

Gadamer’s recent work on language and philosophy: On “Zur Phänomenologie von Ritual und Sprache”

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In an unheralded and so far untranslated major essay from 1992, “Zur Phänomenologie von Ritual und Sprache,”¹ Gadamer sums up in a rich, insightful, and wide-ranging statement his views on language and philosophy. In the absence of an available translation, I will offer here an interpretive reading that introduces and comments on some of the most interesting ideas put forward in this late writing. Unlike most of Gadamer’s shorter essays, which are not partitioned, this piece is subdivided into four sections, which I will discuss *seriatim*.

1. Die verborgenheit der sprache – the hiddenness of language²

The general theme of this first section is the unobtrusive place language has occupied in Western philosophy beginning with the Greeks up through Kant, German idealism, and the later neoKantian idealism. It notes that for serious philosophy, up to the twentieth century, language remained a hidden (*verborgen*) medium of no particular philosophical consequence. A key question in the section is why this is so, and the answer is that thinking in terms of principles, systems, and ultimate grounding has diverted thinking away from a focus on language. The section title parallels the title of a book he published in the same year, *Über die Verborgenheit der Gesundheit*, translated into English as *The Enigma of Health*.³ Language, like health, remains invisible (Heidegger would say “inconspicuous” [“unauffällig”]) until attention is focussed on it. Gadamer notes in this section that language is occasionally discussed by Plato and other philosophers down through history, but it remained for Husserl and Heidegger to make language a key part of the lifeworld. Gadamer asserts that Husserl’s transcendental idealism contributed to the diminishment of the place of language by placing it in the context of the intentional acts of consciousness (404), while Heidegger, on the other hand, went back to the Greek language and made *words* a central focus of his thinking. Heidegger undertook to break the hold of

scholastic metaphysics on philosophy by studying the meaning of key Greek philosophical terms and the impact of translating those Greek terms into Latin. This was the project of “destructuring” of the “language of metaphysics” that also inspired Derrida’s project of deconstruction. The Latin equivalent words were never quite equivalent; they reshaped the concept, including the concept of being, making it *substantia*, a substance and time-neutral (403). The presence metaphysics of Plato had this consequence also, he says. Going back to the Greek language had a special significance for Heidegger and Gadamer. For the Greek philosophers there was no tradition of scholastic metaphysics; there was no gap between everyday words and the meaning they carried in philosophy as terms. Greek did not even possess a general term for “language” as such, and they called other languages *Rhabarber*; since their words sounded like meaningless “bar-bar” syllables. Because of the closeness of Greek philosophical thinking and the ordinary use of the same words, Gadamer and Heidegger found in early Greek philosophy what they sought: the possibility of a new beginning for philosophy free from traditional metaphysics. For Heidegger, however, this meant a careful listening to the meaning attributed to ancient Greek words in Greek sentences and even fragments of sentences. Philosophy moved close to philology as the Greek language moved to center stage as a resource, a gold mine, for philosophical thinking. In the case of Heidegger, it was a matter of *Destruktion*, deconstructing the language of metaphysics by going behind the Latin terms to the Greek words used by philosophers, even the cryptic fragments of presocratic philosophers (404–405).

As in many of his writings, Gadamer here speaks of what he learned from Heidegger. From Heidegger, he says, he learned the closeness of reason (*Vernunft*) and language (*Sprache*) of speaking and thinking, word and concept, dialectic and rhetoric, the being with the other person in speaking and the mutuality in listening (*dem Miteinander des Sprechens und dem Aufeinander des Hörens*) (407, 404). He recalls the excitement of realizing that the discovery of language meant the renewal of philosophical thinking and a leap beyond calcified concepts, first principles, and presuppositionless ultimate grounds. In the case of Gadamer, philosophy became for him a life-long mining process in ancient Greek culture and philosophy, opening up what different terms meant back then: *mimesis*, *techne*, *poiesis*, *energeia*, *phronesis*, and so on. He discovered distortions in the communicating of the Greek tradition, but he did not share Heidegger’s project of deconstructing “the language of metaphysics.” In another text he said metaphysics was not a language in the full sense, only a set of terms, which admittedly had often been mistranslated and thus had misdirected thought within the tradition.⁴ It was part of Gadamer’s method, over and over again, to

critique modern thought in the light of deeper Greek conceptualities.

In this sense, I would point out that some followers of Habermas are wrong in seeing Gadamer as the obedient slave of tradition and authority, and omitting the moment of critique. For Gadamer, philosophy since Socrates has never been the unthinking servant of what is handed down but always exercises a critique of what has been handed down, even of what has been handed down by the Enlightenment, and especially of what has been handed down by a German idealism in which the importance of language was hidden from view.⁵ In this text he says that it was phenomenology that made us aware of the lifeworld and language in the lifeworld as a focus of philosophical reflection, and announced a new start for science and philosophy. (Of course, for Heidegger in the thirties, the “*neue Anfang*” became a slogan and was far from the new beginning Husserl had in mind.) Finally, Gadamer says here he was startled to learn from Heidegger that the classical definition of man in ancient Greece is not as a living being endowed with reason [*animal rationale*] but as “*das Wesen, das Sprache hat*,” the being that has language (404). And language became the key to leaping beyond the transcendental thinking of Husserl and also the Kantian transcendental tendencies in *Being and Time*. Of course, these ideas are not new in Gadamer. Gadamer is looking back and bringing together his views on language and Heidegger’s decisive influence on them.

I will limit myself to commenting briefly on four other points Gadamer makes about language and philosophy in this section. First, Gadamer reminds us here that an appreciation for the power of the spoken word was seen as a challenge to the traditional Greek emphasis on the visual arising in various quarters: in the old Jewish tradition as explored in Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, in Christian thinkers like Theodor Haecker and Ferdinand Ebner, and on the Protestant side, Kierkegaard, Graf Yorck, Karl Hohl, and so on. “Over against the Greek ocularity, hearing was given a new weight . . . In the conceptual language of Greek metaphysics and its Latin continuation, the hearing of the word had found no real home” (403). With this came the stunning realization that “the conceptuality of the philosophical tradition possessed an accent strange to us” (403). So the conceptual importance of hearing sparked the search for a new conceptuality in German philosophy in the early twentieth century, a conceptuality that did justice to the realities experienced in hearing.

Second, in contrast to scientific approaches to language and reasoning, Gadamer seeks the rehabilitation of the classical concept of rhetoric and the forms of persuasiveness it possesses.

He writes, “The classical concept of rhetoric points us to the whole realm of being with each other and reaching understanding, which takes place among

human beings in symbolic forms.” (407) It is these forms of interaction and being together, of solidarity and cooperation, that take place in language. Language, properly understood, stands in the context of such solidarity and interaction: “Language, by the way, is not only the language of words. There is the language of the eyes, the language of the hands, pointing and naming, all this is language and confirms that language is constantly present in our transactions with-one-another [*im Miteinander*]. Words are always answers, even when they are questions” (407).

Third, in death, Gadamer argues, language and philosophy run up against a limit situation, against “the unique unintelligibility of death” (407). When our questions are directed to this mystery, they find no answer. “In the world of being with others which exists in the processes of question and answer, in conversation, this is the dreadful breaking off of every possible conversation.” Resistance is our answer to death. Yet in the face of death one understands the significance of Hölderlin’s saying that “we are a conversation and are able to hear one another” (cited 407). In the face of death we are all together in a conversation. “Our answerlessness in the face of death gives rise to many forms: in cult, in myth, in the creation of art” (408). In thought we can only continually try to think beyond death, as do religions with their concepts of the beyond. In the face of death we sense ourselves as part of a conversation here and now, whether we can imagine it beyond death or not.

Fourth, Gadamer finds in conversation the heart of language. In the closing paragraph of the section he formulates beautifully his view of conversation and the speaking in which language has its being. He says that conversation goes on between mother and child long before words are actually spoken. It is embedded in the being with each other and for each other of the mother and the child, whose learning of language is not just of words but a whole process of socialization. We learn what “one” says and does not say, does and does not do. “If we contemplate these beginning experiences and the experiences of the ending of life, then we see how language encompasses and comes to grips with both. We know then what speaking [*Sprechen*] really is. It is a seeking and finding of words which is never fulfillable” (408). In this conversational exchange that we are, there are no boundaries, no stopping places. “We know the pressure of life, the compulsion that carries all life with it, and thus also human beings in their linguisticity” (408). The give and take, the being with and for each other of humans in their world, is language, is the conversation. It is not just the instrumental competence in the exchange of words by rational beings with interests and goals; it is the medium in which human live and move and have their being with and for one another, communing meditatively with things and with each other, and out of this bringing forth words, gestures, works.

2. Sprache – Gespräch und Ritual: language – conversation and ritual

Gadamer begins this section with the following sentence: “Now let’s go from the beginningless and endless back into the middle of the linguisticity of human beings” (409). By this he wants to go back to animal and human behavior in terms of its factual being in the world, being with others, the rituals of acceptance and negation, courtship and competition for mates, that go on in animals without words and in humans with language. Here he appeals to anthropological studies of higher animals, noting that in many cases there is a startling similarity to human rites and rituals. But there is a difference. The difference, he says, is that for animals these are blind and prescribed in advance, whereas “within one species [the human] there is a multiplicity of usages and morals” that are posited and willed by human beings (409). For human beings, there are animal drives, yes, but there are also the complex mechanisms that control human behavior in response to animal drives.

Now why is Gadamer taking up these seemingly obvious and trivial points about animal and human behavior? In order to place language once again in the *lifeworld* of human beings, a lifeworld with both animal and human dimensions. What is important to Gadamer in this lifeworld are the human solidarities out of which humans come to agreements, to “understandings.” First, there are the animal solidarities and interactions arising from a unity together with nature, which Gadamer calls “*Mitsamt*,” a being gathered together with the whole. We share these with animals because we are animal beings. “The power of nature flows through all living beings, including the human. Nevertheless, a separation from being controlled by nature and their so-called freedom is a fundamental characteristic of humans, by virtue of which the human world is lifted above the animal world by its rituals and capacity of showing or pointing and naming [*des Zeigens und Nennens*]” (410). Among humans the rituals and forms of behavior are socially shaped, although they differ from one culture to the other and individuals sometimes misunderstand what is right behavior in another culture. Still, it is possible for persons from different cultures to reach understandings and agreements, a process which is greatly helped, Gadamer notes, by learning each other’s language.

Gadamer wants to ward off the prevalent view that human beings consist of two antithetical natures, one corporeal and the other spiritual or intellectual. Instead, he sees the mental or spiritual side of human beings as a double, a parallel, of the natural. Protesting against the nature-spirit dichotomy, Gadamer writes that “this distinction has a false abstractness. We are dealing

here with a doubling that consists of the togetherness of being in a unity with nature and of being with each other [*das Ineinander von Mitsamt und Miteinander*]” (411). Animals are compelled into that unity, while humans also feel that unity but along with this the controlling rules of behavior of human beings. “This is the true form of the human being and this is why, in my view, research into behavior has special value” (411). Given this different kind of interwovenness of spirit and body, the task in this situation is “to rightly place the mysterious distinction of [human] linguisticity” (411). In this task, Gadamer warns, “we want at every step to proceed descriptively and not deal with such vague concepts as consciousness, soul, spirit, reason, or sense of the community (common sense in the old sense of the word) as if they were known quantities” (411). One has to go back to showing and naming and the search for the right word, the right gesture, the standards of rightness and how they arise.

Here Gadamer is interested in correctness in the verbal and nonverbal rites of life. At a funeral, for example, the right words are simply the words of the rite or no words at all. One does not strike up a conversation at a funeral. The example shows how much the customary usage determines the meaning of words and “how the speech community shapes the common life” (414). Word usage is something we conform to, not control. “In this word usage the order of behavior is expressed. But the understanding of this is seeking is a completely different understanding from when one ‘wants to say something to someone’” (414). The use of language in rituals does not advance our knowledge of something, it confirms it. Indeed, “*Ritus* is first of all not speaking but doing. And in doing ritual, speaking becomes an action.” Here Gadamer is expressing a point that is commonplace in the speech-act theory of Austin and Searle, but his emphasis is on the solidarity and group unity this brings. It belongs to the unity of the group, he says, not to the exchange of ideas, and thus is closer to the unity of togetherness one speaks of as characteristic of the world of natural beings. In ritual, everyone stands together “in the whole.” Ritual is not the action of an individual but of a group. To this extent it is not really a *Miteinandersein* – the being together of humans when they exchange ideas” (415). Ritual is not a being together in conversation but a being together of a group in an action.

There seem to be two ideas at work here. First, language is rooted in practice in the concrete world. At the same time, ritual is a use of language in which we move back to the unity we have with a nature-based togetherness we do not try to control. The use of language in the exchange of ideas in a conversation is something quite different from that in rituals: “In the true life of language, in contrast [to rituals], the being together with each other takes

the form, above all, of conversations. Being with each other [*Miteinander*] consists not in a monologue, where one person and then another speaks, but rather in seeking for the right word to answer the other person. The being-together of word and answer has its own claim" (418). The speakers seek a common language, come to meet each other in an encounter. This is the being-with-each-other that is the life of language: conversation. Then Gadamer goes one step further to ask whether this being-with-another is in the end the building principle of all life produced by nature. In asking this question he turns to Nietzsche's alternative vision that all life expresses a will to power, a becoming directed toward being. Gadamer asks, "Is this the origin of all sagas? Or is it not the case that the saga lifts itself above the silent dead and enters into a being-together in conversation?" (416) This would mean, he says, that all our thought and planning for something in advance, all creation of devices, all knowing and creation is, to speak with Prometheus, in the most exact sense of the word a "repression" [*Verdrängung*] of death (417). Also, giving and self-sacrifice for the other, he says, are "not an invention of the will to power. Here this concept comes up against its limit. Language has the other person in mind. Language wants an answer. What is disclosed through it? Is it a beyond? Or something on this side?" (417).

Again, Gadamer goes back to language acquisition in the little child: "Let's look at the transition to language that in human behavior can be observed in the small child. As we have said, there is no graspable point of beginning. What we can observe in the small child is the slow growing into a speech community, which corresponds to all beginnings of speech communities, as they take shape in *ritus*, usages, customary morals, and all rules for behavior, and these finally lead to verbal exchange." What Gadamer is saying about language is that it starts in the wordless interactions and relationships between child and adult and as time goes on these interactions and their rules of propriety take appropriate form in language. "How the words take shape that one uses, how one learns to use the right word, and so also learns the way things are is not a process of conscious learning and practice." It is a process of crystallizing into fixed linguistic usages and behaviors, and then the fixity emerges that comes with writing. Indeed, he notes, "one comes to understand that thinking and recalling things can be described in terms of writing and writtenness. In a similar way, the Greeks did not make a distinction between what is held in memory and what is written down. I, too, can never take the measure of what language is and completely leave out the writtenness in which it is taken down" (217).

This immediately prompts an explicit reference by Gadamer to how Derrida in "Ousia and Grammé" and in *Voice and Phenomena*, stimulated by

Heidegger, entered into dialogue with Husserl's analysis of time, "which ended with a persuasive elimination of the transcendental subject and thereby with a critique of the idea of an identity that did not include difference in it" (418). Here Gadamer can only applaud Derrida's analysis. But Gadamer's concern is with the transitional moment when customary rules and ways of seeing crystallize into, harden into, taking shape as, words and sentences.

Gadamer also here reaffirms his borrowing of the "inner logos" concept which Augustine had taken from the Stoics and used in order to understand the mystery of the Incarnation by which Word becomes flesh. But, he says, this is not a Platonic dualism, with its doctrine of two worlds. He can understand why Derrida saw a platonic two-world doctrine in Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and criticized it as a metaphysics of presence. But, says Gadamer, we have learned from Heidegger not to see *présence* as self-evidently metaphysical but rather by placing the being-question in the horizon of time to see it differently. This insight puts us in a position, he asserts, to see why Derrida in his reading of Heidegger on Nietzsche misapprehends [*misgreift*] when he finds in Heidegger a secret dependence on metaphysics. Actually, Heidegger's demonstration of Nietzsche's metaphysics is meant as a criticism, and so Derrida errs in accusing Heidegger himself of falling into metaphysics. (418–419) He concludes the section by linking his own approach to language with Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, saying that he is a follower of Heidegger when he tries "to start from linguisticity and find a way to leave Greek metaphysics behind" (419).

3. Von der sage zur literatur – from the saga to literature

The transition from oral to written literature in Greece again causes Gadamer to invoke the name of Derrida. His opening sentence runs, "Just as Derrida's discussion of Heidegger's Nietzsche interpretation did not completely persuade me, the same goes for his discussion of Levinas in *Writing and Difference*. In any case, one should not, with Derrida, ground writing merely on the development of European culture. The connection between writing and spoken language reaches deeper and already caused me to ponder it" (419). It is fair to see this section as in part a further reply to Derrida.

For Gadamer, we may observe, the "difference" that is of interest is not the presence or absence of a referent but the difference between language in its spoken form and in its written form. One acquires speech and writing quite differently, he notes, and one can more easily live without writing than speaking. The presence of the oral saga before it was memorialized in writing

suggests to Gadamer the primacy of language in its spoken form. Gadamer repeatedly points out that the written text must be brought back to life in a process of reading that causes it to “speak” once again. “It is the word found in speaking that must be refound in the text if the text is to speak” (419). This bringing back of the written text to a spoken form represents “a fulfillment of our bodily being and life as a whole” (419). Additional evidence for this is found in the importance of listening to music and theater in live performance. Even when there is a recording that is indistinguishable aurally from the real thing, it loses the living interchange of an actual performance. Gadamer is not slow to conclude: “This detracts from the significance of writtenness . . . Writing is something that one can invent” but language is not (420). Furthermore, “one does not teach a person to speak a language the way one teaches him or her to write it.” Language is rooted in our behavior; it grows gradually, and is tied with relationships and behavioral mores. Surely it is a great event when a culture acquires writing, Gadamer observes, and the scribes gain great respect via this new technology, but one does not acquire the technology of writing the way one acquires a language.

What Gadamer is looking for, he says, is “what language is as language [*Sprache als Sprache ist*] and what comes to stand in language when language is there as language in its fullness—either as poetry or concept” (421). To probe this question more deeply he takes us back to a time in Greek culture when there was no “literature” and no writing, only poetry. For the form of this preliterate poetry, he points us to the German word *Sage*. “Saga means something that hands itself down only in being said, going from mouth to mouth, passing from generation to generation in free growth and the proliferation of narrative fantasy, ‘stories’” (421). In all narrating of a story “there reigns a kind of freedom that basically resists fixity,” the fixity of writing (421). In fact, “narrating has a tremendous power. In Greece it always had a musical accompaniment” (422). Narratives are absorbing and as we listen we are totally involved. This is no testimony of a witness, Gadamer notes, but a recitation that captures through the evocative power of its art (423). Indeed, they are like “worlds” in which we become at home and scarcely want to leave (424). The great novelists, too, capture us and take us up into their worlds, but it is the power of language, not of writtenness that does this, and indeed the power of art, which Gadamer describes in greater detail in his “Wort und Bild.”

What seems to be at stake here is a defense (especially against Derrida) of the power of language quite aside from its writtenness. And even when language has been embalmed in written form, the words have to be brought to life in the imagination of the reader. When the oral narrative passes over into literature, it loses some of its freedom and flexibility, the reciter is less free to

invent. When reading, it is still important to return to an imagined inflection and situationality. And involvement in the matter is important. Indeed, the important thing is the personal engagement of the reader with the subject matter at hand. Gadamer goes so far as to claim that one enters into a dialogue with a work of art, poses questions to it, and what the work wishes to say “comes forth” (424). We tarry in the conversation, we want to linger. “One may say that a text or a work of pictorial or sculptural art does not answer you, so there can be no real conversation with it. I [Gadamer] would maintain just the opposite. Every work of art, if it addresses one, already promises an answer. Whoever lets himself or herself tarry, viewing or thinking, is already involved in a conversation and somehow takes the part of the other with whom one seeks a common language, as in every conversation. It is as if poetry or a work of plastic art always has new answers ready and always provokes new questions” (424–425). Here Gadamer identifies the power of language with the power of narrative and novelistic art. Here and in dialogue, language is language in its full sense. It is able to disclose a world into which we can enter into dialogue and dwell. Written or not written, the power is still there. In fact, language and music have greater power and vividness in live performance than when fixed in written or in recorded form.

4. Auf dem Wege zum Begriff – on the way to the concept

This final section takes up the transition from ordinary and artistic uses of language to the philosophical use of the concept. Here Gadamer is taking up what one could call his challenge of the nineties. This challenge is not from Derrida but arises in his own dialogue with himself. He addresses it in an essay written after the completion of his collected works, “Vom Wort zum Begriff,”⁶ and later in an unpublished talk arranged by Jean Grondin, but without achieving a breakthrough.

In our discussion here we will discuss very briefly what Gadamer says on four topics: The linguistic basis of philosophical thinking, conversation as the basis of philosophy, the philosophical significance of writtenness, and language and practical reason. We see from these topics that Gadamer is not so much exploring a developmental transition to conceptual thinking but rather the general relation between philosophy and language.

In the opening sentence of the section, Gadamer poses its central theme: “How do things stand in philosophy, where the language of concepts is spoken, and what about the writtenness of this language?” (426). After a nuanced discussion of the philosophical suspicion of the seductions of language in

modernity (e.g. Bacon's idols of the marketplace), Gadamer turns to Heidegger's problem that "for what he wanted to say [for the task of appropriately thinking being and time], language was lacking" (428). The linguistic basis for his thinking was not there. So through Aristotle Heidegger went back to the Presocratics to find the ways into the concept of being. "This is the way it is with the linguistic base of thinking. Language does not establish but opens paths. Whoever speaks chooses his words because he seeks an answer. Every effort at philosophical thinking is an effort at a conversation" (430).

This brings us to the second major topic in the section: conversation as the basis and nature of philosophical thinking. For Gadamer, philosophy is the asking and answering of questions, whether the conversation is with another person or with oneself. "Philosophy knows no true sentences which one only has to defend or use in order to demonstrate something more strongly. Philosophizing is rather a constant self-surpassing of all its ideas; like a conversation, it is a constant self-surpassing by using the answer of the other person" (430). In fact, there are no absolutely true and perfect texts in philosophy in the sense that there are true and perfect religious or literary texts. We are always in dialogue with the ideas of philosophy. "The history of philosophy is an ongoing dialogue with itself" (430). The result of this relentless self-questioning is the destruction of the old order. The Greek beginnings of philosophy were integrally related to mathematics, and in both ancient times and modern, "philosophy brought the dissolution of the old unity of cult, ritual, song, and language; of rhetoric and poetics; and in the end of science and philosophy" (431). Philosophy is in dialogue with the tradition, but it is not the blind preserver of tradition. When it is not in dialogue with another person, it is in dialogue with itself, an inner dialogue of the soul with itself (433).

Gadamer takes up *Schriftlichkeit* (writtenness) once again in this section. Here he refers to Plato's Seventh Letter, where, as we know, Plato spoke disparagingly of writtenness and said that his real doctrine is transmitted orally. Gadamer notes that written language is carried by living language. "The meaning of all presentations fixed in writing are carried by something else that can only be mediated in living language. Other phenomena participate in the transmission, like urgency, intensity, stronger tone or softer tone—above all, slight doubt or hesitation" (433). Gestures go with spoken language, and irony, too, and the innumerable other communicative means available in spoken language. (434). This carrying power of spoken language is connected to another key concept in late Gadamer: social solidarity. Here he takes up the theme of partnership. "Because a true conversation includes a *Miteinander* [a being-with, an interaction with, another person] we must place it under the category of partnership, which reminds us of the Greek concept of *methexis*—

participation” (434). This presupposes a commonality, a taking part in something larger than oneself, a language community. A concept of language based on *Schriftlichkeit* [writtness] tends to omit these, along with ethics, the topic Gadamer turns to at the end of the essay.

For Gadamer commonality, community, and solidarity are directly related to the *rationality of practical reason*. They are its foundation as well as the foundation of language. This practical rationality cannot be grasped by the concept of argument, because it is something one grows into the way one matures into a language community. Ethos and language, then, are closely connected. Summing up, Gadamer says, “I have tried to bring to articulation the human being-with-each-other found in ethos and logos by the concept of ritual, in which ‘rightness’ dictates the standards for observance and fulfillment” (438). The modern relationship of “theory” and “practice” as the bridge between knowledge and its application tends to neglect these elements of a language community. For “the language universe includes completely other realms [than those included in theory and practice], and that is what I had in mind in bringing up the rituals of language” (438).

Gadamer’s more comprehensive concept of language in this essay embeds it in the life, thought, partnership, morality, and rituals of the community. He views philosophy in this context as a tireless critical conversation in and with the community and the tradition. In the transactions of community life, the individual must search for the right word, the right action. Sometimes philosophers like Heidegger spend their lives searching for the right words. In this essay Gadamer seeks to articulate the relationship of philosophy and language principally by placing it in the language community, the language community of ancient Greek philosophy.

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Notes

1. *Ästhetik und Poetik: Kunst als Aussage, Gesammelte Werke 8* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993): 400–440.
2. The basis of this first section may have been a lecture Gadamer gave at the 1987 annual meeting of the German phenomenological society in Trier, a meeting which made language its theme, to which he refers (400).

3. *Über die Verborgenheit der Gesundheit*, (Frankfurt: Bibliothek Suhrkamp, 1993); *The Enigma of Health*, trans. Jason Geiger and Nick Walter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
4. There is no language of metaphysics, Gadamer asserts in his "Letter to Dallmayr" in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer–Derrida Encounter*, edited and translated by Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p. 98.
5. On the Socratic vigilance of Gadamer see James Risser, "The Two Faces of Socrates: Gadamer/Derrida," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: op. cit.*, 176–185.
6. See *Gadamer Lesebuch*, edited by Jean Grondin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), pp. 100–110, and James Risser, "From Concept to Word: The Radicality of Philosophical Hermeneutics," paper presented at SPEP, October 1999.

