From Word to Concept. The Task of Hermeneutics as Philosophy

By Hans-Georg Gadamer

I would first like briefly to justify the theme I have chosen, namely: "from word to concept." The subject matter is a topic belonging both to philosophy and to hermeneutics. In truth, concepts are really one of the distinguishing marks of philosophy. Indeed, philosophy first entered Western culture in this form. For this reason the concept is the first thing I would like to discuss. Of one thing I am sure: the concept, which very often presents itself as something strange and demanding, must begin to speak if it is to be really grasped. For this reason I would first like to revise my topic a little to read: *"Not only from word to concept but likewise from concept to word."*

Let's think back to the beginning for a moment. The point we must start out from is the fact that conceptual thinking is a basic characteristic of the Occident. But even the word "Occident" [*Abendland*, land of the evening] is no longer so current as it was in my youth, when Oswald Spengler announced its decline.[1][1] Today, we would prefer to speak of "Europe," but again nobody really knows what Europe will be; at most we know what we would like it to be one day. For this reason I believe my topic is not so very far removed from the most pressing questions of today. Nor do I think I have simply chosen to speak again about one of my favorite topics to express my thanks for this festive occasion. Rather, because these are questions I am continuously at work on, I want to confront them here once again.

How did it really come about in human history, that in the very dire historical situation in which the Greek city-state culture found itself (i.e., under pressure from the Persian, the Asiatic, and later the Punic African spirit) at exactly this time conceptual thinking, the enduring intellectual creation whose bright rays have streamed out over the globe right down to the present day, arose in Greek culture? You all know, of course, what I am referring to. I am speaking about *science*—obviously about that science we all learn in [2] school, Euclidean geometry first and foremost. What wonderful precision it displayed in logically proving things that nobody doubted, yet which nevertheless required the very highest intellectual effort for their proof! This success in proving represents an intellectual heroic deed that moved human thought for the first time beyond all knowledge based on experience [*Erfahrungswissen*] and founded what is now called "science" [*Wissenschaft*].

I can speak only with greatest admiration about what this powerful capacity of reason truly is: the miracle of numbers and geometry that grounds the enormous edifice of mathematics. If I begin with this basic assumption that science had its birth in Greece and it was from the Greeks that we inherited our thinking and reflection about the possibility of knowledge as such, then I would go on to pose the further question: What does knowing [*Wissen*] signify for us?

You know the answer. It appears in the form in which Socrates received his reply from the Delphic oracle: *that no human being then living was wiser than he.* His great admirer and disciple, Plato, has shown us what this wisdom consists of, namely knowing about not knowing. It is the uncompromising and incorruptible manner by which we humans seek,

[1] Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*, vol. i, *Gestalt und Wirklichkeit* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1918); vol. 2, *Welthistorische Perspektiven* (Munich: Oscar Beck, 1922). There are innumerable editions by Beck, and the work has been translated into English and six other languages. The English translation is *The Decline of the West*, vol. i, *Form and Actuality*; vol. 2, *Perspectives of World History* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1926 and 1928, then in one volume in 1932).

during the short span of life that ends in death, to comprehend the other person, the unknown, the *ignoramus* and *ignorabimus,* the not-knowing of our true place in the world.

If I begin to ponder the matter in this way, then the following question presses itself on me: How has this mathematizing capacity of the Greeks, this logical power, this taking shape of the most speakable of all languages—as Nietzsche called Greek (but in truth all languages are speakable for those who understand how to think)—how did it manage to gain prominence throughout the world? If we pose the question in this way, I think we come somewhat nearer the theme, *"word and concept,"* and therewith closer to what I have in mind when I focus on the situation of the world today and on our conception of the world, a conception that must no longer be purely Eurocentric.

There can be no uncertainty any more that the effects of our science-based civilization, with its unbelievable capacity to alter the givens of nature for our own use, life, and survival, have become a tremendous, worldwide problem. There is no doubt that all this has become an important question that is addressed to us, not least because science itself has taught us more and more about what a very short episode humanity represents within the evolution of the universe.

Along with the privilege of our present power to transform the given, have we not received one last great gift? Also along with this power, have we perhaps been presented with a task that completely exceeds the powers of our understanding? When one looks beyond what we regard as the "civilized motherland" of European and Anglo-Saxon cultural traditions, when [3] one looks around the world today—at Japan, China, India, South Africa, or South America—one finds that in all these cultures the same mathematized and formalized thinking is gaining the upper hand. How will these two factors go together? Or will one dominate the other? Somehow, a global transformation is emerging. I don't want to argue here that the international adoption of the British bathroom betokens a revolution, or that the adoption of the European business suit in offices from Japan to China to India is deeply significant, but rather that at least in certain realms of life a unitary cultural model is emerging, which, like a revolution, is turning everything upside down.

In all this there is a fact worth considering: whole blocks of humanity that are quite different from each other in terms of cult, religion, and honoring their ancestors—in short, that have different collective ways of living together in conformity with their social rules—these cultures are now confronted by the resplendent methodological mastery represented by science. Indeed, we can measure our fate by how, either harmonizing or clashing, this fusing of cultures takes place, perhaps even shaping our own future. Or better: *by how that future will be determined by us.* Our fate will be decided by how well the world that bears the stamp of science, and that was philosophically expressed through the world of concepts, will be able to bring itself into harmony with the equally deep insights into the destiny of humanity that have come to expression, for example, in a dialogue of a Chinese master with his disciple, or in other kinds of testimony from religiously founded cultures that are completely strange to us.

How have we gotten ourselves into this situation? Not completely without poetry, and this holds true for the Greek world as well. The oldest written evidence of Greek conceptual thinking comes in the form of Homeric poetry—testimonies sung in Homeric verse. Not philosophy but the epic stands at the beginning of our written heritage. And we experience this when we see how *the concept suddenly began to speak*—spreading suddenly from Greek city-state cultures to the whole Mediterranean world—when, embedded in the lines of averse text, it uttered the question, *ti to on*—What is being? What is it we call nothingness?

I could continue and show how Plato's question actually developed out of this one question and led to the establishing of metaphysics, which through Aristotle finally came to be accepted throughout the world and left its imprint on two thousand years of Western thought, until from out of it in the seventeenth century modern science emerged, as well as the modern sciences of experience and mathematics. But at the moment, it is perhaps more appropriate for us to remember that we are in a room dedicated to Hegel. So we have good reason to recall that it was Hegel who saw himself [4] faced with the philosophical task of gathering together the new "sciences" and everything else that did not merge with science, such as metaphysics and religion, and thereby to raise them up into a the unitary whole of an encompassing concept.

The modern sciences of experience, on the one hand, with their mathematical instrumentalization, and the Socratic thinking that constantly questions things, on the other, seeking the Good with an attitude of not-knowing—these are two ways of experiencing reality that do not seem to go together. Perhaps for a moment we should venture the leap of laying out before ourselves how this great cultural epoch of modern Europe had reached a certain fulfillment when Hegel sought to make persuasive a reconciliation between the truth of the sciences, the truth of metaphysics, and that of the Christian religion.

Hegel did not bring this about through the mad delusion that science is the unconditional master of cultivating certainty through method. No, one should not forget that as Hegel strove for his great synthesis between the absolute knowledge of metaphysics and the exact knowledge of the methodical sciences, he also always envisioned within this synthesis the message of art and of religion. For Hegel, this synthesis was not just a matter of mastering certain areas of knowledge with the help of abstraction and measurement; it involved those forms of knowing or forms of questioning that *do not let go of us*, such as when we stand before works of art or when we are touched by poetic creations. Also, works that invite theological reflection or fulfill the pious requirement for human beings to consider their finitude reach a very moving intensity.

There was a time when one was well aware that this kind of knowing was quite different from that of mathematics and logic. At that time, for example, one called the study of law *"jurisprudence"*—that is, a kind of intelligence or wisdom in judging. Law students were to develop in themselves a power of making distinctions so that they could judge what was right in a balanced, differentiated, and "objective" way.

In the meantime, however, the "scientific" ideal been so able to absolutize itself today that [in German] one now terms the study of law the *science* of law [*Rechtswissenschaft*] and the study of art the *science* of art [*Kunstwissenschaft*]. Earlier, the study of art was called the history of art [*Kunstgeschichte*]. And in Germany today, the discipline of studying literature is called the *science* of literature [*Literaturwissenschaft*], when earlier it was called the history of literature. What the earlier term signified was that from the beginning one assumed that one cannot "know" literature in the same sense that one obtains "knowledge" through measurement and mathematics following the model of the natural sciences. A quite different capacity was required for this kind of knowledge.

When I have the honor, as now, of speaking at an institution oriented to [5] the "sciences" of the human spirit [*Geisteswissenschaften,* meaning the humanities and also the social sciences, sometimes translated as the "human sciences"], I do this well aware that these "sciences" *[Wissenschaften]* are not sciences in the rigorous mathematical and natural scientific sense. Although the social sciences have certainly applied mathematical methods in their historically developed forms of methodical-critical research, I believe they are nevertheless also guided

and determined by other things: historical models [*Vorbilder*], experience, strokes of fate, and in any case by a different kind of exactness from that in mathematical physics.

In the natural sciences one speaks of the "precision" of mathematizing. But is the precision attained by the application of mathematics to living situations ever as great as the precision attained by the ear of the musician who in tuning his or her instrument finally reaches a point of satisfaction? Are there not quite different forms of precision, forms that do not consist in the application of rules or in the use of an apparatus, but rather in a grasp of what is right that goes far beyond this? I could go into endless examples to make plausible what I mean when I say that hermeneutics is not a doctrine of methods for the humanities and social sciences [*Geisteswissenschaften*] but rather a basic insight into what thinking and knowing mean for human beings in their practical life, even if one makes use of scientific methods.

A distinctive capacity is required in human beings in order for them to make the right use of human knowledge. Plato once posed the question—and not in some context distant from my point: What really constitutes the true statesman? I venture to say that for Plato such a statesman was not just thinking of how to win the next election. Rather, Plato had something essentially different in mind, a quite specific talent: a certain instinctive feeling for balance, an instinct for creating situations of balance and for sensing the many possibilities of how to create and manage situations so as to maintain balance. In his dialogue about the true statesman [*The Statesman*], Plato at one point speaks at some length about this ability. He starts out by presupposing that there are two different possible ways of measuring, and both appear to be indispensable. In the first form of measuring one goes after things with a ruler in order to make them available and controllable, like the meter-ruler in Paris that all other metric measurements must follow. Here one is clearly concerned with what the Greeks called *poson*, quantity.

The second kind of measuring consists of striking the "right measure," finding what is appropriate. We experience this, for example, in the wonder of harmonious tones sounding together, or in the harmonious feeling of well-being that we call "health." This concerns what the Greeks called *poion*, quality. [6]

I was able to elucidate this distinction not so long ago in my book *The Enigma of Health* (VG, EH), dealing specifically with illness as the object of medical science. Illness in itself is certainly a threat that one has to be on guard against. When one becomes ill, a doctor with knowledge and skill is needed, and one hopes that the doctor can "bring it under control" [*beherrschen*]. Health, on the other hand, is clearly something quite different, something we do not observe or control in the same way. Rather, it is something we follow—like a path, for example. When we are on this path we have the feeling that "now we are headed in the right direction." The path under our feet becomes a way. There are, of course, many other instances in addition to becoming physically healthy that I register as a clear contrast to the ideal of scientific governance and control.

We understand the term "scientific rigor" [*Wissenschaftlichkeit*] to mean objectivity, and it is surely a good thing for us to bring under critical control the subjective presuppositions that are in play when one observes anything. Scientific results must in principle be clearly understandable and repeatable by anyone. This is what makes the idea of objective knowledge possible. All this is fully in order. But one should also not forget what the word "object" in German means. It mean "standing-against" [*Gegenstand*], that is, *resisting* [*Widerstand*]. In the sphere of illness and health, however, we are dealing with a knowing [*Wissen*] that does not simply rule over and control objects. For with regard to health, we cannot simply reconstruct the ways of Nature. Rather, we must be content to break the resistance of the

illness and to help Nature prevail using her own secret ways. To do this requires the *art* of the doctor to find the "right measure." This is not just science [*Wissenschaft*] but rather a different kind of knowing that with its own fulfillment withdraws, one might say. Certainly this concept of art as something that basically only helps nature prevail is something different from what "art" is in the creative and formative arts and also the literary arts. But even here one finds something akin to it in how these arts are carried out, and this marks a kind of boundary between it and what one associates with the objectivity of science. In medicine as in other arts one is concerned with much more than the mere application of rules.

In my book *Truth and Method,* I began my considerations first of all with art, and not with "science" or even with the human sciences [*die Geisteswissenschaften*]. Even within the human sciences it is *art* that brings the basic questions of human being to our awareness in such a unique way—indeed, in such a way that no resistance or objection against it arises. An artwork is like a model [*ein Vorbild*].

By this I mean that an artwork is, so to speak, irrefutable [*unwiderleglich*]. For example, one calls poetry irrefutable. Consider what the German word *"Gedicht"* [poem] means. Here, once again, it helps to know a bit of Latin. *Gedicht* comes from the Latin *dicere* [to say] and also *dictare* [to dictate]. This [7] mean a poem is *a Diktat* [something dictated, as in taking dictation, or more strongly, a command]. The poem compels through the way it says what it says. Indeed, this holds for all rhetorical uses of language. But the poem compels over and over, and the better one knows it, the more compelling it is. Nobody would ever object to listening to a recitation by saying that he or she already knew the poem.

In disciplines like art history, literature, and music [*Musikwissenschaft*, the "science" of music], and likewise in the classical studies of philology and archaeology, one who never really opens him-or herself up to a work of art but still claims to be an expert in the field, who always knows it better, is really a "philistine." In all the sciences that I understand a bit about, there comes a moment in which something is *there*, something one should not forget and cannot forget. This is not a matter of mastering an area of study. Take, for example, the discipline of art history. In art history the requirements of science, as such, appear to be satisfied in all areas where we can successfully apply historical methods. This is the reason, I think, that iconography has become so popular in the modern science of art [*Kunstwissenschaft*]. But is scientific knowing what art has in mind? In iconography whether the object of questioning is a work of art or not does not matter. Hence, for iconography, kitsch is really far more interesting.

I am not saying that this is the case for the genuine historian of art; but for understandable reasons, the scientized historical method of understanding works of pictorial art continues to gain importance in academic circles. This should not, however, be the only permissible approach. I fully believe and hope that here, and everywhere, a balance between both forms of knowledge is attainable, a balance that accepts both the scientific and the artistic sides. In the passage from Plato's *Statesman* that we mentioned earlier, you will recall that Plato, too, expressly states that both kinds of measuring are required—the measuring that measures, and the "right measure," the appropriate [*das Angemessene*], that one tries to find. There are other cases of this kind that I would claim have an equal right to stand alongside the scientific ideal. In science, as I have said, one is generally concerned with a knowing that breaks down resistance, and only in the end does it require art [rather than science], an aptitude for art [*Kunstfertigkeit*] that I illustrated with the example of the physician. This second sort of knowing supports itself, carries within itself a capacity of its own that involves itself [*sich einsetzt*]. This is the reason I have focused on these forms of knowledge, and not just because I have a special preference for the arts. I think it is not permissible that one form should try to

be the whole answer: one form of measuring is not more important than the other. Rather, both forms are important.

There is something we also can learn from the German word for measure: we say in German, for instance, "He has a measured nature [*hat ein* [8] *gemessenes Wesen*], always appropriate."[2] What is expressed in these words is something like the security of a balance between open-mindedness [*Aufgeschlossenheit*] and peace within oneself. Now, in these observations I do not presume to situate myself within the social sciences. Indeed, I have no competence to talk about the social sciences in the way that, for example, a political scientist can. Nevertheless, we can consider what "politics" is in relation to the miracle of balance. What is this, really? Let me give you an example of this miracle that I myself experienced as a youth, when I learned to ride a bicycle. I had a somewhat lonely youth and received a bicycle to keep me occupied. I had to learn to ride it all by myself. There was a little hill in our back yard, and there I tried to teach myself how to ride it. I climbed up the hill and after a few failed attempts made a great discovery: as long as I held onto the handlebars as tight as I could, I always tipped over! But suddenly I stopped this and it happened as if by itself. Today, I see in this example what the politicians have learned and what their task is: they must above all create a balance if they want to steer toward and reach their goal.

If a politician wants to realize future possibilities at all, he or she must be persuasive, and this is not easy. Here, the decisive point is the same as in our example. It is virtually unbelievable that a little less pressure in holding onto the handlebars, even just a little bit less, enables one to hold the bicycle in balance and to steer it. But if you exert just a little too much pressure, then suddenly nothing goes right. I apply this experience not just to politics, however, but to all our behavior, conditioned as it is by modern forms of life where we are governed by rules, prescriptions, and orders. Yet a proper conformity to such an order is not a matter of blindly and angrily applying rules. What I am talking about here is first of all simply the consequence that follows from a well-regulated conformity to the proper rules of behavior. The reshaping of reality by modern technology now poses new tasks for us all. We must make justice our starting point and central concern, and in particular we must make right use of our knowledge and ability to do things.

Environmental problems force themselves on us here. Nature, too, is a reality that one cannot protect solely by means of measuring and calculating. Rather, it is something with which and in which one must learn to live, so that one may breathe more freely. It is essential, then, that we behave more appropriately. We all feel this in ourselves, I think, when we observe animals in their ways of life. We should hold them in respect in the same way that one holds in respect other human beings with their varied beliefs and ways of life.

These are relevant questions that we are all struggling with today, for now we see what depends on them: movements to settle inequities, to create balance, and for exchange. It is essential, therefore, to recognize all the varied forms of human life and the expressions of their particular worldviews. In [9] doing so, we find ourselves in the realm of hermeneutics. This I call the art of understanding. But what is understanding, really? Understanding, whatever else it may mean, does not entail that one agrees with whatever or whomever one "understands." Such a meeting of the minds in understanding would be Utopian. Understanding means that I am able to weigh and consider fairly *what the other person thinks!* One recognizes that the other person could be right in what he or she says or actually wants to say. Understanding, therefore, is not simply mastering something that stands

[2] "Steckt in Angemessenheit" in the Bamberger text, corrected to "stets in Angemessenheit" in the *Gadamer Lesebuch*, 106.

opposite you [*das Gegenüber*], whether it is the other person or the whole objective [*gegenständliche*] world in general. Certainly understanding can be this, so that one understands in order to master or control. Indeed, man's will to rule over nature is natural and it makes our survival possible. Even the story of creation in the Old Testament speaks of this order of the world and of humans reigning over all of nature. And yet it still remains true that ruling and the will to power are not everything.

Indeed, it is important that the extent of this ruling over nature be kept within limits by other powers, especially those of commonality—in the family, in comradeship, in human solidarity—so that one understands and is understood. Understanding always means first of all: oh, now I understand what you want! In saying this, I have not said that you are right or that you will be judged to be correct. But only if we get to the point that we *understand* another human being, either in a political situation or in a text, will we be able to communicate with one another at all. Only when we consider seriously the enormous tasks that await humanity in the future, only then, I think, will we also come to appreciate the world-political significance of *understanding.* You will recall how I pictured the world at the beginning of this lecture. A cadre of highly educated East Asians is attending German and European universities. Very often they astonish us with the tremendous discipline with which they work, and the rapidity with which they are able to produce perfectly written texts, even though oral expression is sometimes almost impossible. It is just unbelievable that many of these people speak almost unintelligibly but are able to write error-free texts! These are differences in communicative behavior that we must become aware of in their broad significance if we are to encounter other cultures. All this goes both ways, of course. The Japanese student coming here probably also finds at first that we do not speak intelligibly but only squawk and sputter.

This will be a task of the future world, of that I am sure. Just as we must realize that people speaking other languages do not just babble but are really speaking, so too they, for their part, will need at least to become familiar with our world if they want to speak and understand German and not just hear it as some kind of squawking and sputtering.

This venturesome elite of East Asian scholars is already doing a lot in this regard, and it should be self-evident to us that their efforts do not entail giving [10] up their own inherited ways of life and their own basic religious ideas. Of course, we do not know anything about what the great conversations of the future between members of different religions may hold in store. And while our young people today in their own stressful years of development find a guru from India fascinating, it is still essential that they should learn to understand the other ways of life as wholes, that they understand all that comprises the basis of these cultures: the view of the family, of ancestors, death, and the living on of ancestors within us, and also such a decisive concept in these cultures as their evaluation of human life. In part, all of these are controlled by forms of lawfulness quite different from those that have become natural to us through our long history of Christian education and culture. And when we define philosophy as hermeneutics, we cannot be satisfied just to repeat the same thing as existed before, as if what hermeneutics basically wanted were simply to put forward a conservative view of the world that merely extended Christian values. Perhaps, but only perhaps, this might suffice as a standard for arriving at an understanding of understanding in Europe. But such a standard is far too narrow.

I do not know what answers humanity will one day finally arrive at concerning how people will live together, either in relation to the rights of the individual versus the rights of the collective, or in relation to the violence that comes from the family or from the state. Consider just the almost unbelievable miracle that the communist revolution in China, which surely has

not dealt gently with the elders, was, even with its almost unlimited power, unable to destroy the family order. So clearly there are everywhere in the world individualities and customs of irreconcilable otherness. I do venture to say, however, that if we do not learn hermeneutic virtue—that is, if we do not realize that it is essential first of all to *understand* the other person if we are ever to see whether in the end perhaps something like the solidarity of humanity as a whole may be possible, especially in relation to our living together and surviving together—if we do not, we will never be able to accomplish the essential tasks of humanity, whether on a small scale or large.

It is easy to claim that humankind today is in a desperate situation. For we have finally reached the point where human beings threaten to destroy themselves, and everyone can become aware of this. Doesn't this pose for everyone today a genuine task of thinking: to be very clear about the fact that human solidarity must be the basic presupposition under which we can work together to develop, even if only slowly, a set of common convictions [*gemeinsame Überzeugungen*]? It seems to me that while European civilization has admirably brought to full development the culture of science with its technical and organizational applications, it has for the past three centuries neglected the law of balance.

It has come into possession of deadly weapons of mass destruction, but has it developed a level of maturity high enough to realize what responsibility [11] our culture now bears for humanity as a whole? Is it not the case that in all such questions, we are faced with tasks that require a consciousness possessed of far-sightedness and carefulness [*Weitsicht und Vorsicht*], and also an openness to each other, if we are to carry out the tasks that will shape our future, tasks whose accomplishment is necessary for peace and reconciliation?

I am of the opinion that with all our technical and scientific progress we still have not learned well enough how to live with each other and with our own progress. I would like to close with the following remark: What I have tried to make clear to you today is that hermeneutics as philosophy is not some kind of methodological dispute with other sciences, epistemologies, or such things. No, hermeneutics asserts something nobody today can deny: we occupy a moment in history in which we must strenuously use the full powers of our *reason*, and not just keep doing science only.

Without our bringing concepts to speak and without a common language, we will not be able to find the words that will reach other persons. It is true that the way goes “from word to concept,” but we must also be able to move “from concept to word,” if we wish to reach the other person. Only if we accomplish both will we gain a reasonable understanding of each other. Only in this way, too, will we possess the possibility of so holding ourselves back that we can allow the other person's views to be recognized. I believe it is important to become so absorbed in something that one forgets oneself in it—and this is one of the great blessings of the experience of art, as well as one of the great promises of religion. Indeed, in the end this is one of the basic conditions for human beings to be able to live together at all in a human way.

“Vom Wort zum Begriff. Der Aufgabe der Hermeneutik als Philosophie” by Hans-Georg Gadamer first appeared in a volume in the Bamberger Hegelwoche series, *Menschliche Endlichkeit und Kompensation*, ed. Odo Marquard (Bamberg: Verlag Fränkischer Tag, 1995), 111-124, and is reprinted with permission of Universitätsverlag Bamberg © 1995. The text dates back to an address given in the Bamberger Hegelwochen of 1994, an occasion on which Gadamer received an honorary doctorate. Subsequently, in 1996, the essay appeared in a handsome limited-edition volume by Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Die Moderne und die Grenze der*

Vergegenständlichung, edited by Bernd Klüser with contributions by Hans Belting, Gottfried Boehm, and Walther Ch. Zimmerli, and with five plates of modern art by Sean Scully (Munich: Bernd Klüser, 1996), 19-40. In 1997 it was included in the *Gadamer Lesebuch*, edited by Jean Grondin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 100-110. The present translation is from the original Bamberg publication, but the two later texts have been consulted, and the slight changes and corrections introduced by Gadamer in the later editions have been incorporated into this translation. One of these changes is the [12] omission of Gadamer's opening words of greeting to the Bamberg audience, which were also omitted from the *Gadamer Lesebuch*. Professor Gadamer, when consulted by the translator, felt that these words of greeting need not be included in the present publication of the essay. The translator wants to thank Lawrence K. Schmidt for his careful review of this translation and Meredith Cargill for many helpful comments.

Translated by Richard E. Palmer.

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