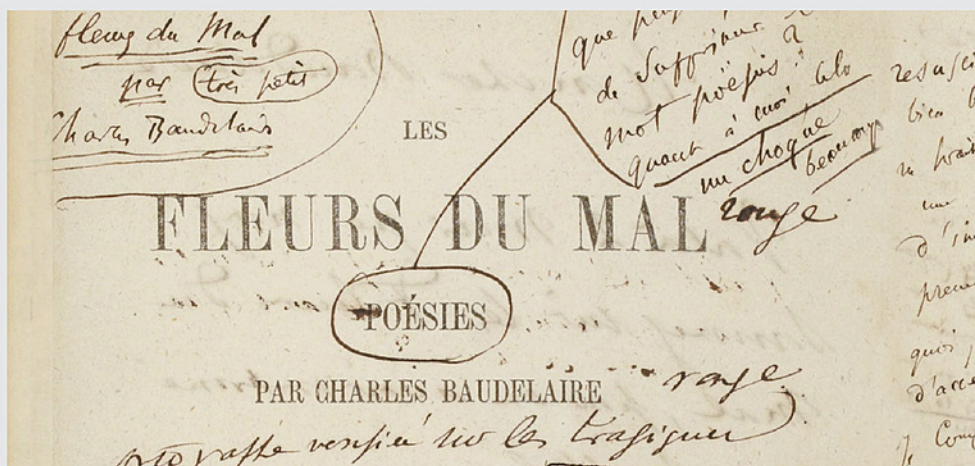


Hermeneutics Between Berlin and Paris

Edited by
Tim Mehigan and
Christian Moser



Reality and Hermeneutics 9

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Reality and Hermeneutics

Bonn Studies in the New Humanities

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Hermeneutics between Berlin and Paris

The Search for Ethics

edited by

Tim Mehigan and Christian Moser

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Brisbane and Bonn, August 2024

Tim Mehigan and Christian Moser

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Introduction: The Situation of Ethics Today

Tim Mehigan and Christian Moser

I. "The Last Chapter in the Story of the World"

In December 1810, the Prussian writer Heinrich von Kleist published an essay in four parts in the *Berliner Abendblätter* entitled *Über das Marionettentheater* (*On the Puppet Theatre*). On the surface, the essay is straightforward, presenting a series of claims about the artistry of a puppet in the hands of a master puppeteer, though it is not the puppeteer who is discussed in the essay but the puppeteer's creation, the puppet. The claims made about the puppet are extravagant. Its movements, as the oracle in the essay, a certain Mr C, tells us, can be classed as 'graceful,' very much in the sense discussed by Schiller in his essay *On Grace and Dignity* (1793):¹ they are free of artifice and adornment, they do not come across as calculated or controlled, and they appear to conform to the puppet's inner center of gravity. How it might be possible for a lifeless puppet to command this type of movement, whereas, in the human being, such movement is achieved, where at all, only in the highest art, is the question with which the essay is concerned. It takes the form of a dialogue with a first-person narrator who appears to give up his natural skepticism about Mr C's claims over the course of their exchange. The result of this artfully constructed series of exchanges about the puppet is that the claims of 'Mr C' cannot be dismissed as fanciful or tongue-in-cheek; it seems plausible that movement of this type could be imagined, even if otherwise restricted in the human realm to a "noble soul" (*schöne Seele*), as Schiller had contended nearly two decades before.²

It turns out that Kleist's essay, while ostensibly concerned with a contentious proposition, is in fact mainly concerned with the process by which we evaluate such propositions. The point of the essay is not whether Mr C's contentions are objectively true but why it is that an interlocutor – the 'I' of the dialogue who might just as well be the 'I' of Kleist's audience, the reader – might come to hold them to be true. Truth is engaged in the essay, for this reason, not as a truth

¹ Friedrich Schiller, *On Grace and Dignity*, in *Works of Friedrich Schiller. Cambridge Edition* (Boston: S.E. Cassino & Co., 1884), vol. 8, *Aesthetical & Philosophical Essays*, 175–210. Original: Friedrich Schiller, *Über Anmut und Würde*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5, *Erzählungen, Theoretische Schriften* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 2004), 433–88 (first publ. 1793).

² Schiller, *On Grace and Dignity* [cf. note 1], 209–11.

statement at the first order of signification but as a question of second-order truth at the level of understanding, a hybrid form of truth-directed inquiry where the question of the validity of truth statements is tested against a range of factors including the interests of speakers as well as their interlocutors. Kleist's *Marionettentheater* essay is valuable in the history of ideas not only because it shifts attention away from the propositional form of truth statements, but also because it provides an implicit rationale for doing so, namely, that truth of the first order no longer brooks the situational complexity of modern times. In light of this shortfall, Kleist casts knowledge in the guarded epistemological terms with which we are familiar today.

In broaching the topic of situational complexity in these terms, Kleist's essay gives evidence of a new shift in thinking that arose in and around Berlin in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Let us call this new thinking 'Berlin hermeneutics.' Berlin hermeneutics represented an attempt to use the resources of a new type of philosophy introduced by Immanuel Kant in the 1780s, as well as a new type of literature brokered by poets and writers who read Kant and the Kantians in the 1790s, in order to cast understanding in a fundamentally new light. This ambition to generate a more powerful platform for the knowledge project than had existed previously soon had an institutional correlate in the shape of the new Berlin University at the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century. Under the pen of Friedrich Schleiermacher, one of the organizers of the new University and its first Professor of Theology, the platform of the new knowledge was formally promulgated as 'hermeneutics.' Schleiermacher devoted much of the next two and a half decades in his post at the new Berlin University to mapping out the dimensions of this intellectual program.

Even before the new Berlin University became a reality, Kleist had been one of the first thinkers to grasp the full significance of the shift from first-order propositionality to second-order understanding. Among others who had appreciated the importance of this shift were the early German Romantics, who sought either to transcend the gap between the two orders of intelligibility in the name of a new poetic style of thinking (Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel)³ or, as Heidegger was later to determine of Hölderlin, to absorb it into a new account of primordial being.⁴ Kleist, by contrast, took a different route, radicalizing the disjuncture between the two levels and casting the question of understanding as typically aporetic. Kleist's schooling in the problems that led him to a baseline skepticism about the process of understanding had been notably Kantian. Letters written to his bride and his half-sister in early 1801 give ample testimony of

³ Cf. Manfred Frank, *'Unendliche Annäherung': Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997).

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996); Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, trans. Keith Höller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000).

an encounter with Kant's philosophy that – unusual for a poet with no formal training in philosophy – had awakened in him a sensitivity to the problem of the world's inscrutability and led him to skeptical conclusions about the enterprise of knowledge.⁵ In the wake of this traumatic encounter with Kant's philosophy, it is not that Kleist, as he expresses that problem nearly a decade later in *Über das Marionettentheater*, feels only scorn for guilelessly or duplicitously advanced propositions of the first order. Nor is it the case that recourse to the process of deconstructing our presentiments about the world at the level of second-order understanding must now simply be endorsed. Rather, it is the case that Kleist was unable to reconcile himself without demurrer to what Kant's Copernican turn had effectively urged upon him – the need to assay a fundamentally new way of imagining the type of referentiality that is possible for human beings when they attempt to comprehend the objects of the world and their own place in that world. While Kleist declared time on Cartesian rationalism and the dualism that underlay it, he did so without immediately ratifying the 'postmodern' alternative of second-order intelligibility familiar to us today. Thus, while appreciating the significance of the 'fall' into the language of modern consciousness like no other of his age, Kleist kept alive nostalgia for the state of innocence before this fall. Though he knows not to take it as given, the narrator of the *Marionettentheater* essay leaves open the prospect that a "second eating from the tree of knowledge" is – or at any rate ought to remain – a possibility for human beings.⁶

As the essay's closing statement tells us, such a renewal of the knowledge project would have to constitute "the last chapter in the history of the world" – the word *Geschichte* in the German original neatly capturing the ambiguity attaching to the progress from first- to second-order intelligibility in the meaning either as 'history' or 'story'.⁷ To write a 'history' of consciousness, as Hegel attempted in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), becomes one of the options for philosophy after the Copernican turn. To hold to the pre-eminence of narrative or 'story' in the process of understanding, by contrast, accords with the viewpoint followed by the literary Romantics. Kleist's response to the fragility⁸ of first-order intelligibility – this is the mark of his uniqueness in the history of ideas – was less to go down one path or the other than to open up consideration of a possible 'third way',⁹ a path depending on, and leading through, the agency

⁵ Tim Mehigan, "The Scepticism of Heinrich von Kleist," in *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, ed. Paul Hamilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁶ Heinrich von Kleist, *Über das Marionettentheater*, in *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 2, ed. Helmut Sembdner (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 345, trans. Tim Mehigan.

⁷ Kleist, *Über das Marionettentheater* [cf. note 6], 345.

⁸ Note the importance of the word *gebrechlich* (fragile) in Kleist's post-Kantian grammar.

⁹ The question of a 'third way' is raised in Odysseus's remarks at the beginning of Kleist's play *Penthesilea*: "So viel ich weiß, gibt es in der Natur / Kraft bloß und ihren Widerstand,

of language. The third way that Kleist glimpses as a possibility for knowledge considers what happens when the medial condition of language becomes a 'player' in the project of knowledge. Kleist's radical suggestion is to ask, in that case, if language might not in and of itself – both in the hands of its users and, as it were, independently of them – bring about through its own processes the final goal of epistemological clarity. Even if Kleist was not to reach a final position in regard to such a third way, his suggestions were far-sighted and valuable. In his essays and short stories in particular, Kleist showed that the path to modernity must be imagined as a critical project where concepts and language, philosophy and literature, provide equal service. It is in this critical outlook with its basal commitment to a hybrid form of understanding that the impetus for modern hermeneutics may be found.

II. Kleist and Gadamer

The present volume has grown from these considerations. The editors of this collection and the leaders of the international research exchange lying behind a three-year collaboration are scholars of the works of Kleist of long standing. Kleist lies at the origin of this project on account of his dramatization of the move to second-order intelligibility, a move – this is the contention of our volume – which is inseparable from the situation of ethics today. Kleist framed this approach to the region of the ethical in his *Marionettentheater* essay in terms of a 'journey around the world' whose goal would be to assess whether paradise can be entered by a 'rear gate.' These words characterize in our view the situation in which ethics still finds itself. Ethics does not present a set of principles to be derived from logical processes and invoked in 'live' situations to which it is thought to apply but a problem of undertaking a strenuous mental-emotional 'journey around the world' in search of infinite understanding of the finite, or, as Kleist put it, "paradise through the rear door."¹⁰ If ethics does indeed present in this way, the ethical issue we face today is not how we might command a set of ethical principles in an attitude of resistance to the predations and slippages of language – the default situation for ethics bequeathed to posterity as a result of the settlement of philosophy's 'ancient dispute' with literature – but how we must acknowledge these predations and slippages, keep them in view, and yet still arrive at an ethics equipped to serve the variable situational

nichts Drittes" ("As far as I know, there is only mere force and its opposite in nature, not a third thing"). Heinrich von Kleist, *Penthesilea*, in *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 1, ed. Helmut Sembdner (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 125–26.

¹⁰ Kleist, *Über das Marionettentheater* [cf. note 6], 342 ("Doch das Paradies ist verriegelt und der Cherub hinter uns; wir müssen die Reise um die Welt machen, und sehen, ob es vielleicht von hinten irgendwo wieder offen ist").

complexity required of ethical thought today. The ethics that we defend in this volume, for this reason, is neither an ethics stabilized at the propositional level as a wholly 'philosophical ethics' nor yet decidedly only of the second order where postmodern ennui forever consigns us anew to the consequences of the calamitous fall into consciousness. The ethics that we defend is one that simultaneously looks both ways, that is, that looks to the propositions arising from the work of philosophy without which, as the ancients already understood, there could not be an ethics to begin with, *as well as* to the suggestions about the pitfalls of nihilistic consciousness against which postmodern critiques in their better forms warn. If an ethics after and in view of the persistence of postmodernism in our own day is to be sustained, it must be advanced as an event of reading, which is to say, as a critical, 'readerly' form of ethical engagement, as a 'hermeneutic' ethics.

Hans-Georg Gadamer clearly understood the importance of this approach to ethics. In a supplement to his major work *Wahrheit und Methode*,¹¹ perhaps the single most important contribution to hermeneutics of the 20th century, Gadamer gives attention to another essay of Kleist's, the essay *Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden* (*On the Gradual Completion of Thoughts While Speaking*), written in 1805 but not published in the poet's lifetime. Gadamer's attention to Kleist is motivated by the role attributed in that essay not just to language as such but especially to the factor of spoken language in its structuring of what Gadamer considers to be the underlying dialogic mode of ethicality since antiquity. In Kleist's essay, the mental-emotional admixture investing spoken language steps to the fore and, in one powerful example the essay discusses, precipitates nothing less than the French Revolution. As Kleist discusses with one eye on (for him) recent history, the aristocrat Mirabeau, who had moved across to the third estate in the French parliament shortly before, does not immediately find the right language with which to respond to the sovereign's instruction to disband, as conveyed to him and his fellow deputies by the Master of Ceremonies. Instead, words – in the form of the famous retort "the nation gives orders but receives none!" – rise to the surface spontaneously within *him*, thereby 'completing' the form of his thought through their own inner workings.¹² As Kleist contends, anticipating on the one hand the performative aspects of language later analyzed by J. L. Austin, and, on the other, the

¹¹ Reproduced under the title "To what extent does language preform thought?" in the English translation of *Wahrheit und Methode*, published as *Truth and Method*. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. William Glen-Doepel (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975); Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. rev. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2006), 545–54.

¹² Heinrich von Kleist, *Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden*, in *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 2, ed. Helmut Sembdner (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 320, trans. Tim Mehigan.

emotional-psychological disposition of the speaker later investigated by psychoanalysis, speech is rarely if ever mastered or fully sovereign. Gadamer is led to the following conclusion:

The background of the universality of this linguistic access to the world is that our recognition of the world – to use an analogy – does not present itself to us as an infinite text which we painfully and piecemeal learn to recite. [...] Speaking is only speaking if we accept the risk of positing something and following out its implications. [...] In fact, language is the single word, whose virtuality opens for us the infinity of discourse, of speaking with one another, of the freedom of ‘expressing oneself’ and ‘letting oneself be expressed.’¹³

In Gadamer’s view no less than Kleist’s, then, the act of speaking holds within it an ethical orientation of potentially limitless trust towards an interlocutor – an attitude of ‘expressing oneself’ to others and allowing ‘oneself to be expressed’ through language. To use language and speak in this way, though we might not suspect it, is to strike out on an ethical ‘journey around the world’ on the basis of something like Kantian ‘good will.’¹⁴ As a speaker plagued by a stutter, Kleist knew that nothing could be assumed of this ethical journey even at the raw physiological level. Yet, he did not consider this physical barrier to the completion of thoughts while speaking only to be a private affliction. Rather, language had a double quality as a ‘bridge’ to communication as well as a ‘barrier’ hindering it precisely because it operates to some extent independently of human beings. In this regard, Kleist had already moved beyond the Enlightenment position according to which language is an efficient instrument serving human ends. It is precisely this attribute of language’s independence from its users that brings into relief the ‘immanence’ we find in the hermeneutical today – a hermeneutics whose vanishing point is no longer, as our ethical talk assumed for so long, the ‘truth’ of transcendent being, the truth of the ‘word of God made flesh.’ Berlin hermeneutics comes alive on the back of the insight that nothing about the process of understanding is assured unless and until proper attention is applied to the independent processes at work in language.

III. From Berlin to Paris

As we define it speculatively in this volume, ‘Berlin hermeneutics’ could be said to have resulted from two distinct historical processes: the rapid progress of secularization of European society in the late eighteenth century on the one

¹³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method* [cf. note 11], 552–53.

¹⁴ Derrida refers to the issue of ‘good will’ in his paper “Three Questions to Hans-Georg Gadamer,” trans. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 52.

hand, and social and political upheaval as a consequence of the French Revolution on the other. Berlin hermeneutics aimed to respond to both historical developments. Its most important early advocate, as we have already suggested, was Friedrich Schleiermacher, who set out the major components of a hermeneutic program in the three decades following the foundation of the new Berlin University in 1810.

There are two main features of the program Schleiermacher inaugurated. First, under the influence of the German discussion of Greek ideals after Winckelmann, hermeneutics was expressly directed at cultivating a responsiveness to art and literature, thereby ending the medieval dispensation of the Holy Roman Empire according to which hermeneutics was to be carried out pre-eminently within a religious context. Second, in a move against the primacy of Enlightenment ideals of sociality, the foundational moment for Berlin hermeneutics was found in the question of individual subjectivity. In discharging the task of cognition, Berlin hermeneutics followed the logic of Kant's Copernican turn toward the importance of the subjective viewpoint. At the same time, Berlin hermeneutics agreed with Schiller's view of the shortcomings of Kant's aestheticism,¹⁵ a criticism maintaining that Kant had failed properly to connect aesthetics and ethics – or to authorize such a connection. Berlin hermeneutics took note of Schiller's revision of Kant by positioning ethics as the vanishing point of all literary-hermeneutic activity. The remedy for these shortcomings, however, was not to be worse than the malady. Berlin hermeneutics, for this reason, understood itself to be attaching Kantianism to a more secure basis than hitherto and thereby remaining in accord with its major philosophical commitments. These philosophical commitments are discoverable in all later variants of Berlin hermeneutics, beginning with Hegel and extending through to Gadamer in the second half of the twentieth century.

Despite its useful augmentation of Kant's philosophy, Berlin hermeneutics would not have become so firmly established in the German setting but for the pivotal role it was to play in Wilhelm von Humboldt's model for the new Berlin University. On this model, hermeneutics was a key activity connecting perceptually self-aware subjects with the civic needs of the society they were later to enter – one that had incurred major disruption during the Napoleonic wars in the German lands in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Under Humboldt's pen, a hermeneutically informed notion of *Bildung* (or 'self-formation') was developed into an educational platform outright.¹⁶ Dilthey adapted this model of *Bildung* in the late nineteenth century in response to the emer-

¹⁵ As expressed in the essays *Über Anmut und Würde* (*On Grace and Dignity* [1793]) and *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (*Letters on the Aesthetic Education of the Human Being* [1795]).

¹⁶ Humboldt also adapted ideas about education that Goethe and Schiller, separately and together, had worked out during the decade of Weimar Classicism after 1794.

gence of science, making hermeneutic activity the rationale for an institutional compact in the universities between science and the humanities. In this form, *Bildung* held sway as the dominant educational platform in Germany and elsewhere until the political cataclysm of Hitler's fascism. Hofmannsthal's programmatic epistolary piece, *The Letter of Lord Chandos* (1902), is one of the first texts to draw implications from the type of accommodation between science and the humanities Dilthey had sought to broker. In Hofmannsthal's thinking, these terms were consciously 'modernist': the new is kept, as it were, hermeneutically in view by the role that science-facing art plays in figuring forth social and ethical ideals.

The caesura marked by German and Italian fascism brought an end to the dominance of Berlin hermeneutics after the Second World War. In the early decades of the post-war period, a new style of thinking was prepared in France that issued a direct challenge to Berlin hermeneutics. This new style of thinking can be referred to as 'Paris hermeneutics' since most of its key arguments emerged from the French academy at this time.¹⁷ Two factors stand behind the appearance of this new style of thinking. First, Paris hermeneutics pointed out that its rival is not developed (as Kant's philosophy is not) from a clear account of the role of language in cognitive processes. While Berlin hermeneutics everywhere paid heed to the importance of language, it did not move against the existing commitments of philosophy in doing so. The radical separation of language from philosophy, for this reason, was not achieved until much later. It is accomplished, notably, in the argument of Paris hermeneutics which maintained that any purported 'art of interpretation' would need to undertake a proper and self-aware 'linguistic turn.' Second, under the influence of the absurdist revolt in the art of the avantgarde in the decades after 1945, Paris hermeneutics fell back on an old form of radical skepticism, arguing, as Derrida was to put it, that "*there is nothing outside the text*" ("*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*"), that, in other words and by implication, propositional thought cannot draw its legitimation from any domain exterior to that of 'internal' textual reference.¹⁸ This also meant that textual arguments themselves are unstable on their own ground and ethical arguments reaching to such an "outside" particularly so. Instead of 'hegemonic' discourses extracted from unreflected language, Paris hermeneutics put forward a program of 'deconstruction' of 'master discourses' directed above all at identifying the circumstances in which power effects condition language and flow through thought. In carrying out this program, Paris hermeneutics pitted language against concepts, corralling both in degrees of

¹⁷ Note that the thinking of Paul Ricœur to our mind sits outside 'Paris hermeneutics' and would sooner align with the approach of 'Berlin hermeneutics.'

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 158, emphasis in original.

isolation from each other that were then solidified into the 'two cultures' position familiar in today's cultural discussions about 'warranted' knowledge.

The ground shifted decisively, then, as a result of the emergence of Paris hermeneutics. Art could find no argument about its right to existence other than an 'art for art's sake' position – a remnant argument from the Romantic discussion of the early nineteenth century. When Gadamer and Derrida came together to discuss hermeneutics in Paris in the year 1981, what became evident was that Berlin hermeneutics and Paris hermeneutics had in certain respects become mutually incomprehensible projects. While Gadamer, in that discussion, located the supports for hermeneutics, as before, in categories of philosophical thought, Derrida recurred to an epistemic skepticism that argued against the capacity of any text to say adequately what it means, much less what it means ethically. Meaning, for Derrida, had become a business of making do with concepts of strictly limited efficacy, agreement for which could no longer be secured in the broad and would have to be negotiated piecemeal in the narrow. The argument that hermeneutics of any description had the capacity to speak authoritatively about human ends in a wider setting of overall sense- or meaning-making – Gadamer's assumption – had become almost completely incoherent for Derrida.

The project of hermeneutics that the present volume seeks to bring to light, from this angle, asks what the task of understanding must be taken to amount to today given this historically significant bifurcation between Berlin and Paris hermeneutics. Can language and concepts be brought into alignment, as early German philosophical Romanticism appeared to maintain and as Dilthey, in the area of education, considered conceivable in an institutional setting, or must attention be directed to a medial form of connectivity invoked to bring them together, as the writer Heinrich von Kleist intimated at the beginning of the modern period? If, however, language and concepts remain incongruent and skepticism about the connection of language with concepts holds under all circumstances, are the literature and art of our times condemned to be seen as a futile activity of configuring accidental alignments between thought and feeling under the influence of some sort of 'gradual completion of thoughts while speaking'¹⁹ – the completion here being 'technical' and 'occasionalistic' rather than essential or ethical?

These are the questions with which this volume grapples. It presents a series of forays into the domain of recent hermeneutic reflection in search of an ethics for our time which, as the rupture of Berlin and Paris hermeneutics implies, cannot be attached to, or reliably located, in the province of either. The volume puts in the spotlight not only the problem of the disjuncture in hermeneutics between a philosophically and a linguistically informed project of understand-

¹⁹ Kleist, *Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden* [cf. note 12].

ing; it also introduces new positions that have the potential to reorient the search for ethics in a post-religious era. The most promising of these new positions do not settle, uncritically, on either side of the divide between Berlin and Paris hermeneutics, so much as seek to move beyond the terms of both, configuring the process of world-making in art and literature as a limited undertaking where the ethical *tertium comparationis*, strictly speaking, is never truly available. The volume therefore supposes that modern (and postmodern) literature develops its own variety of ethics (and, indeed, of hermeneutics) which does its work in areas not directly available to philosophy or political theory. The present volume aims to shed light on what such an aesthetically self-aware, aspirationally ethical, ‘immanent hermeneutics’ might look like in practice and, indeed, what it might be good for.

IV. The Literary Modality of Ethics

In the end, the specific sort of immanent, decidedly literary, ethics that our volume advocates aims to avoid an all too harsh opposition of ‘Berlin hermeneutics’ and ‘Paris hermeneutics’ and to relativize their supposed irreconcilability. It may even help to initiate a hermeneutic dialogue between the two camps or create an awareness that such a dialogue has in fact already been in existence for quite a time. The impression of irreconcilability was the result of the first, seemingly unfortunate, Paris meeting between Gadamer and Derrida in 1981. What has been preserved in memory from this meeting above all is the famous formulation with which Derrida counteracted Gadamer’s intention to reach an “agreement in understanding” among the participants in the interpretative dialogue:²⁰ Derrida confronted the understanding of the other, which according to Gadamer was supposed to emerge from the good will of the dialogue partners and the continuous work of interpretation, with an unavoidable “interruption of *rapport*, a certain *rapport* of interruption.”²¹ However, the conversation, which initially seemed to have been aborted in Paris, found its continuation for all that – across manifold breaks and interruptions or perhaps even precisely *through* such breaks. There were further encounters between Gadamer and Derrida which ultimately led to a mutual rapprochement: Gadamer made greater allowance for the irreducible element of difference and the incomprehensible, the indissoluble strangeness, which is inherent in every process of understanding and at the same time spurs it on; Derrida, on the other hand,

²⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Text and Interpretation,” trans. Dennis J. Schmidt and Richard E. Palmer, in Michelfelder and Palmer, *Dialogue and Deconstruction* [cf. note 14], 21. – See Mark Freed’s article in the present volume.

²¹ Derrida, “Three Questions [cf. note 14],” 53, emphasis in original.

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