Heidegger and Gadamer on the Modern Age:

The Sun Setting in the Western Sky

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ABSTRACT: This essay contributes to research on, and develops a critique of, the later Heidegger's conception of the relationship between modernity and a future beyond or after the modern age. It is argued that Heidegger does not engage in a reactionary rejection of modernity, since he is methodologically opposed to pure negation. Rather, as the example of his reading of Van Gogh demonstrates, Heidegger uses suggestive poetic hints from modern culture to transcend modernity from within into a "postmodern" and ontologically pluralistic future. The author argues, however, that a more livable, plausible, and politically hopeful response to, and reformation of, the modern age is found in Gadamer's work. Gadamerian hermeneutics permits a rehabilitation of modern culture and thought (for example, the tradition of humanism) by charitably and sensitively disclosing overlooked insights and resources that enable us to continue living within, without moving beyond, the modern age.

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The study of Heidegger's philosophy, according to some scholars, is in a crisis. Thomas Sheehan has argued that Heidegger studies suffers from methodological confusion concerning the most basic terms of Heidegger's thinking, especially the question of the meaning of being.[1] These theoretical debates are mirrored in, and related to, the ongoing political controversy concerning Heidegger's infamous participation in National Socialism, which has recently been reignited by the publication of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*. As is well known, Günter Figal resigned in 2015 as chair of the Martin-Heidegger-Gesellschaft over the contents of the *Notebooks*, and now advocates for a phenomenology of the "inconspicuous" that does not take Heidegger as its central inspiration.[2] And yet, either despite these controversies or perhaps indirectly because of them, the fecundity of research on Heidegger suggests the enduring vitality of Heideggerian thought. Two recent edited volumes have surveyed many possible priorities for future Heidegger studies, which indicates that the time is ripe to assess how research on Heidegger and the many philosophers influenced by him should proceed.[3]

My point of departure within this field of debate is as follows. It is essential for any post-Heideggerian philosophical agenda to get clear about what Heidegger means by modernity, that is, our current historical epoch which is marked by a crisis of technology and nihilism that derives from our deficient historical understanding of being. Here, I follow the path of Iain Thomson, whose writings over the last two decades have clarified and defended Heidegger's critique of modernity and vision of the historical movement into a "postmodern" future as the later Heidegger's distinctive philosophical achievement.[4] Although Heidegger does not employ the term "postmodern" in his writings, Thomson persuasively interprets Heidegger as advocating and preparing for a time to come that resists the ontological grounding and theological striving characteristic of every epoch of Western metaphysics or "ontotheology." This coming break with metaphysics will depart from modern Western culture, which Heidegger thinks is characterized by a nihilistic understanding of being in which entities make sense for us primarily in terms of efficient optimization and control. That technological frame of thinking is exemplified by the scientific manipulation of nature. But human beings

have also increasingly applied technology to themselves, monitoring and enhancing our appearance, capacities, happiness, health, and productivity. Even in the face of this grimly one-sided and seemingly relentless technological conception of meaning, Heidegger glimpses, as Thomson reads him, a postmodern recalibration of our relation to being that celebrates the irreducible plurality of meaning instead of reducing everything to efficient technological ordering and optimization. Out of this acknowledgment of the pluralism of being, which neither names a unitary ground for all entities nor specifies the highest possible entity, will emerge a postmodern age.

I agree with Thomson that responding to Heidegger's thinking of the possibility and promise of postmodernity is now the main task for research on the later Heidegger. In the spirit of closely attending to the Heideggerian thinking of modernity, this article aims to contribute a philosophically productive challenge to this Heideggerian account. I have recently argued that Hans-Georg Gadamer, Heidegger's student, provides a compelling alternative conception of the modern age that is in conversation with, but which convincingly departs from, Heidegger's thinking of modernity.[5] Here, I will continue developing my view that this Gadamerian alternative is ideal for contributing to debates in the Heideggerian landscape. The main contrast I will draw is that Heidegger *transcends* and moves beyond the modern age, while Gadamer *rehabilitates* modernity's overlooked resources.

My argument will proceed as follows. First, I will show that Heidegger does not reject modernity in any one-sidedly reactionary negation. Rather, on the basis of his reading of a few modern artists and poets, he advocates moving beyond modernity's understanding of being into a pluralistic, postmodern future. I will next outline Gadamer's alternative to Heideggerian postmodernity, which I interpret as dwelling within the philosophical resources of modernity in a hermeneutically generous rereading of their foundations and overlooked potential. Finally, I will argue that Gadamerian rehabilitation provides a more politically hopeful reaction to our historical condition than does Heidegger's departure from modernity.

SECTION 1: HOW HEIDEGGER AVOIDS REACTIONARY NEGATION

Our first task is to clarify Heidegger's critical approach to modernity. Calling Heidegger a "critic" of modernity does not mean, I argue, that he amounts to some totalizing reactionary who is opposed to the entirety of the modern age.[6] Charles Taylor provides a succinct definition of the reactionary anti-modern position. Taylor refers to modernity's "knockers" who "condemn…modernity *en bloc*," by which he means they indiscriminately "condemn the whole movement of thought and practice" characteristic of the modern age.[7] Such a totalizing attitude toward modernity accurately applies, for example, to Pope Pius IX. In 1864, Pius IX issued the *Syllabus of Errors*, a list of heresies against the Catholic Church which concludes with the following purported "error": "The Roman Pontiff may and ought to reconcile himself to, and agree with, progress, liberalism and modern civilization."[8] Here, we discern the defining characteristics of those whom Taylor calls modernity's "knockers": the association of the modern age with "error" full-stop, the minimization (bordering on erasure) of any positive achievements of modernity, and an attitude of scornful dismissiveness characteristic of an ideologue who wants to say that an entire age has been a mistake. Thinkers like Pius IX who are committed to reestablishing a Christian foundation for Western culture have condemned the whole of the secular, modern age for its alleged irreconcilability with Christianity. Such a wholesale dismissal is characteristically reactionary insofar as it attempts a complete rejection of modernity, advocating instead for the retrieval of a pre-modern past.

At his best, Heidegger is not this sort of anti-modern reactionary but rather adopts a more philosophically plausible approach to modernity. In 1967, he identifies himself with the project of "thinking into a region this side of [*diesseits von*] pessimism and optimism" (GA 9: x/xiii). This revealing self-description invites comparison with Nietzsche's title *Beyond Good and Evil* (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*). Specifically, following the subtitle of Nietzsche's text, Heidegger's later thinking provides a "prelude to a philosophy of the future." Aside from occasional moments of political and cultural despair, Heidegger's *transcending of modernity*

is best understood as an attempt at thinking beyond pessimism and optimism.[9] An optimist sees the future as bright and on the way to inevitable progress, while a pessimist sees it as hopelessly closed. Rejecting both these options, Heidegger owns up to the reality of the modern age (which is neither wholly lamentable nor commendable), recognizes what is genuinely wanting about modernity in light of a phenomenologically sensitive analysis, and moves beyond the problematic features of modern life and culture into a future beyond them. In other words, Heidegger cannot be consistently committed to a reactionary rejection of modernity.

This interpretation of Heidegger's position on modernity is based on his *methodological opposition to pure negation.* He engages in critique in order not merely to condemn or express contempt but rather to gain access to something more primordial or originary than the target of criticism. Heidegger aims to glean how the mode of intelligibility that shapes our present age enables partial access to a source of meaning while blocking other features. Mere negation, on the other hand, cannot accomplish Heidegger's goal of moving beyond what is questionable in the present to prepare for an improved future, because it hastily and summarily rejects what it criticizes without properly examining both its positive and negative features. We cannot grasp Heidegger's approach to "postmodernity" without first fully appreciating the methodological underpinnings of his critique of the modern age.

As Gianni Vattimo has persuasively argued, the later Heidegger does not attempt directly to overcome (*Überwindung*) metaphysics by seeking to reject and replace it but, instead, he tries to overcome metaphysics in the sense of "twisting free" (*Verwindung*) from it.[10] Heidegger explains this point as follows:

> Metaphysics cannot be dismissed like a view [*wie eine Ansicht*]. One can by no means leave it behind as a doctrine no longer believed and represented…we may not presume to stand outside of metaphysics because we surmise the ending of metaphysics. For metaphysics overcome [*überwundene*] in this way does not disappear.

It returns transformed, and remains in dominance as the continuing difference of being and entities. (GA 7: 69–70/EP 85, tm)

Heidegger thinks that rejecting something as a whole – such as metaphysics, theism, or modernity – means remaining unwittingly caught up in the logic of what is opposed. To be anti-metaphysical, atheist, or anti-modern is to define oneself and one's commitments entirely in opposition to something else and so remain within its sphere of influence. If one's identity is fixed against some concept, movement, or thesis, then one has not escaped that which is opposed but has only allowed oneself to be locked in continued struggle against it: "Everything revolutionary remains caught up in opposition. Opposition, however, is servitude" (GA 77: 51/33). Heidegger characterizes direct *overcoming*, whether one fancies oneself as revolting against modernity, metaphysics, or religion, as naïve and self-defeating because it falsely assumes that one could free oneself from something just by pronouncing one's disapproving criticisms of it. The more promising strategy, which he calls *twisting free*, requires initially opening oneself up to what appears questionable by phenomenologically grasping both what it positively reveals as well as what it one-sidedly obscures. This interrogation will thereby enable living through and recovering from the negative effects by discovering something worthwhile within that experience, subsequently opening up a path leading to a more positive future.

Heidegger adopts this methodological opposition to negation in his "history of being," which explains how each metaphysical epoch allows humanity some access to the source of intelligibility and meaning while simultaneously closing off other possibilities. On this view, Western history unfolds as a sequence of epochal understandings of the *being of entities*. These "ontotheological" conceptualizations claim to determine the ontological foundation of what all entities have in common as well as the theological specification of the highest possible entity.[11] Every ontotheological constellation of intelligibility derives from a wellspring of meaning that Heidegger refers to as *being as such* or *being itself*: "we are compelled to question not just entities in their

being but first of all being itself" (GA 9: 238/182, tm). Each ontotheolog-
ical epoch draws upon but ultimately forgets this multitudinous source
and thinks it has completely determined the meaning of being. No
single epoch in the history of being, however, can or will permanently
discover and exhaust what it means to be: "All events [*Ereignisse*] in the
history of being which is metaphysics have their beginning and ground
in the fact that metaphysics leaves and must leave the essence of being
undecided" (GA 6.2: 459/EP 56, tm). Being itself will always exceed any
such understanding, thereby eventually generating the development of
some new dominant understanding that will think it has captured what
the previous understandings failed to see.

While an historical understanding of the being of entities cannot
(despite its best efforts) completely determine the meaning of be-
ing for all time, each epoch does partially disclose being itself: "Even
the doom of the absence of the god is a way in which world worlds"
(GA 5: 31/23). The impoverished understanding of the being of enti-
ties of our godless technological nihilism still opens up an intelligible
world in which things show up and make sense for us as potentially
optimizable. Our forgetfulness of being as such still forms a meaning-
ful world. Rather than simply condemning or negating late-modern
"enframing" (Heidegger's name for our technological understanding of
the being of entities), we should see this one-sided technological under-
standing as the contingent background against which we understand
anything at all. Not only are all technological devices not bad, but
also without enframing, we would not have an intelligible world in the
first place. We must live through and recover from our technological
understanding of the being of entities to construct a properly expansive
appraisal of both what it reveals *and* what it misses. Only then can we
see through to the other side of it.

Heidegger's approach to modernity also takes its cue from his op-
position to pure negation:

> Negation [*Verneinung*] merely throws the negator off
> the track. Modernity requires, however, in order, in the
> future, for it to be resisted in its essence and on the

strength of that essence, an originality and breadth of reflection for which, perhaps, we moderns can prepare somewhat, but over which we can certainly never gain mastery. (GA 5: 97/73)

Here, Heidegger again expresses serious doubts about mere negation, now on the grounds that such a purely negative stance does not allow us to see the rich nature of what is being critically examined. If we presume to stand outside modernity, then we will blind ourselves to the details of how modernity shapes our sense of meaning. Negation discourages resistance because it fails to achieve a full and accurate appreciation of its target, deterring us from seeing not only its destructive but also its ontologically enabling elements. Mere negation presumes that we can voluntarily choose to step outside or beyond what we oppose. In fact, we have little choice about the way modernity tends to prefigure every aspect of our existence, since it provides our basic form of intelligibility. The better option, Heidegger argues, is to open ourselves to what is critiqued in order to see how it shapes what we think is meaningful and thus later to grasp the full scope of those effects, and hence of what remains questionable about them. Only after these preliminary steps can we formulate how we can subsequently move beyond modernity.

Based on these passages, we should reject any reading of Heidegger as an anti-modern reactionary. Methodologically opposing mere negation as hopelessly caught up in the logic and priorities of what it negates, Heidegger opts for an engagement with the target of critique that allows us to grasp its effects and notice what it overlooks or occludes as well as what it reveals, thereby helping us to prepare the basis for something to come after.

SECTION 2: HEIDEGGER'S POSTMODERN PLURALISM

Heidegger certainly does not engage in a reactionary negation, but he thinks that the most promising episodes from the modern age actually point the way beyond modernity: "modernity cannot leap out of its rut…instead, the modern human being must carry out the ending of the modern age in one way or another as a purpose belonging to his own self" (GA 95: 188/146). In other words, Heidegger advocates transcending modernity from within.[12] Heidegger's most fully considered appraisal of modernity reveals its deficient sense of intelligibility. But it is precisely the one-sided partiality of our understanding of the being of entities that reminds us of the more encompassing and pluralistic source of any sense of meaning, namely, being as such. Attention to being itself, whose plurality has been glimpsed at various moments in the modern age against modernity's own reductionistic tendencies, will open up another, postmodern time to come.

Modern metaphysics predominantly encourages "a thinking that has remained oblivious of being itself" (GA 5: 258–9/193). Enmeshed within enframing, we remain focused on technologically enhancing the efficiency of entities according to our predetermined purposes. In other words, we moderns typically understand ourselves as subjects attempting to master and control objects, forgetting a primordial source of meaning that lies outside anyone's or anything's control. Because our modern age is oblivious to being, we currently experience "*abandonment by being* [*Seinsverlassenheit*]" (GA 94: 339/247). Without a full, thoughtful relation to being, we reside in a centerless, aimless, and increasingly meaningless age that has lost its genuine contact with the source of intelligibility. For this reason, Heidegger diagnoses modernity as an exhausted epoch: "God is gone; things are used up; knowledge is in ruins; action has become blind. In short: *beyng is forgotten*" (GA 94: 231/169). The exhaustion of modernity is ultimately the culmination of the history of being, which has finally brought the West to the lowest point of its capacity to recognize and celebrate the plenitude of being itself (or "beyng").

According to the most hopeful version of this Heideggerian perspective, we are living now in the twilight of an age which is on the verge of ending. On the shoulders of visionary artists and thinkers like Hölderlin and Van Gogh, who saw beyond modernity and suggested another relationship to being, we stand at the cusp of another beginning that will improve upon modern technological enframing: "In the age of the world's night [*Weltnacht*], the abyss of the world must be experienced and must be endured. But for this it is necessary that there are those who reach into the abyss" (GA 5: 270/201). If we can see beyond the night of the end of modernity, then we may arrive at a new dawn in which our culture will awaken to a more encompassing and pluralistic appreciation for being which refuses to reduce it to any single ontological foundation or theological idealization.[13]

Heidegger refers to a new "thinking." By this term, he means "a transition from metaphysics" to something *beyond metaphysics*, namely, "the other *beginning* of the history of beyng, i.e., the *break* with the metaphysically determined history of the West" (GA 95: 345/269). This postmodern beginning will center around a collective acknowledgment that embraces and attends to the irreducible plurality of being as such, the now forgotten source of intelligibility that has enabled the sequence of epochal understandings of being in the West. The postmodern future Heidegger advocates will leave behind every ontotheological reduction of being as such to some particular understanding of the being of entities in terms of their ultimate ground and highest instantiation. Heidegger envisions a break, which we may call postmodernity, that moves not only outside modern metaphysics, which frames being as technological efficiency, but beyond any single metaphysical conceptualization.

Heidegger's critique of modernity's dangerously impoverished understanding of being leads to his positive account of a new thinking that enables a reinvigorated and enriched relationship to being. A postmodern stance would do justice to the multitudinous possibilities inherent in being as such, instead of attempting to settle the meaning of being once and for all ontologically or theologically. Being as such permits a fecundity of possibilities that a postmodern thinking on the far side of

modernity will explore. But we must recognize that Heidegger grounds his understanding of this postmodern thinking *in his reading of modern artists and thinkers* who glimpsed the multitudinous meaningfulness of being: "These poets first lay out and secure the building upon which the house must be built in which the gods are to come as guests. The poets *consecrate the soil*" (GA 4: 148/170). We should be careful to emphasize that Heidegger's hope for postmodernity is not built on an indistinct rejection of the present as a whole but rather on hermeneutical engagements with moments from within modern culture that point beyond our predominant modern and technological understanding of the being of entities. This reading follows our account of Heidegger's avoidance of reactionary negation.

I will illustrate this point with reference to Heidegger's interpretation of Van Gogh in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Heidegger celebrates the ontological insights within Van Gogh's painting of a pair of shoes against a richly textured, inchoate background.[14] In this artwork, Heidegger discovers an articulation of his own philosophical distinction between the being of entities, or an historically situated understanding of meaning, on the one hand, and being as such, the necessarily excessive and never fully capturable or exhaustible source of meaning, on the other. Heidegger's names for these referents in "The Origin of the Work of Art" are *world* and *earth*, respectively: "World and earth are essentially different and yet never separated from one another. World is grounded on earth, and earth rises up through world" (GA 5: 35/26). That is, earth (or being as such) enables multiple historically given frameworks for what it means to be, or worlds of meaning. While each world partially discloses the inexhaustible depth of the source of these senses of meaning, earth always withholds meaning as well, giving rise to other, subsequent world-forming constellations of intelligibility: "The self-seclusion of the earth is, however, no uniform, inflexible staying-in-the-dark, but unfolds, rather, into an inexhaustible richness of simple modes and shapes" (GA 5: 34/25). Earth, in other words, permits our continual disclosures of it through new and phenomenologically sensitive ways in our understandings of being.[15]

Throughout his later work, Heidegger continues to develop and refine his innovative distinction between the being of entities and being as such.[16] In "The Origin of the Work of Art," he locates this distinction within Van Gogh's painting: "Truth happens [*geschieht*] in Van Gogh's painting. That does not mean that something on hand is correctly portrayed; it means, rather, that in the manifestation of the equipmental being of the shoe-equipment, the totality of what is – world and earth in their counterplay – achieves unconcealment" (GA 5: 43/32, tm). The pair of shoes exemplifies an understanding of the being of entities as equipment for farming work, that is, a world or disclosed sense of what is and what matters. But the shoes protrude out of and emerge against a deep, richly textured source of implicit meaningfulness that provides the background of the painting. This background, which Heidegger calls earth, serves as a wellspring of further possible senses of meaning.

The recognition and embrace of the manifold, multitudinous plurality of possible meanings deriving from an inexhaustible source constitutes Heidegger's hope for "the time which is to come" (GA 16: 676/ HC 110). In other words, Heidegger finds within a paradigmatic modern artist, namely, Van Gogh, the vision of a nascent postmodernity: "The poet's saying is the intercepting of these hints, in order to pass them on to his people" (GA 4: 46/63). This passage refers to Hölderlin, who performs a similar role throughout Heidegger's postmodern thinking as Van Gogh does in "The Origin of the Work of Art."[17] In these visionary artists, who lived during the modern epoch, Heidegger finds articulations of the ontological pluralism that he hopes will provide the point of departure for a postmodern culture: "The truth that opens itself in the work can never be verified or derived from what went before. In its exclusive reality, what went before is refuted by the work. What art founds, however, can never be compensated and made good in terms of what is present and available for use. The founding is an overflow, a bestowal" (GA 5: 63/47). Taking its cue from being as such or earth as glimpsed and expressed by these emissaries, postmodernity will refuse to rest content with frameworks that understand being in any one way. Instead, a postmodern culture will continually disclose the overflowing

bestowal from being itself that Heidegger discovered in Van Gogh's illustration of the dynamic exchange between our sense of meaning and the inexhaustible source of that intelligibility.

Far from negating modernity, Heidegger derives inspiration for his own philosophical and cultural ideals from figures within the modern age. For Heidegger, prophetic emissaries like Van Gogh and Hölderlin provide hints for a future that would transcend and move beyond all ontotheological reductions of the meaning of being, especially our dangerously nihilistic modern technological frame of reference. What Heidegger most emphatically celebrates from the modern age are those figures and moments that show us the way out of and beyond modernity into a postmodern future. The most profound hope modernity can engender is that it will actually enable our culture to outlive it.

SECTION 3: GADAMER ON REHABILITATING WITHOUT BEGINNING AGAIN

Gadamer, I shall now argue, provides an alternative to Heidegger's thinking of modernity. Construing Gadamer as forging his own path after Heidegger on this issue would go some way toward getting Gadamer outside of Heidegger's considerable shadow.[18] On the issue of the problem of modernity, commentators typically construe Gadamer as simply a Heideggerian critic of the modern age in line with his purported faithfulness to Heidegger generally.[19] Uncovering Gadamer's contestation of Heidegger's account of modernity would not only help correct this misreading but, even more importantly, would contribute a philosophical alternative that draws on but ultimately advances beyond Heidegger's insights on modernity.

We have seen how, for Heidegger, modernity must be transcended: "Today much of the essential tradition [*Überlieferung*] must be abandoned, but that is perhaps unavoidable and not necessarily disastrous" (GA 94: 434/315). Heidegger laments what modern metaphysics obscures and advocates living through those effects to arrive on the modern age's other side. Gadamer, meanwhile, begins from the abundance of meaning within our present form of intelligibility. For Gadamer, historical traditions, far from something we can transcend in favor of

another beginning, function as enduring storehouses of truth. Gadamer *rehabilitates modernity* by sensitively and charitably drawing out the insights and resources contained in our modern inheritances that enable us to continue living within the modern age.

The Gadamerian rehabilitation that I shall balance against Heidegger derives from the section of *Truth and Method* on "The Rehabilitation of Authority and Tradition."[20] There, Gadamer argues that our situatedness within historical traditions, which exert authority over our cognition and our entire existence, enables human understanding. Tradition hands down to us historical conditions that authoritatively point our understanding toward some directions and away from others. When Gadamer provocatively claims to rehabilitate tradition and its "authority," he refers to two objectives. First, and more narrowly, he reclaims tradition as positively enabling against its denigration by the Enlightenment's one-sided focus on autonomous rationality, which views the authority of the past as automatically illegitimate. His second, more general claim interests us here. Gadamer's phenomenology of understanding suggests that traditions contain a wealth of meaning that we can, and must, draw upon: "we are always standing in tradition, and this standing in is no objectifying process – that is, we do not conceive of what tradition says as something other, something alien. It is always already part of us."[21] This passage's conception of tradition contains an implicit but programmatic alternative to Heidegger's movement beyond modernity toward another beginning. Gadamer suggests that, in our finitude and belonging to history, we always take some tradition handed down to us by the past as our starting point, which we can actively mold and rework in some direction or for some purpose. We can, and must, work within and alongside tradition. Rehabilitation means taking what we inherit from the past and positively cultivating and reworking its promising insights.

For Gadamer, our situatedness in tradition signals the fact that modernity contains reserves of philosophical insights with which we must productively engage. While this recognition has its methodological origins in Heidegger's approach to history, Heidegger frequently

thinks of the modern age as exhausted, emptied out, and at its most dynamic only when it points beyond itself to a more encompassing celebration of being's multi-meaningfulness. Gadamer, meanwhile, views traditions as containing opportunities for new and surprising reforms of the conceptual and intellectual frameworks we possess. Gadamer's confrontation with the modern age essentially enacts his fundamental conception of hermeneutics: "I must allow tradition's claim to validity, not in the sense of simply acknowledging the past in its otherness, but in such a way that it has something to say to me. This… calls for a fundamental sort of openness."[22] Gadamerian hermeneutics demands listening to and being open to learning from what we inherit from the past. In the case of our treatment of Heidegger and Gadamer's responses to modernity, this feature of hermeneutic experience refers to Gadamer's call for us to listen more sensitively to what the modern age has to say to us than Heidegger allows. Instead of interpreting the best of the modern age as pointing the way outside it, Gadamer reads modernity's bequests to the present as enabling us to remain within it.

Gadamer rejects Heidegger's vision of another beginning and imagines his own rehabilitative response to modernity.[23] Instead of beginning again with Van Gogh or Hölderlin, Gadamer cultivates the overlooked resources remaining within the modern age that indicate its overlooked potential. In a pivotal but underappreciated passage from the 1965 foreword to the second edition of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer criticizes this Heideggerian conception of the movement from modernity into postmodernity:

> What does the end of metaphysics as a science mean? What does its ending in science mean? When science expands into a total technocracy and thus brings on the "world's night [*Weltnacht*]" of the "forgetfulness of being [*Seinsvergessenheit*]," the nihilism that Nietzsche prophesied, then may one not gaze at the last fading light of the sun setting in the evening sky — instead of turning around to look for the first shimmer of its return?[24]

Gadamer underscores his ambivalent and complex response to Heidegger's postmodern thinking and proposes a robust alternative to Heidegger's movement out of the modern age. As is typically Gadamer's way, he does not engage in a one-sided rejection of Heidegger's position. Indeed, here Gadamer takes Heidegger's conception of modernity as his point of departure. In characterizing our epoch in terms of a scientific conception of intelligibility, the Nietzschean diagnosis of nihilism, and the consummation of metaphysics, Gadamer takes on board (or at least acknowledges) significant aspects of Heidegger's conception of the modern age. But as is also characteristic of Gadamer's reactions to Heidegger, his response does not merely accept Heidegger's framing of this issue.

Gadamer contrasts himself with Heidegger in terms of the striking visual metaphor of looking at the setting sun. On the Heideggerian view Gadamer rejects, one "turn[s] around to look for the first shimmer of its return." That is, since we stand on the cusp of another beginning, we should turn our backs on the exhausted modern age whose twilight we are living through (what Heidegger, following Nietzsche, calls the *Weltnacht*), and look toward the dawning of the age to come. Gadamer, meanwhile, "gaze[s] at the last fading light of the sun setting in the evening sky." In virtue of our openness to historical traditions that enable and condition our understanding of meaning, modernity is not the sort of thing we can transcend, split off from, or turn our backs on. Gadamer suggests that we *belong to* the modern age as we do to human history as a whole. While Heidegger enthusiastically awaits the time to come whose hints he gleaned in the painting of Van Gogh and the poetry of Hölderlin, Gadamer would have us remain within the modern age to which we belong in virtue of the continuities and solidarities within history. Gadamer's caution derives not from complacency or inertia, but rather from his conviction that resources in modernity persist with which we may still productively engage. The modern age can actually positively enhance our present attempts at disclosive sense-making instead of only producing figures or movements that point the way beyond modernity.

Because of this important difference, Gadamer does not typically employ the term *Ereignis*, Heidegger's name for a unique and dramatic event in which being unexpectedly comes into its own and appears to Dasein and in entities, erupting into and transforming and expanding current intelligibility: "Only what occurs only once [*Einmaliges*] can effectuate this arising again of something unique [*Einziges*]. That is the innermost law of beyng" (GA 94: 276/202, tm). In other words, a dramatic and singular event could disrupt the present and radically change history, announcing the break with modernity of which Heidegger saw suggestive glimpses. Tellingly, Gadamer prefers to talk about a happening (*Geschehen*) within history: "A happening of tradition [*Überliefe-rungsgeschehen*]…is a prior condition of understanding. *Understanding proves to be a happening.*"[25] This conception of the happening of history differs from Heidegger's account of the event as a *sui generis* and disruptive historical *Ereignis*. I translate Gadamer's *Geschehen* as "happening" rather than "event" to properly emphasize this difference from the radical disruption in history of the Heideggerian event. Rather, Gadamer emphasizes the happening of a gradual process that ineluctably conditions the present and gestures toward the future.[26] This happening in history names the dynamic interaction of past and present that makes intelligibility possible, according to Gadamer. Heidegger also refers to the everyday or quotidian happening of truth, such as in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Unlike Heidegger, though, Gadamer never assents to the immensely impactful or momentous event of *Ereignis*. Distinguishing their different conceptions of the event of history is another way of describing this crucial difference between the Heideggerian proposal to await a new dawn and the Gadamerian project of gazing at the setting sun.

The passage about Heidegger from the second foreword to *Truth and Method* begins with this self-effacing claim: "Like many of my critics, Heidegger too would probably feel a lack of ultimate radicality in the conclusions I draw."[27] Gadamer alludes to Heidegger's disappointment at Gadamer's unwillingness to welcome the other beginning, which represents a genuine difference between the two.[28] But there is

something radical in Gadamer's alternative of staying behind to face the afterglow of the setting sun and trying to glean what it still shows us. Gadamer is suggesting an entire program for approaching modern culture and thought as containing overlooked intellectual potential that we should not and cannot abandon. Full attention to Gadamer's wide-ranging treatment of concepts, images, metaphors, and motifs from modernity would reveal his rehabilitative approach that sensitively and charitably draws out insights within our inheritances from modernity. Gadamer reworks forms and shapes of modern consciousness that are either underemphasized or actively criticized by Heidegger.[29]

Perhaps no instance of the Gadamerian rereading of modernity exemplifies this difference with Heidegger better than Gadamer's treatment of humanism.[30] *Truth and Method* begins with Gadamer's account of "The Guiding Concepts of Humanism," including *Bildung*, *sensus communis*, judgment, and taste.[31] Here, Gadamer's touchstones include German Idealism, Gracián, Shaftesbury, Vico, and Weimar Classicism. With their help, Gadamer targets the modern reduction of truth and meaning to methodologically produced and structured scientific results. His appeal to the concepts of humanism is meant to motivate the fact that we directly experience the claims to truth of the arts and humanities: "It is to the humanistic tradition that we must turn. In its resistance to the claims of modern science it gains a new significance."[32] In making this argument, Gadamer proposes neither a return to a premodern past nor a movement into a postmodern beginning. Rather, Gadamer maintains that the stubbornly persistent ideals of humanistic knowing and truth that have survived within modern intellectual life remain vital: "It is important to remember the humanistic tradition, and to ask what is to be learned from it with respect to the humanities' mode of knowledge."[33] Gadamer's hermeneutics draws upon conceptual resources within the modern humanistic tradition, which validates claims to truth by the arts and humanities as irreducible to the methods of natural science.

Certainly, Gadamer agrees with Heidegger that modernity has illegitimately equated meaningfulness with a scientific and technological

framework. Gadamer's own critique of modernity's reductionism, how-ever, enlists as its allies movements and arguments from within the modern age that have resisted modernity's own worst impulses, albeit insufficiently and against the grain of modern culture. Gadamer takes these historical inheritances and, instead of using them to twist free from the modern understanding of being, works with and fashions them into tools for immanently improving upon modernity's excesses. Heidegger's predecessors Van Gogh and Hölderlin draw a map beyond modernity into a postmodern future, while Gadamer's humanistic touchstones uncover how modern culture, even when it is not enabling a future relation to being, still remains fertile ground for disclosures of meaning.

SECTION 4: GADAMERIAN HOPE AND POLITICS

If I am right to understand Gadamer as rehabilitating modernity, then to what end or purpose does he accomplish this task? This question is pressing for us because Heidegger's approach contains a more obvious rejoinder. Heidegger transcends modernity in order to move toward a time to come, which he sees as already on the horizon. It may appear less obvious why Gadamer's rehabilitation should seem compelling by comparison with Heidegger's movement beyond modernity. Explain-ing the motivation behind Gadamer's rehabilitation of the modern age will suggest why we should prefer it to Heideggerian twisting free.

Like Heidegger's transcending that brings about another begin-ning, Gadamer's rehabilitation of modernity aims for the fulfillment of the future. Specifically, Gadamer cultivates the latent hermeneutical insights within modernity's intellectual resources so as to inspire hope that the modern age still has something positive to offer. One could parse the distinction between Heidegger and Gadamer in terms of a political metaphor. Heidegger develops a decidedly radical response to modernity, arguing that the mainstream of the modern age, like a corrupt political regime or an exploitative economic system, is beyond saving and should be transcended. This construal gains credence from Heidegger's disastrous endorsement of the political revolution of National Socialism, which promised to overthrow the modern West.

Gadamer, on the other hand, sounds more like a reformist liberal who cautions against radical change and suggests incremental modifications within the existing system. Where Heidegger wants *revolution*, Gadamer wants *progress*.

While illuminating, this political analogy is not completely adequate. For one thing, as we have seen, Heidegger's twisting free of modernity is inspired by the modern age's own most iconoclastic artistic figures who pointed the way beyond it. Heidegger's appeal to these figures finds its methodological basis in his avoidance of radically reactionary negation. Further, the liberal faith in progress connotes optimism, that is, the conviction that things will head in the right direction provided only that we operate according to the best form of rationality, the optimal set of rules and norms, or the correct method. As a critic of the Enlightenment, Gadamer rejects this optimistic outlook (which shows how Gadamer's engagement with modernity is, of course, far from uncritical).

Instead of optimism, Gadamer believes in hope: "People cannot live without hope; that is the only thesis I would defend without any restriction."[34] Understanding the hope that Gadamer enables us to experience will allow us to more adequately explain the genuine political differences between his and Heidegger's approaches to the modern age. What I call *Gadamerian hope* involves two valences. First, Gadamerian hope contests Heidegger's negative assessment of the modern age, which suggests that our radically impoverished intelligibility renders us oblivious to being as such. For Heidegger, hope is directed only toward another beginning. In response to that Heideggerian ideal, we find the second element of Gadamerian hope, namely, its confidence not in an age to come, but rather in the resources of the times in which we already live. Gadamer charitably rereads and hermeneutically listens to the history of modern thought. Performing this rereading motivates hope for modern life and culture without either imagining another beginning or simply accepting the mainstream currents of the age. Gadamer argues that modernity provides opportunities to immanently improve its worst features by thinking through and building upon its best moments.

Gadamerian hermeneutics teaches that we can think against modernity by refusing to give up on the resources for thought and action that the modern age hands down to us. While Heidegger wants to "overcome" modernity in the sense of twisting free from its destructive effects into another future, Gadamer models a form of creative endurance of the effects of the past. This point is illustrated by Gadamer's moving meditation on the phenomenology of physical pain: "What is absolutely necessary is not to abandon courage regardless of how great the pain may be. Whoever can manage this can — there is such a wonderful word in German for this — 'recover' [*verwinden*] from pain."[35] Gadamer's employment of the Heideggerian term *Verwindung* suggests a subtle contrast with Heidegger on responding to history. Where Heidegger saw the chance to live through the experience of history in order to move into a new future, Gadamer advocates a form of steely resolve in the face of our exposure to historical effects. We must live through the experience of modernity, Heidegger and Gadamer agree. The difference between them lies in the possibility of what may come next, namely, either the movement into something else *or* the convalescent recovery from the effects with which we presently live. As his treatment of humanism suggests, Gadamer accepts the starting point that tradition provides. We may then use the inheritance of historical tradition as material for dynamic cultural developments, like modern humanism's incisive contestation of methodological reductionism. Gadamer's reference to physiological convalescence from pain reveals another register of his departure from Heideggerian twisting free. Gadamer proposes staying alongside what we receive and actively and creatively making the best of it, on the model of intentionally and therapeutically recovering from a painful physical state.

But in an age of political discontent, ecological devastation, economic injustice, and cultural upheaval, the Heideggerian vision of another time to come may strike us as tantalizing, despite its foreboding political associations. According to some post-Heideggerian radical liberal political theorists, the polysemy of being will bring in its wake a pluralistic and tolerant politics. On this account, Heidegger's

postmodern unthought includes radical liberalism. Thomson advocates for this view when he argues that Heidegger's later pluralistic ontology "convincingly underwrites an ethico-politics of strong tolerance, that is, a robust, universal tolerance that is intolerant only of intolerance."[36] The most politically heartening form of Heideggerian postmodernity predicts not the right-wing fascism Heidegger endorsed in 1933 but rather a radical postmodern liberalism that takes ontological pluralism as its starting point. This vision of a radical future may seem more inspiring than Gadamer's cautious reworking of the past. Perhaps Gadamer was right to worry that his project is less radical than Heidegger's.

We must remember, however, that the phenomenon of liberalism derives from the modern age, not only in its historical origins but also in its conceptual apparatus, especially categories like autonomy and subjectivity. The postmodern age to come, Heidegger believes, will twist free from the mistakes of modernity and amount to another way of thinking and acting, different in ways we cannot yet fathom. The most radically new politics of the 1930s — namely, fascism — struck Heidegger as the other beginning he was waiting for as he began thinking about the possibility and meaning of postmodernity: "Thinking purely 'metaphysically' (i.e., in heeding the history of beyng), during the years 1930–1934 I saw in National Socialism the possibility of a crossing over [*Übergangs*] to another beginning and gave it this meaning" (GA 95: 408/318, tm). Though Heidegger grounds his understanding of postmodernity in Hölderlin, Van Gogh, and other visionaries, we still cannot know what the age to come will look like until it fully manifests itself. The undecided nature of postmodernity, which is its most disturbing quality, means we do not yet know whether the politics it introduces will be utopian or horrific.[37]

There is little reason to think that the dominant mode of political organization of the modern age will persist into any possible future postmodern age, as Heidegger admits in 1966: "A decisive question for me today is: how can a political system accommodate itself to the technological age, and which political system should this be? I have no answer to this question. I am not convinced that it is democracy"

(GA 16: 668/HC 104). Postmodern Heideggerian radical liberals argue that postmodernity will be more radically liberal even than modern liberalism. But the best, albeit most unsettling, prediction we can make about a putative postmodernity is that it will be decisively *other than* modern — not a deepening of the past, which Gadamer teaches us to hope for, but rather something else. What postmodernity will recognize as coherent and viable political categories may look radically different from anything presently recognizable within the spectrum of debate surrounding liberal democracy and its future.

In his poem "Todtnauberg," in which he describes his visit to Heidegger's hut in 1967 and the message he recorded there in Heidegger's guestbook, Paul Celan elliptically expresses his dissatisfaction with Heidegger: "in this book / the written line of / a hope, today, / for a thinker's / coming / word."[38] In a remarkable reflection on this poem, Gadamer interprets Celan as waiting in vain for Heidegger to speak concretely and inspiringly about Europe's future. Gadamer mutedly but poignantly endorses Celan's despair: "[Celan's poem] is a reference to Heidegger's not claiming *and not being able to have* a coming word, a hope for today — he tried to take a few steps along a risky path… It became a poem because the experience expresses him [Celan] *and us all*."[39] Following Celan, Gadamer intimates that Heidegger's later thinking, whose reception remains complicated by Heidegger's failure to apologize for his involvement with Nazism, ultimately could not engender real hope for the future.

Although his own modesty prevented him from speaking in such bold terms, Gadamer inspires hope for modernity. Gadamerian hope enables a psychically livable and philosophically tenable response to the deficiencies of the modern age that will positively move us to make our age better. With the help of Gadamer's hermeneutically sensitive response to modernity, we should glimpse what the modern age has to offer, without blithely missing what about our epoch we must vigorously contest. Gadamer provides resources for participating in today's globalized and multilingual conversation of humankind, in which the Western modern age rightly appears as merely one cultural

option. As befits his reputation as a thinker of dialogue, Gadamer equips us with a charitable but clear-eyed account of the inheritances from Western modernity, including both their strengths and manifest shortcomings, that we can offer into global exchanges with other ways of life and understandings.

The consonance of his rehabilitation of modernity with global dialogue lends credence to *Gadamerian democracy*, which provides better support for liberalism than Heidegger's risky postmodernity. The association of Gadamerian hermeneutics with democracy is (like humanism) another example of Gadamer's refusal to abandon the modern age's achievements. Heidegger's transcending of modernity impels him to abandon modern accomplishments, including liberal democracy, in favor of another beginning. While Heidegger awakens to the dawn of the postmodern future to come, Gadamer stoically stays behind to live with whatever the setting sun of the modern age still illuminates. Heidegger hopes for another beginning that requires following postmodernity's prophetic visionaries on the path toward another arrangement of cultural and intellectual ideals. But Heidegger's response means also leaving behind modernity's distinctive accomplishments, which may still function as fertile ground for global debates about our human future. The Gadamerian rehabilitation of the modern age, meanwhile, motivates us to hope for a possible future phase within Western modernity that builds upon worthy and exemplary modern achievements that still compel our thoughtful attention, such as the Italian Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and German Idealism.

Richard Rorty insightfully grasped the underlying point of Gadamer's rehabilitation of the modern age: "In a future Gadamerian culture, human beings would wish only to live up to one another, in the sense in which Galileo lived up to Aristotle, Blake to Milton, Dalton to Lucretius, and Nietzsche to Socrates."[40] Gadamerian hope grounds itself in hermeneutically generous readings of our inheritances from history. This invocation of the best the modern age has to offer could guide us toward a positive vision of an achievable future on the basis of modernity's exemplars without yearning for another, uncertain, and

potentially dangerous time to come. Though Heidegger resists this fact, we must measure ourselves by the best accomplishments we inherit from modern thought and culture, and not only by those prophetic emissaries that point the way to another future. By providing a nuanced and appreciative rereading of modernity's past, Gadamer encourages us to recall, rework, and thereby live up to the modern age's genuine achievements.[41]

NOTES

1   Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

2   Günter Figal, *Unscheinbarkeit: Der Raum der Phänomenologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

3   Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, eds., *After Heidegger?* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018); Günter Figal, Diego D'Angelo, Tobias Keiling, and Guang Yang, eds., *Paths in Heidegger's Later Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020).

4   Iain Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Further essays include: "The Failure of Philosophy: Why Didn't *Being and Time* Answer the Question of the Meaning of Being?," in Lee Braver, ed., *Division III of* Being and Time: *The Unanswered Question of Being* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 285–310; "Heidegger's Nazism in the Light of his early *Black Notebooks*: A View from America," in Alfred Denker and Holger Zaborowski, eds., *Zur Hermeneutik der "Schwarzen Hefte": Heidegger Jahrbuch 11* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2017), 184–209; "Heideggerian Phenomenology and the Postmetaphysical Politics of Ontological Pluralism," in S. West Gurley and Geoff Pfeiffer, eds., *Phenomenology and the Political* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 19–42; "Nihilism as the Deepest Problem; Art as the Best Response," *Four By Three Magazine*

no. 5 (2016) (http://www.fourbythreemagazine.com/issue/ni-hilism/iain-thomson); "Ontotheology," in François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson, eds., *The Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 319–28; "Thinking Heidegger's Postmodern Unthought: From Ontotheology to Ontological Pluralism in Technology, Education, Politics, and Art," in Fried and Polt, eds., *After Heidegger?*, 323–34. Thomson lays out the framework for his interpretation of the later Heidegger and Heidegger's relevance for contemporary culture in *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

5   David Liakos, "Another Beginning? Heidegger, Gadamer, and Postmodernity," *Epoché* 24, no. 1 (2019): 221–38. Theodore George and I discuss Heidegger's influence on Gadamer in David Liakos and Theodore George, "Hermeneutics in Post-War Continental European Philosophy," in Kelly Becker and Iain Thomson, eds., *The Cambridge History of Philosophy, 1945–2015* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 399–415.

6   Some Heideggerians may think that this point is already well established. But the interpretation bears reformulating, since some contemporary scholars still read Heidegger as anti-modern. Sheehan, for example, accuses Heidegger of advancing a "Solzhenitsyn-like jeremiad against modernity *au large*" that is "outside the pale of serious discussion" (*Making Sense of Heidegger*, 283, 293). Peter Trawny ascribes to Heidegger a politicized "anti-modernism" that is adjacent to anti-Semitism ("Heidegger, 'World Judaism,' and Modernity," trans. Christopher Merwin, *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 5 [2015]: 19). In his study of Heidegger's politics, Adam Knowles bluntly refers to Heidegger's "overlapping set of ideological commitments involving antisemitism, anti-modernism, and anti-liberalism" (*Heidegger's Fascist Affinities: A Politics of Silence*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019, 15).

7   Charles Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections: Selected Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 186.

8   Quoted in Roberto de Mattei, *Pius IX*, trans. John Laughland (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2004), 120.

9   See Thomson's characterization of Heidegger's position as "neither blind optimism nor fatalistic despair but, instead, real hope for the future" (*Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, 212). Relatedly, James D. Reid criticizes the idea that the early Heidegger of the 1920s was "consistently hostile to all things modern" (*Heidegger's Moral Ontology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 63).

10 Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, trans. by Jon R. Snyder (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 164–81.

11 For further details of this account of ontotheology, including the relationship between being as such and ontotheological understandings of the being of entities, see Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 7–43; and Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, 7–39.

12 This formulation comes from Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, 170. See also Thomson, "Ontotheology," 325–6.

13 On the connection between pessimism about modernity and optimism about what can come after it, see Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, 192–6.

14 My reading here of "The Origin of the Work of Art," including the relationship between "earth" and being as such and "world" and the being of entities, the postmodern pluralism at issue in Van Gogh's painting, and the analogy between Van Gogh and Hölderlin, follows and builds on Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, 65–120.

15 I cannot agree, then, with William McNeill's interpretation of "The Origin of the Work of Art" as an abandonment of phenomenology: "Suddenly it is the work of art, and not phenomenology, that is said to reveal the true Being of equipment…Now,

it seems, the work of art is accomplishing what phenomenology was previously tasked with doing" (*The Fate of Phenomenology: Heidegger's Legacy*, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020, 74). It seems to me that Heidegger is suggesting that the conflict between world and earth is not merely accomplished within or by the artwork. Rather, what "happens" in the painting indicates the historical reality of the tension between our understanding of the meaning of being and the source of that understanding. For Heidegger, phenomenology can and must attend to that tension as we experience it.

16   On the difference between the being of entities and being as such as one of the later Heidegger's main contributions to the history of philosophy since Kant, see Lee Braver, *A Thing of This World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 326–27.

17   I explain this connection in Liakos, "Another Beginning?," 221–22. See also Thomson, "Nihilism as the Deepest Problem; Art as the Best Response."

18   Here I agree with Donatella Di Cesare: "Heidegger opened the door for Gadamer…But we should nevertheless ask how advantageous this was for Gadamer. 'Heidegger and Gadamer' is the formula that gained quick acceptance and became a questionable interpretative cipher for Gadamer's philosophy" (*Gadamer: A Philosophical Portrait*, trans. Niall Keane, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013, 205).

19   See Richard J. Bernstein, "The Constellation of Hermeneutics, Critical Theory and Deconstruction," in Robert J. Dostal, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 267; Stefano Marino, *Gadamer and the Limits of the Modern Techno-Scientific Civilization* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), 13; and Richard E. Palmer, "Moving Beyond Modernity: The Contribution of Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics," in István Fehér, ed., *Kunst, Hermeneutik, Philosophie: Das Denken*

Hans-Georg Gadamers im Zusammenhang des 20. Jahrhunderts (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003), 160.

20 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), 278; Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke 1: Hermeneutik I. Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 281.

21 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 283, tm; *Gesammelte Werke 1*, 286.

22 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 355; *Gesammelte Werke 1*, 367.

23 See Liakos, "Another Beginning?" for further details of and evidence for this reading. There, I contrast Heidegger's readings of Hölderlin and Nietzsche with Gadamer's interpretations of Rilke and Dilthey as another way of making the same contrast I am making in this paper.

24 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxxiv, tm; *Gesammelte Werke 2: Hermeneutik II. Wahrheit und Methode: Ergänzugen, Register* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 447.

25 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 308, tm; *Gesammelte Werke 1*, 314.

26 In his discussion of their conceptions of truth, Robert J. Dostal puts this difference in the temporal terms of truth as sudden (Heidegger) as opposed to taking time (Gadamer) ("The Experience of Truth for Gadamer and Heidegger: Taking Time and Sudden Lightning," in Brice Wachterhauser, ed., *Hermeneutics and Truth*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994, 49).

27 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxxiv; *Gesammelte Werke 2*, 447.

28 Jean Grondin reports that Heidegger considered Gadamer's starting point in the philosophy of the *Geisteswissenschaften* "too weak a response to the age's technological crisis," suggesting that the humanities would soon find themselves overrun by technological enframing (*Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, 292). It is difficult not to be impressed by Heidegger's prescience as we witness, for example, the popularity of the "digital humanities." But Heidegger's prediction does not, in my view, negate the

importance of Gadamer's (admittedly at times stodgily classical) articulation and defense of humanistic understanding.

29   I have made this case with regard to the ocular and visual metaphors of infinity, perspective, and mirroring, in David Liakos, "Hermeneutics and the Conservatism of Listening," *Cosmos and History* 16, no. 2 (2020): 495–519.

30   For another reading of Gadamer's humanism, which argues that Gadamer "concretizes" Heidegger's "Letter on 'Humanism,'" see Theodore George, *The Responsibility to Understand: Hermeneutical Contours of Ethical Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 30–38.

31   Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 8; *Gesammelte Werke 1*, 15.

32   Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 16,; *Gesammelte Werke 1*, 23.

33   Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 17, tm; *Gesammelte Werke 1*, 24.

34   Quoted in Grondin, *Gadamer: A Biography*, 335.

35   Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Pain: Reflections of a Philosopher," trans. Alexander Crist, *The Journal of Continental Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2020): 67–68.

36   Thomson, "Heideggerian Phenomenology and the Postmetaphysical Politics of Ontological Pluralism," 30. See also Thomson, "Thinking Heidegger's Postmodern Unthought," 325–26.

37   Gregory Fried makes a similar point in his book on Heideggerian politics (*Heidegger's Polemos: From Being to Politics*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, 238).

38   Quoted in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*, Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson, eds., trans. Lawrence Schmidt and Monica Reuss (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 121; Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke 9: Ästhetik und Poetik II. Hermeneutik im Vollzug* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 375–76.

39   Gadamer, *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History*, 123, em; Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke* 9, 377–78.

40   Richard Rorty, "Being That Can Be Understood Is Language," in Bruce Krajewski, ed., *Gadamer's Repercussions: Reconsidering*

Philosophical Hermeneutics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 29.

41   Lee Braver, Haley Burke, and Iain Thomson provided extensive and helpful comments on drafts of this essay. My thanks to all of them.