cannot, in retrospect, any longer consider W.'s responses to be idiosyncratic just because it does not happen to be founded in the conventional language characteristic of one tradition of understanding or another or because it is not immediately headed toward establishing a connection to something more universally understood. There is time enough to establish those connections latter on. Frankly, I can't think of a better metaphor for deconstruction than W.'s "termites". I now believe that she had in mind something like the image of termites eating away at the foundation of conventional thinking. As a teacher committed to moderate hermeneutics, I want to extend the foundations of experience rather than tear them down. But when a foundation becomes exclusive, when it does not permit productive thinking, then tearing it down does not seem to be an inappropriate response on the part of a young person for whom the conventional thinking of normal discourse is inadequate.

What I have called "authoritative expertise" in this thesis - derived from Gadamer but now extended by Gallagher's conception of moderate hermeneutics - should also include some deference to teaching events that are equally well or even better described by radical hermeneutics. There can be no further incorporation of deconstruction into moderate hermeneutical thinking unless such sensitivity is practiced. My own behavior as a teacher toward W. was hegemonic from a radical point of view and also unnecessarily authoritarian from a moderate perspective. Because I risked cutting off the possibility of a more open conversation, I violated principles inherent to both the radical and the moderate philosophical school.

I now refer my reader to Chapter Seven, Exercise # 2. Herein, I assigned students

to read Sartre's "Existentialism is a Humanism" (see pp. 272-289). The essay was discussed in class. I considered that a first reading of any text should correspond to Gadamer's I-Thou relationship wherein readers are obliged to listen in an objective fashion by setting aside, insofar as it is possible, their own prejudices in light of new and unfamiliar ideas. After reading and an opportunity to ask questions, students were instructed to make entries in their journals. As stated, I had difficulty from the beginning getting students to listen to Sartre in any fair-minded way (see p. 273). His uncompromising atheism was an immediate object of attack. (Many of the students in this particular class came from fundamentalist Christian backgrounds).

The frustration that I felt trying to conduct a conversation of understanding based on Sartre's essay echoes a question concerning Gadamer's faith in the process of conversational understanding itself (see Gallagher, pp. 20-24 for discussion on Derrida's questioning of good will in conversation, etc.). What happens when a group of students dogmatically refuse even to consider a point of view different from their own? Initially, I satisfied myself with a few small inroads to their closed intellectual horizons. A few students did try to integrate Sartre's emphasis on individual moral responsibility into their own Christian framework of understanding (see my critical analysis of M.H. on pp. 289-90). One student applied Sartre to the *Pieta* exercise and concluded, somewhat tentatively, that at the moment of moral decision-making ambiguity asserts itself (see p. 285 and my critical analysis of D.M.). In general, however, I had to content myself with believing that no matter how intellectually unmoved the students were at the time, they had now come to live in a phenomenal-world that was broader and more inclusive than before.

The important question is to ask how the events just described fit into hermeneutic philosophy broadly conceived. To begin with, my original ideas on authoritative expertise, derived from Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy and shared by Gallagher's moderate hermeneutics, were at least partially confirmed. As a teacher-expert I had to become very active if students were to become open-minded at all. Somewhat

ironically, the hegemony that Derrida fears had to be actually offset by authoritative expertise. If not, very little productive thinking would have occurred. Student prejudices were deeply entrenched. In a sense the resistance toward a "plurality of meaning" flowed from the students toward the text, not the other way. From Derrida's perspective this can be seen as the students not mustering sufficient good will to read the essay objectively, a fact that calls the process of conversational understanding itself into question. What Derrida does not seem to anticipate is the need in these cases for an authoritative expertise to offset closed-mindedness.

Both hermeneutic positions, for admittedly different reasons and perhaps with very different outcomes in mind, come to similar conclusions: it is difficult to get people to break free from their preconceived notions of right and wrong. But a broader pedagogical understanding is advanced by thinking through the observations and insights of both schools. My own hermeneutic position reminds me that the influence of any tradition, e.g. fundamentalist Christianity, does not determine one's total experience with new and unfamiliar ideas. It conditions but does not strictly determine. Yet - and here I must adjust my own prejudgments - Gadamer does not sufficiently consider how one copes on a practical level with such unabated resistance to the possibility of new experience.

Deborah Kerdeman makes the following point concerning this weakness within Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Her point is well worth the length of the following quotes:

> A major problem . . . besets Gadamer's thought. . . . Gadamer ironically fails to address how concrete contextual factors might influence the capacity to acknowledge limits and remain open. Are their psychosocial developmental issues, for example, that might be important to consider when educating teenagers to accept others and themselves? How might the real-life political demands faced by teachers influence the way they choose to be open with students?

> How, exactly, do we distinguish relations and conditions that promote

openness from those that shut it down? Gadamer seems to think that simply encountering difference is sufficient to compel a person to examine her biases and acknowledge the challenges of others. 'My experience has been that my own power of judgment finds its limits, and also its enrichment, whenever I find someone else exercising his own power of judgment', Gadamer writes [Gadamer is quoted from *On Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*]. But why should simply confronting another have this effect? Why might experiencing challenge and loss not make a person more defensive? Why is it that some well-adjusted people are able to learn from pain, while others react by 'hiding out' in various sorts of ways?

It seems that in order to get off the ground, Gadamer's philosophy must presuppose what it promotes. That is, in order to learn how to be open, one must already be willing to engage in self-acceptance and self-questioning. How does this happen? This is the question Jacques Derrida raises in his criticism of Gadamer [the author alludes to the famous debate between Gadamer and Derrida]. . . . What Gadamer does is to locate this concern centrally for education (Kerdeman 1998, pp. 19-20).

Moreover, in this incident with the students who "hide-out", to use Kerdeman's expression, instead of putting their own prejudices aside long enough to fairly consider another's ideas and how these might be applied to their lives, there was a failure to play with the text. (This is same failure that I documented on my part when discussing the case of W.) Michael Cowan (1994), whose work is closely associated with the Heidegger/Gadamer tradition of hermeneutics, relates his own practical experience with getting students to respond to a text. Despite his commitment to Gadamer's point of view in general, Cowan guides his students in a way that would allow for a partial integration of deconstructive principles, while keeping Gadamer's overall philosophy intact. He advocates a four part method.

First, he has the students read a particular text. This happens prior to any classroom discussion. The initial emphasis is on the horizon of the reader. He has them note their initial feelings to the text; he directs them to record their agreements and disagreements with the text; and he also asks them to record questions they might

have about the text that call for clarification. Only then are students invited to briefly share their initial responses with one another. He writes, "The listeners do not judge, compare, or evaluate. Other's responses to the reading are to be listened to for understanding, not agreement or disagreement" (Cowan 1994, p. 5).

Secondly, he tries to get the students to commit themselves to "pursuing a deeper understanding of the text on its own ground" (Cowan, p. 5). Cowan reminds that "All texts are interpretations of life" (Cowan, p. 5). Some texts by their very nature offer "explicit interpretations of their subject matter" (Cowan, p. 5). This is the point where Gadamer asks us to allow the text to speak to us as a Thou, as a partner in dialogue. We are asked to listen carefully and respectfully (Gadamer 1994, p. 358). This, of course, is where Derrida probably first senses the danger of conversational understanding. Hegemonic forces exercise their sway over us at this point in the process. But as we have seen, this force flows both ways, from text to student, but also from student to text. This is where we, as teachers, are at risk if we unwittingly assume an open-mindedness on the part of the reader that the reader may not possess. Nevertheless, this is where a focus on the horizon of the text must be emphasized if interpretation is to take place. Cowan writes, "Until . . . [a] text is adequately understood on its own ground, valid interpretation is impossible" (Cowan, p. 5). Cowan refers not only to the cultural horizons that surround any text but also to critical textual factors, which might accommodate themselves to deconstructive interpretive tenets - although I doubt he has that in mind.

Thirdly, there is a basic shift in the process toward conversational understanding itself. Here Cowan says he "encourage[s] students to 'mix it up' with the text and with one another" (Cowan, p. 5). This is where playfulness begins. Cowan writes that "It is at this point that the game of conversation first takes shape" (Cowan, p. 5). This is also the point in the process where Gadamer's belief in the need for an I-Thou relationship with other conversants, as well as the text under consideration, is required. But Kerdeman, as we have already seen, warns that Gadamer assumes too

much at this point. And one cannot dismiss her warning. Goodwill on the part of the student cannot be assumed. The radical hermeneutic position may be more right about this than Gadamer. But what other choices are available to the educator? What other tactics would one pursue? The following observation comes to guide Cowan at this point. He writes, "In the give-and-take of this moment of the conversation, the reader puts his or her evaluative responses in dialogue with the text and the views of others, seeking a fuller understanding of the text's proposals for life" (Cowan, p. 6). By being involved in a process that requires open-mindedness it can be hoped that students will assume the rules of playfulness as their own.

The last phase of Cowan's method is to encourage students to receive texts in a way that might "transform a reader's sense of what is possible and what should be the case for her or his life" (Cowan, p. 6). He instructs students to complete this sentence: "'An implication for how my life might go that has arisen in my conversation with this text is . . . ,and my reaction to that possibility is . . .'"(Cowan, p. 6). Cowan concludes by alluding to his own experience, "Possibilities named in this moment of text interpretation range from a dim, new awareness of some prospect to a specific decision that must now be faced" (Cowan, p. 6).

There are advantages to Cowan's method of instruction. It does not allow students to escape self-examination. The student is put into a position by the formalized aspects of the exercise whereby he must engage and interact with the text. Although hegemonic forces within the conversation, whether they emanate from text, interpreter, or conversant, still threaten, the technique guarantees that the teacher is less likely to be a purveyor of those forces. (My own mistakes with W. would have been unlikely following Cowan's instructional technique). And finally, the student is not bound into a purely conventional way of responding to the text. There is room for what might be mistaken as idiosyncrasy and "plurality of meaning", without necessarily precluding connections to traditions of understanding in Gadamerian fashion.

Last of all this method calls for a judicious use of authoritative expertise

throughout, but especially in the first three phases. The first phase, which focuses on the student's initial response to the text, requires strong guidance so that students will have the opportunity to record their initial responses without undue influences from other students. It is here that Cowan allows for students to register their agreements and disagreements with the text. Each agreement spontaneously recorded while reading becomes a potentially recognized prejudice. Each disagreement also indicates a possible prejudice revealed. He also advises students to use exclamation marks to indicate places where the text surprises them. Surprises indicate places in the text alien to the student's usual point of view (Remember Gadamer's admonishment that we are the alien we come home to!). This is, of course, not merely recommended. Students are assigned the details of the process. They are encouraged to try it out to see if it enhances their understanding of a particular text - before they have a chance to reject the underlying process outright. It is, of course, a process that they will either ultimately reject or, conversely, accept in a way that will change the way they experience their life-world. But they are required to practice this method precisely because they are students in a class wherein the process of learning is being tried out. Goodwill can be formally required in an educational setting if nowhere else.

The second phase, which focuses on an understanding of the text itself, requires a knowledge of subject matter that students cannot be expected to have in their possession. Teacher/experts must now grow self-reflective as they explain the historical-cultural context of the text to students. The teacher must also be ready to explain inter-textual references (references within the text to other texts). These are ideational references that may not be understood by students. They will require careful explanation. If the goals of process education are to be advanced, then the teacher/experts must recognize their own prejudices, and students must be made aware of them if the basic principles of a hermeneutically guided pedagogy are to be maintained.

Moreover, teacher/experts may be influenced by hegemonic ideas. I refer to the

specific concerns of radical and even critical hermeneutics. Hegemonic ideas must be examined, both those embedded within the language games that we have available for discussion and understanding of the events of our life-worlds and those extralinguistical forces that originate in the power structures of society. The teacher as well as students are subject to both nefarious influences. The students will have to be careful that their full right to question the expert is not only allowed but encouraged. This may well require specific types of intellectual training conducted by the teacher/expert. All schools of hermeneutic thinking would have a strong interest in seeing that this is done.

The third phase, which entails what Cowan refers to as a "talking back to the text", is where open conversation in the classroom about what the text means takes place (Cowan, p. 5). This corresponds, in part, to Gadamer's "fusion of horizons". It is predicated, as I have said, on an I-Thou relationship between student and text and student and student. But sometimes students must be forced to listen to the text and to one another. I have had experience with this method since I reported on my research in Part Two. Students, for example, must be held back from arguing. The teacher must intervene and demonstrate the difference between an arguing relationship and one that emphasizes listening. And even here the teacher may have to act as subject matter expert. One of the concerns of radical hermeneutics is that the prejudice of reason, derived from the Enlightenment, has enormous hegemonic power over our discourses. A teacher in the role of expert might have to enter the conversation in order to point out that other more poetic, less rationalistic ways of understanding the world might be useful to the discussion at hand. All the while the expert must try to be fair to all contending points of view, listening in the fashion recommended by Garrison (1996) and Bramall (2000) and expecting the same of students.

I hope that the second part of this conclusion in particular suggests an expanded way of understanding my empirical work. If overall I have suggested further lines of inquiry, then I have ended this thesis no worse than when I began. Perhaps the single

greatest idea in western philosophy is Plato's Doctrine of Ignorance. When the oracle told Plato that he was the wisest of men, he was baffled. What was it that he knew that others did not? He thought long and hard about this, and when an answer finally came to him, he realized that he had started out on his quest for wisdom simply knowing that he knew nothing at all. If I have gained insight, I still hold what I know to be tentative. I must now await the experience of others whose insight will inevitably surpass my own and who will one day reinterpret this research.

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