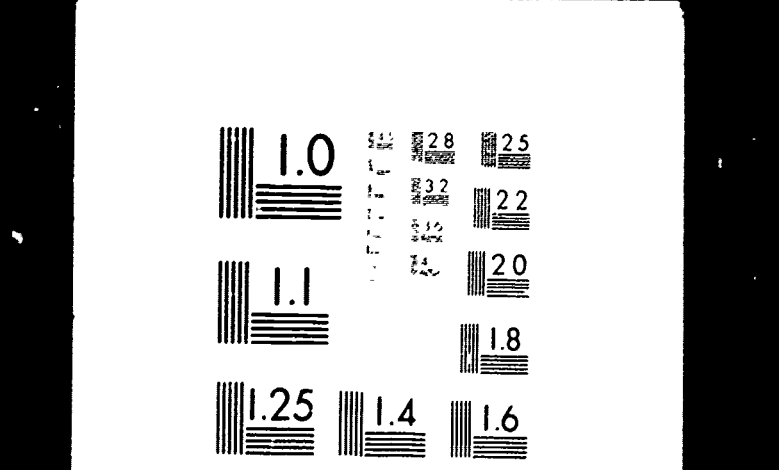
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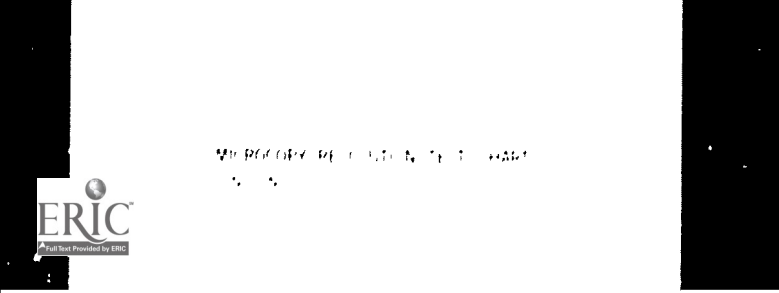

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ABSTRACT

Hans-Georg Gadamer's development of the hermeneutic question points to the need for a hermeneutic consciousness in the United States appropriate for human communication research. Communication studies in the United States have taken a route very different from hermeneutics. They are based on attempts to understand the subjective intentions of a psychological self, while Gadamer, in attributing greater importance to the developing interaction structure than to the subject, presents understanding as reaching agreement concerning the subject matter. While communication researchers in the United States try to eliminate prejudices and reproduce the other's state of mind through empathy, Gadamer explores ways of increasing understanding by making prejudices appropriately operant. Developing a hermeneutic consciousness in the United States has implications for future communication studies. Attempts should be made to ground all studies in the life experience of everyday actors, to reduce the reification of experience that comes from present concepts, and to question the propriety of the assumed research task of verification directed toward constructing objective knowledge. (Author/GW)

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GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICS AND AMERICAN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICS AND AMERICAN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Hermeneutics has emerged as a topic of discussion in many academic disciplines in the United States but has its modern roots as well as its greatest development in Germany. The American interest in hermeneutics appears to be motivated more by facotrs other than its intrinsic appeal. Much of the interest has resulted from the disallusionment with the brand of empiricism which has dominated the social and behavioral sciences for the last several years. Hermeneutics has benefited along with the sociology of knowledge, phenomenology, and critical theory as legitimate counterpoints due to their connection to German idealism as opposed to British empiricism. This opposite appeal has lead to distortions and concepts which are merely the negation of standard concepts. At best attempts to leap the conceptual channel have often resulted more in engulfing integrations which erode important differences or false reports of barren shores due to the difficulty of entering another world, than in rejoining traditions.

Rather than a reunion or even a bridge between German and American thought, I hope only to reopen certain questions for American communication students — questions which are now answered in a customary fashion with little consideration for the implications of the questions themselves. Reasking basic questions requires the distance of time or place (of generation or culture) but the answer must be found at home.

Hermeneutics serves as an ideal questioner due to its rich but separate tradition and its ability to raise these questions in such a way as to not reopen the typical battles between idealism and empiricism. Looking at the tradition which gave rise to the modern hermeneutic question will enable

us to see more clearly how these same questions are arising in current American communication studies.

Constituting an American Hermeneutic Consciousness

Hermeneutics, while having much earlier roots, received its earliest systematic formulation by Schleiermacher as the principles underlying proper textual and particularly Biblical interpretation.[1] The speaking word of the Bible was to take precedence through hermeneutics over arbitrary and utilitarian interpretations imposed by the church or present readers but in such a way as to be applicable to everyday life problems. The desire was for correct understanding of that which was temporally distant but an understanding which was not abstracted from the flow of current life.

Later Dilthey, while still considering hermeneutics to deal with methodological problems, greatly broadened the domain of hermeneutics.[2] Hermeneutics was to become the foundation for the human sciences and a distinctive method for humanistic studies. Essentially Dilthey's hermeneutics was to lead to objective knowledge of "foreign" life-experiences through interpretation of human expressions (art, literature, dress, and so forth). He clearly contrasted these studies from the quantifying, scientific grasp of the physical world in the natural sciences.

Had the development of hermeneutics ended at this stage, it certainly would have joined in the current critique of quantitative methods and opposition to abstracted empiricism and could have served as one aspect of the thesis of complementarity, but would not have been adequate for its eventual role in the development of thought nor, of course, for the purposes here. The association of hermeneutics with phenomenology in Heidegger's explication of the structure of existence radicalized the hermeneutic task.[3] The questions hermeneutics began to ask were of ontological rather than methodological import, thus,

concerned with the experience of world and the process of existing in it beyond the special acts of textual and cultural interpretation. In this advance man became connected to his world in a way much unlike the scientific researcher or the transendental ego. Schrag, in opposing the hermeneutic task to assertive or representational thought, summed up the difference as follows:

> Hermeneutic thinking discloses the world as a dwelling in which various styles of behavior can occur. Hermeneutic thinking is a path or a way to an understanding of the world as a region of involvements. It uncovers not denotable objects, although assuredly such denotation may accompany it, but rather the historical self-understanding of the experiencer as he is lodged in the world, advancing his projects amidst a welter of existential possibilities. . . . Hermeneutical thinking is thought with a thinker, embodied and historicized.[4]

Gadamer in his magnum opus, Wahrheit und Methode, (recently translated into English as Truth and Method)[5] re-collects the hermeneutic tradition giving the most thorough discussion to the implication of a modern hermeneutic consciousness. Of particular importance is his affirmation of the historicity of existence through a positive concept of prejudice. The ability to understand that which is different is constituted by having prejudices and the researcher's greatest advantage comes not in freeing himself from prejudice but in being first and foremost an everyday actor.

This conceptual development of another tradition brings into focus the vague uneasy feeling many have about current communication research. Sammual Becker suggested more than a decade ago that he could not see how all the research done in the field had made much difference in the life of the average person.[6] Bar room conversations as well as public reports continue to reflect this view though it is undoubtly overstated to some degree. The problem is not, of course, restricted to communication studies, in fact its generality makes it even more alarming. While dismissing most of the proported problems in the social and behavioral sciences as troublesome but insignificant, Schrag recently thought this particular problem qualified as a true crisis in the human sciences.

He demonstrated how the crisis is a

> loss of reflexivity on the part of the human sciences. By this loss of reflexivity we mean the severance of theoretical interests and designes from the original matrix of man's socio-historical existence—from the field of significations embedded within pre-categorial lived experience.[7]

Certainly as evidenced by this conference the critique cannot be leveled against the topics selected, but comes to the fore when we look at the origin of the concepts and methods employed.

A second concern with today's research arises in part from the attempt by some to avoid or to solve "Becker's complaint." The field as a whole has difficulties in productively analyzing everyday interaction experience. Recently many good ethnographic descriptions of routine situations and of language use have appeared. But the meaning and significance of these descriptions is unclear and many researchers have at least informally questioned these study's contribution to the development of knowledge about communication.

A third problem arises in part from naïveté and in part from the desire to be considered scientific. The field is largly unaware of its own prejudices. Extreme care is taken in individual studies to avoid bias but little work has been done to examine the bias of the methods and concepts of the field as a whole.[8] The excellent papers presented last winter at the Speech Communication Association's national convention worked at this problem and helped increase the theoretical clarity.[9] But how this understanding will influence the mass of rather piecemeal research generated by the field is unclear. The average communication researcher, like the historian Gadamer describes

> usually chooses the concepts by means of which he describes the historical nature of his objects, without expressly reflecting on their origin and justification. He is simply following here his interest in the material and takes no account of the fact that the descriptive aptness of his chosen concepts can be highly detrimental to his proper purpose, inasmuch as it assimilates what is historically different to what is familiar and thus, despite all objectivity, has already subordinated the alien being of the object to its own conceptual frame of reference. Thus, despite all his

> scientific method, he behaves just like everyone else, as a child of his time who is dominated unquestioningly by the concepts and prejudices of his own age.[10]

The ethnomethodologists have shown the same to be true of the most careful "naturalistic" studies.[11] The problem for the study of communication is not the existence of prejudices but the unawareness of their presence and subsequent inability to separate appropriate from inappropriate ones. A sense of perspective on one's work is thus lacking.

A final problem arising at this juncture in communication research presents itself as a special conceptual dilemma. For several years and explicitly since Berlo's work in 1960,[12] the discipline has understood communication to be a "process" with the process characteristics of emergence, holism, and indeterminacy. Yet this widely held concept dispite the talk was not taken seriously, particularly in doing research. This seemed to be the case for a variety of reasons but ptinciply due to it's conceptual incompatability with a number of other assumed concepts and the inddequacy of current methods to handle this kind of phenomenon. The later refinment of the concept through a combination with a transactional perspective on perception and the development of a transactional concept of communication[13] tended only to make the problem more pervasive rather than to solve it. Even with the excellent discussions of the problem and the methodological requirement of accepting the process idea by David Smith[14] and Barry Brummett,[15] the field seems essentially unable to study communication as they themselves define it as existing. Monge confirmed the depth of this problem when he showed how one commonly held "ideal of science [causal analysis] is held inconsistantly with the claims made about the nature of the phenomenon."[16]

All four of these problems arose primarily as a result of the "objective consciousness" which dominates the field. This should not be considered as a criticism of either the concepts or scientific methods but rather of a mode of working which developed an unsupported faith in objectification, reductionism,

and certain methods and a certain blindness to the nature and limitations of its own work and suitable alternatives.

There are many options to the mainstream of present communication research. Weaknesses in current research have been noted by forms of humanism, rationalism, marxism, and naturalism and each have presented viable conceptual and methodological alternatives. A new dogma or a return to past metaphysical arguements, however, is not needed. What I am arguing for is the development of a "hermeneutic consciousness" which can help assign a proper role to science and to subjectivity without reducing one to the other and which will allow the discipline to work its way out of the four specified problems. This will require a clarification of man's relation to his experience which can lead us to understand experience in its multitude of presentations including science. Hermeneutics can allow this by re-opening fundamental questions to which other positions have assumed answers.

Given the need for a hermeneutic consciousness, simply importing an analysis developed in the German tradition is not likely to be understood in its full significance nor capable of properly raising the questions most relavent to current American research. For that reason what is most needed is a uniquely American hermeneutics collected from its own tradition--the same tradition which gave rise to the current problems in communication research. This tradition needs to be re-collected in such a way as to allow these problems to work themselves out or to show themselves as constituted by misunderstandings. As ambitious as this paper is, it cannot assume this task. I wish only to suggest where one might look for such a tradition and use Gadamer's work to establish an image to help in this task.

In looking for an American school of thought upon which to base a hermeneutic consciousness, the following characteristics seemed to be essential. It must be a well developed perspective having an articulated philosophy as well

as being familiar to those doing social and particularly communication research. Many of its concepts must have joined into everyday life thinking in some relatively significant manner. It must have a concept of time rich enough to describe linear as well as process events. Finally, it must be capable of raising methodological questions as well as substantive ones.

Symbolic interactionism, particularly as developed by George Herbert Mead and expanded by several of his students, appears to be the best candidate.[17] Clearly its legacy in American pragmaticism and its many threads into current work of many theoretical colors connect it closely to the development of American thought. Many of its concepts (though somewhat changed) have found their way into everyday language as well as into contemporary communication research. Mead's discussion of time in The Philosophy of the Present[18] is probably unsurpassed in American writing. Finally its methodological guidelines have become widely discussed.[19] The necessity of these characteristics will be developed more fully as the present paper demonstrats some of the rethinking needed to develop this form of hermeneutic consciousness by comparing American descriptions of the communicative process with those of Gadamer.

Describing the Process of Communication

The basic reason for studying or discussing communication whether by everyday actors or researchers involves the problem of understanding--How it is possible? How it can be improved? What stands in the way of it? Even studies primarily concerned with persuasion or influence need to first consider how the message or speaker was understood. Only singly stage S-R theories avoid the concept altogether and they have been sufficiently criticised as to no longer greatly influence communication studies.[20] Discussing understanding is not easy partly because of the great difficulty of the concept itself and partly because the concept raises philosophical questions which we may or may not be qualified to

answer or even discuss adequately. Nonetheless, we cannot teach or talk about communication very long until we must either present or assume a theory of understanding. Since the goals of communication study are so intrinsicly connected with the problem of understanding, any attempt to describe the communicative process will be connected to a theory of understanding.

The comparison of Gadamer's implied description of the communicative process with American communication studies will be necessity and design focus on concepts of understanding. Before I begin I should clarify this process of comparison. The position of American communication studies to be discussed is not the view of any particular author nor does it include everything currently being done in the United States. Rather it is a characterization which hopes to show a hidden unity in that research. Gadamer's conceptions will be presented in contrast to aspects of this work not as an argument against it, but rather to show the uniqueness of his work and to establish a difference which can authentically bring assumed views into question.

Most American discussions have implicitly conceptualized the process of understanding as "empathy"—"the ability to project ourselves into other people's personalities."[21] Most have, thus, approached understanding as comprehending another's psychological intentions or state of being.[22] Understanding the message becomes primarily an instrumental act toward this end. Berlo was clear about this view in 1960 when he described the two most influential theories of empathy. I have not seen where the field of study as a whole has moved significantly beyond or away from these two central views.

The first theory Berlo discusses is an inference theory which he credits to Solomon Asch. He succinctly presented this theory as follows:

> An inference theory of empathy is psychologically oriented. It argues that man can observe his own physical behavior directly, and can relate his behavior symbolically to his own internal psychological states—his feelings, thoughts, emotions, etc. Through this process, man comes to have meanings (interpretations) for his own physical

> behavior. He develops a concept of self, by himself, based on his observations and interpretations of his own behavior.
>
> Given a self-concept, he communicates with other people. He observes their physical behaviors. On the basis of his prior interpretations of himself, he makes inferences about the internal states of others. In other words, he argues to himself that if a behavior on his part represented such and such a feeling, a similar behavior produced by somebody else would represent a similar feeling.[23]

The theory in Berlo's analysis made three key assumptions about human experience Those too are made very clear by Berlo:

1. Man has first-hand evidence of his own internal states. He can only have second-hand evidence of other people's internal states.
2. Other people express a given internal state by performing the same behaviors that you perform to express the same state.
3. Man cannot understand internal states in other people which he has not experienced himself. Man cannot understand emotions which he has not felt, thoughts which he has not had, etc.[24]

The theory and assumptions entailed is widely accepted by members of the society (epitomized by industry's desire for real work experience, minority hiring practices, women's liberation slogans, and the counter-culture's "if you haven't been there you don't know it") and teachers of communication. Many researchers also seem to assume a varient of this theory, believing that the person is understood by observing his behavior and the behavior is understood by knowing the person.

In contrast to this theory, though not necessarily in opposition, Berlo presented a "role-taking" theory based on the common interpretation of Mead's concept.[25] This theory essentially holds that due to man's imitative social development he has the ability to understand experiences vicariously by imaginatively putting himself in the other's position. The self, thus, does not develop in isolation but through communication. Role-taking rather than inference by analogy thus can account for empathy. Understanding in this theory is not limited by self-experience but by the other's experience and one's ability to imagine and recreate that experience. Research using participant observation and so forth would basically assume this theory.

Berlo, like many current authors, opted for both views arguing that man uses both. My purpose is aided none by arguing for the superiority of either position nor by discussing the adequacy of the compromise. What is significant are the common basic assumptions of both views and the fact that neither theory ever questions these assumptions.

Both assume that the primary goal of communication is to understand the other. Since this other is fundamentally a psychological entity separate from the self, the primary task is to build bridges or remove barriers so the self can get into the other and recreate his subjective experience or see the world as he sees it. This is the same philosophy which sees literary interpretation as trying to grasp the author's meaning or the meaning of the piece to its original audience. Both views further imply that understanding is easier to accomplish when the interactants enter the interaction with similar prior personal experiences and backgrounds.

These basic assumptions strongly influence both the substance and form of the typical communicative process description. In the separation of self from the world and other, descriptive concepts were often reifi and the elements of the process psychologized. By reification I mean the tendency to abstract and objectify and finally treat the abstraction as the real thing. Take for example the concept of "self." The self is fundamentally experienced as consistence and conceptualized as an inference from responses. In studies and discussions this experience of being subject to actions becomes conceptualized as an entity or image causing actions. The self, thus, changes from a conceptual to empirical question and people start to look for it.[26] Subsequently due to the psychological attitude this self is sought deep inside the person. Once the self is abstracted from experience, as in most dualistic philosophies, the objectification of the elements and the entire communicative process is inevitable. "Experience" rather than including the self in the world becomes psychologized as something one has of the world. An "intention" becomes a purpose one has in mind. An "interpretation"

becomes the meaning a self gives to the objects of his experience. "Language" becomes a special object of the world which, due to prior agreement, can be used to present intentions. But meaning is in people. The "other becomes a special object in the world to whom you direct your intentions. "Understanding," thus, can best be measured by comparing the intentions of the speaker with the actions of the listener assuming by analogical inference or role-taking that the intention has been comprehended.[27] Understanding is thus merely an act of reproducing something separated from the original by time and place but connected to it by communication. The enumeration of variables in research merely embellishes rather than changes this underlying conception.

This characterization is obviously oversimplified and thus looses the richness of much of the work done. But it does call to the fore the implicit structure of much of the current work. Even the current departures from several of these views in the transactional conception[28] and the "rule-governed" paradigms [29] do not break from the fundamental position. The transactional perspective while able to give a non-linear conception of time in the process does so by psychologizing to even a greater extent by giving a more strongly subjective account of experience. The "rule" paradigms despite their capacity to avoid psychologizing have tended to reaffirm dualism even in their major internal battles by making the rules property of the subject as an innate structure or as objectified social conventions imposed on the subject.[30] Thus while granting the highly productive nature of current conceptions and research it is clearly prefined by several overly simple assumptions. The basic logic runs: Whatever happens must happen either inside the subject or outside him. Anything which is not physical is inside him. Thus, communication through making use of physical signs trys to bridge the gap between two psychological selves by reconstructing subjective experiences of an external world.

Looking again at the problems of understanding, American researchers primarily consider the problem as the desire to avoid or correct misunderstandings. Given the desire for the correct understanding, many of the normative principles given everyday actors parallel those of science. To whatever extent possible one was to give up their prejudices and deny their own role as actor. With this concern the statement became both the grammatical form and unit of meaning most under consideration.

Gadamer started from a different question. Rather than asking how to produce understanding he explored how it takes place.(263)[31] The analysis is placed from the start in direct relation to everyday experience. This allows us to come to describing the communicative process in a different manner. To Gadamer, understanding has little to do with empathy. As he contended:

> the understanding of what someone says is not an achievement of empathy, which involves guessing the inner life of the speaker. Certainly it is part of all understanding that what is said acquires its definition through a supplementing of meaning from occasional sources. But this defination by situation and context which fills out what is said to a totality of meaning and makes what is said really said, is not something that pertains to the speaker, but to what is spoken.(445)

Understanding fundamentally, thus, is a problem of understanding messages rather than people. This is clearly a reversal in emphasis from most American communication studies.[32] In Gadamer's analysis the desire to improve our understanding of a speaker can be seen as different and secondary to understanding what is spoken. When attention is drawn to what was said rather than the speakers intentions, the incompletness of all understanding (including self-understanding) rather than misunderstanding becomes problematic. This question never took on much significance for Americans due to their interest in the speaker's purpose and degree of success.

In asking this different question Gadamer is lead to a different discussion of the event of understanding and description of the communicative process. To him, understanding is by necessity historical, linguistic, and dialectical.

Allow me to briefly describe each in turn.

In saying that understanding is historical, Gadamer is arguing against the idea that a correct or perfect understanding can be found. Understanding to Gadamer is always prejudiced. Rather than being an unfortunate weakness to be minimized, Gadamer argues that the having of prejudice opens our ability to understand. The person who imagines himself free from prejudices not only becomes unconsciously dominated by them but cuts himself off from their positive insight. "To stand within a tradition [to have prejudices] does not limit the freedom of knowledge but makes it possible."(324) The creation of more complete understanding necessitates the desire to grasp the tradition, prejudices, of what is said in such a way that they fuse with your own tradition rather than trying to objectively reconstruct what the other meant. Openness is not the lack of bias but the ability to distinguish productive from unproductive prejudices. This ability is not the knowledge of a method or procedure, since the distinction cannot be made prior to the event of understanding. Rather, sensitivity to the demands of the event itself is needed. The role of openness is not to lose yourself in assuming the role of the other but to find what the prejudice of that which is spoken calls into question of your prejudice.(326) Distance between tradition, rather than needing bridging, bring more into question thus makes the possibilities in understanding even clearer.(264)

Understanding is also linguistic in that tradition is linguistic. Gadamer demonstrated how, "the linguistic quality of understanding is the concretion of the effective-historical consciousness."(351) Tradition is gathered and expressed in language. In this sense "language is not just one of man's possessions in the world, but on it depends the fact that man has a world at all."(401) Experience does not simply arise to which language is attached, not is language autonomous in such a way that it can determine experience. Experience and language arise together.(377)

> Not only is the world"world" only insofar as it comes into language but language, too has its real being only in the fact that the world is re-presented within it. Thus the original humanity of language means at the same time the fundamental linguistic quality of man's being-in-the-world,(401)[33]

Our experience is thus always biased, interpreted, due to its linguistic character (as is the experience of other), but since it is linguistic rather than subjective it is available to others. The speaker speaks from a tradition rather than a self, a tradition which expresses itself linguistically. Understanding necessitates bringing this other tradition to life in its application to one's own development.

Language in communication like tradition is not fixed but always developing, thus, "a constant process of concept-formation [is] at work."(364) The arising of new experience shifts the linguistic totality to allow it a place. This development, like understanding, is made possible by the interplay of familiarity and distance. The act of speaking like a metaphor is an interpretive presentation of experience which opens the new by the familiar--the original by the traditional. Thus experience develops.

The third characteristic of understanding as dialectical, becomes apparent in this discussion. True understanding is productive in that it always excedes that which is understood by either listener or speaker. Gadamer argues that, "not occasionally only, but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive but a productive attitude as well."(264) Both self and other are called forward to a new understanding as it unfolds in communication. The "listener" be he the other or one listening to himself finds implications in the expression which neither could see prior to the expression. Understanding is a "fusing" of horizons of possibilibies, opening that which is beyond yet limited by what is presently held. In that sense understanding starts from and is made possible by presumptions about what is to be meant but must be open to refinement, change or rejection as the message unfolds

further. All understanding thus has a speculative character forming and exceeding itself with every movement. Interpretation as a mode of understanding has, according to Gadamer, the "dialectical structure of all finite, historical being insofar as every interpretation must begin somewhere and seeks to remove the one-sidedness that it inevitably produces."(428) This essentially integrative quality of understanding attempts to integrate what is said with that which already exists in such a way as to exceed and change what is already present. In this genuine union that which was possessed is lost and is never found in quite the same way again. Understanding is, thus, an opening of life-possibilities heretofore unknown, a changing of one's worldly horizons. Understanding thus can never be purely hypothetical. Once the possibility is open it cannot be wished out of existence. The accounts well for the inability to take back what was said. An unknown possibility once opened cannot simply disappear even if it was not meant. Neither can understanding be "general". It always implies application to a specific situation.

> This includes the fact that the text . . . if it is to be understood properly, ie according to the claim it makes, must be understood at every particular situation, in a new and different way. Understanding here is always application.(275)

Understanding is change with the loss and gain associated with it. The unwillingness to let this change happen closes the possibility of understanding. To understand is to be willing to see where that which speaks to us takes us. The dialectic focuses on life-possibilities and the understanding of <u>possibilities</u> of experience which places the analysis logically prior to the American concern with <u>probability</u>.

With this fundamental background, the description of the communicative process becomes quite different from most American studies. Gadamer's description of the genuine conversation can give a sense of perspective on the process in general.

The genuine conversation does not require the bareing of one's feelings, nor the hearing out or accepting another's opinions though these may accompany it.

The genuine conversation is characterized more by giving in to the subject matter and allowing it to develop in the interchange. As Gadamer showed "To understand what a person says is . . .to agree about the object, not to get inside another person and relive his experiences."(345) This kind of conversation develops less from the will of the participants but from the power of the subject material. Gadamer's suggestion that the more "fundamental a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner,"(345) notes this falling into conversation. Due to the predominance of the subject over the participants, assertions become questions. One listens with the desire to bring out the strength rather than the weakness of what is said--to find that which is different yet applicable to one's own position. "As against the solidity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid. A person who possesses the 'art' of questioning is a person who is able to prevent the suppression of questions by the dominant opinion."(330) The ideal is not, then, of "self-expression and the successful assertion of one's point of view, but a transformation into commmion, in which we do not remain what we were,"(341) The concern is not with supporting one's claims but finding the key questions. While the dialectic of a genuine conversation requires a certain commonality of meaning it works more to create and recreate a common language. More than sharing one's possessions it is an "art of seeing things in the unity of an aspect, ie it is the art of the formation of concepts as the working out of the common meaning." (331) In Gadamer's description of the conversation the process character of interaction is clear.

In structure interaction aimed at increasing understanding closely resembles "play." It is not something that is worked at nor is it truly an activity. Interaction like play has a life of its own apart from the purposes of the partakers. As Gadamer showed, "It is the game that is played--it is irrelevant whether or not there is a subject who plays."(93) Or again, ". . . the actual subject of play is obviously not the subjectivity of an individual who among other activities also plays, but instead the play itself."(93) The structure of play absorbs the player

much like the experience of everyday interaction. The more involved the player the less he plays by his own initiative and the more he fills in as needed for the game's continuation. Saying interaction is like play does not suggest a lack of seriousness for as Gadamer showed seriousness is intrinsicly part of play itself.(92)

With this analysis it is easy to turn back to the possible description of the communicative process. As some have recently suggested but without much self-awareness,[34] interaction can be seen as having "structural unity" quite apart from the "causal continuity" most Americans seek in their studies. What is meant by "structural unity" can be seen in Gadamer's description of the structured of individuality.

> What emerges, the actual "individuality," ie the character of the individual, is not a mere consequence of the causal factors to be understood only in terms of the causes, but it constitutes a unity that is intelligible in itself, a unity of life that is expressed in everyone of its manifestations and hense can be understood in each of them. Something becomes fused here to form a unique figure, independently of the system of cause and effect.(199)

In looking at the concrete manifestation of the communicative process as two people interacting, the structure of the interaction can be explored independent of the actor's character or the causal relations. This structure comes from the intelligibility of the interaction itself rather than from outside factors or explanations.

The use of the concept of "structure" rather than directional influence of variables allows for the description of communication as a process without losing its process characteristics. This description however requires a non-linear conception of time. In communication one looks forward to both the past and future. In the same sense that the first part of a sentence finds its meaning and influence on the last part by the meaning found in the last part, interaction (as well as tradition itself) constantly comes into its own meaning and influence as it unfolds in a future it helped to shape. It both determines and is determined by the forward movement. The notion of past to future in interaction as well as left to right in reading are subsumed by the emergence of meaning in the act of understanding.

Only with this understanding can the full significance of time structuring or punctuation by either researchers or interactants be understood.

Gadamer would have communication studies become aware of time not as a variable to be considered as "timing" not as something alongside interaction (as interaction happens through time) but as an integral part of the structure of interaction itself. To say one has misunderstood freezes time and is a comparison between two understandings at different times--different times in the interaction itself as well as in the life of each actor. To have meant something different to Gadamer is not so much a problem. Meaning is not extra worldly but is subject to change in time and thus open to new significance. Meaningful everyday interaction like a great literary work is never closed in meaning but able to speak again in a different but significant way. This concept of time is, of course, not unlike Meads analysis in The Philosophy of the Present. Communication directed toward increased understanding is the opening of meaning to time and change and the interactants to new experience.

Interaction as a structural unity in this analysis is neither subjective nor objective, neither totally relative nor fixed. It has meaning in itself apart from the participants and any observer. In this way it is able to lead them to new experience. When one moves into interaction one must be willing to take on the structure's intentions and resultant emotions as one's own. Understanding is not of the other (as the meaning always exceeds the other's intentions) but of the interaction itself. As Gadamer said of a text, "the task of understanding is concerned in the first place with the meaning of the text itself."(335) The criteria for understanding must be the harmony of all the details with the whole.(259)

Gadamer's analysis using the concept of structural unity makes possible a non-subjective concept of interpretation for communication studies. Interpretation as a part of all understanding cannot be seen in this process as a subject constructing reality or giving meaning to the meaningless but as the internal movement

of the interaction to unite itself with itself. Otherwise the subject would only see what he put into it rather than being pulled to a new more complete understanding. standing.(see 422 ff.)

As the self is lost as an abstract entity standing outside controlling and interpreting the interaction and becomes instead subject to the developing action, the other has character different from that in American communication studies also. The "other" needs to be experienced in his difference rather than similarity to the self. The reduction of other to self or of self to other is the closing of understanding. The hermeneutic experience of other is that of tradition manifesting itself in the interaction. Understanding is the allowing of this tradition to open up in its relevance to the self. Gadamer contended that, "I must allow the validity of the claim made by tradition, not in the sense of simply acknowledging the past in its otherness, but in such a way that it has something to say to me."(324) The other tradition opening in the dialectic of interaction makes possible the self's understanding new possibilities for future action. In this opening, possibilities come available which were unseen due to one's own traditional blindness. These possibilities in their opening in interaction belong to no one yet once opened are available to anyone who will listen (in the special hermeneutic sense). Luhmann made clear the necessity of distance in making possible the unavailable for the communicative process. "Other persons are socially relevant only insofar as they present, in communication, different pasts and/or different futures. They transform in a highly selective way distant temporal relevances into present social ones."[35]

The forgotten questions Gadamer raises for the study of communication relate to the process rather than the results of interaction. The question of understanding is formed to ask how understanding is possible, how it develops and changes in interaction, and what style of consciousness is necessary to make possible the kind of openness which allows understanding to increase and experiences to develop.

In order to explore these questions a concept of time is necessary which does not break interaction into a sequence of linear events. The process can then be described as it unfolds as an intelligible pattern which interprets itself in this maintenance of unity through change and serves as its own explanation. This structure is neither subjective nor objective, neither controlled by the interactants nor controlling them. It is a fusing of traditions or prejudices which transforms traditions as well as opens new but intelligible possibilities into the future. Genuine interaction rather than being an exchange of statements describing experience is a forming of questions which call experience into question.

Implication for Communication Research

It should be clear in relooking at the development of a hermeneutic consciousness that the questions raised cannot merely stand alongside current questions asked in communication studies in a sense supplementing them. The questions being raised are really more fundamental questions standing in back of the choices made for current work. The asking of these basic questions doesnot refute current work but rather puts it in perspective. Current research is itself a working out of a tradition but it needs to be aware that it is that and only that. Other traditions exist and other ways of working out this one also exist. The opening of other positions should help to end the one-sidedness and false confidence of current work.

Clearly a need is seen for researchers independent of their choice of method or conceptual background, to return to the life experience of everyday people for the communication problem to be studies. All research is application. Application to some problem. The real questions are who's problem should be studied and who's conceptualization of the problem is to be used.

Leonard Hawes appeared essentially correct in suggesting that traditional communication studies are both elitist and ethnocentric,

> elitist insofar as the researcher assumes, whether implicitly or explicitly, his/her account of other peoples' behavior is superior to the accounts they formulate for themselves. Such studies tend to be ethnocentric insofar as the researcher assumes a multiplicity of human perspectives can be interpreted from a single perspective--that of traditional social science.[36]

The research is changed though not necessarily improved when the researcher negates himself as an everyday actor in the type of "naturalistic" study Hawes suggested. Gadamer makes clear the impossibility and undesirability of losing ourselves or our concepts in the process of understanding. Both traditional studies and "naturalistic" studies can give valuable insights but require greater self awareness. The former holds to the concepts of the self and the latter to those of the other. Thus both are one-sided and neither allow the process to remove the distortion. Underlying both types of studies is a process of understanding-interpretation-application which is invisible to them due to the desire for valid conclusions (good for all times and places). This blindness makes them unable to see their concepts and problem's place in the historical development of either the individual, the discipline or the society. The discipline needs to be aware of and concerned with the realation between life-experience and the researcher in the selection and conceptualization of communication problems.

Further a need exists for greater care in avoiding the reification of experience. Many concepts used in today's studies serve as categories which abstract from and classify aspects of experience. While this gives rise to certain problems such as dualism and unproductive distortions, there is nothing wrong with this act in itself. However, when these concepts are taught and make their way into everyday language, they are often understood as representing things rather than experiences and processes. "Self," "attitudes," "norms," "culture," and so forth are examples of concepts suffering from this reification. Explanation using these concepts is understood as one thing causing another rather than a chosen way of structuring the experience of continuity. The experience is thus explained away in abstraction rather than brought to clearer understanding. For example, what does

it mean to say that a communication problem is a result of cultural differences? And how does that move us toward solving the problem? Concepts do not need to be seen as tools of classification (in a categorical sense) but can be seen as opening experience in an interpretive sense. "The interpretative concepts are not . . . thematic in understanding. Rather, it is their nature to disappear behind what they bring, in interpretation, into speech."(359) With the help of a hermeneutic consciousness we can see how explication subsumes explanation as the principle research task.[37]

In concluding, it should be clear that Gadamer's analysis of the character of understanding makes problematic the basic assumed goal of communication studies to construct a body of objective knowledge. What is gained by the "scientific" abstraction and attempted reconnection to everyday life? What have the conceptual categories and "why" explanations done for personal or societal development? Are there research alternatives to this "objective consciousness" other than a romanicized humanism which merely reduces the same research to "personal knowledge?" I think it is clear that the present concern with "what is and why" needs to be subsumed and redirected by the joint question of "how it came about and what can it be?" The concern for the possibilities of life should not be left to poets, planners, and politicians but should be directly connected with those most focused on the actualities of life. The opening of life-possibilities based in and relevant to the real human condition requires a self-awareness which destroys the myth of objective consciousness and reconsiders which prejudices should be controlled. The social service of the study of communication will come, if it does, more from the creation of new forms of human relationships than the ability to control toward particular existing forms. This will require a new mode of historical consciousness.

NOTES

[1]Schleiermacher, Hermeneutik, edited by Heinz Kimmerle. For brief discussion see Richard Palmer, Hermeneutics (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), chapter 7.

[2]Herbert Hodges, The Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey (New York: Fertig, 1969). See also Palmer, chapter 8.

[3]Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, translated by John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962) and also William Richardson, Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963).

[4]Calvin Schrag, Experience and Being (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. 113.

[5]Hans-Georg Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode, 2 ed. (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1965), Truth and Method translation edited by Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1975). All subsequent notes will be to the English edition.

[6]Samuel Becker, "Methodological Analysis in Communication Research," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 51 (1965), 382-391.

[7]Calvin Schrag, "The Crisis of the Human Sciences," Man and World, 8 (May 1975), 133.

[8]Exceptions to this are of course present. See for example Dennis Smith, "The Fallacy of the Communication Breakdown," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 56 (1970), 343-346 and especially Daniel O'Keefe, "Logical Empiricism and the Study of Human Communication," Speech Monographs, 42 (August 1975), 169-183.

[9]Charles Berger, "The Covering Law Model In Communication Inquiry;" Donald Cushman, "The Rules Perspective;" Peter Monge, "The Systems Perspective" presented at the Annual Convention of the Speech Communication Association, December 1975. Even these papers did not question the presumed ideals of science nor the purpose of doing research.

[10]Gadamer, pp. 357-358.

[11]Jack Douglas (ed.), Understanding Everyday Life (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 19ff.

[12]David Berlo, The Process of Communication (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960).

[13]Dean Barnlund, "A Transactional Model of Communication," in Sereno and Mortenser (eds.), Foundations of Communication Theory (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

[14]David Smith, "Communication Research and the idea of Process," Speech Monographs, 39 (August 1972), 174-182.

[15]Barry Brummett, "Some Implications of 'Process' or 'Intersubjectivity': Post Modern Rhetoric," Philosophy and Rhetoric, 9 (Winter 1976), 21-51.

[16]Monge, p. 15.

[17]See particularily George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self and Society edited by Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934); and Herbert Blumer, Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1969).

[18]Mead, The Philosophy of the Present, (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1959).

[19]For example Blumer, chapter 1 and Norman Denzin, The Research Act (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1970).

[20]See Frederic Gruber, "Speech Behaviorism: A Dissenting Opinion," presented to the Annual Convention of the Speech Communication Association, November, 1973.

[21]Berlo, p. 119.

[22]For example from recent texts differing greatly in theoretical perspectives, Heun and Heun, Developing Skills for Human Interaction (Columbus Charles Merrill, 1975), p. 186; John Stewart, Bridges Not Walls, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1973), p. 15; McCroskey and Wheeless, Introduction to Human Inter action (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1976, p. 268; Miller and Steinberg Between People (Palo Alto: SRA, Inc.1975), chapter 6.

[23]Berlo, p. 122.

[24]Berlo, p. 123.

[25]Berlo, p. 124.

[26]In this case a misconception turns into an identity crisis which cannot be solved but only eventually forgotten.

[27]A position made most explicit by Robert Goyer, "Communication, Communicative Process, Meaning: Toward a Unified Theory," Journal of Communication, 20 (1970), 4-16.

[28]See Barnlund and Stewart previously cited.

[29]See Robert Sanders, "The Question of a Paradigm for the Study of Speech-Using Behavior," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 59 (1973), 1-10; Donald Cushman and Gordon Whiting, "An Approach to Communication Theory: Toward Consensus on Rules," Journal of Communication, 22 (9172), 217-238; and W. Barnett Pearce, "Consensual Rules in Interpersonal Communication," Journal of Communication, 23 (1973), 160-168.

[30]The use of the "rule" concept in communication research is well

summarized by Michael John Schneider, "Intention, Situation and Communicative Competence," a paper presented to the Fourth International Congress of Applied Linguistics, 1975.

[31]References to Truth and Method will be made by page number alone in the text.

[32]The need for this reversal has been often discussed, but the alternatives are never radical enough, see H. Wayland Cummings, "In Search of a Variable: Is Language Research the Salvation of a Discipline Gone Scholarly?" a paper presented at the Eastern Communication Association Convention, March 1974.

[33]This concept is more fully developed in Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, translated by Ralph Manheim (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961); On the Way to Language, translated by Peter Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); and in Joseph Kockelmans, (ed.) On Heidegger and Language (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972). The discussion is summarized in my own "Words Without Things: Toward a Social Phenomenology of Language," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 59 (February 1973), 40-51.

[34]See in particular Leonard Hawes, "Elements of a Model for Communication Processes," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 59 (1973), 11-21, and W. Barnett Pearce, Communication and Interpersonal Relationships, (Palo Alto: SRA, 1976). The Field has also been influenced by a somewhat subjective account of this idea by the works of Von Wright, Explanation and Understanding, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971) and R. Harre and P. R. Secord, The Explanation of Social Behavior (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972).

[35]Niklas Luhmann, "The Future Cannot Begin: Temporal Structures in Modern Society," Social Research, 43 (Spring 1976), 146.

[36]Leonard Hawes, "The Naturalistic Study of Human Communication," A paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Speech Communication Association, December 1975, p. 1.

[37]This idea is partially developed in an earlier paper "An Understanding of Science and a Hermeneutic Science of Understanding," Journal of Communication 23 (June 1973), 139-159. See also Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text," Social Research, 38 (1971) 529-562.