



 **Opin vísindi**

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Title: Gadamer's "Practice" of *Theoria*

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Abstract:

This paper explores the Greek conception of *theoria*, Gadamer's interpretation of it, and how he applies it to his own hermeneutics. In particular, the transition that Gadamer makes from traditional metaphysical perspectives of *theoria* in ancient thought towards the activity of *theoria* within human life is explored, and the role that his aesthetics plays in this process. The importance of the intertwining of theory and practice for Gadamer is considered and what the practice of *theoria* may consist in. It is suggested that Gadamer's approach, which emphasizes heightened experiences of interconnection to promote self-transformation, is a productive transformation of *theoria* relevant to contemporary points of view.

What is *theoria*? I will begin by examining the Greek conception of *theoria* before turning to Hans-Georg Gadamer's interpretation of it and what the "practice" of *theoria* might look like for him.<sup>2</sup> In my discussion of the Greek conception of *theoria*, I will be largely drawing upon Andrea Nightingale's general account of *theoria* and specifically Plato's conception of *theoria* from her book *Spectacles of Truth in Ancient Greek Philosophy*.

Philosophy first emerged as a discipline in Greece in the fourth century BCE and there was a need to define, legitimize, and outline the scope of this new discipline and how it differed from other approaches to experience wisdom.<sup>3</sup> From the debates among Greek thinkers at this time about the nature of philosophy and hence the highest type of knowledge, there was "generated (among other things) a novel and subversive claim: that the supreme form of wisdom is *theoria*, the rational 'vision' of metaphysical truths".<sup>4</sup> Nightingale explains that *theoria* was related to the traditional practice of making a journey to spectacles and festivals in order to give it legitimacy, and distinguishes between two forms of *theoria*, the "civic" and the "private". In respect to the civic, she explains that in many instances the *theoros* (the person participating in the *theoria*) was sent by their city as an official representative and would journey abroad to a festival or oracular center. They would view the events there and "returned home with an official eyewitness report".<sup>5</sup> In regards to the private *theoros*, they only needed

to answer to themselves; however, in both cases, although the practice of *theoria* covered the whole process of journeying, including separating from home, spectating, and reentry, it was the act of seeing or witnessing, usually focused on sacred objects or events, that was central. Nightingale explains that “this sacralized mode of spectating was a central element of traditional *theoria*, and offered a powerful model for the philosophic notion of ‘seeing’ divine truths”.<sup>6</sup>

Plato drew upon traditional conceptions of *theoria* with its model of journeying, spectating and returning.<sup>7</sup> For Plato, *theoria* involves a process of leaving behind or becoming blind to the ordinary world for a time, which isn’t a permanent withdrawal from the world, but a temporary vision through which there can be a re-orientation of oneself. Nightingale writes, “In the *Republic*, Plato makes a paradoxical and controversial claim, namely, that turning away from the world of becoming and contemplating an unchanging reality will give us better insight and virtue in the earthly realm”.<sup>8</sup> Nightingale maintains that this contemplation does not impede the philosopher from practical action upon their return.<sup>9</sup> This blindness to the world is temporary and there is a re-engagement with the world, but the philosopher can take a more impartial view of the social realm even as they live within it. Nightingale maintains that “the practice of *theoria*...produce[s] a moral agent who will be just and impartial in his dealings with the world, using the apprehension of the Forms as a ‘measure’ for all his actions,” and that such a contemplative journey is transformative.<sup>10</sup> Now, this does not mean that there is a perfect knowing, and Nightingale suggests that unlike an ideal philosopher who will achieve a complete journey in one go, the human philosopher will move between the world and the Forms throughout their life, achieving at most only a partial view of the Forms.<sup>11</sup> These profound insights will change the philosopher and affect their daily lives, but there will never be a perfect seeing.

Nightingale states that “most twentieth century thinkers, of course, view Greek metaphysical philosophy with suspicion if not scorn. The conception of knowledge as *theoria* is, for some, a cowardly flight from the world of action and, for others, a pernicious power-grab posing as disinterested speculation”.<sup>12</sup> Nightingale points to a passage from Nietzsche that, according to her, clearly reflects some of the central claims made by modern and post-modern criticisms of the spectator theory of knowledge. She explains that in the passage he rejects conceptions such as a disembodied intellect, non-perspectival viewpoints, objective truth beyond that constructed by the human mind,

and “the belief in a mode of cognition separated from will, desire, and the emotions”.<sup>13</sup> However, Nightingale maintains that these criticisms “hardly do justice to the Greek theorists”.<sup>14</sup> She explains that in Plato’s understanding of *theoria*, *eros* and wonder play important roles in the experience of contemplation and that for Plato “*theoria* is fueled and sustained by erotic desire,” and points out that the theoretical philosopher’s vision of *theoria* is partial and that the sight of beautiful human and celestial bodies plays a key role in the activity of *theoria* in some of his dialogues.<sup>15</sup> Nightingale maintains that most modern and postmodern criticisms of Greek *theoria* center around what is seen as a problematic distance of a spectator that allows “the subject to stand over against the object”<sup>16</sup> and understand it objectively. She explains that, according to this line of thought, a theoretical gaze objectifies what it views and encourages the domination and control of these objects, a viewpoint which has been extended to include political and technological control.<sup>17</sup> In Nightingale’s view, these critiques are more relevant to Cartesian thinking and modern science than Greek theorizing. According to Nightingale, far from Greek theorizing being an impartial apprehension of an object at a distance, Greek theoretical philosophers sought to distance themselves from the world to establish a kinship with metaphysical objects, and in so doing to transform themselves.<sup>18</sup> *Theoria* thus understood can be seen as a part of a philosophical and transformative way of life, and profound insights lead towards greater wisdom and changes in the philosopher.

Gadamer’s conception of *theoria* reflects the limitations and partial and ongoing nature of the insight of *theoria* that Nightingale highlights, and how it differs from scientific objectivity and domination, albeit his explanation for this is that he finds Greek knowledge to have been “so much within language,”<sup>19</sup> a perspective that relates in ways to the crucial role that language plays in his own hermeneutics. For Gadamer, language is the universal medium and it is through language that we experience the world. Language on the one hand limits us and on the other hand opens us up to new possibilities of experience, and the activity of *theoria* is also within language. Gadamer’s view of *theoria* has strong parallels to Nightingale’s viewpoint that *theoria* is a transformative experience rather than being abstract and disinterested, and Gadamer emphasizes *theoria* as a form of participation and enhanced presence.

According to Nightingale, the activity of *theoria* involves a re-defined sense of self, and in relation to this she quotes Gadamer in respect to how *theoria* is an

experience of the real, involves forgetting one's own purposes, being present, is participatory, and that to be a spectator is to give oneself in self-forgetfulness to what one is viewing.<sup>20</sup> By reference to this idea, Nightingale goes on to question what kind of self we can associate with this self-forgetting and wonders, given that one is blind to the regular world when contemplating eternal beings, how this might relate to self-understanding. She writes:

The fourth-century philosophers went in search of new kinds of selves. In particular, they reexamined the boundaries between the human and the divine, positing a kinship between human *nous* and divine and metaphysical beings. Departing from traditional Greek views, these philosophers introduced the notion of a theorizing self, which they defined in relation to metaphysical and divine beings and to the rationally organized cosmos. In placing the human being in this (new) relation to the divine, these philosophers developed a conception of human identity that was not socially or environmentally defined.<sup>21</sup>

Nightingale explains that Plato and Aristotle were of course fully aware that humans are “composite creatures” that are embodied and live in and are “defined in relation to the social and natural world,” but through identifying with the rational faculty as the best aspect of our human self, “the ancient philosophers invited people to conceive of themselves (and the world) in a whole new way”.<sup>22</sup> Now, Gadamer arguably is also, to draw upon Nightingale's expression, in search of a “new kind of self,” one that would still be socially defined and within language but moving towards more universality and relationality. One of the reasons why Gadamer draws upon the Greeks in his thought is that their perspectives, reflected in conceptions such as *theoria*, provide an alternative possibility for experience beyond the subject-object dualism present in Cartesian inspired thought and scientific method.<sup>23</sup> However, for Gadamer this takes place through language rather than through a Divine Mind as in ancient thought.<sup>24</sup> However, transitions such as these create challenges, and in my view, one of the hardest tasks facing the interpreter of Gadamer is how he draws upon metaphysical theories yet tends to back away from their metaphysical aspects and, related to this, the way he combines strong notions of truth with human finitude. For example, Gadamer writes that “life...is a unity of theory and practice that is the possibility and the duty of everyone. Disregarding oneself, regarding what is: that is the behavior of a cultivated, I might almost say a divine, consciousness,”<sup>25</sup> which, if one were considering Plato, such a conception would be backed by the Forms as true Being. Gadamer also associates the experience of artworks and his understanding of *theoria* with conceptions of the

absolute,<sup>26</sup> which seem to bring out similar tensions. However, Gadamer's hermeneutics is an attempt to articulate the practice of moving towards more theoretic and universal perspectives and applying this experience dynamically back into our concrete situation.

For Gadamer, ancient conceptions of theory are different from how he characterizes the modern theoretical attitude of science as one that stands back and observes, with theoretical knowledge being understood in terms of dominating what exists, and he maintains that:

“Theory” in the ancient sense, however, is something quite different. There it is not just that existing orders as such are contemplated, but “theory” means sharing in the total order itself.<sup>27</sup>

In Gadamer's view, *theoria* does not fall into presences that would be subject to Heidegger's critique of the metaphysics of presence and in fact would seem to imply a type of letting be given how he mentions that *theoria* maintains “the dignity of a ‘thing’”.<sup>28</sup> For Gadamer, the experience of *theoria* seems to be a type of enhanced awareness and relationality rather than self-conscious clarity or vision of structure, and he emphasizes the participatory aspects of *theoria*. Gadamer points to the original sense of *theoria* for the Greeks:

The word means observing (the constellations, for example), being an onlooker (at a play, for instance), or a delegate participating at a festival. It does not mean a mere “seeing” that establishes what is present or stores up information. *Contemplatio* does not dwell on a particular entity, but in a region. *Theoria* is not so much the individual momentary act as a way of comporting oneself, a position and condition. It is “being present” in the lovely double sense that means that the person is not only present but completely present. Participants in a ritual or ceremony are present in this way when they are engrossed in their participation as such, and this always includes their participating equally with others or possible others.<sup>29</sup>

From this description, we can see that Gadamer is pointing to holistic experiences beyond particular entities to a region, and an intensified way of being present and participation that involves experiences of equality. The type of vision that Gadamer associates with *theoria* is not that of a neutral observer, whose emphasis is on the control of an object or to turn it to their own purposes by explaining it, but rather involves participation and more relational experience, and Gadamer relates *theoria* to a type of good that is held in common and accessible to all and is not like distributed goods that are owned by some and excluded from others.<sup>30</sup> What we have in common

and community are familiar themes that can be found in Gadamer's conception of the festival as an experience that leads past our normal purposes and identifications towards a more holistic relation to one another. Gadamer writes that "if there is one thing that pertains to all festive experiences, then it is surely the fact that they allow no separation between one person and another. A festival is an experience of community and represents community in its most perfect form. A festival is meant for everyone".<sup>31</sup> According to Gadamer, in a festival, separations between individuals are set aside in favor of a common respect and openness to all, and instead of falling into individual conversations and activities a sense of unity prevails. This points towards collective communal experiences which may lead to a greater sense of unity than may normally be experienced. For Gadamer, *theoria* seems to be a type of respectful participation that avoids objectification and involves relational perspectives. The activity of *theoria* is linguistically mediated and not a "pure seeing," but nevertheless this is a profound experience that may lead to self-transformation which may change our relation to other people and the world more generally.

Gadamer's understanding of *theoria* perhaps can be somewhat clarified by very briefly looking at how Gadamer interprets Plato. Rather than focusing on a two-world Platonism of static Forms as real Being in contrast to a diminished physical and historical world, Gadamer's interpretation of Plato points towards the positive possibility of the role for becoming in the mixture of a good life in Plato's *Philebus*. He explains that "only when the mixture is no longer thought of as a diminution and clouding of the pure, true, and unmixed, but as a genus of its own, can it be the place where we see how the being of the good and the true is constituted".<sup>32</sup> According to Gadamer, the conception of noetic ideas existing apart in themselves is an abstraction from the mixture within life.<sup>33</sup> He later explains that Plato names "beauty, symmetry or measuredness, and truth (*alētheia*)...as the three structural components of the good, which appears as the beautiful,"<sup>34</sup> and writes:

What is viewed from the perspective of the *Republic* (or the *Symposium*) as the pure unmixed good or beautiful "beyond being" is here [in the *Philebus*] determined to be the structure of "the mixed" itself. In each case it would seem to be found only in what is concretely good and beautiful. And precisely the unity and integration of the appearance itself would thus appear to constitute its being good. This thesis, it seems to me, does not represent a change in Plato's teaching, a change that would have led him to abandon the doctrine of ideas or the transcendence of the good. It is still true that the good must be separated out of everything that appears good and seen in distinction from it. But it is in

everything and is seen in distinction from everything only because it is in everything and shines forth from it.<sup>35</sup>

According to Gadamer, the good is something that shines forth within our daily lives through its appearance in the beautiful rather than being an experience of a second world, but it also transcends what it appears within. If we consider what the activity of *theoria* is for Gadamer, I would understand it not as a vision of metaphysical objects in a second world, but rather as a heightened experience of becoming as emergent possibility in the here and now.<sup>36</sup> Gadamer famously remarks that “*being that can be understood is language*,”<sup>37</sup> and *theoria* is a heightened experience that can transform our understanding of being, our language, and ourselves. An intensified experience of *theoria* may lead to new experiences of being which may inform our self-understanding, a process of transformation.

Gadamer points to the importance that the Greek word *theoria* originally meant to participate in a festive act, not merely as a spectator, but rather “‘to be fully there,’ which is a highest form of activity and reality,”<sup>38</sup> also relates activity and reality to the Greek term *energeia*, and writes:

Whoever participates in a cultic act in this way lets the “divine” emerge, so that it is like a palpable bodily appearance. This applies very well to an artwork. Standing before its appearing we also say: “That [*sic*] right!” [*So ist es!*]. What has come forth is something with which we agree, not because it is an exact copy of something but because as an image it has something like a superior reality. It may perhaps also be a copy of something, but it does not need to have anything about it that is like a copy. In thinking of it one thinks of what, for example, the mystery cults protected as a holy secret.<sup>39</sup>

Gadamer is indicating a relation to divine or holy experience that has some affinity with the experience at religious festivals in Greek times. In his consideration of a copy, Gadamer is not discounting that it could reflect an existent reality, but he is emphasizing the possibility of creative emergence.<sup>40</sup>

In Gadamer’s view, *theoria* is not something abstract, like a scientific theory or other such constructs. Rather, *theoria* is an activity that takes us outside of ourselves and is beyond the conscious control of a subject. Gadamer explains that “*theoria* is true participation, not something active but something passive (*pathos*), namely being totally involved in and carried away by what one sees,” and remarks that “considered as a subjective accomplishment in human conduct, being present has the character of



being outside oneself".<sup>41</sup> As Gadamer continues, he relates this to the ecstatic experience of divine madness in Plato's *Phaedrus*:

In the *Phaedrus* Plato already described the blunder of those who take the viewpoint of rational reasonableness and tend to misinterpret the ecstatic condition of being outside oneself, seeing it as a mere negation of being composed within oneself and hence as a kind of madness. In fact, being outside oneself is a positive possibility of being wholly with something else. This kind of being present is a self-forgetfulness and to be a spectator consists in giving oneself in self-forgetfulness to what one is watching.<sup>42</sup>

Far from being "madness," this experience may bring us out of our limited and normal awareness towards a more relational experience of reality. Gadamer, considering insights from Greek religion, Rilke, and Hegel in relation to experiences beyond that of the conscious individual, remarks that if Greek religion viewed "human decision as the result of divine action rather than simply as the exercise of human choice, then it did justice to this truth: we are always other and much more than we know ourselves to be, and what exceeds our knowledge is precisely our real being".<sup>43</sup> From this description, we can see the importance of Gadamer's conception that what is beyond our subjective consciousness is something "more real," which seems to point towards a more holistic and profound sense of self that we are not normally aware of and which works towards overcoming subject-object dualism. Whether we are considering Gadamer's understanding of *theoria* or his aesthetics with its conceptions such as the festival, they reflect the impetus towards encouraging experiences of relationality that we find within Gadamer's thought more generally.

According to Gadamer, *theoria* and practice are intertwined, and aesthetic experiences are more real than the everyday but are not separate from it and are rather intensifications of the everyday that may transform us. In this respect, both Plato and Aristotle indicate theory is superior to practice, but for Plato theory is related to practice while for Aristotle, judging from renowned and controversial passages in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Book X there seems to be a separation between theory and practice, and theoretical contemplation divorced from the everyday is the highest form of happiness. However, given the overall practical orientation of Aristotle, the relation between theory and practice in his thought is a matter of scholarly contention.<sup>44</sup> In this respect, Gadamer argues that for Aristotle there is an intertwining between theory and practice.<sup>45</sup> Walter Brogan maintains that Aristotle's understanding of friendship

supports Gadamer's view, and that a self-sufficient contemplative attunement with oneself allows oneself to be present to the other and respectful of their differences in friendship, and true friendship is an activity of *theoria* in practice.<sup>46</sup>

Nightingale notes that there may be challenges assimilating Plato's understanding of *theoria* to modern thought:

We may object to a philosophical theory based on a "metaphysics of presence" which does not acknowledge human subjectivity (i.e. that the human subject constructs what it perceives, apprehends, or knows). In addition, Plato's divinization of the Forms and his comparison of the activity of contemplation to a religious revelation will strike many modern readers as objectionable. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge that, for Plato, the activity of *theoria* takes as its model a cultural practice that was essentially religious, i.e. *theoria* at religious sanctuaries and festivals.<sup>47</sup>

Gadamer was also well aware of concerns such as these, which perhaps contributes to why he tries to avoid associating *theoria* with objective presences, articulates a more modest variation of *theoria* related to human finitude through language, and draws upon conceptions such as the cultic and heightened experience more generally, but relates them with less exotic cultural forms. For example, in his essay "The Festive Character of the Theatre," Gadamer defends cultic experiences and associates them with experiences of the festive and the theatre in modern times. He writes that "all cultic ceremony is a kind of creation," and notes that "the original and still vital essence of festive celebration is creation and elevation into a transformed state of being".<sup>48</sup> The strong relationality and creative emergence that runs through Gadamer's aesthetics finds cultural placeholders in festivals, the theatre, and artwork more generally. Nightingale explains that Plato drew upon the accepted cultural practice of *theoria* and through this "claimed legitimacy for theoretical philosophy and found a way to structure philosophic practice and make it more intelligible to the layperson".<sup>49</sup> I would suggest, similarly, that Gadamer finds legitimacy for heightened experiences of interconnection such as the cultic and *theoria* through drawing upon more accepted notions such as festivals, the theatre, and aesthetics more generally. Gadamer writes, "I believe that the arts, taken as a whole, quietly govern the metaphysical heritage of our Western tradition," and remarks later that "art belongs in the neighborhood of *theoria*".<sup>50</sup> Such a transition or "translation" is not without challenges, and although I have pointed to tensions in Gadamer's thought, these frictions and ambiguities in his approach are arguably quite productive, whereby

through holding both to strong notions of truth *and* human finitude his conception of *theoria* both draws upon and reinvigorates transcendent aspects of Greek thought through their articulation in a contemporary context. This is perhaps not only a good example of Gadamer's contention that we participate in an ongoing and living tradition that we may draw upon for our benefit and contribute to its ongoing emergence, but specifically points to the value of our metaphysical philosophical tradition that Gadamer defends contra Heidegger.

I would suggest that the practice of *theoria* for Gadamer would be the attempt to open towards more relational experiences and perspectives. This is not just a theory of relationality, but rather a practice of experiencing the transformative effect of heightened interconnection. In Gadamer's aesthetics, the experience of beauty, order, and harmony are also important to his thought, and what I believe Gadamer is driving at is encouraging the emergence of perspectives and cultural forms that may support self-transformation and more harmonious experiences of community. Nightingale explains that for Plato, the experience of beauty and seeing the Forms leads towards becoming more virtuous, wise, and happy.<sup>51</sup> For Plato, the contemplation of Forms moves us out of illusion and can promote virtue, and Gadamer seems to be pointing in the same general direction as this, albeit instead of *theoria* being a vision of a second world of Forms along the lines of the prevalent interpretation of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, for Gadamer *theoria* is an experience of heightened and creative emergence of the becoming of being that occurs within language in the here and now, and which may serve as a measure of sorts. I believe that the truth-value of this for Gadamer would rest on the engagement of the subject matter through our linguistic experience of the world as experienced through conversation, aesthetic perspectives such as the symbol and the festival, experiences of art, and *theoria*. For Gadamer, as with his hermeneutics more generally, the activity of *theoria* is something that will never be complete and is always ongoing, but nevertheless seems to reorient us towards a holism that impacts our lives and potentially encourages a more ethical relation to others. To draw on another conception from Gadamer's discussions of the festival, we move past our purposefulness and have a different sense of time, there is a tarrying, and he writes, "The essence of our temporal experience of art is in learning how to tarry in this way. And perhaps it is the only way that is granted to us finite beings to relate to what we call eternity".<sup>52</sup> This tarrying is akin to the lived experience of *theoria*, an abandonment to

the real and participation like in a festival, an experience that is related to the divine and the whole for a time. Like Plato's understanding of a *theoros*, for Gadamer theoretical insight is not something that is unrelated to normal reality, but rather is something to be applied back into the everyday. As Gadamer writes in respect to the relational experience that a work of art may have on us, this is "a shattering and a demolition of the familiar. It is not only the 'This art thou!' disclosed in a joyous and frightening shock; it also says to us; 'Thou must alter thy life!'"<sup>53</sup>

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### NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> This paper is a revised version of part of Chapter 6 from my PhD dissertation, "Developing a Contemporary Approach to Philosophy as a Way of Life," University of Iceland, 2018. An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the Canadian Hermeneutics Institute held in Calgary in 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 8-9. For example, Nightingale explains that although Plato is well known for his denigration the material world, she points out that in the myths of the *Phaedrus* and the *Phaedo* the vision of beautiful bodily beings plays a key role in the activity of *theoria*

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(139). Nightingale also points to how the cosmological theory found in the *Timaeus* encourages the theorist to look closer at the material world and that astronomical *theoria* plays an important role alongside metaphysical *theoria* (140-1).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>19</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. and ed. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2004), 451.

<sup>20</sup> Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth*, 13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 13-4.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>23</sup> See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

<sup>24</sup> Experiences of interconnection and oneness are also important for Gadamer, although for him this is linguistically mediated and focuses on human community. However, he draws upon ancient philosophy and metaphysical conceptions within the Western tradition, relating this back through his perspectives of finitude and language. In the essay "The Nature of Things and the Language of Things," (Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Nature of Things and the Language of Things," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge [Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2008]) he discusses the strengths of classical metaphysics in overcoming subject-object dualism and writes: "An enigma that is insoluble for the finite mind is thus resolved in the infinite mind of the Creator. The essence and actuality of the creation consists in being such a harmony of soul and thing". Gadamer contends that we cannot go back to this theological grounding or secularized versions of it such as speculative idealism, "But for its part, philosophy may also not close its eyes to the truth of this correspondence". He asks: "Are there finite possibilities of doing justice to this correspondence?". Gadamer answers in the affirmative, and it is "the way of language" (75).

<sup>25</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Praise of Theory," in *Praise of Theory: Speeches and Essays*, trans. Chris Dawson (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 35.

<sup>26</sup> See Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Artwork in Word and Image: 'So True, So Full of Being!'," in *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, trans. and ed. Richard E. Palmer (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 451.

<sup>28</sup> Gadamer is well aware of Heidegger's concerns about the metaphysics of presence and his conception of *theoria* reflects this. Gadamer writes that when Heidegger "showed that the concept of presence-at-hand is a deficient mode of being and viewed it as the background of classical metaphysics and its continuance in the modern concept of subjectivity, he was pursuing an ontologically correct connection between Greek *theoria* and modern science" (*Truth and Method*, 452). Nevertheless, he notes that "in Greek *theoria* there was undoubtedly another element as well. *Theoria* grasps not so much the present-at-hand as the thing itself, which still has the dignity of a 'thing'" (452). Gadamer wants to avoid this objectifying tendency both in respect to things and language and states that "our starting point is that verbally constituted experience of the world expresses not what is present-at-hand, that which is calculated or measured, but what exists, what man recognizes as existent and significant" (452). This points to the crucial role that language plays in Gadamer's thought, with language being the medium through which we experience the world and the experience of truth is a dynamic linguistic event. Within language "the structure of being is not simply reflected;

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rather, in language the order and structure of our experience itself is originally formed and constantly changed," (453) which points to the productive nature of linguistic experience for Gadamer. In Gadamer's view, as finite beings it is through language and tradition that we may transcend ourselves and experience truth.

<sup>29</sup> Gadamer, "In Praise of Theory," 31. In regard to the word "contemplatio," Gadamer writes that contemplation is "the Latin equivalent for *theoria*," and that *contemplatio* is "the *vita contemplativa*," (21) and provides further historical background information about the word.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>31</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 39.

<sup>32</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. and ed., Christopher P. Smith (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986), 113.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 115.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> In my view, there is some ambiguity here that relates to Gadamer's thought more generally. It would seem to me that Gadamer may not be dismissing the possibility of metaphysical structures running through reality, but rather is pointing to how whatever structures there may be dynamically emerge within the subject matter of language and tradition.

<sup>37</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 470.

<sup>38</sup> Gadamer, "Artwork in Word and Image," 213.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. Note that the interpolation "[sic]" is mine, whereas the interpolation "[So is est!]" appears in the quoted text.

<sup>40</sup> In Gadamer's presentational account of the artwork he points to the productive value of a picture versus it being a mere copy of an original (see Gadamer, *Truth and Method*). Whereas a copy is self-effacing and points back to an original, a picture is rather an experience of truth in its presentation and is an "increase of being" (*Truth and Method*, 135). Gadamer writes that "the Platonic conception of the relationship between copy and original does not exhaust the ontological valence of what we call a picture" (136). For Gadamer what is pictured, in contrast to a copy, is rather ontologically connected with the original and is an opportunity for increase and the presentation of what is, an event of being. This ontological and presentational account of artwork is crucial to his account of aesthetics more generally. If we consider what this presentational account may indicate in respect to Gadamer's conception of *theoria*, the emphasis would be on how such insight is a dynamic linguistic event of true insight which is creative and productive rather than merely repeating or copying what already exists, a coming into presence of being.

<sup>41</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 122.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Image and Gesture," in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 78.

<sup>44</sup> For example, see Walter A. Brogan, "Gadamer's Praise of Theory: Aristotle's Friend and the Reciprocity Between Theory and Practice," *Research in Phenomenology* 32 (2002): 141-55 and Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth*.

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<sup>45</sup> In regard to the connection between theory and practice, see Gadamer's *Idea of the Good* and "Praise of Theory".

<sup>46</sup> Brogan, "Gadamer's Praise of Theory."

<sup>47</sup> Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth*, 112-3. Nightingale notes that although Plato does draw upon secular notions of *theoria* in which a traveller goes out to see the world, his account of *theoria* is primarily informed by the "sacred visuality" at religious sanctuaries.

<sup>48</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Festive Character of the Theatre," in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 59.

<sup>49</sup> Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth*, 93.

<sup>50</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Artwork in Word and Image," 195, 220.

<sup>51</sup> Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth*, 84.

<sup>52</sup> Gadamer, "Relevance of the Beautiful," 45.

<sup>53</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 104.