sion of the enquiry that *Being and Time* opened up. In defending himself against such superficially-argued polemics, Heidegger could quite legitimately refer to the transcendental intention of his own work, in the same sense that Kant's enquiry was transcendental. His enquiry transcended from the start all empirical differences and hence all ideals of specific content.

Hence we too are beginning with the transcendental significance of Heidegger's problematic. The problem of hermeneutics gains a universal framework, even a new dimension, through his transcendental interpretation of understanding. The correspondence between the interpreter and his object, for which the thinking of the historical school was unable to offer any convincing account, now acquires a significance that is concretely demonstrable, and it is the task of hermeneutics to demonstrate it. That the structure of There-being is thrown projection, that There-being is, in the realisation of its own being, understanding, must also be true of the act of understanding within the human sciences. The general structure of understanding acquires its concrete form in historical understanding, in that the commitments of custom and tradition and the corresponding potentialities of one's own future become effective in understanding itself. There-being that projects itself in relation to its own potentiality-for-being has always 'been'. This is the meaning of the existential of 'thrownness'. The main point of the hermeneutics of facticity and its contrast with the transcendental constitution research of Husserl's phenomenology was that no freely chosen relation towards one's own being can go back beyond the facticity of this being. Everything that makes possible and limits the project of There-being precedes it, absolutely. This existential structure of There-being must find its expression in the understanding of historical tradition as well, and so we shall start by following Heidegger.[167]

II
Foundations of a Theory of Hermeneutical Experience

1 THE ELEVATION OF THE HISTORICALITY OF UNDERSTANDING TO THE STATUS OF HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLE

(A) THE HERMENEUTIC CIRCLE AND THE PROBLEM OF PREJUDICES

(i) Heidegger's disclosure of the fore-structure of understanding

Heidegger went into the problems of historical hermeneutics and criticism only in order to develop from it, for the purposes of ontology, the fore-structure of understanding.[168] Contrariwise, our question is how hermeneutics, once freed from the ontological obstructions of the scientific concept of objectivity, can do justice to the historicality of understanding. The way in which hermeneutics has traditionally understood itself is based on its character as art or technique.[169] This is true even of Dilthey's extension of hermeneutics to become an organon of the human sciences. It may be asked whether there is such a thing as this art or technique of understanding—we shall come back to the point. But at any rate we may enquire into the consequences that Heidegger's fundamental derivation of the circular structure of understanding from the temporality of There-being has for the hermeneutics of the human sciences. These consequences do not need to be such that a theory is applied to practice and the latter now be performed differently, ie in a way that is technically correct. They could also consist in a correction (and purification of inadequate manners) of the way in which constantly exercised understanding understands itself—a procedure that would benefit the art of understanding at most only indirectly.

Hence we shall examine once more Heidegger's description of the hermeneutical circle in order to use, for our own purpose, the new fundamental significance acquired here by the circular structure. Heidegger writes: 'It is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated.

In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. To be sure, we genuinely take hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves'. (*Being and Time,* p 153)

What Heidegger works out here is not primarily a demand on the practice of understanding, but is a description of the way in which interpretation through understanding is achieved. The point of Heidegger's hermeneutical thinking is not so much to prove that there is a circle as to show that this circle possesses an ontologically positive significance. The description as such will be obvious to every interpreter who knows what he is about.[170] All correct interpretation must be on guard against arbitrary fancies and the limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought and direct its gaze 'on the things themselves' (which, in the case of the literary critic, are meaningful texts, which themselves are again concerned with objects). It is clear that to let the object take over in this way is not a matter for the interpreter of a single decision, but is 'the first, last and constant task'. For it is necessary to keep one's gaze fixed on the thing throughout all the distractions that the interpreter will constantly experience in the process and which originate in himself. A person who is trying to understand a text is always performing an act of projecting. He projects before himself a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the latter emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. The working out of this fore-project, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there.

This description is, of course, a rough abbreviation of the whole. The process that Heidegger describes is that every revision of the fore-project is capable of projecting before itself a new project of meaning, that rival projects can emerge side by side until it becomes clearer what the unity of meaning is, that interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones. This constant process of new projection is the movement of understanding and interpretation. A person who is trying to understand is exposed to distraction from fore-meanings that are not borne out by the things themselves. The working-out of appropriate projects, anticipatory in nature, to be

confirmed 'by the things' themselves, is the constant task of understanding. The only 'objectivity' here is the confirmation of a fore-meaning in its being worked out. The only thing that characterises the arbitrariness of inappropriate fore-meanings is that they come to nothing in the working-out. But understanding achieves its full potentiality only when the fore-meanings that it uses are not arbitrary. Thus it is quite right for the interpreter not to approach the text directly, relying solely on the fore-meaning at once available to him, but rather to examine explicitly the legitimacy, ie the origin and validity, of the fore-meanings present within him.

This fundamental requirement must be seen as the radicalisation of a procedure that in fact we exercise whenever we understand anything. Every text presents the task of not simply employing unexamined our own linguistic usage—or in the case of a foreign language the usage that we are familiar with from writers or from daily intercourse. We regard our task as rather that of deriving our understanding of the text from the linguistic usage of the time of the author. The question is, of course, to what extent this general requirement can be fulfilled. In the field of semantics, in particular, we are confronted with the problem of the unconscious nature of our own use of language. How do we discover that there is a difference between our own customary usage and that of the text?

I think we must say that it is generally the experience of being pulled up short by the text. Either it does not yield any meaning or its meaning is not compatible with what we had expected. It is this that makes us take account of possible difference in usage. It is a general presupposition that can be questioned only in particular cases that someone who speaks the same language as I do uses the words in the sense familiar to me. The same thing is true in the case of a foreign language, ie that we all think we have a normal knowledge of it and assume this normal usage when we are reading a text.

What is true of the fore-meaning of usage, however, is equally true of the fore-meanings with regard to content with which we read texts, and which make up our fore-understanding. Here too we may ask how we can break the spell of our own fore-meanings that determine my own understanding can go entirely tion that what is stated in a text will fit perfectly with my own meanings and expectations. On the contrary, what another person tells me, whether in conversation, letter, book or whatever, is generally thought automatically to be his own and not my opinion; and it is this that I am to take note of without necessar-

ily having to share it. But this presupposition is not something that makes understanding easier, but harder, in that the fore-meanings that determine my own understanding can go entirely unnoticed. If they give rise to misunderstandings, how can misunderstandings of a text be recognised at all if there is nothing else to contradict? How can a text be protected from misunderstanding from the start?

If we examine the situation more closely, however, we find that meanings cannot be understood in an arbitrary way. Just as we cannot continually misunderstand the use of a word without its affecting the meaning of the whole, so we cannot hold blindly to our own fore-meaning of the thing if we would understand the meaning of another. Of course this does not mean that when we listen to someone or read a book we must forget all our fore-meanings concerning the content, and all our own ideas. All that is asked is that we remain open to the meaning of the other person or of the text. But this openness always includes our placing the other meaning in a relation with the whole of our own meanings or ourselves in a relation to it. Now it is the case that meanings represent a fluid variety of possibilities (when compared with the agreement presented by a language and a vocabulary), but it is still not the case that within this variety of what can be thought, ie of what a reader can find meaningful and hence expect to find, everything is possible, and if a person fails to hear what the other person is really saying, he will not be able to place correctly what he has misunderstood within the range of his own various expectations of meaning. Thus there is a criterion here also. The hermeneutical task becomes automatically a questioning of things and is always in part determined by this. This places hermeneutical work on a firm basis. If a person is trying to understand something, he will not be able to rely from the start on his own chance previous ideas, missing as logically and stubbornly as possible the actual meaning of the text until the latter becomes so persistently audible that it breaks through the imagined understanding of it. Rather, a person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something. That is why a hermeneutically trained mind must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's quality of newness. But this kind of sensitivity involves neither 'neutrality' in the matter of the object nor the extinction of one's self, but the conscious assimilation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings.

When Heidegger showed that what we call the 'reading of what is there' is the fore-structure of understanding, this was, phenomenologically, completely correct. He also showed by an example the task that arises from this. In *Being and Time* he gave a concrete example, in the question of being, of the general statement that was, for him, a hermeneutical problem.[171] In order to explain the hermeneutical situation of the question of being in regard to fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception, he critically applied his question, directed at metaphysics, to important turning-points in the history of metaphysics. Here he was actually doing simply what the historical, hermeneutical consciousness requires in every case. Methodologically conscious understanding will be concerned not merely to form anticipatory ideas, but to make them conscious, so as to check them and thus acquire right understanding from the things themselves. This is what Heidegger means when he talks about 'securing' our scientific theme by deriving our fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conceptions from the things themselves.

It is not, then, at all a case of safeguarding ourselves against the tradition that speaks out of the text but, on the contrary, to keep everything away that could hinder us in understanding it in terms of the thing. It is the tyranny of hidden prejudices that makes us deaf to the language that speaks to us in tradition. Heidegger's demonstration that the concept of consciousness in Descartes and of spirit in Hegel is still influenced by Greek substance-ontology, which sees being in terms of what is present and actual, undoubtedly goes beyond the self-understanding of modern metaphysics, yet not in an arbitrary, wilful way, but on the basis of a fore-having that in fact makes this tradition intelligible by revealing the ontological premises of the concept of subjectivity. On the other hand, Heidegger discovers in Kant's critique of 'dogmatic' metaphysics the idea of a metaphysics of the finite which is a challenge to his own ontological scheme. Thus he 'secures' the scientific theme by framing it within the understanding of tradition and so putting it, in a sense, at risk. This is the concrete form of the historical consciousness that is involved in understanding.

This recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust. By the light of this insight it appears that historicism, despite its critique of rationalism and of natural law philosophy, is based on the modern enlightenment and unknowingly shares its prejudices. And there is one prejudice of the enlightenment that is essential to it: the fundamental prejudice of the enlightenment is

the prejudice against prejudice itself, which deprives tradition of its power.

Historical analysis shows that it is not until the enlightenment that the concept of prejudice acquires the negative aspect we are familiar with. Actually 'prejudice' means a judgment that is given before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined. In German legal terminology a 'prejudice' is a provisional legal verdict before the final verdict is reached. For someone involved in a legal dispute, this kind of judgment against him affects his chances adversely. Accordingly, the French préjudice, as well as the Latin praejudicium, means simply 'adverse effect', 'disadvantage', 'harm'. But this negative sense is only a consecutive one. The negative consequence depends precisely on the positive validity, the value of the provisional decision as a prejudgment, which is that of any precedent.

Thus 'prejudice' certainly does not mean a false judgment, but it is part of the idea that it can have a positive and a negative value. This is due clearly to the influence of the Latin praejudicium. There are such things as préjugés légitimes. This seems a long way from our current use of the word. The German Vorurteil, like English 'prejudice' and even more than the French préjugé, seems to have become limited in its meaning, through the enlightenment and its critique of religion, and have the sense simply of an 'unfounded judgment'.[172] It is only its having a basis, a methodological justification (and not the fact that it may be actually correct) that gives a judgment its dignity. The lack of such a basis does not mean, for the enlightenment, that there might be other kinds of certainty, but rather that the judgment does not have any foundation in the facts themselves, ie that it is 'unfounded'. This is a conclusion only in the spirit of rationalism. It is the reason for the discrediting of prejudices and the claim by scientific knowledge completely to exclude them.

Modern science, in adopting this principle, is following the rule of Cartesian doubt of accepting nothing as certain which can in any way be doubted, and the idea of the method that adheres to this requirement. In our introductory observations we have already pointed out how difficult it is to harmonise the historical knowledge that helps to shape our historical consciousness with this ideal and how difficult it is, for that reason, for the modern concept of method to grasp its true nature. This is the place to turn these negative statements into positive ones. The concept of the 'prejudice' is where we can make a beginning.

(ii) The discrediting of prejudice by the enlightenment

If we pursue the view that the enlightenment developed in regard to prejudices we find it makes the following fundamental division: a distinction must be made between the prejudice due to human authority and that due to over-hastiness.[173] The basis of this distinction is the origin of prejudices in regard to the persons who have them. It is either the respect in which we hold others and their authority, that leads us into error, or else it is an over-hastiness in ourselves. That authority is a source of prejudices accords with the well-known principle of the enlightenment that Kant formulated: Have the courage to make use of your own understanding.[174] Although this distinction is certainly not limited to the role that prejudices play in the understanding of texts, its chief application is still in the sphere of hermeneutics. For the critique of the enlightenment is directed primarily against the religious tradition of christianity, ie the bible. By treating the latter as an historical document, biblical criticism endangers its own dogmatic claims. This is the real radicality of the modern enlightenment as against all other movements of enlightenment: it must assert itself against the bible and its dogmatic interpretation.[175] It is, therefore, particularly concerned with the hermeneutical problem. It desires to understand tradition correctly, ie reasonably and without prejudice. But there is a special difficulty about this, in that the sheer fact of something being written down confers on it an authority of particular weight. It is not altogether easy to realise that what is written down can be untrue. The written word has the tangible quality of something that can be demonstrated and is like a proof. It needs a special critical effort to free oneself from the prejudice in favour of what is written down and to distinguish here also, as with all oral assertions, between opinion and truth.[176]

It is the general tendency of the enlightenment not to accept any authority and to decide everything before the judgment seat of reason. Thus the written tradition of scripture, like any other historical document, cannot claim any absolute validity, but the possible truth of the tradition depends on the credibility that is assigned to it by reason. It is not tradition, but reason that constitutes the ultimate source of all authority. What is written down is not necessarily true. We may have superior knowledge: this is the maxim with which the modern enlightenment approaches tradition and which ultimately leads it to undertake historical research.[177] It makes the tradition as much an object

of criticism as do the natural sciences the evidence of the senses. This does not necessarily mean that the 'prejudice against prejudices' was everywhere taken to the extreme consequences of free thinking and atheism, as in England and France. On the contrary, the German enlightenment recognised the 'true prejudices' of the christian religion. Since the human intellect is too weak to manage without prejudices it is at least fortunate to have been educated with true prejudices.

It would be of value to investigate to what extent this kind of modification and moderation of the enlightenment[178] prepared the way for the rise of the romantic movement in Germany, as undoubtedly did the critique of the enlightenment and the revolution by Edmund Burke. But none of this alters the fundamental facts. True prejudices must still finally be justified by rational knowledge, even though the task may never be able to be fully completed.

Thus the criteria of the modern enlightenment still determine the self-understanding of historicism. This does not happen directly, but in a curious refraction caused by romanticism. This can be seen with particular clarity in the fundamental schema of the philosophy of history that romanticism shares with the enlightenment and that precisely the romantic reaction to the enlightenment made into an unshakeable premise: the schema of the conquest of mythos by logos. It is the presupposition of the progressive retreat of magic in the world that gives this schema its validity. It is supposed to represent the progressive law of the history of the mind, and precisely because romanticism has a negative attitude to this development, it takes over the schema itself as an obvious truth. It shares the presupposition of the enlightenment and only reverses the evaluation of it, seeking to establish the validity of what is old, simply because it is old: the 'gothic' middle ages, the christian European community of states, the feudal structure of society, but also the simplicity of peasant life and closeness to nature.

In contrast to the enlightenment's belief in perfection, which thinks in terms of the freedom from 'superstition' and the prejudices of the past, we now find that olden times, the world of myth, unreflective life, not yet analysed away by consciousness, in a 'society close to nature', the world of christian chivalry, all these acquire a romantic magic, even a priority of truth.[179] The reversal of the enlightenment's presupposition results in the paradoxical tendency to restoration, ie the tendency to reconstruct the old because it is old, the conscious return to the unconscious, culminating in the recognition of the superior wisdom

of the primaeval age of myth. But the romantic reversal of this criterion of the enlightenment actually perpetuates the abstract contrast between myth and reason. All criticism of the enlightenment now proceeds via this romantic mirror image of the enlightenment. Belief in the perfectibility of reason suddenly changes into the perfection of the 'mythical' consciousness and finds itself reflected in a paradisic primal state before the 'fall' of thought.

In fact the presupposition of a mysterious darkness in which there was a mythical collective consciousness that preceded all thought is just as dogmatic and abstract as that of a state of perfection achieved by a total enlightenment or that of absolute knowledge. Primaeval wisdom is only the counter-image of 'primaeval stupidity'. All mythical consciousness is still knowledge, and if it knows about divine powers, then it has progressed beyond mere trembling before power (if this is to be regarded as the primaeval state), but also beyond a collective life contained in magic rituals (as we find in the early Orient). It knows about itself, and in this knowledge it is no longer simply 'outside itself'.[180]

There is the related point that even the contrast between genuine mythical thinking and pseudo-mythical poetic thinking is a romantic illusion which is based on a prejudice of the enlightenment: namely, that the poetic act, because it is a creation of the free imagination, is no longer in any way bound within the religious quality of the myth. It is the old quarrel between the poets and the philosophers in the modern garb appropriate to the age of belief in science. It is now said, not that poets tell lies, but that they are incapable of saying anything true, since they have an aesthetic effect only and merely seek to rouse through their imaginative creations the imagination and the emotions of their hearers or readers.

The concept of the 'society close to nature' is probably another case of a romantic mirror-image, whose origin ought to be investigated. In Karl Marx it appears as a kind of relic of natural law that limits the validity of his socio-economic theory of the class struggle.[181] Does the idea go back to Rousseau's description of society before the division of labour and the introduction of property?[182] At any rate, Plato has already demonstrated the illusory nature of this political theory in the ironical account he gives of a 'state of nature' in the third book of the *Republic*.[183]

These romantic revaluations give rise to the attitude of the historical science of the nineteenth century. It no longer mea-

sures the past by the yardsticks of the present, as if they represented an absolute, but it ascribes their own value to past ages and can even acknowledge their superiority in one or the other respect. The great achievements of romanticism—the revival of the past, the discovery of the voices of the peoples in their songs, the collecting of fairy-tales and legends, the cultivation of ancient customs, the discovery of the world views implicit in languages, the study of the 'religion and wisdom of India'—have all motivated the historical research that has slowly, step by step, transformed the intuitive revival into historical knowledge proper. The fact that it was romanticism that gave birth to the historical school confirms that the romantic retrieval of origins is itself based on the enlightenment. The historical science of the nineteenth century is its proudest fruit and sees itself precisely as the fulfilment of the enlightenment, as the last step in the liberation of the mind from the trammels of dogma, the step to the objective knowledge of the historical world, which stands as an equal besides the knowledge of nature archieved by modern science.

The fact that the restorative tendency of romanticism was able to combine with the fundamental concern of the enlightenment to constitute the unity of the historical sciences simply indicates that it is the same break with the continuity of meaning in tradition that lies behind both. If it is an established fact for the enlightenment that all tradition that reason shows to be impossible, ie nonsense, can only be understood historically, ie by going back to the past's way of looking at things, then the historical consciousness that emerges in romanticism involves a radicalisation of the enlightenment. For the exceptional case of nonsensical tradition has become the general rule for historical consciousness. Meaning that is generally accessible through reason is so little believed that the whole of the past, even, ultimately, all the thinking of one's contemporaries, is seen only 'historically'. Thus the romantic critique of the enlightenment ends itself in enlightenment, in that it evolves as historical science and draws everything into the orbit of historicism. The basic discrediting of all prejudices, which unites the experiential emphasis of the new natural sciences with the enlightenment, becomes, in the historical enlightenment, universal and radical.

This is the point at which the attempt to arrive at an historical hermeneutics has to start its critique. The overcoming of all prejudices, this global demand of the enlightenment, will prove to be itself a prejudice, the removal of which opens the way to an appropriate understanding of our finitude, which dominates not only our humanity, but also our historical consciousness.

Does the fact that one is set within various traditions mean really and primarily that one is subject to prejudices and limited in one's freedom? Is not, rather, all human existence, even the freest, limited and qualified in various ways? If this is true, then the idea of an absolute reason is impossible for historical humanity. Reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms, ie it is not its own master, but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates. This is true not only in the sense in which Kant limited the claims of rationalism, under the influence of the sceptical critique of Hume, to the a priori element in the knowledge of nature; it is still truer of historical consciousness and the possibility of historical knowledge. For that man is concerned here with himself and his own creations (Vico) is only an apparent solution of the problem set by historical knowledge. Man is alien to himself and his historical fate in a quite different way from that in which nature, that knows nothing of him, is alien to him.

The epistemological question must be asked here in a fundamentally different way. We have shown above that Dilthey probably saw this, but he was not able to overcome the influence over him of traditional epistemology. His starting-point, the awareness of 'experience', was not able to build the bridge to the historical realities, because the great historical realities of society and state always have a predeterminant influence on any 'experience'. Self-reflection and autobiography—Dilthey's starting-points—are not primary and are not an adequate basis for the hermeneutical problem, because through them history is made private once more. In fact history does not belong to us, but we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and state in which we live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.

(B) PREJUDICES AS CONDITIONS OF UNDERSTANDING

(i) The rehabilitation of authority and tradition

This is where the hermeneutical problem comes in. This is why we examined the discrediting of the concept of prejudice by the enlightenment. That which presents itself, under the aegis of an absolute self-construction by reason, as a limiting prejudice be-

longs, in fact, to historical reality itself. What is necessary is a fundamental rehabilitation of the concept of prejudice and a recognition of the fact that there are legitimate prejudices, if we want to do justice to man's finite, historical mode of being. Thus we are able to formulate the central question of a truly historical hermeneutics, epistemologically its fundamental question, namely: where is the ground of the legitimacy of prejudices? What distinguishes legitimate prejudices from all the countless ones which it is the undeniable task of the critical reason to overcome?

We can approach this question by taking the view of prejudices that the enlightenment developed with a critical intention, as set out above, and giving it a positive value. As for the division of prejudices into those of 'authority' and those of 'over-hastiness', it is obviously based on the fundamental presupposition of the enlightenment, according to which a methodologically disciplined use of reason can safeguard us from all error. This was Descartes' idea of method. Over-hastiness is the actual source of error in the use of one's own reason. Authority, however, is responsible for one's not using one's own reason at all. There lies, then, at the base of the division a mutually exclusive antithesis between authority and reason. The false prejudice for what is old, for authorities, is what has to be fought. Thus the enlightenment regards it as the reforming action of Luther that 'the prejudice of human prestige, especially that of the philosophical (he means Aristotle) and the Roman pope was greatly weakened'.[184] The reformation, then, gives rise to a flourishing hermeneutics which is to teach the right use of reason in the understanding of transmitted texts. Neither the teaching authority of the pope nor the appeal to tradition can replace the work of hermeneutics, which can safeguard the reasonable meaning of a text against all unreasonable demands made on it.

The consequences of this kind of hermeneutics need not be those of the radical critique of religion that we found, for example, in Spinoza. Rather the possibility of supernatural truth can remain entirely open. Thus the enlightenment, especially in the field of popular philosophy, limited the claims of reason and acknowledged the authority of bible and church. We read in, say, Walch, that he distinguishes between the two classes of prejudice—authority and over-hastiness—but sees in them two extremes, between which it is necessary to find the right middle path, namely a reconciliation between reason and biblical authority. Accordingly, he sees the prejudice from over-hastiness

as a prejudice in favour of the new, as a predisposition to the overhasty rejection of truths simply because they are old and attested by authorities.[185] Thus he discusses the British free-thinkers (such as Collins and others) and defends the historical faith against the norm of reason. Here the meaning of the prejudice from over-hastiness is clearly reinterpreted in a conservative sense.

There can be no doubt, however, that the real consequence of the enlightenment is different: namely, the subjection of all authority to reason. Accordingly, prejudice from over-hastiness is to be understood as Descartes understood it, ie as the source of all error in the use of reason. This fits in with the fact that after the victory of the enlightenment, when hermeneutics was freed from all dogmatic ties, the old division returns in a changed sense. Thus we read in Schleiermacher that he distinguishes between narrowness of view and over-hastiness as the causes of misunderstanding.[186] He places the lasting prejudices due to narrowness of view beside the momentary ones due to overhastiness, but only the former are of interest to someone concerned with scientific method. It no longer even occurs to Schleiermacher that among the prejudices in the mind of one whose vision is narrowed by authorities there might be some that are true—yet this was included in the concept of authority in the first place. His alteration of the traditional division of prejudices is a sign of the fulfilment of the enlightenment. Narrowness now means only an individual limitation of understanding: 'The one sided preference for what is close to one's own sphere of ideas'.

In fact, however, the decisive question is concealed behind the concept of narrowness. That the prejudices that determine what I think are due to my own narrowness of vision is a judgment that is made from the standpoint of their dissolution and illumination and holds only of unjustified prejudices. If, contrariwise, there are justified prejudices productive of knowledge, then we are back with the problem of authority. Hence the radical consequences of the enlightenment, which are still contained in Schleiermacher's faith in method, are not tenable.

The distinction the enlightenment draws between faith in authority and the use of one's own reason is, in itself, legitimate. If the prestige of authority takes the place of one's own judgment, then authority is in fact a source of prejudices. But this does not exclude the possibility that it can also be a source of truth, and this is what the enlightenment failed to see when it denigrated all authority. To be convinced of this, we only have to consider one

of the greatest forerunners of the European enlightenment, namely Descartes. Despite the radicalness of his methodological thinking, we know that Descartes excluded morality from the total reconstruction of all truths by reason. This was what he meant by his provisional morality. It seems to me symptomatic that he did not in fact elaborate his definitive morality and that its principles, as far as we can judge from his letters to Elizabeth, contain hardly anything new. It is obviously unthinkable to prefer to wait until the progress of modern science provides us with the basis of a new morality. In fact the denigration of authority is not the only prejudice of the enlightenment. For, within the enlightenment, the very concept of authority becomes deformed. On the basis of its concept of reason and freedom, the concept of authority could be seen as diametrically opposed to reason and freedom: to be, in fact, blind obedience. This is the meaning that we know, from the usage of their critics, within modern dictatorships.

But this is not the essence of authority. It is true that it is primarily persons that have authority; but the authority of persons is based ultimately, not on the subjection and abdication of reason, but on recognition and knowledge—knowledge, namely, that the other is superior to oneself in judgment and insight and that for this reason his judgment takes precedence, ie it has priority over one's own. This is connected with the fact that authority cannot actually be bestowed, but is acquired and must be acquired, if someone is to lay claim to it. It rests on recognition and hence on an act of reason itself which, aware of its own limitations, accepts that others have better understanding. Authority in this sense, properly understood, has nothing to do with blind obedience to a command. Indeed, authority has nothing to do with obedience, but rather with knowledge. (It seems to me that the tendency towards the acknowledgment of authority, as it emerges in, for example, Karl Jaspers' *Von der Wahrheit*, p 766ff and Gerhard Krüger, *Freiheit und Weltverwaltung*, p 231ff, is not convincing unless the truth of this statement is recognised.) It is true that authority is necessary in order to be able to command and find obedience. But this proceeds only from the authority that a person has. Even the anonymous and impersonal authority of a superior which derives from the command is not ultimately based on this order, but is what makes it possible. Here also its true basis is an act of freedom and reason, which fundamentally acknowledges the authority of a superior because he has a wider view of things or is better informed, ie once again, because he has superior knowledge.[187]

Thus the recognition of authority is always connected with the idea that what authority states is not irrational and arbitrary, but can be seen, in principle, to be true. This is the essence of the authority claimed by the teacher, the superior, the expert. The prejudices that they implant are legitimised by the person himself. Their validity demands that one should be biased in favour of the person who presents them. But this makes them then, in a sense, objective prejudices, for they bring about the same bias in favour of something that can come about through other means, eg through solid grounds offered by reason. Thus the essence of authority belongs in the context of a theory of prejudices free from the extremism of the enlightenment.

Here we can find support in the romantic criticism of the enlightenment; for there is one form of authority particularly defended by romanticism, namely tradition. That which has been sanctioned by tradition and custom has an authority that is nameless, and our finite historical being is marked by the fact that always the authority of what has been transmitted—and not only what is clearly grounded—has power over our attitudes and behaviour. All education depends on this, and even though, in the case of education, the educator loses his function when his charge comes of age and sets his own insight and decisions in the place of the authority of the educator, this movement into maturity in his own life does not mean that a person becomes his own master in the sense that he becomes free of all tradition. The validity of morals, for example, is based on tradition. They are freely taken over, but by no means created by a free insight or justified by themselves. This is precisely what we call tradition: the ground of their validity. And in fact we owe to romanticism this correction of the enlightenment, that tradition has a justification that is outside the arguments of reason and in large measure determines our institutions and our attitudes. It is even a mark of the superiority of classical ethics over the moral philosophy of the modern period that it justifies the transition of ethics into 'politics', the art of right government, by the indispensability of tradition.[188] In comparison with it the modern enlightenment is abstract and revolutionary.

The concept of tradition, however, has become no less ambiguous than that of authority, and for the same reason, namely that it is the abstract counterpart to the principle of the enlightenment that determines the romantic understanding of tradition. Romanticism conceives tradition as the antithesis to the freedom of reason and regards it as something historically given, like nature. And whether the desire is to be revolutionary and

oppose it or would like to preserve it, it is still seen as the abstract counterpart of free self-determination, since its validity does not require any reasons, but conditions us without our questioning it. Of course, the case of the romantic critique of the enlightenment is not an instance of the automatic dominance of tradition, in which what has been handed down is preserved unaffected by doubt and criticism. It is, rather, a particular critical attitude that again addresses itself to the truth of tradition and seeks to renew it, and which we may call 'traditionalism'.

It seems to me, however, that there is no such unconditional antithesis between tradition and reason. However problematical the conscious restoration of traditions or the conscious creation of new traditions may be, the romantic faith in the 'growth of tradition', before which all reason must remain silent, is just as prejudiced as and is fundamentally like the enlightenment. The fact is that tradition is constantly an element of freedom and of history itself. Even the most genuine and solid tradition does not persist by nature because of the inertia of what once existed. It needs to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated. It is, essentially, preservation, such as is active in all historical change. But preservation is an act of reason, though an inconspicuous one. For this reason, only what is new, or what is planned, appears as the result of reason. But this is an illusion. Even where life changes violently, as in ages of revolution, far more of the old is preserved in the supposed transformation of everything than anyone knows, and combines with the new to create a new value. At any rate, preservation is as much a freely-chosen action as revolution and renewal. That is why both the enlightenment's critique of tradition and its romantic rehabilitation are less than their true historical being.

These thoughts lead to the question of whether in the hermeneutic of the human sciences the element of tradition should not be given its full value. Research in the human sciences cannot regard itself as in an absolute antithesis to the attitude we take as historical beings to the past. In our continually manifested attitude to the past, the main feature is not, at any rate, a distancing and freeing of ourselves from what has been transmitted. Rather, we stand always within tradition, and this is no objectifying process, ie we do not conceive of what tradition says as something other, something alien. It is always part of us, a model or exemplar, a recognition of ourselves which our later historical judgment would hardly see as a kind of knowledge, but as the simplest preservation of tradition.

Hence in regard to the dominant epistemological methodologism we must ask if the rise of historical consciousness has really detached our scientific attitude entirely from this nature attitude to the past. Does understanding in the human sciences understand itself correctly when it relegates the whole of its own historicality to the position of prejudices from which we must free ourselves? Or does 'unprejudiced science' have more in common than it realises with that naive openness and reflection in which traditions live and the past is present?

At any rate understanding in the human sciences shares one fundamental condition with the continuity of traditions, namely, that it lets itself be addressed by tradition. Is it not true of the objects of its investigation—just as of the contents of tradition—that only then can its meaning be experienced? However much this meaning may always be a mediated one and proceed from a historical interest, that does not seem to have any relation to the present; even in the extreme case of 'objective' historical research, the proper realisation of the historical task is to determine anew the meaning of what is examined. But the meaning exists at the beginning of any such research as well as at the end: as the choice of the theme to be investigated, the awakening of the desire to investigate, as the gaining of the new problematic.

At the beginning of all historical hermeneutics, then, the abstract antithesis between tradition and historical research, between history and knowledge, must be discarded. The effect of a living tradition and the effect of historical study must constitute a unity, the analysis of which would reveal only a texture of reciprocal relationships.[189] Hence we would do well not to regard historical consciousness as something radically new—as it seems at first—but as a new element within that which has always made up the human relation to the past. In other words, we have to recognise the element of tradition in the historical relation and enquire into its hermeneutical productivity.

That there is an element of tradition active in the human sciences, despite the methodological nature of its procedures, an element that constitutes its real nature and is its distinguishing mark, is immediately clear if we examine the history of research and note the difference between the human and natural sciences with regard to their history. Of course no finite historical effort of man can completely erase the traces of this finiteness. The history of mathematics or of the natural sciences is also a part of the history of the human spirit and reflects its destinies. Nevertheless, it is not just historical naiveté when the natural scientist writes the history of his subject in terms of the present

stage of knowledge. For him errors and wrong turnings are of historical interest only, because the progress of research is the self-evident criterion of his study. Thus it is of secondary interest only to see how advances in the natural sciences or in mathematics belong to the moment in history at which they took place. This interest does not affect the epistemic value of discoveries in the natural sciences or in mathematics.

There is, then, no need to deny that in the natural sciences elements of tradition can also be active, eg in that particular lines of research are preferred at particular places. But scientific research as such derives the law of its development not from these circumstances, but from the law of the object that it is investigating.

It is clear that the human sciences cannot be described adequately in terms of this idea of research and progress. Of course it is possible to write a history of the solution of a problem, eg the deciphering of barely legible inscriptions, in which the only interest was the ultimate reaching of the final result. Were this not so, it would not have been possible for the human sciences to have borrowed the methodology of the natural ones, as happened in the last century. But the analogy between research in the natural and in the human sciences is only a subordinate element of the work done in the human sciences.

This is seen in the fact that the great achievements in the human sciences hardly ever grow old. A modern reader can easily make allowances for the fact that, a hundred years ago, there was less knowledge available to a historian, who therefore made judgments that were incorrect in some details. On the whole, he would still rather read Droysen or Mommsen than the latest account of the particular subject from the pen of a historian living today. What is the criterion here? Obviously one cannot simply base the subject on a criterion by which we measure the value and importance of research. Rather, the object appears truly significant only in the light of him who is able to describe it to us properly. Thus it is certainly the subject that we are interested in, but the subject acquires its life only from the light in which it is presented to us. We accept the fact that the subject presents itself historically under different aspects at different times or from a different standpoint. We accept that these aspects do not simply cancel one another out as research proceeds, but are like mutually exclusive conditions that exist each by themselves and combine only in us. Our historical consciousness is always filled with a variety of voices in which the echo of the past is heard. It is present only in the multifariousness of such voices: this constitutes the nature of the tradition in which we want to share and have a part. Modern historical research itself is not only research, but the transmission of tradition. We do not see it only in terms of the law of progress and verified results; in it too we have, as it were, a new experience of history, whenever a new voice is heard in which the past echoes.

What is the basis of this? Obviously we cannot speak of an object of research in the human sciences in the sense appropriate to the natural sciences, where research penetrates more and more deeply into nature. Rather, in the human sciences the interest in tradition is motivated in a special way by the present and its interests. The theme and area of research are actually constituted by the motivation of the enquiry. Hence historical research is based on the historical movement in which life itself stands and cannot be understood teleologically in terms of the object into which it is enquiring. Such an object clearly does not exist at all in itself. Precisely this is what distinguishes the human sciences from the natural sciences. Whereas the object of the natural sciences can be described idealiter as what would be known in the perfect knowledge of nature, it is senseless to speak of a perfect knowledge of history, and for this reason it is not possible to speak of an object in itself towards which its research is directed.

(ii) The classical example

Of course it is a lot to ask of the self-understanding of the human sciences to detach itself, in the whole of its activity, from the model of the natural sciences and to regard the historical movement of whatever it is concerned with not simply as an impairment of its objectivity, but as something of positive value. There are, however, in the recent development of the human sciences points at which reflection could start that would really do justice to the problem. The naive methodologism of historical research no longer dominates the field alone. The progress of enquiry is no longer universally seen within the framework of the expansion or penetration into new fields or material, but instead as the attaining of a higher stage of reflection in the problem. Even where this happens, thinking is still teleological, in terms of the progress of research, in a way appropriate to the scientist. But a hermeneutical consciousness is gradually growing which is infusing the attitude of enquiry with a spirit of self-criticism; this is true, above all, of those human sciences that have the oldest tradition. Thus the study of classical antiquity, after it had

worked over the whole extent of the available transmitted texts, continually applied itself again, with more subtle questions, to the old favourite objects of its study. This introduced something of an element of self-criticism, in that it reflected on what constituted the real merit of its favourite objects. The concept of the classical, that since Droysen's discovery of Hellenism had reduced historical thinking to a mere stylistic concept, now acquired a new scientific legitimacy.

It requires hermeneutical reflection of some sophistication to discover how it is possible for a normative concept such as that of the classical to acquire or regain its scientific legitimacy. For it follows from the self-understanding of historical consciousness that all normative significance of the past is ultimately dissolved by the now sovereign historical reason. Only at the beginnings of historicism, as for example in Winckelmann's epoch-making work, was the normative element still a real motive of historical research.

The concept of classical antiquity and of the classical, such as dominated pedagogical thought in particular, since the days of German classicism, had both a normative and an historical side. A particular stage in the historical development of man was thought to have produced a mature and perfect formation of man. This combination of a normative and an historical meaning in the concept goes back to Herder. But Hegel still preserved this combination, even though he gave it another emphasis in terms of the history of philosophy. Classical art retained its special excellence for him through being seen as the 'religion of art'. Since this is a form of the spirit that is past, it is exemplary only in a qualified sense. The fact that it is a past art testifies to the 'past' character of art in general. Hegel used this to justify systematically the historicisation of the concept of the classical and introduced that process of development that finally made the classical into a descriptive stylistic concept that describes the brief harmony of measure and fullness that comes between archaic rigidity and baroque dissolution. Since it became part of the aesthetic vocabulary of historical studies, the concept of the classical has preserved the reference to a normative content only in an unacknowledged way.

It was indicative of the start of historical self-criticism when classical studies started to examine themselves after the first world war in relation to a new humanism, and hesitantly again brought out the combination of the normative and the historical elements in 'the classical'.[190] It proved, however, impossible (although the attempt was made) to interpret the concept of the

classical that arose in antiquity and was operative in the canonisation of certain writers as if it had itself expressed the unity of a stylistic ideal.[191] On the contrary, the ancient concept was wholly ambiguous. When today we use 'classic' as an historical stylistic concept that has a clear meaning by being set against what came before and after, this concept has become quite detached from the ancient one. The concept of the 'classical' now signifies a period of time, the period of an historical development, but does not signify any suprahistorical value.

In fact, however, the normative element in the concept of the classical has never completely disappeared. It is still the basis of the idea of liberal education. The classicist is, rightly, not satisfied with simply applying to his texts the historical stylistic concept that has developed through the history of the plastic arts. The question that suggests itself, whether Homer is also 'classical', shatters the historical stylistic category of the classical that is used in an analogy with the history of art—an instance of the fact that historical consciousness always includes more than it acknowledges of itself.

If we try to see what these implications mean, we might say that the classical is a truly historical category, precisely in that it is more than a concept of a period or an historical stylistic one and that yet it does not seek to be a suprahistorical concept of value. It does not refer to a quality that we assign to particular historical phenomena, but to a notable mode of 'being historical', the historical process of preservation that, through the constant proving of itself, sets before us something that is true. It is not at all the case, as the historical mode of thought would have us believe, that the value judgment through which something is dubbed classical was in fact destroyed by historical reflection and its criticism of all teleological constructions of the process of history. The value judgment that is implicit in the concept of the classical gains, rather, through this criticism a new, real legitimacy. The classical is what resists historical criticism because its historical dominion, the binding power of its validity that is preserved and handed down, precedes all historical reflection and continues through it.

To take the key example of the blanket concept of 'classical antiquity', it is, of course, unhistorical to devalue the hellenistic as an age of the decline and fall of classicism, and Droysen has rightly emphasised its importance and its place within the continuity of history for the birth and spread of christianity. But he would not have needed to undertake this historical apologetic if there had not always been a prejudice in favour of the classical

and if the culture of humanism had not held on to 'classical antiquity' and preserved it within Western culture as the heritage of the past. The classical is fundamentally something quite different from a descriptive concept used by an objectivising historical consciousness. It is a historical reality to which historical consciousness belongs and is subordinate. What we call 'classical' is something retrieved from the vicissitudes of changing time and its changing taste. It can be approached directly, not through that, as it were, electric touch that sometimes characterises a contemporary work of art and in which the fulfilment of an apprehension of meaning that surpasses all conscious expectation is instantaneously experienced. Rather it is a consciousness of something enduring, of significance that cannot be lost and is independent of all the circumstances of time, in which we call something 'classical'—a kind of timeless present that is contemporaneous with every other age.

So the first thing about the concept of the classical (and this is wholly true of both the ancient and the modern use of the word) is the normative sense. But insofar as this norm is related retrospectively to a past entity that fulfilled and embodied it, it always contains a temporal quality that articulates it historically. So it was not surprising that, with the rise of historical reflection in Germany which took as its standard the classicism of Winckelmann, an historical concept of a time or a period detached itself from what was regarded as classical in Winckelmann's sense and denoted a quite specific stylistic ideal and, in a historically descriptive way, also a time or period that fulfilled this ideal. From the distance of the Epigones, who set up the criterion, it becomes clear that this stylistic ideal was fulfilled at a particular past moment of the world's history. Accordingly, the concept of the classical came to be used in modern thought to describe the whole of 'classical antiquity' when humanism proclaimed anew the exemplary nature of this antiquity. It was taking up an ancient usage, with some justification, for those ancient authors who were 'discovered' by humanism were the same ones that, for the later period of antiquity, comprised the canon of classics.

They were preserved in the history of Western culture precisely because they became canonical as the writers of the 'school'. But it is easy to see how the historical stylistic concept was able to follow this usage. For although it is a normative consciousness that is behind this concept, it is still a retrospective element. It is an awareness of decline and distance that gives birth to the classical norm. It is not by accident that the concept of the classical and of classical style emerges in late periods. The

Dialogus of Callimachus and Tacitus has been decisive in this connection.[192] But there is something else. Those authors who are regarded as classical are, as we know, always the representatives of particular literary genres. They were considered as the perfect fulfilment of the norm of that literary genre, an ideal that the retrospective view of literary criticism makes plain. If we now examine these norms of literary genres historically, ie if we consider their history, then the classical is seen as the concept of a stylistic phase, of a climax that articulates the history of the genre in terms of before and after. Insofar as the climactic points in the history of genres comes largely within the same brief period of time, the classical, within the totality of the historical development of classical antiquity, refers to such a period and thus also becomes a concept denoting a period; this concept fuses with the stylistic one.

As this kind of historical stylistic concept, the concept of the classical is capable of being extended to any 'development' to which an immanent telos gives unity. And in fact all cultures have high periods, in which a particular civilisation is marked by special achievements in all fields. Thus the general value concept of the classical becomes, via its particular historical fulfilment, again a general historical stylistic concept.

Although this is an understandable development, the historicisation of the concept also involves its uprooting, and that is why historical consciousness, when it started to engage in self-criticism, reinstated the normative element in the concept of the classical and the historical uniqueness of its fulfilment. Every 'new humanism' shares, with the first and oldest, the awareness of being directly committed to its model which, as something past, is unattainable and yet present. Thus there culminates in the classical a general character of historical being, preservation amid the ruins of time. It is the general nature of tradition that only that of the past which is preserved offers the possibility of historical knowledge. The classical, however, as Hegel says, is 'that which signifies itself and hence also interprets itself'.[193] But that means ultimately that the classical is what is preserved precisely because it signifies and interprets itself; ie that which speaks in such a way that it is not a statement about what is past, a mere testimony to something that still needs to be interpreted, but says something to the present as if it were said specially to it. What we call 'classical' does not first require the overcoming of historical distance, for in its own constant communication it does overcome it. The classical, then, is certainly 'timeless', but this timelessness is a mode of historical being.

Of course this does not exclude the fact that works regarded as classical present tasks of historical understanding to a developed historical consciousness that is aware of the historical distance. It is not the aim of the historical consciousness to use the classical model in the direct way of Palladio or Corneille, but to know it as an historical phenomenon that can be understood solely in terms of its own time. But this understanding will always be more than the mere historical construction of the past 'world' to which the work belongs. Our understanding will always include consciousness of our belonging to that world. And correlative to this is the fact that the work belongs to our world.

This is just what the word 'classical' means, that the duration of the power of a work to speak directly is fundamentally unlimited.[194] However much the concept of the classical expresses distance and unattainability and is part of cultural awareness, the phrase 'classical culture' still expresses something of the continuing validity of the classical. Cultural awareness manifests an element of ultimate community and sharing in the world out of which a classical work speaks.

This discussion of the concept of the classical does not lay claim to any independent significance, but serves only to evoke a general question, namely: Does this kind of historical fusion of the past with the present that characterises what is classical, ultimately lie at the base of the whole historical attitude as its effective substratum? Whereas romantic hermeneutics had taken human nature as the unhistorical substratum of its theory of understanding and hence had freed the connatural interpreter from all historical limitations, the self-criticism of historical consciousness leads finally to seeing historical movement not only in process, but also in understanding itself. Understanding is not to be thought of so much as an action of one's subjectivity, but as the placing of oneself within a process of tradition, in which past and present are constantly fused. This is what must be expressed in hermeneutical theory, which is far too dominated by the idea of a process, a method.

(iii) The hermeneutic significance of temporal distance

Let us consider first how hermeneutics sets about its work. What follows for understanding from the hermeneutic condition of belonging to a tradition? We remember here the hermeneutical rule that we must understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole. This principle stems from ancient rhetoric, and modern hermeneutics has taken it and applied it to the art of understanding. It is a circular relationship in both cases. The anticipation of meaning in which the whole is envisaged becomes explicit understanding in that the parts, that are determined by the whole, themselves also determine this whole.

We know this from the learning of ancient languages. We learn that we must 'construe' a sentence before we attempt to understand the individual parts of the sentence in their linguistic meaning. But this process of construing is itself already governed by an expectation of meaning that follows from the context of what has gone before. It is also necessary for this expected meaning to be adjusted if the text calls for it. This means, then, that the expectation changes and that the text acquires the unity of a meaning from another expected meaning. Thus the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole. Our task is to extend in concentric circles the unity of the understood meaning. The harmony of all the details with the whole is the criterion of correct understanding. The failure to achieve this harmony means that understanding has failed.

Schleiermacher differentiated this hermeneutic circle of part and whole in both its objective and its subjective aspect. As the single word belongs within the total context of the sentence, so the single text belongs within the total context of a writer's work, and the latter within the whole of the particular literary genre or of literature. At the same time, however, the same text, as a manifestation of a creative moment, belongs to the whole of its author's inner life. Full understanding can take place only within this objective and subjective whole. Following this theory, Dilthey speaks then of 'structure' and of the 'centring in a mid-point', from out of which there follows the understanding of the whole. In this (as we have already said, pp 173 and 212f above) he is applying to the historical world what has always been a principle of all textual interpretation: namely, that a text must be understood in terms of itself.

The question is, however, whether this is an adequate account of the circular movement of understanding. Here we must go back to the result of our analysis of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. We may set aside Schleiermacher's ideas on subjective interpretation. When we try to understand a text, we do not try to recapture the author's attitude of mind but, if this is the terminology we are to use, we try to recapture the perspective within which he has formed his views. But this means simply that we try to accept the objective validity of what he is saying. If we want to understand, we shall try to make his arguments

even more cogent. This happens even in conversation, so how much truer is it of the understanding of what is written down that we are moving in a dimension of meaning that is intelligible in itself and as such offers no reason for going back to the subjectivity of the author. It is the task of hermeneutics to clarify this miracle of understanding, which is not a mysterious communion of souls, but a sharing of a common meaning.

But even the objective side of this circle, as Schleiermacher describes it, does not reach the heart of the matter. We have seen that the goal of all communication and understanding is agreement concerning the object. Hence the task of hermeneutics has always been to establish agreement where it had failed to come about or been disturbed in some way. The history of hermeneutics can offer a confirmation of this if, for example, we think of Augustine, who sought to relate the christian gospel to the old testament, or of early protestantism, which faced the same problem or, finally, the age of the enlightenment, when it is almost like a renunciation of agreement to seek to acquire 'full understanding' of a text only by means of historical interpretation. It is something qualitatively new when romanticism and Schleiermacher ground a universal historical consciousness by no longer seeing the binding form of tradition, from which they come and in which they stand, as the firm foundation of all hermeneutical endeavour.

One of the immediate predecessors of Schleiermacher, Friedrich Ast, still had a view of hermeneutical work that was markedly concerned with content, in that, for him, its purpose was to establish harmony between the world of classical antiquity and christianity, between a newly discovered genuine antiquity and the christian tradition. This is something new, in comparison with the enlightenment, in that this hermeneutics no longer accepts or rejects tradition in accord with the criterion of natural reason. But in its attempt to bring about a meaningful agreement between the two traditions to which it sees itself as belonging, this kind of hermeneutics is still pursuing the task of all preceding hermeneutics, namely to achieve in understanding agreement in content.

In going beyond the 'particularity' of this reconciliation of the ancient classical world and christianity, Schleiermacher and, following him, nineteenth-century science, conceive the task of hermeneutics in a way that is formally universal. They were able to harmonise it with the natural sciences' ideal of objectivity, but only by ignoring the concretion of historical consciousness in hermeneutical theory.

Heidegger's description and existential account of the hermeneutic circle constitutes in contrast a decisive turning-point. The hermeneutic theory of the nineteenth century often spoke of the circular structure of understanding, but always within the framework of a formal relation of the part and the whole or its subjective reflex, the intuitive anticipation of the whole and its subsequent articulation in the parts. According to this theory, the circular movement of understanding runs backwards and forwards along the text and disappears when it is perfectly understood. This view of understanding culminated logically in Schleiermacher's theory of the divinatory act, by means of which one places oneself entirely within the writer's mind and from there resolves all that is strange and unusual about the text. As against this approach, Heidegger describes the circle in such a way that the understanding of the text remains permanently determined by the anticipatory movement of fore-understanding. The circle of the whole and the part is not dissolved in perfect understanding but, on the contrary, is most fully realised.

The circle, then, is not formal in nature, it is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter. The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the communality that binds us to the tradition. But this is contained in our relation to tradition, in the constant processs of education. Tradition is not simply a precondition into which we come, but we produce it ourselves, inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition and hence further determine it ourselves. Thus the circle of understanding is not a 'methodological' circle, but describes an ontological structural element in understanding.

The significance of this circle, which is fundamental to all understanding, has a further hermeneutic consequence which I may call the 'fore-conception of completion'. But this, too, is obviously a formal condition of all understanding. It states that only what really constitutes a unity of meaning is intelligible. So when we read a text we always follow this complete presupposition of completion, and only when it proves inadequate, ie the text is not intelligible, do we start to doubt the transmitted text and seek to discover in what way it can be remedied. The rules of such textual criticism can be left aside, for the important thing to note is that their proper application cannot be detached from the understanding of the textual content.

The anticipation of completion that guides all our understanding is, then, always specific in content. Not only is an immanent

unity of meaning guiding the reader assumed, but his understanding is likewise guided by the constant transcendent expectations of meaning which proceed from the relation to the truth of what is being said. Just as the recipient of a letter understands the news that it contains and first sees things with the eyes of the person who wrote the letter, ie considers what he writes as true, and is not trying to understand the alien meanings of the letter writer, so we understand texts that have been handed down to us on the basis of expectations of meaning which are drawn from our own anterior relation to the subject. And just as we believe the news reported by a correspondent because he was present or is better informed, we are fundamentally open to the possibility that the writer of a transmitted text is better informed than we are, with our previously formed meaning. It is only when the attempt to accept what he has said as true fails that we try to 'understand' the text, psychologically or historically, as another's meaning.[195] The anticipation of completion, then, contains not only this formal element that a text should fully express its meaning, but also that what it says should be the whole truth.

We see here again that understanding means, primarily, to understand the content of what is said, and only secondarily to isolate and understand another's meaning as such. Hence the first of all hermeneutic requirements remains one's own fore-understanding, which proceeds from being concerned with the same subject. It is this that determines what unified meaning can be realised and hence the application of the anticipation of completion.[196]

Thus the meaning of the connection with tradition, ie the element of tradition in our historical, hermeneutical attitude, is fulfilled in the fact that we share fundamental prejudices with tradition. Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a relation to the object that comes into language in the transmitted text and has, or acquires, a connection with the tradition out of which the text speaks. On the other hand, hermeneutical consciousness is aware that it cannot be connected with this object in some self evident, questioned way, as is the case with the unbroken stream of a tradition. There is a polarity of familiarity and strangeness on which hermeneutic work is based: only that this polarity is not to be seen, psychologically, with Schleiermacher, as the tension that conceals the mystery of individuality, but truly hermeneutically, ie in regard to what has been said: the language in which the text addresses us, the story that it tells us. Here too there is a tension. The place between strangeness and familiarity

that a transmitted text has for us is that intermediate place between being an historically intended separate object and being part of a tradition. The true home of hermeneutics is in this intermediate area.

It follows from this intermediate position in which hermeneutics operates that its work is not to develop a procedure of understanding, but to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place. But these conditions are not of the nature of a 'procedure' or a method, which the interpreter must of himself bring to bear on the text, but rather they must be given. The prejudices and fore-meanings in the mind of the interpreter are not at his free disposal. He is not able to separate in advance the productive prejudices that make understanding possible from the prejudices that hinder understanding and lead to misunderstandings.

This separation, rather, must take place in the understanding itself, and hence hermeneutics must ask how it happens. But this means it must place in the foreground what has remained entirely peripheral in previous hermeneutics: temporal distance and its significance for understanding.

This point can be clarified by comparing it with the hermeneutic-theory of romanticism. We shall recall that the latter conceived understanding as the reproduction of an original production. Hence it was possible to say that one should be able to understand an author better than he understood himself. We examined the origin of this statement and its connection with the aesthetics of genius, but must now come back to it, as our present enquiry lends it a new importance.

That subsequent understanding is superior to the original production and hence can be described as superior understanding does not depend so much on the conscious realisation that places him on the same level as the author (as Schleiermacher said), but denotes rather an inevitable difference between the interpreter and the author that is created by the historical distance between them. Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text is part of the whole of the tradition in which the age takes an objective interest and in which it seeks to understand itself. The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and whom he originally wrote for. It certainly is not identical with them, for it is always partly determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence by the totality of the objective course of history. A writer like Chladenius,[197] who does not yet see understanding in terms of history, is saying the same

thing in a naive, ingenuous way when he says that an author does not need to know the real meaning of what he has written, and hence the interpreter can, and must, often understand more than he. But this is of fundamental importance. Not occasionally only, but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive, but always a productive attitude as well. Perhaps it is not correct to refer to this productive element in understanding as 'superior understanding'. For this phrase is, as we have shown, the application of a principle of criticism from the age of the enlightenment on the basis of the aesthetics of genius. Understanding is not, in fact, superior understanding, neither in the sense of superior knowledge of the subject because of clearer ideas, nor in the sense of fundamental superiority that the conscious has over the unconscious nature of creation. It is enough to say that we understand in a different way, if we understand at all.

This concept of understanding undoubtedly breaks right out of the circle drawn by romantic hermeneutics. Because what we are now concerned with is not individuality and what it thinks, but the objective truth of what is said, a text is not understood as a mere expression of life, but taken seriously in its claim to truth. That this is what is meant by 'understanding' was once self-evident (we need only recall Chladenius).

But this dimension of the hermeneutical problem was discredited by historical consciousness and the psychological turn that Schleiermacher gave to hermeneutics, and could only be regained when the impasses of historicism appeared and led finally to the new development inspired chiefly, in my opinion, by Heidegger. For the hermeneutic importance of temporal distance could be understood only as a result of the ontological direction that Heidegger gave to understanding as an 'existential' and of his temporal interpretation of the mode of being of there-being.

Time is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged, because it separates, but it is actually the supportive ground of process in which the present is rooted. Hence temporal distance is not something that must be overcome. This was, rather, the naive assumption of historicism, namely that we must set ourselves within the spirit of the age, and think with its ideas and its thoughts, not with our own, and thus advance towards historical objectivity. In fact the important thing is to recognise the distance in time as a positive and productive possibility of understanding. It is not a yawning abyss, but is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which all that is

handed down presents itself to us. Here it is not too much to speak of a genuine productivity of process. Everyone knows that curious impotence of our judgment where the distance in time has not given us sure criteria. Thus the judgment of contemporary works of art is desperately uncertain for the scientific consciousness. Obviously we approach such creations with the prejudices we are not in control of, presuppositions that have too great an influence over us for us to know about them; these can give to contemporary creations an extra resonance that does not correspond to their true content and their true significance. Only when all their relations to the present time have faded away can their real nature appear, so that the understanding of what is said in them can claim to be authoritative and universal.

It is this experience that has led to the idea in historical studies that objective knowledge can be arrived at only when there has been a certain historical distance. It is true that what a thing has to say, its intrinsic content, first appears only after it is divorced from the fleeting circumstances of its actuality. The positive conditions of historical understanding include the self-contained quality of an historical event, which allows it to appear as a whole, and its distance from the opinions concerning its import with which the present is filled. The implicit prerequisite of the historical method, then, is that the permanent significance of something can first be known objectively only when it belongs within a self-contained context. In other words, when it is dead enough to have only historical interest. Only then does it seem possible to exclude the subjective involvement of the observer. This is, in fact, a paradox, the epistemological counterpart to the old moral problem of whether anyone can be called happy before his death. Just as Aristotle showed what a sharpening of the powers of human judgment this kind of problem can bring about,[198] so hermeneutical reflection cannot fail to find here a sharpening of the methodological self-consciousness of science. It is true that certain hermeneutic requirements are automatically fulfilled when a historical context has become of no more than historical interest. Certain sources of error are automatically excluded. But it is questionable whether this is the end of the hermeneutical problem. Temporal distance has obviously another meaning than that of the quenching of our interest in the object. It lets the true meaning of the object emerge fully. But the discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process. Not only are fresh sources of error constantly excluded, so that the true meaning has filtered out of it all kinds of things that obscure it, but there

emerge continually new sources of understanding, which reveal unsuspected elements of meaning. The temporal distance which performs the filtering process is not a closed dimension, but is itself undergoing constant movement and extension. And with the negative side of the filtering process brought about by temporal distance there is also the positive side, namely the value it has for understanding. It not only lets those prejudices that are of a particular and limited nature die away, but causes those that bring about genuine understanding to emerge clearly as such.

It is only this temporal distance that can solve the really critical question of hermeneutics, namely of distinguishing the true prejudices, by which we understand, from the false ones by which we misunderstand. Hence the hermeneutically trained mind will also include historical consciousness. It will make conscious the prejudices governing our own understanding, so that the text, as another's meaning, can be isolated and valued on its own. The isolation of a prejudice clearly requires the suspension of its validity for us. For so long as our mind is influenced by a prejudice, we do not know and consider it as a judgment. How then are we able to isolate it? It is impossible to make ourselves aware of it while it is constantly operating unnoticed, but only when it is, so to speak, stimulated. The encounter with a text from the past can provide this stimulus. For what leads to understanding must be something that has already asserted itself in its own separate validity. Understanding begins, as we have already said above,[199] when something addresses us. This is the primary hermeneutical condition. We now know what this requires, namely the fundamental suspension of our own prejudices. But all suspension of judgments and hence, a fortiori, of prejudices, has logically the structure of a question.

The essence of the question is the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities. If a prejudice becomes questionable, in view of what another or a text says to us, this does not mean that it is simply set aside and the other writing or the other person accepted as valid in its place. It shows, rather, the naiveté of historical objectivism to accept this disregarding of ourselves as what actually happens. In fact our own prejudice is properly brought into play through its being at risk. Only through its being given full play is it able to experience the other's claim to truth and make it possible for he himself to have full play. (In this passage the author plays on the German expressions ins Spiel bringen, auf dem Spiele stehen and sich ausspielen).

The naiveté of so called historicism consists in the fact that it does not undertake this reflection, and in trusting to its own

methodological approach forgets its own historicality. We must here appeal from a badly understood historical thinking to one that can better perform the task of understanding. True historical thinking must take account of its own historicality. Only then will it not chase the phantom of an historical object which is the object of progressive research, but learn to see in the object the counterpart of itself and hence understand both. The true historical object is not an object at all, but the unity of the one and the other, a relationship in which exist both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding. A proper hermeneutics would have to demonstrate the effectivity of history within understanding itself. I shall refer to this as 'effective-history'. Understanding is, essentially, an effective-historical relation.

(iv) The principle of effective-history

The fact that the interest of the historian is directed not only towards the historical phenomenon and the work that has been handed down but also, secondarily, towards their effect in history (which also includes the history of research) is regarded in general as a mere supplement to the historical problematic that, from Hermann Grimm's *Raffael* to Gundolf and beyond, has given rise to many valuable insights. To this extent, effective-history is not new. But that this kind of effective-historical approach be required every time that a work of art or an element of the tradition is led from the twilight region between tradition and history to be seen clearly and openly in terms of its own meaning—this is a new demand (addressed not to research, but to methodological consciousness itself) that proceeds inevitably from the analysis of historical consciousness.

It is not, of course, a hermeneutical requirement in the sense of the traditional concept of hermeneutics. I am not saying that historical enquiry should develop this effective-historical problematic that would be something separate from that which is concerned directly with the understanding of the work. The requirement is of a more theoretical kind. Historical consciousness must become aware that in the apparent immediacy with which it approaches a work of art or a tradition, there is also contained, albeit unrecognised and hence not allowed for, this other element. If we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, we are always subject to the effects of effective-history. It determines in advance both what seems to us worth enquiring about and what will appear as an object of

investigation, and we more or less forget half of what is really there—in fact, we miss the whole truth of the phenomenon when we take its immediate appearance as the whole truth.

In our understanding, which we imagine is so straightforward, we find that, by following the criterion of intelligibility, the other presents himself so much in terms of our own selves that there is no longer a question of self and other. Historical objectivism, in appealing to its critical method, conceals the involvement of the historical consciousness itself in effective-history. By the method of its foundational criticism it does away with the arbitrariness of cosy re-creations of the past, but it preserves its good conscience by failing to recognise those presuppositions —certainly not arbitrary, but still fundamental—that govern its own approach to understanding, and hence falls short of reaching that truth which, despite the finite nature of our understanding, could be reached. In this historical objectivism resembles statistics, which are such an excellent means of propaganda because they let facts speak and hence simulate an objectivity that in reality depends on the legitimacy of the questions asked.

We are not saying, then, that effective-history must be developed as a new independent discipline ancillary to the human sciences, but that we should learn to understand ourselves better and recognise that in all understanding, whether we are expressly aware of it or not, the power of this effective-history is at work. When a naive faith in scientific method ignores its existence, there can be an actual deformation of knowledge. We know it from the history of science as the irrefutable proof of something that is obviously false. But looking at the whole situation, we see that the power of effective-history does not depend on its being recognised. This, precisely, is the power of history over finite human consciousness, namely that it prevails even where faith in method leads one to deny one's own historicality. The demand that we should become conscious of this effective-history is pressing because it is necessary for scientific consciousness. But this does not mean that it can be fulfilled in an absolute way. That we should become completely aware of effective-history is just as hybrid a statement as when Hegel speaks of absolute knowledge, in which history would become completely transparent to itself and hence be raised to the level of a concept. Rather, effective historical consciousness is an element in the act of understanding itself and, as we shall see, is already operative in the choice of the right question to ask.

Effective-historical consciousness is primarily consciousness of the hermeneutical situation. To acquire an awareness of a

situation is, however, always a task of particular difficulty. The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it.[200] We are always within the situation, and to throw light on it is a task that is never entirely completed. This is true also of the hermeneutic situation, ie the situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition that we are trying to understand. The illumination of this situation—effective-historical reflection—can never be completely achieved, but this is not due to a lack in the reflection, but lies in the essence of the historical being which is ours. To exist historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete. All self-knowledge proceeds from what is historically pre-given, what we call, with Hegel, 'substance', because it is the basis of all subjective meaning and attitude and hence both prescribes and limits every possibility of understanding any tradition whatsoever in terms of its unique historical quality. This almost defines the aim of philosophical hermeneutics: its task is to move back along the path of Hegel's phenomenology of mind until we discover in all that is subjective the substantiality that determines it.

Every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of 'situation' by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence an essential part of the concept of situation is the concept of 'horizon'. The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons etc. The word has been used in philosophy since Nietzsche and Husserl[201] to characterise the way in which thought is tied to its finite determination, and the nature of the law of the expansion of the range of vision. A person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. Contrariwise, to have an horizon means not to be limited to what is nearest, but to be able to see beyond it. A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, as near or far, great or small. Similarly, the working out of the hermeneutical situation means the achievement of the right horizon of enquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition.

In the sphere of historical understanding we also like to speak of horizons, especially when referring to the claim of historical consciousness to see the past in terms of its own being, not in terms of our contemporary criteria and prejudices, but within its

own historical horizon. The task of historical understanding also involves acquiring the particular historical horizon, so that what we are seeking to understand can be seen in its true dimensions. If we fail to place ourselves in this way within the historical horizon out of which tradition speaks, we shall misunderstand the significance of what it has to say to us. To this extent it seems a legitimate hermeneutical requirement to place ourselves in the other situation in order to understand it. We may ask, however, whether this does not mean that we are failing in the understanding that is asked of us. The same is true of a conversation that we have with someone simply in order to get to know him, ie to discover his standpoint and his horizon. This is not a true conversation, in the sense that we are not seeking agreement concerning an object, but the specific contents of the conversation are only a means to get to know the horizon of the other person. Examples are oral examinations, or some kinds of conversation between doctor and patient. The historical consciousness is clearly doing something similar when it places itself within the situation of the past and hence is able to acquire the right historical horizon. Just as in a conversation, when we have discovered the standpoint and horizon of the other person, his ideas become intelligible, without our necessarily having to agree with him, the person who thinks historically comes to understand the meaning of what has been handed down, without necessarily agreeing with it, or seeing himself in it.

In both cases, in our understanding we have as it were, withdrawn from the situation of trying to reach agreement. He himself cannot be reached. By including from the beginning the other person's standpoint in what he is saying to us, we are making our own standpoint safely unattainable. We have seen, in considering the origin of historical thinking, that in fact it makes this ambiguous transition from means to ends, ie it makes an end of what is only a means. The text that is understood historically is forced to abandon its claim that it is uttering something true. We think we understand when we see the past from a historical standpoint, ie place ourselves in the historical situation and seek to reconstruct the historical horizon. In fact, however, we have given up the claim to find, in the past, any truth valid and intelligible for ourselves. Thus this acknowledgement of the otherness of the other, which makes him the object of objective knowledge, involves the fundamental suspension of his claim to truth.

The question is, however, whether this description really corresponds to the hermeneutical phenomenon. Are there, then, two

different horizons here, the horizon in which the person seeking to understand lives, and the particular historical horizon within which he places himself? Is it a correct description of the art of historical understanding to say that we are learning to place ourselves within alien horizons? Are there such things as closed horizons, in this sense? We recall Nietzsche's complaint against historicism that it destroyed the horizon bounded by myth in which alone a culture is able to live.[202] Is the horizon of one's own present time ever closed in this way, and can a historical situation be imagined that has this kind of closed horizon?

Or is this a romantic reflection, a kind of Robinson Crusoe dream of the historical enlightenment, the fiction of an unattainable island, as artificial as Crusoe himself for the alleged primary phenomenon of the solus ipse? Just as the individual is never simply an individual, because he is always involved with others, so too the closed horizon that is supposed to enclose a culture is an abstraction. The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never utterly bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion. It is not historical consciousness that first sets the surrounding horizon in motion. But in it this motion becomes aware of itself.

When our historical consciousness places itself within historical horizons, this does not entail passing into alien worlds unconnected in any way with our own, but together they constitute the one great horizon that moves from within and, beyond the frontiers of the present, embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness. It is, in fact, a single horizon that embraces everything contained in historical consciousness. Our own past, and that other past towards which our historical consciousness is directed, help to shape this moving horizon out of which human life always lives, and which determines it as tradition.

Understanding of the past, then, undoubtedly requires an historical horizon. But it is not the case that we acquire this horizon by placing ourselves within a historical situation. Rather, we must always already have a horizon in order to be able to place ourselves within a situation. For what do we mean by 'placing ourselves' in a situation? Certainly not just disregarding ourselves. This is necessary, of course, in that we must imagine the other situation. But into this other situation we must also bring ourselves. Only this fulfils the meaning of 'placing ourselves'. If

we place ourselves in the situation of someone else, for example, then we shall understand him, ie become aware of the otherness, the indissoluble individuality of the other person, by placing ourselves in his position.

This placing of ourselves is not the empathy of one individual for another, nor is it the application to another person of our own criteria, but it always involves the attainment of a higher universality that overcomes, not only our own particularity, but also that of the other. The concept of the 'horizon' suggests itself because it expresses the wide, superior vision that the person who is seeking to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand—not in order to look away from it, but to see it better within a larger whole and in truer proportion. It is not a correct description of historical consciousness to speak, with Nietzsche, of the many changing horizons into which it teaches us to place ourselves. If we disregard ourselves in this way, we have no historical horizon. Nietzsche's view that historical study is deleterious to life is not directed, in fact, against historical consciousness as such, but against the self-alienation that it undergoes when it regards the method of modern historical science as its own true nature. We have already pointed out that a truly historical consciousness always sees its own present in such a way that it sees itself, as it sees the historically other, within the right circumstances. It requires a special effort to acquire an historical horizon. We are always affected, in hope and fear, by what is nearest to us, and hence approach, under its influence, the testimony of the past. Hence it is constantly necessary to inhibit the overhasty assimilation of the past to our own expectations of meaning. Only then will we be able to listen to the past in a way that enables it to make its own meaning heard.

We have shown above that this is a process of distinguishing. Let us consider what this idea of distinguishing involves. It is always reciprocal. Whatever is being distinguished must be distinguished from something which, in turn, must be distinguished from it. Thus all distinguishing also makes visible that from which something is distinguished. We have described this above as the operation of prejudices. We started by saying that a hermeneutical situation is determined by the prejudices that we bring with us. They constitute, then, the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see. But now it is important to avoid the error of thinking that it is a fixed set of opinions and evaluations that determine and limit

the horizon of the present, and that the otherness of the past can be distinguished from it as from a fixed ground.

In fact the horizon of the present is being continually formed, in that we have continually to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing is the encounter with the past and the understanding of the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves. We know the power of this kind of fusion chiefly from earlier times and their naive attitude to themselves and their origin. In a tradition this process of fusion is continually going on, for there old and new continually grow together to make something of living value, without either being explicitly distinguished from the other.

If, however, there is no such thing as these horizons that are distinguished from one another, why do we speak of the fusion of horizons and not simply of the formation of the one horizon, whose bounds are set in the depths of tradition? To ask the question means that we are recognising the special nature of the situation in which understanding becomes a scientific task, and that it is necessary to work out this situation as a hermeneutical situation. Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of the tension between the text and the present. The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naive assimilation but consciously bringing it out. This is why it is part of the hermeneutic approach to project an historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present. Historical consciousness is aware of its own otherness and hence distinguishes the horizon of tradition from its own. On the other hand, it is itself, as we are trying to show, only something laid over a continuing tradition, and hence it immediately recombines what it has distinguished in order, in the unity of the historical horizon that it thus acquires, to become again one with itself.

The projecting of the historical horizon, then, is only a phase in the process of understanding, and does not become solidified into the self-alienation of a past consciousness, but is overtaken by our own present horizon of understanding. In the process of understanding there takes place a real fusing of horizons, which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously removed. We described the conscious act of this fusion as

the task of the effective-historical consciousness. Although this task had been obscured by aesthetic historical positivism in the train of romantic hermeneutics, it is, in fact, the central problem of hermeneutics. It is the problem of application that exists in all understanding.

2 THE REDISCOVERY OF THE FUNDAMENTAL HERMENEUTIC PROBLEM

(A) THE HERMENEUTIC PROBLEM OF APPLICATION

In the early tradition of hermeneutics, which the historical self-consciousness of post-romantic scientific method completely forgot, this problem had its systematic place. Hermeneutics was divided up in the following way: a distinction was made between subtilitas intelligendi (understanding), and subtilitas explicandi (interpretation). Pietism added a third element, subtilitas applicandi (application), as in J. J. Rambach.[203] The act of understanding was regarded as made up of these three elements. It is notable that all three are called subtilitas, ie they are not considered so much methods that we have at our disposal as a talent that requires particular finesse of mind.[204]

As we saw, the hermeneutic problem acquired its systematic importance because the romantics recognised the inner unity of intelligere and explicare. Interpretation is not an occasional additional act subsequent to understanding, but rather understanding is always an interpretation, and hence interpretation is the explicit form of understanding. In accordance with this insight, interpretative language and concepts are also an inner structural element of understanding. This moves the whole problem of language from its peripheral and incidental position into the centre of philosophy. This is a point we shall be coming back to.

The inner fusion of understanding and interpretation led to the third element in the hermeneutical problem, application, becoming wholly cut off from any connection with hermeneutics. The edifying application of scripture, for example, in christian proclamation and preaching now seemed quite a different thing from the historical and theological understanding of it. In the course of our reflections we have come to see that understanding always involves something like the application of the text to be understood to the present situation of the interpreter. Thus we are forced to go, as it were, one stage beyond romantic hermeneutics, by regarding not only understanding and interpretation, but also application as comprising one unified process. This is not to return to the traditional distinction of the three separate 'subtleties' of which pietism spoke. For, on the contrary, we consider application to be as integral a part of the hermeneutical act as are understanding and interpretation.

Because of the stage of hermeneutical discussion reached so far we are emphasising the fundamental importance of this point. We can appeal first to the forgotten history of hermeneutics. Formerly it was considered obvious that the task of hermeneutics was to adapt the meaning of a text to the concrete situation to which it was speaking. The interpreter of the divine will, who is able to interpret the language of the oracle is the original model for this. But it is still the case, even today, that the task of an interpreter is not simply to reproduce what is said by one of the partners in the discussion he is translating, but to express what is said in the way that seems necessary to him considering the real situation of the dialogue, which only he knows, since only he knows both languages being used in the discussion.

Similarly, the history of hermeneutics teaches us that apart from literary hermeneutics, there is also a theological and a legal hermeneutics; all three together make up the full concept of hermeneutics. It is only since the emergence of historical consciousness in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that literary hermeneutics and historical studies became detached from the other hermeneutical disciplines and established themselves as the methodology for research in the human sciences.

The original close connection between these forms of hermeneutics depended on the recognition of application as an integral element of all understanding. In both legal and theological hermeneutics there is the essential tension between the text set down—of the law or of the proclamation—on the one hand and, on the other, the sense arrived at by its application in the particular moment of interpretation, either in judgment or in preaching. A law is not there to be understood historically, but to be made concretely valid through being interpreted. Similarly, a religious proclamation is not there to be understood as a merely historical document, but to be taken in a way in which it exercises its saving effect. This includes the fact that the text, whether law or gospel, if it is to be understood properly, ie according to the claim it makes, must be understood at every moment, in every particular situation, in a new and different way. Understanding here is always application.

We started from the point that understanding, as it occurs in the human sciences, is essentially historical, ie that in them a