

Analysis and Hermeneutics

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Much of what we are doing is a question of changing the style of thinking – Wittgenstein¹

Is there only one way of defining a term in philosophical discourse? Or is there perhaps a mode of definition that is peculiar to certain kinds of philosophical discourse? In a discussion of the Scandinavian praxeologist Jakob Meløe, Carl Erik Kühl suggests that there is indeed more than one way of giving the meanings of terms. There are, according to Kühl, two sorts of definitional practice: the analytic and the hermeneutic.

Kühl's distinction arises out of his recognition of a peculiarity in Meløe's definition of the concept 'world'. The concept is central to Meløe's praxeological account of action and is defined somewhat indirectly in terms of the notion of 'existence in the world'. According to Meløe: 'to exist in our world is to be connected with our operations in the world ... such that the form of connection gives the form of existence'.² The difficulty with this definition is that it defines the concept 'world' in terms that presuppose the concept being defined. It refers us to the concepts of 'operations', 'the form of connection', and 'the form of existence' that are themselves only to be understood, on Meløe's account, in terms of the notion of 'world'. As Kühl points out:

... these concepts are not defined in the good old analytic way. Not one of them appears as the unknown definiendum to the left of an identity sign, with an array of other, and well known, concepts mustered to the right, as the definiens. We find ourselves, in fact, in the quite tricky position of not being able to define the basic praxeological terms without sinning against a ground rule of analytic definitional practice, viz. the rule that the term to be defined, and so explained to others, must not be among the terms that we use to define it, or to explain it with.³

The difficulty here leads Kühl to suggest that there is a mode of definition other than that of reductive analysis. There is, he suggests, a mode of definition that he calls, for obvious reasons, 'hermeneutical':

... the fundamental concepts of praxeology are, each one of them, parts picked out from a whole. It is only by moving around among the different parts, that we can come to grasp the whole that they are parts of, and it is only by grasping the whole, that we can come to understand the part.⁴

It is this hermeneutic mode that is characteristic of Meløe's definitional practice. Here it is not a matter of defining one term by reference to concepts that are distinct from the original term and that are themselves already understood. Rather the point is to see how each concept fits into a broader conceptual framework: to see how the parts are parts of a whole and how the whole is constituted from its parts.

Kühl's interest in this matter is, of course, due to his interest in Meløe. However, in bringing to our notice the distinction between analytic and hermeneutic definition, Kühl has identified something of much more general philosophical interest. For the distinction between these two modes of definition may provide a useful focus for considering the differences between the broadly 'hermeneutic' (or 'continental') and 'analytic' traditions in contemporary philosophy. Moreover, Kühl's distinction also provides the basis for exploring the nature of hermeneutic philosophical practice as such.

Yet there is a problem here. Kühl claims that there are two differing modes of definitional practice. Drawing a distinction between those two modes presupposes being able to provide some sort of definition of the hermeneutical as distinct from the analytical. Yet surely this can be done only from within one or another of the definitional modes identified by Kühl. But if Kühl is correct, and there are two distinct and differing definitional practices, then it may well be inappropriate to attempt to define one practice according to the canons of the other. Whichever of the two modes of definitional practice was adopted, the choice of that mode might prejudice the attempt to clarify the nature of the hermeneutical. To adopt an analytic mode may lead to a misunderstanding of the hermeneutical-particularly if the hermeneutic mode embodies an approach that is incompatible with or opposed to

the analytical. It is also to assume the adequacy of the analytic mode to all problems of definition and this might come into question. But to adopt a hermeneutic mode is to presume that that mode has already been established as distinct from the analytical. To be in a position to adopt that mode also presupposes some prior acquaintance with the nature of hermeneutic practice. Yet, of course, the nature of hermeneutic practice and the distinction of the hermeneutical from the analytical is just what is at issue.

Kühl's distinction of these two modes of definitional practice raises interesting questions about the nature of the two modes and the nature and ground of the distinction itself. It raises the further question of whether the hermeneutic mode can be regarded as a real alternative to the analytic. Yet clearly there is a difficulty here, in that one cannot pursue these questions without already, perhaps, prejudicing one's position through the decision (whether implicit or explicit) to adopt a particular mode of proceeding. In the face of this difficulty the only method of approach is a circumspect one. Such an approach may well appear to be a somewhat roundabout way of doing things, but it is the only way in which one can be sure of not prejudicing the inquiry from the start.

Thus, rather than providing a straightforward account of the nature of the hermeneutical, the approach taken here will be a somewhat discursive one. Rather than laying out an account of the hermeneutical in some a priori fashion, my procedure will be to draw out some of the characteristic features of hermeneutic practice from hermeneutic practice itself, that is, from the work of philosophers who might reasonably be thought to exemplify the hermeneutic approach. Two such philosophers are the primary influences in the work of Meløe himself – Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein – two philosophers who can be seen as representative of the hermeneutical as it appears in both the Anglo-American and the so-called Continental philosophical traditions respectively. That there is a hermeneutical strand within Anglo-American philosophy outside of certain schools of rhetoric of literature, may be a surprise to some. Yet not only would I contend that Wittgenstein exemplifies such a strand, but I would argue that it is also exemplified in the work of such as Richard Rorty, and most importantly, Donald

Davidson. In many respects, Davidson's work is a continuation of key hermeneutical elements present in Wittgenstein, although Davidson's work is also innovative in its own right, combining elements of formal semantics, Quinean pragmatism, and a strong, if nevertheless implicit, Kantianism. Although Davidson is referred to only briefly below, and in relation to one issue in particular, he too should be seen as standing in the background of much of this discussion and more on the side of the hermeneutical than the analytic.⁵

Of course, just as one needs to have some preliminary idea of that into which one would inquire (as Plato suggests in the *Meno*), so one cannot begin an investigation of the hermeneutical without some idea of the nature of hermeneutics. And Kühl himself provides an admirable starting place: he points to the apparent circularity of hermeneutic definition as its distinguishing feature. Such apparent circularity is, in fact, expressed in the idea, fundamental to hermeneutic theory, of the circle of the understanding – the 'hermeneutic circle'. That circle is not usually presented as circularity in definition, but certainly involves a circularity in the grasping of meaning. It expresses a holistic conception of the nature of meaning and of understanding according to which any whole (whether it be a set of concepts, a text, a language, a set of actions, a set of beliefs or whatever) is only to be understood through its parts, and vice versa. This idea has a ready application to the sort of definitional practice Kühl finds in Meløe, since there the central terms are defined only through their connections with other terms, and hence by their location within a wider conceptual framework; that framework is, in turn, explicated or defined only through the constituent terms. The idea of circular definition to which Kühl draws attention can thus be understood in terms of this holistic approach to meaning and understanding. That approach is reflected in the structure of the hermeneutic circle; or, perhaps more accurately, the circle is itself the expression of the holistic character of meaning and understanding.⁶

The notion of the hermeneutic circle will mark both the starting point and the theme of my discussion here. What I will suggest in the course of the discussion will be that the circularity in definition identified by Kühl merely reflects the nature of hermeneutic practice as such. Hermeneutic practice itself exemplifies the circularity

of the hermeneutic circle—a circle that is manifest, not only in definitional practice, but also in overall style and methodology. That hermeneutic practice should exemplify such circularity is, perhaps, unsurprising and uncontroversial. What I will do here, however, is offer an account of how such circularity is manifest in particular features of hermeneutic practice and to consider some of the implications of such circularity for philosophical practice in general, as well as for the reading of hermeneutic texts in particular.

What is at issue is not, of course, just a question of stylistics. It is not a question of preferring one philosophical 'style' to another, or of merely legitimating one style as against another. There is more at stake here than just this. As Köhl himself says, definition is often the first step in philosophical work and the initial problem of circularity identified by Köhl may be present in most, if not all, philosophical endeavour. Analysis cannot be an endless process of reduction to more and more basic components, nor can definition proceed indefinitely. Consequently, the possibility of discussing some very basic philosophical questions may depend on the recognition of the hermeneutic mode as a legitimate mode of definition in its own right – on recognising that mode of definition that depends on a grasp of the whole rather than reduction to its parts. Thus, it may well be that, as Köhl himself says, 'Analytic definitional practice must give way to hermeneutic definitional practice'.⁷

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It is with the work of Martin Heidegger that I intend to begin. And the reason for beginning here is that in Heidegger the idea of the hermeneutical is not only a central notion, but also a notion that appears in an especially developed form. In Heidegger, the hermeneutic circle assumes ontological significance: the circle describes both the structure of understanding in general, and the structure of our understanding of Being. In this respect Heidegger treats the whole/part relationship described by the circle as one in which there is a special priority given to the whole—our understanding of Being is, in an important sense, prior to any

understanding we have of beings. The idea of such priority is expressed in the Heideggerian notion, foreshadowed by Husserl⁸ and developed further by Gadamer,⁹ of the fore-structures of understanding-what I shall refer to as the fore-sightedness of understanding. (I will use 'fore-sight' to refer to the entire three-fold structure of Vorgriff, Vorhabe and Vorsicht that appears in Being and Time.) As Heidegger presents the hermeneutic circle, we always already have a prior grasp of the whole through which our understanding is enabled to grasp the parts of that whole and in so doing, perhaps, to articulate the whole (and so improve our understanding of it). Heidegger writes:

... understanding always pertains to the whole of Being-in-the-world. In every understanding of the world, existence is understood with it, and vice versa. Any interpretation which is to contribute understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted.¹⁰

Understanding is characterized by its pre-understanding, its foresight into the concepts that it seeks to understand. The articulation of this fore-structure is what makes up the essence of Heidegger's work in Being and Time.

Yet the very fore-sightedness of understanding suggests a possible problem for the Heideggerian project. It is, in fact, a problem very similar to that which Kühl raises in respect of Meløe – a problem of circularity. Just as the hermeneutic circle is reflected in the circularity of Meløe's definition of 'world', so the circular structure of understanding is reflected in the hermeneutic method of Being and Time itself.

Heidegger himself explicitly notes the apparent problem here. Commenting on the way in which his inquiry will proceed, he writes:

... to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity-the inquirer-transparent in his own Being ... Is there not, however, a manifest circularity in such an undertaking? If we must first define an entity in its Being, and if we want to formulate the question of Being only on this basis, what is this but going in a circle? In working out our question, have we not 'presupposed' something which only the answer can bring out?¹¹

At first sight, one might suppose that the problem that Heidegger addresses here is that our inquiry into being already presupposes what it seeks to find. Our

understanding of being is thus presupposed by our search for such understanding. This, however, cannot be the real point of Heidegger's concern. For while it is certainly true that we must have some understanding of Being with which to begin, that understanding need not be the same as the understanding with which we end up. What we aim at is, after all, an articulation and exploration of the nature of being. That articulation is not presupposed even though some grasp of being is. Thus our foresight into the nature of being is not the same as that articulate understanding which is the result of explicit and self-conscious reflection.

Perhaps this is the point of Heidegger's comment that 'factually there is no circle at all'¹² and his rejection of the idea that there is any vicious circularity associated with his procedure. For while he accepts that 'In a scientific proof, we may not presuppose what it is our task to provide grounds for',¹³ what is presupposed in this case is just the implicit and to a large extent inarticulate pre-understanding of Being which is part of our necessary constitution as the sort of beings-in-the-world that we are. It is a pre-understanding 'which belongs to the essential constitution of Dasein itself'.¹⁴

It is, indeed, always the case that we must possess a certain foresight into that which is the subject of inquiry-this is so no matter what we inquire into. Without possessing or acquiring such foresight there would be no possibility of even beginning to inquire, for there would be no way of determining what it was that we aimed to inquire into. This is largely the point of Heidegger's conception of the understanding as essentially constituted by its fore-structures. It is a point developed further in Gadamer's idea of the necessarily 'pre-judicial' character of all understanding.

The circle that concerns Heidegger is thus the circle that arises out of the fore-sightedness of understanding. The problem associated with this circle, however, is not that it is viciously circular. The difficulty is rather that there is no way to understand without already possessing some prior understanding. There is no presuppositionless starting point from which our inquiry could begin. Thus, to set the problem in terms of definition, there can be no way of defining certain terms

except one that already presupposes some prior grasp of the terms to be defined. And this, of course, was the difficulty that Kühl brought to our attention initially.

What is apparent now is that this 'difficulty' really marks a fundamental feature of understanding as such-its fore-sightedness. It is this that Heidegger refers to as the 'circle of understanding' and that leads to a conception of philosophical method in which deductive or reductive analysis can play no part. Heidegger himself is quite clear on this point. In discussing the alleged circularity of his procedure he writes:

... the issue is not one of grounding something by such a [deductive] derivation; it is rather one of laying bare the grounds for it and exhibiting them. In the question of the meaning of Being there is no 'circular reasoning' but rather a remarkable 'relatedness backward or forward'.¹⁵

The issue here is not, we might say, a matter of providing a reductive definition of a concept, but of letting the nature of the concept stand forth. It is a matter of 'showing' the concept, or of allowing the concept to 'show' itself. Given the idea that the articulation of meaning is always a matter of elaborating a whole/part structure, then allowing the concept to be seen in this way must involve placing the concept into the totality of which it is a part. This is, of course, just what is involved in the notion of hermeneutic definition distinguished by Kühl. In the case of a concept like 'being' or 'world', where the concept is that of a whole, it must involve articulating that concept in terms of its parts-parts that in turn necessarily presuppose the original whole. As this passage from Heidegger also suggests, that process of articulation can be understood as a circle-as in the hermeneutic circle-or as a process of inter-play or dialogue between parts and whole. (The notions of both play and dialogue are important features of Gadamer's account of understanding, while the notion of play also suggests the idea of the Wittgensteinian 'language game'.)

Of course this conception of the nature of the project is not independent of the fore-sightedness of understanding that I discussed at the start. Perhaps now we can better recognize the methodological implications of that fore-sightedness. Insofar as we already have access to what we wish to articulate, the process of articulation will be a matter of laying out what is, in one sense, already present to the understanding.

The process is one of articulating an implicitly and priorly understood whole in terms of its separate parts. But it is not a process of reduction, for those parts are not independent of each other or of the holistic background. Indeed, only with respect to the whole can they be understood at all. The process is a dialogic or circular one.

Heidegger emphasizes that the circularity that can be discerned here does not prevent understanding, but instead makes it possible. It is a necessary feature of understanding and is a feature of philosophical understanding as much as of any other. Heidegger claims, moreover, that the circle suggests something about the proper way in which any fundamental philosophical inquiry has to proceed. He writes:

If we see this circle as a vicious one and look out for ways of avoiding it ... then the act of understanding has been misunderstood from the ground up.... What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to get into it in the right way.... 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 . . . to make the scientific scheme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves.¹⁶

This comment immediately refers us back to the discussion with which Heidegger begins Being and Time in which he raises the question of the nature of phenomenology, for it is phenomenology that, as a philosophical methodology, directs attention to the things themselves-to the phenomena. In the discussion of phenomenology, Heidegger provides an account of his method in Being and Time, as well as an account of the nature of both phenomenology and hermeneutics. The account is one that identifies the two-as Heidegger sees it, phenomenology is hermeneutics.¹⁷

The phenomenological method is one based on the exhortation to return to the things themselves. The idea is that our investigations should be addressed to the phenomena-that is, to the things as they show themselves.¹⁸ This does not mean that we should focus more minutely on the things before us-as if understanding them was a matter of seeing them more closely. Indeed, if something is individuated and identified only in relation to a wider whole of which it is a part, then, the more

closely we look, the less we are likely to be illuminated about that thing.

Understanding the thing as what it is will be a matter of standing back to let the thing, together with the setting in which it presents itself, show forth. This is one way in which we might understand the Husserlian epoché – the bracketing of existence-which is the primary methodological move in Husserl's phenomenology. In understanding phenomenology in this fashion we can clearly see the way in which phenomenology might be related to hermeneutics. The two methods have, in fact, a very similar concern: to always see things in relation to the context in which they appear. In that case phenomenology, particularly in Heidegger's thinking, is as much a matter of showing that wherein the things appear as it is a showing of the things themselves.

This point can also be put in another way. The idea of letting things be shown as the things they are presupposes that we already have some access to the things such that they can be shown. Since things can only appear against a background, this means that we need already to have some grasp of the background against which things can appear. In Heidegger's terminology, this means that we must have some preconception of the things themselves. The process of phenomenological analysis can thus be seen as a process of articulating that initial, implicit, preconception-as a matter of articulating the background against which appearance is possible and which determines the appearance of the thing itself. Yet the articulation of this background is the articulation of something that we must already, implicitly, grasp. The fore-sightedness of understanding, and the hermeneutic circularity that is tied to such foresightedness, thus provides the basis for the phenomenological conception of understanding as a matter of the disclosure of what is already within our view.

Heidegger's method in Being and Time is phenomenological insofar as it aims at bringing the phenomena to light, of exhibiting or disclosing the things themselves and, in so doing, exhibiting the overall background within which their appearance is possible. In this respect it is also hermeneutical. Hermeneutics involves the interpretation, articulation, or 'laying out' of our prior understanding of things. It is a matter of disclosing the original interconnections of the parts and of the parts with the whole. This is indeed what is embodied in Kühn's idea of hermeneutic definition.

And insofar as it does involve just such disclosure, so it involves a return of attention to the very things with which we are already familiar. Hermeneutics is, in this sense, phenomenological. In the same sense phenomenology is also essentially hermeneutical.

The notion of hermeneutics as disclosure aimed at allowing us to see things as they appear against a wider background suggests an important connection with the Heideggerian conception of truth as aletheia. Heidegger claims, particularly in Being and Time, that the ordinary conception of truth as correctness or, more specifically, as correspondence, orthotes, is underlain by a more fundamental notion of truth as aletheia. Aletheia is a term translated by Heidegger, from the Greek, as unhiddenness or unconcealedness. For Heidegger, truth is an event whereby things are brought out of such unhiddenness and thereby revealed to us.¹⁹ I do not wish, here, to go into the details of Heidegger's complex treatment of truth.²⁰ What I do wish to bring attention to, however, is the way in which the notion of truth as disclosure is closely tied to the idea of the hermeneutic method itself. Just as hermeneutics and phenomenology can be seen as aiming at the disclosure of things against a background, so Heidegger conceives of truth as just such an act of disclosure of things against a background, within a setting. Not only does the notion of aletheia carry with it connotations of hermeneutic circularity, but the hermeneutic method can itself be seen as essentially truthful in this more fundamental Heideggerian sense. Hermeneutics must be essentially truthful just insofar as it is a process in which disclosure takes place—a disclosure of things against a background that we already, in some sense, understand. It is not that hermeneutics uncovers 'the Truth' (for in the sense of truth as aletheia, truth is not what is uncovered but the uncovering itself), but that hermeneutics is itself disclosive.

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In the work of Heidegger, we can thus discern the underlying thesis of the holistic character of understanding and also see the development of that thesis into a conception of hermeneutics as essentially a disclosive practice – a practice that

shows rather than proves or derives. The hermeneutic circle thus precludes noncircular demonstration that aims at a linear process of deduction or proof on the basis of some agreed foundation. The hermeneutic method is not linear in this sense; it is rather a circular method concerned to illuminate the foundation itself.

This hermeneutic method is not only apparent in Heidegger. It is also clearly discernible in the work of the later Wittgenstein. Gadamer suggests that there are important parallels between the thought of Wittgenstein (as well as Austin and other linguistic philosophers) and that of thinkers within the phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions, Heidegger amongst them.²¹ Clearly there is a common orientation towards language as the focus for philosophical interest. (And such a focus is itself characteristic of the hermeneutic approach.) Moreover, Wittgenstein's work manifests a holistic approach to issues of human understanding, and a conception of philosophic method that is similar to that which we have already seen in the work of Heidegger. Wittgenstein's philosophy appears, like Heidegger's, to be thoroughly hermeneutical.

The holistic element in Wittgenstein's thought (which can be discerned even in his early work²²) provides a clear link with the work of continental thinkers. Wittgenstein insists upon seeing human speech and behaviour always against the wider background of practices that make up what Dilthey called the 'life world' and that Wittgenstein came to term 'forms of life'. The holism that characterises Continental hermeneutic theory is thus equally characteristic of Wittgenstein. And while Wittgenstein provides no enunciation of the hermeneutic circle it seems clear that there is similar circularity at work in his philosophising.²³

A sentence is only meaningful, according to Wittgenstein, against the overall network of our practical activities. This is an idea present as much in Heidegger as in Wittgenstein. In both, there is an emphasis on the way in which meaning is constituted through our practical (rather than theoretical) involvement with things in the world. The practical context provides a holistic framework – a form of life in Wittgenstein's terminology-against which particular acts of meaning can be understood. This holistic conception of meaning is often presented by Wittgenstein through an analogy with games. One can thus see particular acts of

meaning-particular instances of speaking, for instance-as like moves in a game where the game is analogous to a wider practical context. Here is the familiar Wittgensteinian notion of a language-game. Wittgenstein's employment of the game metaphor provides a useful example of the implicit circularity in his approach. One can only understand any particular move in a game by seeing it against the background of the rules that make up the game (even if those rules are only imperfectly grasped). Yet the rules of the game can be understood only in relation to the making of particular moves. We would doubt someone who claimed to understand the rules of a game but who could not reliably make a legitimate move in that game. Learning a game is never a matter of just learning the rules, but also involves coming to understand particular moves. Thus, coming to understand chess is largely a matter of learning how to play. If we were asked what the game of chess was, we would quite likely answer by demonstration: by getting out a chess board and going through the rules and the moves-perhaps even playing a brief game as illustration. It is the holistic interdependence between general framework and particular instances that is illustrated by the usefulness of such 'showing' and that is typical of the hermeneutic circle. It is this circularity which requires that learning a game is a matter of 'getting the hang of it'. It is a matter of learning a practice.

Yet even this way of presenting the holistic structure that is involved here is a gross oversimplification. For learning a practice, or mastering a set of rules, involves mastery over a whole set of practices. The practice of chess is thus embedded in a much wider set of practical activities. Indeed any act, insofar as it is meaningful, is embedded in some such wider structure. Such holism applies to the whole range of human activities, though it is most evident in those that involve language. But even an act such as the lighting of a match acquires any meaning it may have (and here I am using meaning in a fairly wide sense) through its relation to a network of other activities-lighting a cigar, starting a fire, making a light. Here the re-description of the act places the act in relation to some other activity and thus integrates it with a wider practical context. To grasp the meaning of any such act is thus to grasp something of that wider social, practical context. Knowledge of the meaning of a particular act-whether linguistic or non-linguistic-thus presupposes a knowledge of

or acquaintance with a wider background. Yet the latter is only to be acquired through involvement with particular instances of meaning.

Wittgenstein's holism is apparent, not only in his approach to matters of language, however, but also in his response to questions of knowledge and belief. This is evident in the *Investigations*, but is made even clearer in *On Certainty*. There belief is seen as a network in which any particular belief is dependent on many others. And when a belief is questioned, the very question presupposes still further beliefs. This is a large part of the Wittgensteinian answer to the Cartesian sceptic—the holistic nature of belief makes universal doubt impossible. Thus Wittgenstein writes that:

When we first begin to believe anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions. (Light dawns gradually over the whole) ... It is only through the commitment to an unquestioned background of beliefs that it is possible to mean and therefore to judge, doubt, confirm, disconfirm, etc.²⁴

Moreover, our beliefs are not independent of our practical activities, and Wittgenstein emphasizes that it is in our practical activities that our beliefs and language are embedded: 'It is our acting, that lies at the bottom of the language game.'²⁵ Thus, while Wittgenstein's holism may begin with Fregean semantic holism ('only in the context of a sentence do words have meaning'), it ultimately extends much wider than this to encompass the whole of human life.

Given the breadth of Wittgensteinian holism, it would not be surprising to find holism as also a feature of his philosophical method. And certainly Wittgenstein's hermeneutic practice is evident as much in his theory of philosophy, and in the way he philosophizes, as in the philosophical 'theories' he puts forward. But, whereas in Heidegger there is explicit recognition of the structure of hermeneutic practice, this is not evident in Wittgenstein. Nevertheless, there is a similar conception of philosophical practice.

Wittgenstein's very style of philosophizing is clearly opposed to any sort of reductive analysis. He himself characterized his work as a series of 'reminders' or 'sketches'. Like Heidegger's, Wittgenstein's whole project is a hermeneutic one—it is a

matter of exhibiting or showing rather than deducing or deriving (this feature is also evident in some 'ordinary language' philosophy). Wittgenstein is himself quite explicit on this point. His conception of philosophy is of a project that aims at making clear or disclosing that which we already implicitly know:

We may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place. Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything,-Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain.²⁶

In this respect Wittgenstein's persistent claims that he is not offering philosophical theories does not involve a refusal to describe, so much as a refusal to explain. His aim is simply to show or to lay out.

Here is an obvious connection with the hermeneutic method that is to be found in Heidegger. Hermeneutic thinking aims to show the things themselves, rather than to provide deductions or reductions of them. Both Wittgenstein and Heidegger exhort us to look at the things themselves; to pay attention to our actual practices and our actual ways of going about things. While analysis can also claim to be concerned with a careful examination of things, the hermeneuticist claims that this can only be done by taking account of the background against which things appear. Allowing things to appear thus means allowing them to appear in such a way that the context of appearance is also made evident. In this respect the method of the hermeneuticist is rather different from the method that the analytician might claim to employ, for it does not assume that things will simply appear through looking more closely at the thing itself – through analysing them more minutely. Instead the hermeneuticist suggests we take a step back, to allow the things to appear with their surrounding context. Instead of deducing or analysing, the hermeneuticist thus strives for a clearer overview of things, to see things as they are in the context in which they appear.

A recurrent theme in Wittgenstein's thought is that his method is not the same as the method of science. This idea is, of course, tied up with the idea of demarcating science from philosophy, art, and religion-a project that was at the heart of the

Tractatus. Much the same idea is at work in Wittgenstein's later thought, where Wittgenstein emphasizes how much closer his thinking is to the work of the poet or artist than to the scientific enquirer. He tells us that he is "not aiming at the same target as the scientists" and that his "way of thinking is different from theirs."²⁷ Elsewhere Wittgenstein considers the case of aesthetic appreciation and particularly musical appreciation.²⁸ Wittgenstein points out that one cannot explain the effect of a piece of music by using the analytic techniques of science or mechanics. One cannot understand the impression conveyed by a piece of music by breaking the music into its components, nor by considering the listener apart from the music. Instead it is a matter of trying to understand both the music as a whole and the reaction to it. The same goes, Wittgenstein suggests, for the understanding of meaning, and more generally, we might say, for the understanding that philosophy requires. This is perhaps part of what Wittgenstein meant by saying that 'philosophy ought really to be written only as poetic composition.'²⁹

Here the holistic theory of meaning ties in with Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy as a matter of seeing things aright. Since what concerns the philosopher is a network of concepts and practices, it would be foolish to expect to be able to reduce such a holistic network to some more primitive foundation. Indeed it can have no foundation outside of itself. In that case the most that the philosopher can do is to try to achieve some sort of clear view of the way in which the whole is constructed and of the relations between the parts. This is just the strategy which Wittgenstein recommends. Thus philosophical problems are solved 'not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known.'³⁰ In a similar way we saw that the Heideggerian conception of hermeneutics as essentially disclosive arose, in part, out of a recognition of the circular or holistic nature of understanding. What we seek to understand is something already known and cannot be deduced or derived from more fundamental premises. What is required is an articulation of what is already before us.

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The disclosive character of hermeneutic practice is evident, not only in the explicit conception of philosophy that is adopted by philosophers such as Heidegger and Wittgenstein, but also in the sorts of techniques that they employ. Wittgenstein's own work is often characterized as having the form of a series of reminders – reminders that aim to direct our attention back (insofar as it is assumed to have strayed) to the actual way in which we proceed. Wittgenstein's reminders often take the form of a reference to some particular example. The use of such examples should be seen as itself in the spirit of the hermeneutic approach. Heidegger, too, makes use of concrete examples (they became more significant in his later thinking) and for much the same reason. In the work of both philosophers the aim is to direct attention to the details of actual human life and practice-to make the reader see what might otherwise be overlooked or forgotten. One way in which this can be done is by paying attention to our own practices and experiences-for these are both familiar to us and yet also most easily covered over in their details. Hermeneutic thinking is concerned to uncover such details and to show things in the original setting in which they arise. Thus it is sometimes actually antagonistic to abstract procedures, in its concern always to return attention to the actual things themselves. One looks to those things-to actual cases and examples-not merely as illustrations but as demonstrations in themselves.

It is equally typical of hermeneutic practice that the language employed is often highly evocative. The words used provoke important associations. This becomes quite obvious in Heidegger's case in his frequent resort to etymological considerations. It is not that Heidegger believes that etymology is always the best guide to ontology. Instead, I suggest, he uses etymology, at least in part, as a way of enriching the associations of a word or phrase, and in so doing indirectly adds to the metaphor and imagery of his language thereby enabling a much richer and more powerful picture to be drawn.

The concern to "draw the right picture" also influences the choice of examples. I have already noted that the hermeneutic method puts emphasis on the use of concrete examples. But not every example will serve the hermeneutic purpose equally well and the holistic considerations that are so characteristic of hermeneutic

practice extend to the choice of examples. Thus Heidegger, especially in his later work, looks to examples taken from art or craft or from rural life. Similarly, Meløe's discussions of action take as examples the work of a berry-picker, a fisherman, a shoemaker. Such examples themselves suggest a holistic set of practices—a community of actions and agents. The work of a process worker in a factory engaged, say, in tightening the caps on pill bottles, is not only less interesting, it is also less readily evocative of the holism that is central to the hermeneutic approach (although such holism must obtain even in such mundane cases).³¹ The use of examples is thus in part an evocative and not merely an illustrative use. As David Pears writes in discussing Wittgenstein's reliance on linguistic examples: “the work of presenting linguistic examples in philosophy will have a certain similarity with the work of an artist. The significance of those examples will be fully intelligible only to someone who has experienced the imagery which gives them their force”.³²

Sometimes, of course, Wittgenstein will appear to use an example that lacks the evocative power that hermeneutic thinking so often values. But this is because, at least in Wittgenstein, examples may also be used for other purposes and with other techniques in mind. So Wittgenstein will occasionally draw attention to particular examples in order to show, not only how things are, but also how they are not. Yet he seldom simply states that a position is false—his argument is much more indirect and ironic. He will suggest a nonsensical conclusion in order to make its patent nonsense apparent to the reader: “The absent-minded man who at the order “Right turn!” turns left, and then, clutching his forehead, says “Oh! right turn” and does a right turn. —What has struck him? An interpretation?”³³ What Wittgenstein does is to bring a certain absurdity (an absurdity that may be implicit in much of our thinking) to light by stating it explicitly, as if it were to be taken seriously.³⁴ The irony lies, of course, in the fact that such seriousness is belied by the obvious absurdity of what is suggested. In this Wittgenstein's style bears some similarity to that of Kierkegaard, although it is much more abbreviated and particularized.³⁵ Irony, and even sarcasm, thus often seem to lie in the background of Wittgenstein's writing.

The use of techniques such as irony and, perhaps more important, of imagery, metaphor, and simile, is a particularly common feature of hermeneutic practice.

Indeed it is a natural consequence of the holistic, disclosive character of such practice. This is particularly obvious in the case of metaphor, since what a metaphor does is to evoke an image or to suggest a way of seeing. It can do this in a particularly sharp and immediate fashion. Metaphors suggest a picture, rather than provide an analysis. And of course what hermeneutic practice aims at is just to provide a way (or ways) of seeing in which the whole is brought into view and not merely the parts. In this sense hermeneutics is indeed close to poetry. It makes use of metaphor and also, on occasion, of poetic imagery. As these techniques are two of the stock tools of the poet's trade, so they are also common tools of the hermeneuticist. It may, in fact, be only through the use of metaphor and imagery that the disclosive purpose of hermeneutics can be fully achieved.

This casts an interesting light on the nature of hermeneutic practice. Consider what Donald Davidson has to say about the metaphorical:

... there is no limit to what a metaphor calls to our attention, and much of what we are caused to notice is not propositional in character. When we try to say what a metaphor 'means' we soon realize that there is no end to what we want to mention ... seeing as is not seeing that.³⁶

Davidson's contrast between 'seeing as' and 'seeing that' captures much of what is crucial in the distinction between analytic and hermeneutic method. And the non-propositional character of what metaphors bring to mind applies equally to much of what the hermeneuticist aims to show. There will always be more to the hermeneuticist's account than can be stated in any set of propositions, for what such an account aims at is a matter of 'seeing as' rather than 'seeing that'. In this sense, one could regard the hermeneutic task as metaphorical through and through; the hermeneutic project could then be seen as the construction of a metaphor or set of metaphors that will provide an appropriate view of the whole.

As that which the hermeneuticist aims to show is not propositional, it will never be possible to provide a final and complete account of any hermeneutic project. What the hermeneuticist aims to show can never be reduced to a precise and exhaustive description – as Davidson comments, 'A picture is not worth a thousand words, or any number. Words are the wrong currency to exchange for a picture.'³⁷ It

would, however, be a mistake to suppose that it is merely the hermeneuticist's reliance on techniques such as the use of metaphor that leads to the impossibility of completing the hermeneutic task. Rather the impossibility of completion arises out of the very nature of the hermeneutic project and the nature of understanding.

Essential to the conception of hermeneutics as developed in the work of Heidegger and Gadamer is the notion of the fore-sightedness, the 'pre-judicial' character, of all understanding. It is this idea that, as I suggested earlier, lies behind the notion of the hermeneutic circle. Given this fore-sightedness any attempt at understanding is already determined by some prior understanding of the subject matter. In the attempt, for instance, to define a term or articulate a concept, there must always be some prior comprehension of the term or concept in question. But if any attempt at articulation always presupposes a prior conception or comprehension, then the process of articulation can never be complete. The prior conception is always prior to the process of articulation, because it is the ground for such articulation.

Of course, we could try to make our preconceptions the focus for investigation, but this, too, would be problematic. It is unclear how we could separate our preconceptions from the process of the articulation in which we were originally engaged. But even if we could isolate our preconceptions and establish them as the explicit subject of inquiry, this would itself require the setting up of a new structure of presuppositions. Complete articulation complete transparency – will always be beyond us – the only consequence of the attempt finally to capture the presuppositions of our inquiries is to see them always receding away from us. They will remain removed from the focus of inquiry in exactly the way that the visual horizon will always remain at a distance. Indeed the analogy with the visual horizon is a thoroughly appropriate one, for the role of our preconception of a concept in the process of articulation is that the former provides the horizon within which the latter can take place. In this respect the Gadamerian notion of 'pre-judice' is firmly rooted in the original Husserlian concept of intentional horizon.³⁸ And that horizon cannot be completely explored because it is part of the constituting structure of the very attempt at exploration.

Thus, whatever the holistic structure that the hermeneuticist wishes to uncover, it is a structure that is not merely the sum of its related parts. The whole is never fully or completely understood. It will, in fact, always be resistant to any attempt to approach it directly. This is so whether, to take just three examples, we are interested in the notion of 'Being', 'world', or 'form of life'. There is no possibility of reducing such a whole to its parts because the parts do not exhaust the whole. It stands beyond those parts and provides the 'horizon' or framework within which those parts are intelligible. The attempt to provide an analysis of any such whole is always dependent on the use of indirect techniques such as metaphor, analogy, and example. The aim is to point towards a certain preconception of things rather than to provide a complete analysis or definition-such completeness is, after all, unattainable.³⁹

The concern of hermeneutic practice is to see things clearly, to let things stand forth in their original interrelation. Often it is also a matter of changing how things are seen-changing our vision from something incomplete or distorted or inappropriate in order to gain a clearer view of the things themselves. One implication of this is that hermeneutic practice has a much more personal orientation than any process of mere analysis. As it is directed at our seeing of things, so it concerns our understanding of ourselves, and our perceptions of ourselves and our activities. It employs techniques that rely on our ability to 'see' what is going on. If the hermeneutic technique is more akin to poetry than to science, so, too, does hermeneutic thinking concern us, and make demands on us as individuals, in much the way that poetry does.

The 'personal' character of hermeneutic discourse derives from the fundamentally holistic approach embodied in the hermeneutic circle. This is made explicit in the work of Heidegger and especially Gadamer. The hermeneutic circle, as Gadamer develops it, is one that encircles us in its embrace, since any act of understanding is also an act of self-understanding. It is, moreover, an act that brings an alteration in ourselves. This is clearest in what is the paradigm case of understanding for Gadamer-the case of understanding and responding to what another says to us. Such dialogue involves 'a transformation into a communion, in

which we do not remain what we were'.⁴⁰ Such dialogue is described by Gadamer in terms of a 'fusion of horizons' – a union of the holistic frameworks within which meaning is constituted.⁴¹ It is on this basis that Richard Rorty has urged a hermeneutic conception of philosophy as concerned with 'edification' rather than foundations.⁴² For Gadamer and Heidegger the hermeneutic concern with self-understanding is tied to recognition of the historicity of understanding. Understanding is seen as historically constituted, not merely in terms of its historical locatedness, but also in terms of its 'historizing' character-it always understands within a historical framework.⁴³ While Wittgenstein sometimes seems to lack the same sensitivity to the historicity of understanding as do Heidegger and Gadamer, it is clear that he, too, sees philosophical understanding as primarily a matter of self-understanding. At one point he writes that 'Working in philosophy ... is really more like working on oneself.'⁴⁴

Wittgenstein's aphoristic, confessional style certainly reinforces the personal character of his work. That work concerns Wittgenstein personally, but it is also clearly meant to have a personal impact on the reader. Stanley Cavell writes that Wittgenstein's style is directed at 'preventing understanding which is unaccompanied by inner change.'⁴⁵ Wittgenstein is undoubtedly concerned to bring about this sort of change-to change his own and others' ways of seeing. (This is obviously tied up with the Wittgensteinian notion of philosophy as therapy.) That aim often necessitates peculiarities of style-peculiarities designed to prevent the reader from settling comfortably into one theoretical position or one way of thinking. Wittgenstein's stylistic idiosyncrasies can thus give rise to an inevitable difficulty in reading. Thus, if Wittgenstein is regarded as obscure (along with other thinkers such as Heidegger), it is an obscurity that is a consequence of the demands of his necessarily hermeneutic methodology, rather than any deliberate attempt to obstruct certain forms of understanding.⁴⁶

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I began this discussion with K uhl's recognition of hermeneutic circularity in the definitional practice of Jakob Mel e. What has become evident through the consideration of the hermeneutic method of Heidegger and Wittgenstein, however, is that the circularity of definition is only one feature of hermeneutic discourse. Circularity of definition is simply one manifestation of the holism that is encapsulated in the idea of the hermeneutic circle. The primary feature of hermeneutic thinking is its recognition and elaboration of the holistic character of meaning and of understanding in general. One important consequence of this holism for hermeneutic inquiry itself is that such inquiry cannot proceed analytically, by separating out various independent components. Hermeneutic inquiry is, instead, always a matter of exhibiting the interconnectedness of parts within a whole, while at the same time the whole cannot merely be reduced to those interrelated parts. The whole is more than the parts and their interrelations.

Hermeneutics is a matter of disclosing the parts as they appear within the already understood whole. It is precisely a matter of disclosure-of showing what already lies before us-rather than proof of deduction. The disclosive character of hermeneutic practice leads to the employment of certain techniques: notably the use of metaphor and analogy, but also irony and an emphasis on particular, concrete examples. As hermeneutic discourse is characterized by holism, by 'circularity', so it always has a necessarily personal character. The thinker cannot stand outside of the circle of thought. Hermeneutics is not a process of abstract analysis, but a matter of self-reflection. Hermeneutic engagement brings with it a change in oneself and in one's ways of seeing.

Given this account of the nature of the hermeneutical, it should now be quite clear how far removed hermeneutic practice is from the practice of analysis-or, at least, from the way in which analysis presents itself. It should also be clear how much of a mistake it would have been to attempt an account of hermeneutic practice from an analytic perspective. To have done so would have resulted in a distortion-perhaps even a trivialization-of the whole notion of the hermeneutical. More generally, the attempt to judge or even to read a work of hermeneutics according to narrowly analytic standards will always lead to difficulties. It will lead,

for instance, to just the sort of difficulty that Kiihl alerts us to in his reading of Meløe – to charges of circularity – and perhaps also to what may well be inappropriate charges of ambiguity, equivocation, lack of argument, and imprecision. Irrespective of whether or not we think that hermeneutic practice is a legitimate form of philosophical discourse, it will always be mistaken-as it would be mistaken in the consideration of any discourse-to attempt to understand it without paying attention to its particular character. One must, as it were, speak the same language before one can judge whether what is said is true. In this respect, it is interesting to see how at least one analytically-minded philosopher has reacted to Heidegger. Roger Scruton writes of Heidegger's work in Being and Time that:

It is impossible to summarise Heidegger's work, which no one has claimed to understand completely ... it may be unintelligible, from the very nature of the phenomenological 'method' which it employs. Its language, like that of the later Husserl is metaphorical and contorted to the point almost of incomprehensibility ... There is a certain poetry in Heidegger's vision ... But how much of it is really philosophy, and how much an embroidered description of a private spiritual journey? ... Heidegger does not give any arguments for the truth of what he says. Most of Being and Time consists of compounded assertions, with hardly a 'thus', 'therefore', 'possibly', or 'it might follow that' to indicate the relations that are supposed to hold between them.⁴⁷

I do not think that such criticisms are atypical, and I do not find them surprising either. Hermeneutic practice will always seem illegitimate if it is looked upon from the perspective of analytic philosophical practice. It is interesting, however, to see that Scruton's list of criticisms mirrors pretty closely my own description of the essential features of hermeneutic discourse. Indeed, I suggest that many of Scruton's comments could as easily apply to Wittgenstein, though Scruton himself does not draw this conclusion. He does, in fact, use Wittgenstein to criticise Heidegger. 'This sort of philosophy,' he writes, 'shows, in Wittgenstein's words, "the bewitchment of the intelligence by language."' ⁴⁸

Whether hermeneutics is a legitimate form of philosophical discourse or not, it should be obvious that the hermeneutic method involves a different approach to philosophical discourse-an approach that will not be understood if looked at through the techniques of analytic practice. Hermeneutic thinkers must be read, not

analytically, but hermeneutically. Of course, according to the hermeneuticist, the reading of any text is a hermeneutic process, not in the sense that such reading also calls upon skills of analysis, but insofar as any reading is always structured according to the circularity of understanding. In most cases, however, the hermeneutic element remains implicit. When confronted by a work that is explicitly hermeneutic in its own methodology, the only legitimate response—the only response that properly attends to the work—is a reading that itself takes account of the hermeneutic element.

The reading of a hermeneutic thinker is thus even more of a hermeneutic process than is the reading of any other work. For the concepts involved in a work of hermeneutics are often so closely related that there can be no gradual progression from simpler to more complex notions. Reading a work of hermeneutics is more like seeing a painting or hearing a piece of music than understanding a proof. This is not to imply that argument is irrelevant in hermeneutic thinking, but any argument that is employed already presupposes some precomprehension of the concepts involved. One has to see before any sort of articulation can be possible. And what one has to see is not merely a series of separated parts but a whole ('Light dawns gradually over the whole'). Such seeing involves something like a leap. Only thus can the hermeneutic circle be entered into. This is indeed something that I noted earlier in discussing Heidegger's account of the fore-sightedness of understanding. William Richardson makes the point in relation to the reading of Heidegger himself:

... [hermeneutic] 'circle' expresses the a priori structure of There Being itself ... the task [of providing an analysis of Dasein] involves effort, and this effort involves an initial 'leap' (springen) The necessity of a leap will explain at once the difficulty of the analysis which follows, and its importance should be emphasised from the start. There is no gradual pedagogy in Heidegger. To fail to make with him the initial leap into the circular structure of There-being is to render any sympathetic understanding impossible.⁴⁹

Of course, it is quite possible that, having made 'the initial leap' with Heidegger, or with any other thinker, one may come to the conclusion either that Heidegger fails in what he attempts or, perhaps, that his very project is, in some sense, misconceived.

And there is certainly as much disagreement among practitioners of hermeneutics; as among practitioners of analysis. Yet this cannot be used to justify that rejection of Heidegger-or of Wittgenstein, Gadamer, Husserl or Derrida-that is based in a mere reaction against the different and unfamiliar. One certainly cannot write off criticism of such thinkers simply on the grounds that any such criticism must depend on a failure to understand. But the evaluation of any thinker must depend on an engagement with that thinker. All too often a refusal to accept the possibility of differences in philosophical style, methodology, and interests, and an assumption that only one form of practice is appropriate to philosophical inquiry has precluded any such engagement from the start and has, consequently, rendered almost worthless the 'evaluations' that have resulted. Thus have analytic thinkers often found the work of hermeneutic thinkers philosophically inadequate, while hermeneutic thinkers have advanced similar conclusions about the work of their analytic colleagues. Misunderstanding, mutual antagonism, and suspicion have been the inevitable results.

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In these pages, I have provided a brief exploration of the nature of hermeneutic practice. Such practice is not just distinguished by a peculiarity in definitional practice. The difference between hermeneutics; and analysis goes much deeper than that. Nevertheless, the focus on the problem of definition is an important one. For it is often on matters of definition that philosophical issues rest. The question may then arise whether hermeneutic and analytic definitional practices are really autonomous or whether one is more fundamental than the other. Kühl suggests that it is the hermeneutic mode that is prior and that most philosophical work is implicitly or explicitly committed to the employment of the hermeneutic method. If this were so, then the distinction between hermeneutics and analysis would not mark a simple division between two different ways of philosophizing. Rather, it would correspond to two different levels of philosophical reflection. Analysis would be dependent ultimately on hermeneutics.

Of course, the holistic conception of the nature of understanding that is the basis of hermeneutic theory is itself suggestive of the priority of hermeneutic practice over the analytic. For if the hermeneutic circle really does represent the structure of understanding, with the understanding of meanings as a special case of such understanding, then clearly analytic definition will only be possible by, as it were, confining attention to just a portion of the circle, rather than the whole. In other words, only by limiting the purview of our investigation into the meaning of a term will we be able to provide any (superficially) non-circular definition. Indeed, Heidegger perhaps suggests something like this himself in Being and Time, when he comments that mathematics is not more rigorous than history, only narrower.⁵⁰ This is not to say that the hermeneutic circle can be made to disappear; rather, the circle as a whole is left outside the scope of the particular discourse. The hermeneuticist's claim is that this is precisely why analysis is possible. The analytician simply restricts attention to a limited domain.

Of course, the fact that analysis does depend on such restriction of attention is seldom explicitly recognized by the analytician. Thus, the analytician typically misunderstands or misrepresents the nature of analytic practice itself, for the claim of analysis is that analysis is indeed an independent mode of practice. And this cannot be so if the above account is correct. But this point can be clarified further. In order for analysis to be an independently viable way of proceeding, it would have to be possible to attain complete transparency with respect to the concepts employed in analysis and with respect to the concepts analysed. Yet the burden of hermeneutic theory is that this sort of transparency is not possible. We can never fully articulate or make explicit the presuppositions of our inquiries. Thus analysis can only see itself as an independent mode by neglecting its own presuppositional – its ultimately hermeneutic-foundations.

There is a related point here also, and that is that any attempt to apply analytic definitional practice universally and exclusively – any attempt to provide 'complete' definitions – would result in either regress or, what is perhaps the same thing, circularity. This sort of point is, in fact, made by Carl Hempel in discussing the need for the definition of scientific terms.⁵¹ Hempel's conclusion is that we should

take certain terms as primitives. Perhaps Hempel's point could also be put by saying that certain fundamental terms are understood, not analytically, but hermeneutically. For I would suggest that, typically, a term is 'primitive' just insofar as it is definable only in terms of some whole-part relationship. Such 'primitive' terms form part of a horizontal structure within which a limited form of reductive definition is possible. Such terms can themselves be articulated only by seeing them in their interconnection. This does not mean that analysis is impossible, nor does it mean that philosophy can only be practiced hermeneutically. What it does mean is that analytic practice must always be aware of its limitations. Analysis always presupposes some prior grasp of the concepts it employs and the subject into which it inquires. Recalling Heidegger, I could say that analysis itself depends on the fore-sightedness of understanding. Analytic practice is limited just insofar as that fore-sight cannot be the subject of analysis itself.

That analytic practice should indeed be founded in the hermeneutical is perhaps not surprising. Hermeneutic techniques such as the use of metaphor and example are clearly present in the work of even the most analytically-minded philosophers. Of course, such techniques are looked upon by the proponents of analysis rather differently from the way they are regarded within hermeneutic practice. The analytician aims to keep the use of metaphor under the strict control of analytical technique. For the hermeneuticist, however, the position is somewhat reversed and it is the power of the metaphor that, to a large extent, is primary.⁵² It is 'seeing' that makes possible the hermeneutic 'language-game'.

Nevertheless, when one comes to look at the actual practice of philosophers, the distinction between analytic and hermeneutic practice is somewhat less clear than my discussion here might have suggested. Most philosophy is probably a mixture of both hermeneutic and analytic styles. Thus there is no simple analytic/hermeneutic divide with respect to which individual philosophers can be placed. Moreover, if all definition is ultimately founded in the hermeneutic, then the distinction between hermeneutics and analysis will, in any case, be a difference, not so much in the nature of definitional practice as in the ideology and rhetoric that accompany that practice. In this respect, Kühl was perhaps mistaken to think that he

had identified two distinct forms of definitional practice in the first place. There are not two forms of such practice but only one—the hermeneutical—though the hermeneutic character of such practice is often obscured or overlooked.

Of course, the claimed priority of the hermeneutical over the analytical is a claim of hermeneutic theory itself (perhaps such circularity is only to be expected) and the analyticians will naturally have their own replies to this claim. If I have not considered those replies here, it is not only because of a lack of space, it is also because, as the hermeneutically sensitive reader might notice, this paper has itself taken a hermeneutic approach to the hermeneutic/analytic distinction. Thus the answer to the problem that arose at the start of this paper, the problem of how one could approach the question of the nature of hermeneutic practice as distinct from analysis without already prejudicing the issue, must be that one cannot approach this matter in other than a prejudicial manner. In the very roundabout and circumspect method that has been adopted, I have already taken up an approach that was typically hermeneutic. For characteristic of hermeneutics is its reliance on an indirect, a circumspect, approach. The hermeneuticist aims to show, to get the reader to see, rather than to dissect and analyse. Only a roundabout, often discursive, sometimes repetitious, approach will be appropriate to the hermeneutic project. In this respect, my discussion has itself been hermeneutical in its orientation, not only in virtue of its subject matter, but in virtue of its method.

There is, of course, a problem here. Any attempt to disclose the nature of hermeneutic practice from within the practice of hermeneutics; (whether explicitly so or not) must already presuppose some sensitivity to hermeneutic practice on the part of the reader. Yet the impetus behind such an attempt must be, at least in part, a desire to communicate to the analytically-minded philosopher some conception of the nature of hermeneutics; as distinct from analysis. Such communication may well prove impossible, however, if hermeneutics; and analysis do indeed represent distinct, and perhaps even antagonistic, modes of philosophical practice. But, on the other hand, if the hermeneuticist is right, and hermeneutic practice is indeed fundamental even for the practice of analysis, then the attempt may not be entirely

in vain. For if hermeneutics is the more fundamental mode, then we are all practitioners of the hermeneutic art, whether we know it or not.⁵³

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- ¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief, ed. Cyril Barrett (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1972), p.28.
- ² Meløe, 'The Agent and his World,' in Praxeology: An Anthology, ed. Gunnar Skirbekk (Bergen, Stavanger, Oslo, Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1983), p.13.
- ³ Kühl, 'Worlds and Operations. Notes Concerning Jakob Meløe's Article: The Agent and his World,' Praxeology: An Anthology, p.39.
- ⁴ Kühl, *ibid.*
- ⁵ On the relation between Davidson and hermeneutics see especially chapter three below.
- ⁶ I refer to holism here and elsewhere in this paper in a very general way. It is meant to indicate the holistic approaches to meaning and understanding found in the work of a number of philosophers including, particularly, Heidegger and Wittgenstein-approaches that typically concur in claiming that, with respect to any meaningful structure, understanding a part always involves a grasp of the whole. It is a much wider notion than Fregean semantic contextualism (though in Wittgenstein it may be seen as a generalisation of that notion) and involves not only the idea that the structure of meaning is holistic, but that the attempt to understand meaning is itself holistically structured.
- ⁷ Kühl, 'Worlds and Operations. Notes Concerning Jakob Meløe's Article: The Agent and his World,' Praxeology: An Anthology, p.39
- ⁸ The idea of the 'fore-structure' of understanding is already implicit in the Husserlian notion of 'horizon'; see David Woodruff Smith and Ronald McIntyre, Husserl and Intentionality (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1982), especially Chapter V, pp. 227-65.
- ⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), pp.235ff.
- ¹⁰ Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), H152.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, H7.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, H8.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, H152.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, H8.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, H8. See also Gadamer's comments on Heidegger's discussion of the circle, Truth and Method, p.261.
- ¹⁶ Being and Time, H153
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, H38-1140; see William J. Richardson, Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), p.631. Even if the relation between hermeneutics and phenomenology is more complex than a mere identification of the one with the other, still the relation is a very close one. Gadamer, like Heidegger, has presented his own work as 'phenomenological' while Paul Ricouer 'Phenomenology and Hermeneutics', Nous 9 (1975), pp.85-102.
- ¹⁸ See Heidegger, Being and Time, H28
- ¹⁹ I say 'ultimately' because Heidegger acknowledges that truth is also understood as correctness or correspondence. Indeed, in his later thought, Heidegger sees truth as always understood in terms of correctness. Aletheia is then no longer spoken about as truth-see Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," trans. Joan Stambaugh, in Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp.388-90.
- ²⁰ But see 'The Centrality of Truth, chapter eleven below.
- ²¹ Philosophical Hermeneutics, ed. and trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1976), pp.75,127 & 173-7.
- ²² The theory of elementary propositions in the Tractatus is, of course, atomistic. However, other aspects of Wittgenstein's thought in the Tractatus betray a much more holistic orientation. This seems to be so in respect of his more general metaphysical considerations-in the last few pages of the book, for instance-and at one point Wittgenstein seems to present what is almost a version of

the hermeneutic circle itself-see Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, trans. D. F. Pears and Brian McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), §6.2322.

- ²³ The connection between Wittgenstein and continental hermeneutics is almost commonplace today, but was already explicitly suggested by the work of Peter Winch in The Idea of a Social Science (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958). Winch connects Wittgensteinian ideas about rule-following and 'forms of life' with the philosophy of Verstehen.
- ²⁴ Wittgenstein, On Certainty, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), §141 and §341.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, §204
- ²⁶ Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976), §109 and §126
- ²⁷ Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, ed. G. H. von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 7e.
- ²⁸ Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief, pp.19-21 28-29.
- ²⁹ Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, 24e.
- ³⁰ Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, §109
- ³¹ This is perhaps the reason why hermeneutically-inclined writers are more likely to employ examples from rural or pre-twentieth century life. There may, of course, be an element of nostalgia in the use of such examples, but for the most part such examples are both more immediately familiar in that they draw on more basic activities and relationships, while also providing a richer, and more easily developed, context of analysis .
- ³² David Pears, Wittgenstein (London: Fontana, 1971), p.125.
- ³³ Philosophical Investigations, §506. It needed be absent-mindedness at issue here – it is a common feature of many people's psychology that they have no immediate sense of which bodily directions are referred to by 'right' and 'left', but actually have to reflect on which is which. It is said that this was true of Freud, and I can also confirm the phenomenon in my own case.
- ³⁴ See Viggo Rossvaer, 'Philosophy as an Art Form,' Wittgenstein-Aesthetics and Transcendental Philosophy, ed. Kjell S. Johannessen and Tore Nordenstam (Vienna: Verlag H61der-Pichler-Tempsky, 1981).
- ³⁵ See Alan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, Wittgenstein's Vienna (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), pp.157-61.
- ³⁶ Davidson, 'What Metaphors Mean', Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p.263.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ The notion of 'horizon' appears throughout Husserl's writings and especially in the Cartesian Meditations, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960). The notion also appears in the work of Gadamer and in the writings of Merleau-Ponty and, of course, Heidegger. In Husserl the notion of 'horizon' is developed in a number of ways-see David Woodruff Smith and Ronald McIntyre, Husserl and Intentionality – the sense in which I use it here is closest to the particular sense employed by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. In a footnote to the English translation of Heidegger's Being and Time, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson point out that there "the word 'horizon' is used with a connotation somewhat different from that to which the English-speaking reader is likely to be accustomed. We tend to think of a horizon as something which we may widen or extend or go beyond; Heidegger, however, seems to think of it rather as something which we can neither widen nor go beyond, but which provides the limits for certain intellectual activities performed 'within' it" (Being and Time, H1). The use of the notion of horizon in Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer – and it is a common concept in all three-does, however, vary-even within the writings of any one of these thinkers.
- ³⁹ Of course holism itself rules out the possibility of ever achieving a final completed vision of the whole. For the whole is only to be articulated and understood through its parts and there will always be more than one way of arranging those parts. There is, after all, no independent ground to appeal to outside of the whole-there is only the interrelation of parts and whole. There is thus an ineliminable indeterminacy to the entire hermeneutic project. That such indeterminacy does indeed follow from holism is particularly evident in Donald Davidson's account of radical

interpretation. I have argued elsewhere (see my Donald Davidson and The Mirror of Meaning, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, and various other essays contained below) that holism is the determining feature of Davidson's account of interpretation; it leads directly to an interpretative indeterminacy according to which there is always more than one acceptable way of assigning attitudes and interpreting behaviour (See Davidson, "Belief and the Basis of Meaning," Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation, 153-54; and "The Inscrutability of Reference," Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation, 239-40). While Davidson's work is thoroughly within the Anglo-American analytic tradition, his work also has strong hermeneutic elements. Central concepts such as meaning, belief, and truth are defined by Davidson, not by means of some reductive analysis, but in terms of their interrelation within the overall project of interpretation

⁴⁰ Gadamer, Truth and Method, p.341.

⁴¹ See Truth and Method, 273, 337, and 358

⁴² Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), pp.357ff. It should be noted, however, that Rorty very much adapts the hermeneutical to his own ends

⁴³ See, for instance, Being and Time, H372ff

⁴⁴ Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, l6e.

⁴⁵ 'The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy', Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations, ed. George Pitcher (Macmillan: London, 1968), p.184.

⁴⁶ The hermeneutical concern with self-knowledge means that hermeneutical thought must always be oriented in an important way towards the social sciences and, of course, towards history. This is something that is obvious from the history of hermeneutics itself. It is also a feature notoriously lacking in much modern Anglo-American philosophy – see the comment by Stanley Cavell, ibid

⁴⁷ From Descartes to Wittgenstein (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.259-64.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.264

⁴⁹ Richardson, Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought, p.42.

⁵⁰ Being and Time, H153.

⁵¹ Carl G. Hempel, Philosophy of Natural Science (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p.87.

⁵² The role of metaphor in philosophical writing, is of course, something to which Derrida has given particular attention in 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy', New Literary History 6 (1974), 5-74.

⁵³ One issue that I have neither the time nor the space to discuss here is how the distinction between analysis and hermeneutics bears on deconstructionist practices. This is perhaps a more significant question if Wittgenstein is taken, as some have taken him, to be involved in a form of deconstruction. Is deconstruction another form of practice to be added to the hermeneutic and analytic? Certainly deconstruction is sometimes opposed to hermeneutics, and while hermeneutics often aims to elucidate concepts, deconstruction sometimes appears to aim at undermining them. However, deconstruction relies upon a fundamentally hermeneutical conception of the nature of understanding. What is specific to deconstruction is an attempt to turn the circle of understanding back on itself to exhibit the indeterminacy, and occasionally the self-contradiction, of the process of understanding. Often the application of such deconstructive technique is simply part of an attempt to rid understanding of the idea that analysis can take us all the way down to an ultimate foundation. But the idea of the impossibility of such a foundation would also seem to be a key element in hermeneutic theory and is exemplified in the very idea of hermeneutic circularity as such, and the indeterminacy it brings with it. Historically deconstruction seems to arise out the confluence of hermeneutic and structuralist analysis, but I would suggest it remains within a broadly hermeneutic frame, and that the deconstructionist mode within hermeneutics is one that explicitly takes up the indeterminacy arising out of holism as its theme. On this general point, see Richard Palmer, "On the Transcendability of Hermeneutics." Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects, ed. Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984). The issue of the relation between hermeneutics and deconstructivist practice—especially Palmer's discussion of this—also bears on the important question (not raised here) as to whether Heidegger's celebrated 'Kehre' involved a turning away from the hermeneutic approach.