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Heidegger and Gadamer on the History of Being and the Relationship between Being and Language [*]

For Rosa Maria Marafioti,
because "life without friends is like life on a desert island.
True friendship multiplies the good in life
and divides its evils".
(Baltasar Gracián)

1.

"Language is the house of Being (*Die Sprache ist das Haus des Seins*)[1]".

"Being that can be understood is language (*Sein, das verstanden werden kann, ist Sprache*)[2]".

These statements not only represent two of the most cited sentences of Heidegger and Gadamer, but undoubtedly belong to the group of the most famous statements of twentieth-century philosophy in general. Both sentences clearly refer to a close and indeed essential relationship between being and language, *Sein* and *Sprache*, thus pointing in the direction of a sort of ontological shift of phenomenology and hermeneutics guided by language[3]. In light of this, Heidegger and Gadamer have been enlisted among the main representatives of the continental versions of the so-called "linguistic turn" that has characterized to a wide extent the history of contemporary philosophy, and have been commonly interpreted as philosophically very close to each other. One of the most famous examples of this general consideration of their philosophical relationship

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[*] In this article Martin Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* (102 vols., Klostermann, Frankfurt a. M. 1976 ff.) will be cited as GA, while Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Gesammelte Werke* (10 vols., Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 1985-1995) will be cited as GW.

[1] GA 9, p. 313 (*Pathmarks*, ed. by W. McNeill, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York, 1998, p. 239).

[2] GW 1, p. 478 (*Truth and Method*, trans. by J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, Continuum, London-New York 2004, p. 470).

[3] As is well-known, "The Ontological Shift of Hermeneutics Guided by Language" is exactly the title of the third part of *Truth and Method*.

is surely represented by Jürgen Habermas' interpretation of Gadamer's hermeneutics as a mere "urbanization of the Heideggerian province[4]".

However, in recent times several outstanding scholars of phenomenology and hermeneutics have underlined that the philosophical relationship between Heidegger and Gadamer was actually more complex and nuanced than most interpreters have usually assumed. So, for example, according to Donatella Di Cesare "the image of Gadamer limiting himself to the 'urbanization of the Heideggerian province' would have to be revised. Certainly Gadamer himself contributed to this picture, by suggesting to many inattentive readers that his thought is a continuation of, rather than a break from, Heidegger's. Perhaps he himself did not want to recognize this break entirely, let alone emphasize it. Nevertheless, the filiation is much less direct than has often been thought[5]". Jean Grondin, for his part, has emphasized the difference between the two philosophers' fundamental attitude towards the humanist tradition, which Gadamer always tried to rehabilitate but Heidegger attempted instead to overcome[6]. And Günter Figal has poignantly defined Gadamer's attitude towards his teacher as one of "philosophical diplomacy" that was nevertheless aimed since the very beginning at radically (although always in a discrete way[7]) reinterpreting and transforming Heidegger's thought. As Figal puts it, "in a consummate act of philosophical diplomacy, Gadamer speaks against Heidegger precisely by giving the impression of speaking with him", but the fact that Gadamer's "reinterpretation could not be more radical becomes clear when one considers its philosophical consequences": in a word, in his *early* phenomenological hermeneutics of facticity "Heidegger concerns himself […] with the fact of the hermeneutical, Gadamer with the hermeneutics of the factical[8]".

Now, it is my aim to follow here this recent interpretation line by paying specific attention to Gadamer's selective reception of Heidegger's *late* philosophy. To this end, I will first outline the basic reasons underlying Gadamer's problematic relationship with, and even refusal of, Heidegger's Being-historical thinking (which, as is well-known, somehow

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[4] See J. Habermas, "Hans-Georg Gadamer: Urbanizing the Heideggerian Province", in *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, trans. by F. G. Lawrence, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 1983, pp. 189-198.

[5] D. Di Cesare, *Gadamer: A Philosophical Portrait*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington (IN) 2013, pp. 79-80.

[6] See J. Grondin, *Gadamer on Humanism*, in L. E. Hahn (ed.), *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, Open Court, Chicago-La Salle 1997, pp. 157-170.

[7] Figal actually speaks of Gadamer's "discrete radicality" (G. Figal, *Objectivity: The Hermeneutical and Philosophy*, trans. by Th. D. George, SUNY Press, Albany [NY] 2010, p. 1).

[8] G. Figal, *Objectivity*, pp. 10-12.

represents the general framework underlying *all* his writings following the famous and much discussed *Kehre*). Then, I will take into account some consequences of this general refusal with specific regard to Heidegger's and Gadamer's different concepts of being and language.

2.

As is well-known, Gadamer often and openly admitted that he "received impetuses for thinking from Heidegger very early on", and that he "attempted from the very beginning to follow such impetuses within the limits of [his] capabilities and to the extent that [he] could concur[9]". "One cannot think of my becoming who I am without Heidegger[10]", he said, and it is important to notice that such impetuses came both from Heidegger's early and late philosophical conceptions, which were notoriously separated from each other by a sort of caesura precisely represented by the turn (*die Kehre*). Although it is not my intention to suggest outmoded distinctions between "Heidegger I" and "Heidegger II", it is out of doubt that at least one basic change actually occurred in his philosophy by the late 1920s/early 1930s, namely the shift to the "new *seynsgeschichtlich* approach" characterized by the idea of Being as *Ereignis* and the concept of a "history of unfolding epochs of [Being's] self-manifestation[11]". From that moment on, the history of metaphysics is understood by Heidegger as the historical-ontological happening of the forgetfulness of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*), originated by the oblivion of the ontological difference in ancient Greek philosophy and culminating in the nihilistic character of our technological age.

According to Heidegger, it is with the "oblivion to [this] difference" that "the destiny of Being begins", and it is precisely this oblivion that constitutes "the event of metaphysics", "the richest and broadest event in which the world-history of the West achieves its resolution[12]". In this sense, metaphysics is viewed by Heidegger as virtually coinciding with nihilism, which "is not just one historical phenomenon among others",

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[9] GW 3, p. VI (*Heidegger's Ways*, trans. by J. W. Stanley, SUNY Press, Albany [NY] 1994, p. VII).

[10] H.-G. Gadamer, *Dialogischer Rückblick auf das Gesammelte Werk und dessen Wirkungsgeschichte*, in *Gadamer Lesebuch*, ed. by J. Grondin, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 1997, p. 293 (*The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, trans. and ed. by R. E. Palmer, Northwestern University Press, Evanston [IL] 2007, p. 425).

[11] C. B. Guignon, *Introduction*, in Id. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 1993, p. 15.

[12] GA 5, p. 365 (*Off the Beaten Track*, trans. by J. Young and K. Haynes, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 2002, p. 275).

but "is on the contrary the fundamental movement of the history of the West", the "scarcely recognized fundamental process in the destiny of Western peoples [that] moves history[13]". Metaphysics and nihilism thus represent to him the "concealed ground of our historical *Dasein*[14]": the happening that grounds history, that "runs through Western history from the inception onward", and that "the eyes of all historians will never reach, but which nevertheless happens[15]". However, although Gadamer always recognized the influence of Heidegger's late philosophy on him (going so far as to claim that the basis of his own "treatment of the universal hermeneutic problem" was precisely formed by Heidegger's "thinking of the turn[16]"), and although he accepted and developed many *particular* themes of the later Heidegger, it is precisely the latter's *general* conceptual framework (namely, the one concerning the history of metaphysics understood as the history of Being and thus compared to "the destiny of Being itself", "the unthought – because withheld – mystery of being itself" which forms "the historical ground of the world history[17]") that he seemed to question and sometimes explicitly rejected.

As I have explained in detail elsewhere[18], Gadamer's criticism basically rests upon the idea that Heidegger's *Seinsgeschichte*, after all, represents just another version of traditional *Geschichtsphilosophie*. One of Gadamer's fundamental beliefs is that the historically conditioned character of human consciousness constitutes "an insuperable barrier to its reaching perfect fulfilment in historical knowledge", which evidently questions every effort to reach an "historical viewpoint on everything" and understand history as "a structured whole[19]". Here Gadamer's criticism towards Hegel explicitly emerges, since the ambition of the latter's philosophy of history appears to him quite illegitimate, and it is important to notice that he sometimes extends these ideas also to Heidegger's Being-historical perspective.

According to Gadamer, "being historical" means precisely "never being able to pull everything out of an event such that everything that

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[13] GA 5, p. 218 (*Off the Beaten Track*, p. 163).
[14] GA 40, p. 100 (*Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by G. Fried and R. Polt, Yale University Press, London-New Haven 2000, p. 99).
[15] GA 40, p. 40 (*Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 39).
[16] GW 2, p. 446 (*Truth and Method*, pp. XXXII-XXXIII).
[17] GA 5, pp. 264-265 (*Off the Beaten Track*, pp. 197-198).
[18] Let me remind the reader of my article *Gadamer on Heidegger: Is the History of Being "Just" Another Philosophy of History?*, in "The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology", n. 41/3, 2010, pp. 287-303.
[19] GW 1, p. 235 (*Truth and Method*, p. 225).

has happened lies before me[20]", and this leads him to the conclusion that all Hegel-inspired philosophies of history (including those, like Heidegger's, which do not recognize this Hegelian inspiration as such) cannot "gain access to the reality of history", because they stand "in complete contradiction to the finitude of man's existence[21]". In fact, such "magnificent and yet violently construing philosoph[ies] of world history[22]" always run the risk not to do justice to "the actual reality of the event, especially its absurdity and contingency […]. The finite nature of one's own understanding is the manner in which reality, resistance, the absurd, and the unintelligible assert themselves. If one takes this finitude seriously, one must take the reality of history seriously as well[23]". In Gadamer's view, although Heidegger made continuous efforts to "draw a sharp contrast between his own peculiar, negative teleology of the forgetfulness of Being and Hegel's teleological system of the history of philosophy[24]", and although he never spoke of "an historical necessity anything like the one which Hegel claims as the basis of his construing of world history", nevertheless "in conceiving of metaphysical thought as a history unified by the forgetfulness of Being which pervades it" he could not avoid attributing "a kind of inner consequentiality to history[25]". In addition to this, Gadamer argues that the very idea of a "radical deepening of forgetfulness of Being" in our age led Heidegger to a sort of "eschatological expectation in thought of a turnabout", i.e. to something "quite similar to […] a dialectical reversal", and to "an historical self-consciousness" that is "no less all-inclusive than Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute[26]". So, in front of such ambitious and all-encompassing doctrines, Gadamer's fundamental belief in the inescapable finiteness of the possibilities of human knowledge leads him to ask: "which goal could history possibly contemplate – regardless of whether it be the history of Being or the history of the forgetfulness of Being – without straying again into the realm of simple possibility and phantasmal irrealities[27]?"

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[20] GW 3, p. 221 (*Heidegger's Ways*, p. 58).
[21] GW 2, p. 140 (*The Continuity of History and the Existential Moment*, trans. by T. Wren, in "Philosophy Today", n. 16/3, 1972, p. 236).
[22] GW 3, p. 214 (*Heidegger's Ways*, p. 50).
[23] GW 2, p. 445 (*Truth and Method*, pp. XXXI-XXXII).
[24] GW 3, p. 304 (*Heidegger's Ways*, p. 161).
[25] GW 3, p. 95 (*Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. by P. C. Smith, Yale University Press, New Haven-London 1976, p. 109).
[26] GW 3, p. 96 (*Hegel's Dialectic*, p. 110).
[27] GW 3, p. 221 (*Heidegger's Ways*, p. 59).

3.

Beside this first and actually very important form of criticism towards Being-historical thinking one can also mention other important divergences between Gadamer and Heidegger, for example with regard to the latter's "thoughtful dealings with the history of philosophy[28]". In fact, when asked about possible objections against Heidegger, Gadamer admits that it is "difficult to rule out as unjustified the complaint brought by classical philology […] against the violence of Heidegger's interpretations or even the incorrectness of certain of his interpretative strategies[29]", and he goes so far as to add that whenever Heidegger came to him "with interpretations of Greek texts" he actually took "every opportunity to drive home the fact that he [*scil.* Heidegger] didn't have enough Greek[30]".

In this context, the most relevant point of disagreement is probably represented by the interpretation of Plato, whose philosophy according to Heidegger somehow represented "the beginning of metaphysics" by reducing the proper essence of Being as such to the domain of ideas and thus establishing a profound "change in the essence of truth, a change that becomes the history of metaphysics, which in Nietzsche's thinking has entered upon its unconditioned fulfillment[31]". Quite on the contrary, Gadamer considers Plato as the non-dogmatic philosopher *par excellence*, who "in the end […] does not have a doctrine that one can simply learn from him, namely the 'doctrine of ideas'", since "the acceptance of the 'ideas' does not designate the acceptance of a doctrine so much as of a line of questioning that the doctrine has the task of developing and discussing[32]". So, while Heidegger from the 1930s on "worked to reduce the structural commonalities of the metaphysical tradition to a formal framework in which he could fit every 'fundamental metaphysical position' in the history of the Western tradition[33]", and argued that "the unity of philosophy as Platonic metaphys-

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[28] GW 3, p. 307 (*Heidegger's Ways*, p. 165).
[29] GW 3, pp. 376-377 (*The Beginning and the End of Philosophy*, in C. E. Macann [ed.], *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments*, Routledge, London-New York 1992, vol. 1, p. 17).
[30] H.-G. Gadamer, *L'ultimo dio. Un dialogo filosofico con Riccardo Dottori*, Meltemi, Roma 2002, p. 135 (*A Century of Philosophy: Hans-Georg Gadamer in Conversation with Riccardo Dottori*, trans. by R. Coltman and S. Koepke, Continuum, London-New York 2003, p. 132).
[31] GA 9, p. 237 (*Pathmarks*, p. 181).
[32] GW 2, p. 502 (*Reflections on My Philosophical Journey*, in L. E. Hahn [ed.], *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, p. 33).
[33] I. D. Thomson, *Ontotheology? Understanding Heidegger's* Destruktion *of Metaphysics*, in H. L. Dreyfus and M. A. Wrathall (ed.), *Heidegger Reexamined*, Routledge, London-New York 2002, vol. 2, p. 109.

ics conditions its possible forms up to Nietzsche³⁴", Gadamer, while agreeing that "the history of metaphysics could be written as a history of Platonism³⁵", somehow aimed at demonstrating that Plato himself was no Platonist at all in the Heideggerian sense of this term. As he claims indeed at the end of his lectures on the beginning of Western philosophy, "Plato was no Platonist" (just like Heidegger, for his part, cannot "be held responsible for the Heideggerians³⁶"!).

On this basis, it appears reasonable to define Gadamer's thought as "historical [but] not Being-historical", i.e. "not thought in the terms of the *Geschick*, of Being's sending-withdrawal. It is historical but not epochal, for it does not see the *epoché* of the *Seinsgeschick* in any given epoch. […]. His is a kind of Heideggerianism without the scandal of the *Ereignis* and the play of the epochs³⁷". In my opinion, the consequences of this *general* attitude of Gadamer towards Heidegger's late philosophy in the *particular* field of the philosophy of language are vast, relevant and far-reaching.

In fact, if it is true that "any attempt to make sense of the later Heidegger must start out from the conception of Being-historical thinking", which he presented "in the lectures […] delivered in the mid-1930s" but even more prominently "in the work he was privately composing during that period, the *Contributions to Philosophy*³⁸", then it is clear that even his *Sprachdenken* (just like his philosophy of art, his philosophical meditations on technology, and other aspects of his thought after the *Kehre*) must be essentially understood in the context of his Being-historical conception. For Heidegger it is indeed only "according to […] the essence of language *in the history of Being*" that language can be properly understood as "the house of Being, which is propriated by Being and pervaded by Being³⁹". Hence refusing Heidegger's fundamental *seinsgeschichtlich* approach, as Gadamer in my view actually did, has relevant effects on *all* areas of philosophizing, including the philosophy of language.

³⁴ B. Magnus, *Heidegger's Metahistory of Philosophy Revisited*, in H. L. Dreyfus and M. A. Wrathall (ed.), *Heidegger Reexamined*, vol. 2, p. 142.
³⁵ GW 2, p. 502 (*Reflections on My Philosophical Journey*, p. 34).
³⁶ H.-G. Gadamer, *L'inizio della filosofia occidentale*, ed. by V. De Cesare, Guerini, Milano 1993, p. 150 (*The Beginning of Philosophy*, trans. by R. Coltman, Continuum, London-New York 1998, p. 125).
³⁷ J. D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington-Indianapolis (IN), 1987, pp. 114-115.
³⁸ C. B. Guignon, *The History of Being*, in H. L. Dreyfus and M. A. Wrathall (ed.), *A Companion to Heidegger*, Blackwell, Oxford 2005, p. 399.
³⁹ GA 9, p. 333 (*Pathmarks*, p. 254 [my emphasis]).

4.

Among the relevant consequences of Gadamer's rejection of the Being-historical perspective one must surely mention the fact that he clearly refuses Heidegger's basic idea of a "language of metaphysics, into which one supposedly falls again and again": an expression that he explicitly defines as "poor, inexact[40]". According to Gadamer, there is indeed "no 'language of metaphysics'. There is only a metaphysically thought-out coinage of concepts that have been lifted from living speech", since even the "concept-words coined in the realm of philosophy are […] always articulated by means of the spoken language in which they emerge[41]". So, although Gadamer agrees that it is certainly "the language of metaphysics […] which makes [our] thinking capable of being formulated", and although he concedes that the "usages in Graeco-Latin times" of the "technical language of philosophy […] established ontological implications whose prejudiced character Heidegger uncovered[42]", he nonetheless asks: "Can a language […] ever properly be called the language of metaphysical thinking, just because metaphysics was thought, or what would be more, anticipated in it?[43]". And most of all: "Is there no rising above such a preschematizing of thought[44]?". Given the fact that, for him, "no conceptual language […] represents an unbreakable constraint upon thought[45]", Gadamer's implicit answer to the last question is obviously "Yes", which evidently marks a fundamental divergence with Heidegger.

Furthermore, while the later Heidegger conceives language as "the house of Being" or "the house of the truth of Being[46]", and "all beings, […] all creatures, each in its own way", as "beings […] in the precinct of language[47]", Gadamer primarily conceives language as "the house of the human being[48]" and on some occasions even claims that Heidegger "in the end simply says: 'It happens'. But for a long time", Gadamer adds, "I have always put it like this: 'I say *Sein* grudgingly, but I say *Da* quite willingly'[49]"! To be sure, this does not mean that Gadamer only conceives language as a dialogical, rhetorical and even ritual phenomenon (although

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[40] GW 10, p. 132 (*Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. by D. P. Michelfelder and R. E. Palmer, SUNY Press, Albany [NY] 1989, p. 121).
[41] GW 2, pp. 365-366 (*Dialogue and Deconstruction*, p. 107).
[42] GW 3, p. 247 (*Heidegger's Ways*, p. 78).
[43] GW 3, p. 236 (*Heidegger's Ways*, p. 78).
[44] GW 3, p. 237 (*Heidegger's Ways*, p. 79).
[45] GW 2, p. 332 (*Dialogue and Deconstruction*, p. 23).
[46] GA 9, p. 318 (*Pathmarks*, p. 243).
[47] GA 5, p. 310 (*Off the Beaten Track*, p. 233).
[48] H.-G. Gadamer, *Das Erbe Europas. Beiträge*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 1989, p. 172.
[49] H.-G. Gadamer, *L'ultimo dio*, p. 133 (*A Century of Philosophy*, p. 130).

in some contributions he surely does so[50]), since it is apparent that he, like Heidegger, assigns in the first place a fundamental ontological dimension to language. Not by chance, the final and indeed decisive part of *Truth and Method* is precisely entitled "Language as Horizon of a Hermeneutic Ontology[51]", while, as far as Heidegger's philosophy is concerned, one only needs to remember that, for him, "where language is not present, […] there is also no openness of beings […]. Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to world and to appearance[52]". However, the question at issue here is precisely that Heidegger and Gadamer, although at a very general level both belong to the language-as-world-disclosure paradigm opposed to the representational-function-of-language paradigm which has been predominant in the analytic tradition[53], actually have different concepts of language and also of being.

As I said, at least since the 1930s Heidegger's philosophy of language basically rests upon the so-called *Ereignisdenken* and its related Being-historical concept of *Geschick*, so that "our relation to language" according to him "is determined by destiny[54]". This, in turn, is essentially connected to his abovementioned concept of ontological difference, namely the difference between Being and beings, *Sein* and *Seiendes*. With regard to this concept, Günter Figal has noticed that "Heidegger uses this concept for the first time in his lecture-course *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*", but "the distinction between Being and beings […] had shaped his thinking since 1922", and "since 1926 [it] was called the 'ontological difference[55]'". Apropos of the same concept, Franco Volpi also underlined that the idea of a fundamental difference between Being and beings came early to Heidegger's mind, soon after his reading of Franz Brentano's dissertation *On the Manifold Sense of Being in Aristotle*, and that the ontological difference

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[50] I borrow this interpretation from G. Figal, *The Doing of the Thing Itself: Gadamer's Hermeneutic Ontology of Language*, in R. J. Dostal (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, p. 123. On this topic, see above all GW 8, pp. 400-440 (*Toward a Phenomenology of Ritual and Language*, trans. by L.K. Schmidt and M. Reuss, in L.K. Schmidt [ed.], *Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, Lexington Books, Lanham-Oxford 2000, pp. 19-50).

[51] GW 1, pp. 442-494 (*Truth and Method*, pp. 436-484).

[52] GA 5, p. 61 (*Off the Beaten Track*, p. 46).

[53] On this basic paradigm distinction, see the interesting observations of J. Habermas, "Hermeneutic and Analytic Philosophy: Two Complementary Versions of the Linguistic Turn" (in *Truth and Justification*, trans. by B. Fultner, The MIT Press, Cambridge [MA] 2003, pp. 51-82); and, more in general, Christina Lafont's systematic monograph *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 2000.

[54] GA 12, p. 256 (*On the Way to Language*, trans. by P. D. Hertz, Harper & Row, New York 1982, p. 135).

[55] G. Figal, *Introduction*, in *The Heidegger Reader*, ed. by G. Figal, trans. by J. Veith, Indiana University Press, Bloomington (IN) 2009, pp. 13 and 31.

assumed different meanings in the course of Heidegger's long and complex *Denkweg*, depending on the ways in which the concept of Being was thought. As a consequence, according to Volpi, Heidegger's concept of the ontological difference in the 1920s and in *Being and Time* has not exactly the same meaning as the concept appearing in his writings following the *Kehre*, all conceived from a Being-historical perspective[56].

Anyway, not only Gadamer objects to the somehow all-encompassing "narrative" of the *Seinsgeschichte* and its corollary of a supposed language of metaphysics that one, according to Heidegger, should attempt at overcoming, but sometimes he also points out and implicitly criticizes the "rather obscure[57]" character of the concept of ontological difference as such, even comparing it to a sort of hidden theological or mystical doctrine[58], and defining it – together with the related expression "beings as a whole" or "being in general" (*das Seiende im Ganzen*) – as "a very vague formulation[59]". "Another term […] which I ponder even now", as Gadamer writes in his essay *Hermeneutics and the Ontological Difference*, "is the phrase, *das Seiende im Ganze* (beings as a whole)":

> This was an expression that the young Heidegger used in almost the same way as the 'ontological difference'. It was a very vague formulation. As I would explain it today, by using such terms Heidegger avoided sharpening the meaning of his terms too much, for at that time he did not want to differentiate unequivocally between *Sein* and *Seiendes*, the way that he later took true pleasure in doing, such that in the end *Sein* was seen as not only quite different from *das Seiende* (concrete beings) and their mode of being (*Seiendheit*) but was even written with a *y*, as *das Seyn*. In the terminology of the later Heidegger, all these other expressions articulated the being of what at that time he called 'beings as a whole' (*das Seiende im Ganzen*). […] This expression named what Heidegger had in mind when, with a certain sharpening of his terminology, he did not say *Sein* but *das Seiende im Ganzen* (beings as a whole). […] When Heidegger later on speaks of the 'ontological difference', he has in mind something which remains unexpressed in this first formulation. He means by it the difference between being and all the things that are. What this is supposed to mean is rather obscure[60].

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[56] See F. Volpi, *Glossario*, in Id. (ed.), *Guida a Heidegger*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2002, p. 311
[57] GW 10, p. 58 (*The Gadamer Reader*, p. 359). On the somehow problematic character of Heidegger's concept of ontological difference, see also H.-G. Gadamer, *L'inizio della filosofia occidentale*, p. 147 (*The Beginning of Philosophy*, p. 123).
[58] GW 10, p. 58 (*The Gadamer Reader*, p. 358). As Gadamer claims: "One never spoke of a 'theological difference'. No, the first minting of this new Heideggerian term was too strong for that and too exclusive. But if one looks at the matter more closely, one still has a right to ask about what *das Sein* (Being) means and at the same time what is meant by the divine and God".
[59] GW 10, p. 59 (*The Gadamer Reader*, p. 358).
[60] GW 10, pp. 58-60 (*The Gadamer Reader*, pp. 358-359).

Now, according to some interpreters the concept of ontological difference "is present in Gadamer's thought as well", and somehow corresponds to "what he calls *speculative unity*[61]". A concept, the latter, that Gadamer defines in this way in *Truth and Method*: "To come into language does not mean that a second being is acquired. Rather, what something presents itself as belongs to its own being. Thus everything that is language has a speculative unity: it contains a distinction, that between its being and its presentation of itself, but this is a distinction that is really not a distinction at all[62]". However, this question is actually a very complex and controversial one, which is not possible to exhaustively deal with here, and in my opinion it is also quite doubtful to attribute such a strong and decisive significance to the ontological difference in Gadamer's philosophy[63].

Anyway, what matters for the specific purposes of this contribution is just that Gadamer's concept of being, inasmuch as it is conceived *out* of the Being-historical perspective of thinking, essentially differs from Heidegger's post-*Kehre* concept of Being. The fact that the two thinkers actually use different concepts of *Sein* has been recognized in a very clear way, among others, by Günter Figal, according to whom "Gadamer's conception of being differs from Heidegger's in that Gadamer does not take it to mean the open (*das Offene*), but instead linguistic revealability (*sprachliche Offenbarkeit*) and thus the truth of something[64]". Although Figal's observation makes primarily reference to Heidegger's and Gadamer's concepts of being in relation to their ontologies of artworks, I think that this observation can be generalized and applied to the two thinkers' philosophies in their entirety, thus establishing another relevant point of divergence between them.

In conclusion, despite the great and indeed undisputable influence of Heidegger on Gadamer, and despite the seeming conceptual nearness of such statements as "Language is the house of Being" and "Being that can be understood is language", a closer look at their philosophies reveals a great amount of differences (beside an obvious amount of resemblances upon which, as I said, most interpreters had focused their attention almost exclusively until quite recent times). In short, it is apparent that

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[61] O. Ottaviani, *Esperienza e linguaggio. Ermeneutica e ontologia in Hans-Georg Gadamer*, Carocci, Roma 2010, pp. 76-77.

[62] GW 1, p. 479 (*Truth and Method*, p. 470).

[63] So, for example, I find it quite problematic to define with the same term, namely "ontological difference", both Heidegger's distinction between *Sein* and *Seiendes*, and Gadamer's distinction between *Sein* and *Verstehen* (see O. Ottaviani, *Esperienza e linguaggio*, p. 76).

[64] G. Figal, *Aesthetics as Phenomenology: The Appearance of Things*, trans. by J. Veith, Indiana University Press, Bloomington (IN), 2015, p. 36.

Gadamer's ideas on language are "freed from Heidegger's *Geschick*", and that he "does not make the history of Being part and parcel of his philosophy of language[65]".

According to Heidegger, "language originates from Beyng (*Seyn*) and therefore belongs to Beyng[66]": if conceived from the Being-historical perspective, instead than from "within the history of metaphysics (and thus within all of previous philosophy)", language must be understood as "the saying of Beyng (*das Sagen des Seyns*)", "the echo which belongs to the event[67]". For Gadamer, however, differentiating a metaphysical concept of language from a post-metaphysical one scarcely makes any sense, since he does not seem to accept Heidegger's entire view about the history of metaphysics and the need to radically overcome it, and thus he does not even share Heidegger's concept of Being as "destining (*das Geschick*)", as "the sending that gathers, that first starts man upon a way of revealing[68]". So, as far as their respective notions of language are concerned, I would finally suggest that while the later Heidegger's concept of "Saying (*die Sage*)", namely language understood in its very essence from a Being-historical point of view, stands for "the mode in which Appropriation (*das Ereignis*) […] speaks[69]", language rather represents to Gadamer the condition of "accessibility (*Zugänglichkeit*)" to being: an aspect, the latter, that makes fully explicit the phenomenological dimension inherent to the ontological shift of hermeneutics[70].

[65] M. Kusch, *Language as Calculus VS. Language as Universal Medium: A Study in Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer*, Kluwer, Dordrecht 1989, pp. 242-243.
[66] GA 65, p. 501 (*Contributions to Philosophy: Of the Event*, transl. by R. Rojcewicz and D. Vallega-Neu, Indiana University Press, Bloomington [IN] 2012, p. 394).
[67] GA 65, p. 497 (*Contributions to Philosophy*, p. 391).
[68] GA 7, p. 25 (*Basic Writings*, trans. by D. Farrell Krell, Harper, San Francisco-New York 1993, p. 329).
[69] GA 12, p. 255 (*On the Way to Language*, p. 135).
[70] See G. Figal, *Gadamer als Phänomenologe*, in "Phänomenologische Forschungen", 2007, pp. 95-107.

Heidegger e Gadamer sulla Storia dell'Essere
e la relazione tra Essere e linguaggio

Questo articolo prende in esame la questione della "appropriazione", da parte di Gadamer, della tarda filosofia di Heidegger, attraverso un'analisi di alcuni aspetti della prospettiva heideggeriana della Storia dell'Essere che Gadamer sembra mettere in discussione e talvolta rigettare esplicitamente. La mia tesi è che la critica gadameriana all'ultimo Heidegger si basa perlopiù su un'interpretazione della sua concezione della Storia dell'Essere (*Seinsgeschichte*) come una forma di filosofia della storia che condivide con la *Geschichtsphilosophie* di Hegel un'autocoscienza genuinamente escatologica che Gadamer, per parte sua, non accetta. Sulla base di ciò, cerco infine di sottolineare alcune conseguenze della peculiare e "selettiva" ricezione dell'ultimo Heidegger da parte di Gadamer nel campo della filosofia del linguaggio, in particolare riguardo alle questioni concernenti il linguaggio della metafisica e il rapporto essere/linguaggio.

Parole chiave: Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, ontologia, filosofia della storia, filosofia del linguaggio

Heidegger and Gadamer on the History of Being
and the relationship between Being and language

This paper takes up the issue of Gadamer's "appropriation" of Heidegger's later philosophy, and it does so in terms of an examination of some aspects of Heidegger's Being-historical perspective that Gadamer seems to question and sometimes explicitly reject. I argue that Gadamer's criticism of the later Heidegger is mostly based on an interpretation of Heidegger's conception of the history of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*) as a form of philosophy of history which shares with Hegel's *Geschichtsphilosophie* a genuinely eschatological self-consciousness that Gadamer, for his part, does not endorse. Given these assumptions, I finally try to highlight some consequences of Gadamer's peculiar and "selective" reception of the later Heidegger in the realm of the philosophy of language, in particular with regard to the questions concerning the language of metaphysics and the relationship between Being and language.

Keywords: Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, ontology, philosophy of history, philosophy of language