INTERPRETATION OF PAST TEXTS: THE APPLICATION OF HANS-GEORG GADAMER'S PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY EDUCATION

by

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Abstract

This thesis applies an interpretation of philosophical hermeneutics in Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* to an understanding of history education. First, I review the Anglophone literature pertaining to history teaching and learning to determine whether there is a gap that can be filled by Gadamerian hermeneutics. Then, I present the interpretation of philosophical hermeneutics and describe what may occur during the experience of understanding in the history classroom. Specifically, this section e chapter presents the effects of tradition and history on individuals and the dialogical nature of Gadamer's interpretation and understanding. Third, I describe what dialogue might look like in context of young people learning history. It also expands the interpretation of dialogue's role in reducing the separation in time and meaning between interpreter and text. Last, I present the implications for *Bildung*. Dialogical interpretation and understandings in the classroom provides new opportunities for individuals to expand their horizons and understanding of the world. In chapter five, I also describe the implications for curriculum, pedagogy, classroom materials and teacher education.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, C. Pedersen.

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Acknowledgments

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Dedication

For Mel.

"Don't say: there must…but, look and see…"
— Wittgenstein

1 Introduction

1.1 Interpretation of the historical record

1.1.1 Critical reconstruction of historical records

History is constructed with evidence found in past texts. Historical narratives are then passed down through generations. In this thesis, past texts are the various historical records handed down through time. This thesis is concerned with the interpretation of past texts in the history classroom. Individuals interpret past texts to enrich understanding. The historian reads texts to construct significant interpretations of past events.[1] This emerges from the historians' task to critically reconstruct the past.[2]

In 1976, the Schools History Project (*SHP*) in Great Britain published *New Look at History (NLH).* The *NLH* report questioned the nature and purposes of history education[3] and postulated that problems existed with how history was taught and learnt. The *NLH* report cautions that historians[4] are not free to imagine and construct the past at will without proper use of evidence; historical interpretations are conditioned by available evidence.[5] Historians cannot observe the past, so we must rely on the evidence available in past texts in the construction of historical narratives.

Historians undertake creative processes to construct historical narratives. As stated earlier, they question past texts (traces and records of the past) to ascertain their value.

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[1] The hermeneutic interpretation of past texts is concerned with a different type and process of understanding. I will pick this idea up later in this section.
[2] Mark Cottingham, "Developing Spirituality through the Use of Literature in History Education," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 10, no. 1 (2005): 51; James Goulding, "Historical Thinking and Social Media," *Agora* 46, no. 3 (July 2011): 15; Gina Hogue, "Using Computer Technology to Record and Present Family History and to Enhance Historical Thinking Skills," *OAH Magazine of History* 5, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 70; Peter Seixas & Tom Morton, *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts* (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013): 5; Wineburg, Samuel S. *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past (*Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).
[3] Schools History Project, *A New Look at History*, 9–10.
[4] Students as well.
[5] Schools History Project, *A New Look at History* (Edinburgh: Homes McDougall Ltd., 1976): 15.

Historians' questions critically assess the validity of past texts, bringing the dormant meaning of a text into contemporary conversations aimed at reconstructing the past, determining a text's significance, and its ability to provide an understanding of human nature. Historians engage with texts, bring their meaning back to the present and construct historical narratives. Students too must be taught to question texts to turn these into evidence and information to be used in the construction of historical narratives.[6] The *NHL* report states that opportunities for "handling and using historical evidence,"[7] develop students' abilities to understand the processes involved in the construction of historical narratives.

Historical reconstruction requires "finding, selecting, contextualizing, interpreting, and corroborating sources."[8] Historians undertake this task when they study the past. Seixas and Morton call this historical thinking. [9] Student exposure to various forms of past texts can teach students the importance of providing the necessary evidentiary support in every aspect of studying the past. Drake and Brown, et al, argued that students must be taught the historian's process of "interrogating primary sources and secondary narratives"[10] to determine their reliability and value.

An important aspect of using historical sources is sourcing—questioning where the source originated, its author and their "purpose, values, and worldview"[11]— which establishes the validity of a source. Seixas and Morton argued that we can never rely on one source when studying the past. It is important to corroborate evidence to construct the most detailed and justified account of the past. This process of validating and corroborating a source is an important element of contemporary history teaching and

[6] Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six*, 40.
[7] Schools History Project, *A New Look at History*, 6.
[8] Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six*, 5.
[9] Ibid., 5.
[10] Frederick Drake & Sarah Drake Brown. "A Systematic Approach to Improve Student's Historical Thinking," *The History Teacher* 36 4 (2003): 471.
[11] Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six*, 40.

learning—with its focus on competency and skill. It is important for students to approach texts in a similar matter to historians.

The act of critically assessing and corroborating the evidence provided by a past text teaches students to understand the human hand in the creation of these texts, which are created for a purpose.

Corroboration is a crucial element of historical reconstruction. What I will call the historical or disciplinary interpretation of past texts is an important element of history teaching and learning. However, I wish to add to an understanding of interpretation and understanding in the history classroom. Therefore, this thesis presents the interpretation of texts in the history classroom in another manner, one that enriches the valuable work that exists in the literature of history teaching and learning and looks at it in a new light. The contemporary literature in history education advocates that students be taught the processes of historical thinking to interpret past texts. This process of interpretation is predicated on the critical reading of texts. The aim is to not only reconstruct past events, and understand the significant effects of these events, but to understand human nature. I expand and enrich an understanding of what occurs to teachers and students in the interpretation of past texts. In this thesis, I provide an interpretation of Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and the experience of dialogue. I then apply this interpretation to the question of understanding in the history classroom.

1.1.2 Philosophical hermeneutics and past texts

Hans-Georg Gadamer's interpretation of philosophical hermeneutics in *Truth and Method* offers a direction to the study of the interpretation and the reading of past texts (primary documents) in the history classroom. Again, this expands an understanding of the type of understanding that occurs in the experience of the history classroom. In its broadest

sense, hermeneutics is the interpretation of past texts. But, it is an elusive entity. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is not a method for understanding but describes what happens to us during the journey of understanding. This journey, *Gespräch*[12] or dialogue with texts from the past contributes to *Bildung* or the formation and self-cultivation of who we are and how we behave in the world.

The interpretation of past texts in the history classroom is a varied and complicated experience.[13] In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer stated that the interpretation and understanding of past texts is not merely a concern of methodology. It belongs to the human experience of the world. Hans-Georg Gadamer stated:

> The understanding and the interpretation of texts is not merely a concern of science, but obviously belongs to human experience of the world in general. The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically not a problem of method at all. It is not concerned with a method of understanding by means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigation like all other objects of experience. It is not concerned with amassing verified knowledge, such as would satisfy the methodological ideal of science—yet it too is concerned with knowledge and truth. In understanding tradition, not only are texts understood, but insights are acquired and truths known.[14]

So too, the phenomenon of understanding is not confined to the contemporary literature on history teaching and learning and the methodologies of teaching historical thinking.[15] I describe an understanding of history education concerned with knowledge and truth, but as we see in Gadamer, much different than that produced by methodology. I describe an

[12] The German term for dialogue– thinking together about human nature, truth, and the world is *Gespräch*.
[13] Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six*, 42.
[14] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd, rev ed. (London: Continuum Publishing Group, 1989, xxi.
[15] "Historical thinking is the creative processes that historians go through to interpret the evidence of the past and generate stories of history." In Seixas & Morton, in *The Big Six, 2.*

aspect, one phenomenon of understanding in the history classroom, and the implications of this for teachers and students. I describe an understanding of history education (which does not exclude historical thinking or critical reconstruction in the classroom) where students engage in dialogue to develop a rich understanding of human nature. Interpretation and understanding in the history classroom also effects the individuals involved. Teachers and students are involved in self-formation, or the individual concept of *Bildung*. In understanding, individuals' horizons are expanded and they develop a broader view of the world. A person's horizon of understanding is everything seen from a particular viewpoint. It is the limits of what we can see from our particular situation and point in time. Horizons orient us, but also confine us; individuals would be completely disorientated without one.

Both aspects of interpretation and their application to the classroom contribute to a rich, and complex, understanding of history education. As Gadamer did not discount science in *Truth and Method*, only claiming it does not have a monopoly on truth, I present an understanding of history education that can be incorporated as one task of the history classroom. This thesis focuses on students' interpretations of past texts and the generation of new understandings of the human world generated through dialogue.

1.2 Positionality and complications

I am in a privileged position due to my education and lived experiences. My privilege comes from my experience as a teacher in a high school history classroom, and my time as a graduate student at the University of British Columbia (UBC). I was taught the disciplinary or historical thinking[16] approach to history teaching and learning in the undergraduate social studies education courses I took at UBC in 2011. When I became a history teacher, I prioritized the integration of Seixas and Morton's historical thinking

[16] I describe these concepts in the second chapter.

concepts into the curricula of my classroom. Students gained opportunities to develop competencies in historical thinking, study traces of the past, think about the nature of history, reconstruct the past, and make ethical decisions in the present. As a history teacher, the daily reality of teaching historical thinking to students taught me the importance of teaching students to critically engage with past texts. Consequently, I continuously search for opportunities to teach this to students. Another important element of my history classroom was discussion or conversation. As a student I was taught the importance of conversation for learning, and I worked to provide students opportunities to engage in conversations on a variety of topics—including an understanding of human nature and what it means to belong in this world. While often fruitful to reinforce learning, I felt I had an inadequate understanding of how individuals communicate with each other, group dynamics, what occurs in conversation, and how to reach an enriched understanding of the subject matter in conversation. I was particularly concerned with how to assess the conversation so as to determine student learning objectives were being met. I embraced these important ideas when I began the M.A. program in the department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the University of British Columbia.

My graduate courses enriched the practical knowledge obtained as a teacher. I was introduced to a host of readings about philosophy, pedagogy, dialogue, historical thinking, historical consciousness, history education, the philosophy of history, and history teaching and learning. In class, I reveled in the conversations with fellow students and professors and was introduced to numerous new ways of thinking. I constantly reflected on my own thinking about history education, history, philosophy, and education. Through this *Gespräch*[17] (dialogue), with professors, colleagues, and texts, my practiced conceptualizations, prior knowledge, beliefs and thinking concerning history education

[17] The German term for dialogue– thinking together about human nature, truth, and the world is *Gespräch*.

were tested. Primarily, my reading of Gadamer and then *Truth and Method* led me to enrich my understanding of what occurs (often, as Gadamer would say, above our wanting or knowing) in the history classroom when we engage in hermeneutic dialogue with past texts. I came to realize that the articles and books I was reading on history, history education, hermeneutics, and the philosophy of dialogue and education had a place in an understanding of the history classroom. An understanding of the history education can be enriched through the application of philosophical hermeneutics to interpretation and understanding in the history classroom. Critical reconstruction and hermeneutic or dialogical understanding may exist in the same space— the history classroom.

1.3 Research questions

My immersion in the study of philosophical hermeneutics, pedagogy, historical thinking, and the philosophy of history, and history education, has shaped my thinking. My situation within the tradition of history education means that I seek to find an answer to the question: How can I contribute to an enriched understanding of history education? The question of history education has guided my dialogue with *Truth and Method.*

My primary research questions are:

1. What is missing from the Anglophone history education literature that could be supplemented by Gadamerian hermeneutics?
2. How might an interpretation of Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* enrich an understanding of history education?
3. What could authentic dialogue in the history classroom look like?
4. What are the implications of [authentic dialogue?] for history curriculum, classroom materials, teacher education, and classroom practice?

In this thesis, I apply an interpretation of Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* to an understanding of history education. If successful, I will have explicated an understanding of history education which situates teacher and student within the experience of *Gespräch* (dialogue) with past texts. Following my description of history education is a demonstration of the impacts this understanding of history education has for *Bildung*, pedagogy, curriculum, teacher education, and classroom materials. I hope to achieve a marriage of the conceptual with the practical. Interpretation and understanding must be applied to the situation in which we find ourselves.

1.4 Structure of Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Each chapter pertains to one specific research question listed above. The four research questions relate to the overarching question this thesis seeks to answer: How might we describe the interpretation of pasts by teachers and students in the history classroom?

The first chapter (introduction), sets the context for my thesis. The second chapter, (2) I review the literature that encompasses the Anglophone tradition[18] of history education. I present this review to demonstrate that an understanding of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and its application to the interpretation of written texts in the history classroom has not been addressed by the literature that exists on Anglophone history teaching and learning. In the third chapter, (3) I provide an interpretation of philosophical hermeneutics in *Truth and Method.* In this chapter I interpret the fundamental concepts of tradition, prejudice, fore-conception, historical effect, experience of negativity, hermeneutic circle, and dialogue. I assert that the specific movement from textual record to speech through dialogue explicates an understanding of history teaching and learning. In

[18] Literature on history teaching and learning from Canada, the United States and Great Britain.

the fourth chapter, (4) I describe what the dialogue that moves textual records into speech (a dialogue between reader and text) might resemble in the history classroom. It is when we engage in dialogue with a text by asking questions that the truth claims of the text are brought into this speech act (dialogue) and are able to shape our understandings of a particular subject matter. Finally, in the fifth chapter, (5) I explain the type of education, *Bildung*, that may be achieved through the pursuit of dialogue with past texts and the implications of this for teachers and students. I also examine the implications of the first three chapters and *Bildung* for pedagogy, curriculum, teacher education, and the classroom materials of history education. In the sixth chapter (conclusion), I describe the contributions to knowledge mad by this thesis and espouse the further research necessary to continue our understanding of history education.

2 Review of the Anglophone Literature on History Teaching and Learning

In this chapter, I review the work of scholars and teachers within the Anglophone tradition of history education. This literature review is comprised of research from Britain, Canada, and the United States.[19] The purpose of the review is to determine whether a gap exists in the literature that Gadamerian hermeneutics may fill.

This chapter is divided into four sections. First, (1) I review the purpose of history education and its evolution since the nineteenth century. Second, (2) I document the development of historical thinking, and the methodological or disciplinary approach to the interpretation of texts in the history classroom. Third, (3) I focus on the description of dialogue in the literature. This section is critical in order to identify the gap that may be filled by Gadamerian hermeneutics. Finally, (4) I bridge the literature on history education with philosophical hermeneutics. This section foreshadows what is to come in chapters three and four.

2.1 Purposes of history education

2.1.1 Beyond public memory, and collective identity

With the advent of large-scale public schooling in the nineteenth century, history education was often intended as an instrument for the preservation of public memory and collective identity, often contributing to the construction of the nation state.[20] Christian Laville argued that learning history created, "in the citizen a sense of inclusion and respect

[19] There is a rich tradition of history education in other Anglophone countries, however a review of such literature is beyond the purview of this thesis. There is also literature pertaining to the French tradition of history education in Canada, but it too lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

[20] Peter Lee, "Understanding History," in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, ed. Peter Seixas (n.p.: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 130; Peter Seixas, "Introduction," introduction to *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (n.p.: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 13; Christian Laville, "Historical Consciousness and Historical Education: What to Expect from the First for the Second," in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, edited by Peter Seixas, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004): v; Peter C. Seixas, "Schweigen! Die Kinder! Or Does Postmodern History Have a Place in Schools," in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives*, ed. Peter N. Stearns, Peter C. Seixas, and Samuel S. Wineburg (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 20.

for established order,"[21] contributing to socialization in an ordered society. Intended to demonstrate the progressive nature of the state and enforce this sense of collective identity, history curricula were constructed around grand historical narratives that presented a unified and common national identity. These universal representations of the past presented to students became dogmatic propositions— closed from interpretation, revision, and re-presentation. In contrast to this approach, much of the contemporary (since the 1970's) research in the field of history teaching and learning confronts this collective identity and nation building approach to history education. The majority of recent scholarship argues that history teaching and learning should go beyond transmitting "official version[s] of the past"[22] to students. This could lead to the socialization of students into an accepted social and political tradition. David Pace argued for an approach to history teaching and learning where students become exposed to multiple historical perspectives and become critical participants in society.[23] This has been categorized as a historical thinking approach to history teaching and learning.

2.1.2 Critical awareness and disciplinary competence

The NLH report argues that adolescents learn a great deal from engagement in humanities courses such as history. The *NLH* report states that, "the part that history can play in this should not be underestimated, for in history the adolescent has access to a vast pool of real human experience."[24] History teaching and learning serves an important purpose for adolescents—a purpose beyond instilling in them a sense of collective identity and initiation into an established society. Not only do adolescents learn the skills of the

[21] Laville, " Historical Consciousness and Historical Education: What to Expect from the First for the Second," 166.
[22] Ibid., 166.
[23] David Pace. "The Amateur in the Operating Room: History and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning." *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 4 (October 2004): 1172.
[24] Schools History Project, *A New Look at History*, 9–10.

historian, critical engagement with the past, and rational judgment based on weighted evidence, they also develop the realization of important personal values, establish a personal identity, and improve their understanding of the world and their place in human affairs.[25] The report concluded that understanding history aids humans in making sense of their personal lives, the world, and their place in society.[26] In the aftermath of this report, similar work has emerged in Canada.

The study of past texts—traces and records of the past passed down through time—in the classroom contributes to students' awareness and development of historical thinking, and an increased knowledge of history's influence on the present. The development of historical thinking competencies, and an understanding of historical effect on the present, are seen as prerequisites for students to become engaged and critical participants in society—rather than passive bystanders enthralled with the collective identity in which they have found themselves thrown. In Canada, Peter Seixas argued that the history classroom has a role in society that goes beyond the creation of public memory and preserving collective identity.[27] He argued that history education should focus on providing students with a usable past—that is constantly shaped and re-shaped—to help orient young people.[28] This echoes the purpose of the *NLH* report for history education and its role in looking to the past to aid in making decisions. Seixas outlines questions the

[25] Ibid., 9–10.
[26] Ibid., 9–10.
[27] Peter Seixas, "What is Historical Consciousness?." in *To the Past: History Education, Public Memory, and Citizenship in Canada*, ed. Ruth W. Sandwell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 13.
[28] Ibid., 14.

history classroom can focus on answering.[29] These questions help students understand the past, make sense of their place in the world, and make decisions for the future. Building on his earlier work, Seixas and Tom Morton argued in *The Big Six* that the study of history in schools can help student's recognize their place in the world.[30] Seixas and Morton argued that "the social, political, and cultural worlds that we navigate daily,"[31] are products of the past. Seixas and Morton discuss a practical and very realistic aspect of understanding the past: through recognition of the ethical dimension of history, "restitution and remembrance"[32] is possible in the present. When students study history in the classroom they develop an understanding of history's effect on the present.

The study of history (whether through historical thinking processes or philosophical hermeneutics) has the potential to lead to deeper understandings of human nature and the multifarious experience of being human. The preeminent scholar of history education in the United States Sam Wineburg argued that "history holds the potential, only partly realized, of humanizing us in ways offered by few other areas in the school curriculum."[33] In other words, students have the potential to develop a greater understanding of humanity through the study of history. Wineburg argued that the study of human behaviour leads to the recognition that humans are more than the labels of race, wealth, geographic location assigned at birth.[34] The study of history raises these labelled prejudices in front of us for critical evaluation. In our encounter with the past, our prior

[29] The seven questions: "1. How did things get to be as we see them today? Which aspects are signs of continuity over time, and which are signs of change?... 2. What group or groups am I a part of, and what are its/their origins?... 3. How should we judge each other's past actions? By extension, what debts does my group owe to others and/or others to mine?... 4. Are things basically getting better or are they getting worse?... 5. What stories about the past should I believe? On what grounds? Oliver Stone's account in JFK? Daniel Goldhagen's explanation of the Holocaust? Marc Starowicz's history of Canada?... 6. Which stories shall we tell? What about the past is significant enough to pass on to others, and particularly to the next generation?... 7. Is there anything we can do to make things better?": from Seixas, "What is historical Consciousness?" 15.
[30] Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six*, 1.
[31] Ibid., 1.
[32] Ibid., 17.
[33] Samuel S. Wineburg, Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts, 5.
[34] Ibid., 7.

understandings evolve; we pick ourselves up and discover that we have learned. Echoing Wineburg, Martha Viator argued that history education has as its aim the development of a student's historical thinking skills. These skills aid in understanding past events and using these lessons to make decisions in the present. [35]

To summarize, the contemporary literature on history teaching and learning argues for a purpose beyond that of reinforcing the collective identity or "public memory" of a nation. Great Britain, Canada, and the United States possess a rich written tradition of history teaching and learning predicated on the academic discipline of historical study; a body of literature that works towards a progression away from cultivation through memorization. I present the development of historical thinking in the following section organized according to the country in which the literature originates.

2.1.3 The development of historical thinking competencies

Thinking historically is often conceived as an unnatural process that fails to emerge from psychological development; it must be taught and learned. Since the processes of thinking historically are seen as "unnatural" acts and do not occur automatically in individuals, students can improve their historical thinking competencies in the classroom with a structured curriculum and pedagogy. Sarah Drake Brown sees this as a crucial aspect of history teaching and learning. She stated that letting the practical aspects of "doing history" overshadow or extinguish the emphasis on the historical thinking concepts need not occur. According to Brown, historical thinking does need not to become an

[35] Martha Graham Viator, "Developing Historical Thinking through Questions," *The Social Studies* 103 (2012): 198.

afterthought.[36] The literature in history education demonstrates a variety of theories and processes to ensure historical thinking is developed in students.

The history classroom is an opportunity for students to engage with the remnants (traces) of the past. This originates from historians' task to construct contemporary representations of the past from a multitude of historical sources.[37] In Great Britain, the *NLH* report states that opportunities for "handling and using historical evidence,"[38] develop students' abilities to understand the process of historical thinking and what is involved in the construction of historical narratives. The *NLH report* cautions that historians (and students) are not free to imagine and construct the past at will without proper use of evidence; in other words, the available evidence conditions historical interpretations.[39] Individuals cannot observe the past. Evidence is necessary to construct historical narratives. Therefore, exposure to various forms of evidence such as primary documents, secondary sources, artefacts, museums, and historic sites helps teach students the importance of providing evidentiary support for their claims about the past.

Historical thinking focuses on questioning sources to ascertain their reliability and value to the historian. Drake and Brown stated that reading sources for facts or test material is insufficient. Students need to be taught the historian's process of "interrogating primary sources and secondary narratives"[40] to determine not only their reliability but their value as a historical source. Through the act of questioning a source, students are taught to view it as a human document created for a purpose and as such must be corroborated.

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[36] Sarah Drake Brown, "History Circles: The Doing of Teaching History," *The History Teacher* 42, no. 2 (February 2009): 192.
[37] Mark Cottingham, "Developing Spirituality through the Use of Literature in History Education," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 10, no. 1 (2005): 51; James Goulding, "Historical Thinking and Social Media," *Agora* 46, no. 3 (July 2011): 15; Gina Hogue, "Using Computer Technology to Record and Present Family History and to Enhance Historical Thinking Skills," *OAH Magazine of History* 5, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 70; Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six*, 5; Wineburg. *Historical Thinking*.
[38] Schools History Project, *A New Look at History*, 6.
[39] Ibid., 15.
[40] Drake & Brown, " A Systematic Approach to Improve Student's Historical Thinking," 471.

Positing an inquiry in the classroom provides an opportunity for a focused unit of study and facilitates the development of students' competency in historical thinking. The *NLH* report states that history is an inquiry into the raw materials of the past; the intention being to narrate what happened, when it happened, and why it happened.

Peter Lee and Rosalyn Ashby argued that history education should focus on the development of second-order or procedural thinking in students.[41] These second order concepts—such as evidence, explanation, change, and accounts—are not the substantive aspects of history (the content) but instead comprise of how we think about the past and the processes involved in the construction of history. Lee stated these second-order thinking concepts[42] are crucial to the discipline of history and therefore crucial to history education.[43] He argued they are historians' ideas about, "the nature and status of historical accounts, evidence, understanding and explanation, time and change,"[44] and they frame the way in which humans make sense of the diverse accounts of the past. Students may become intellectually equipped to deal with varying perspectives and viewpoints that exist in the world through the development of competencies in these second-order concepts. As students critically assess various viewpoints from past texts, they work towards reconstructing the past and developing empathy—rather than naively assuming a dogmatic view of the world is preferable or sufficient.[45] Students not only critically study the past through the texts left behind, but also critically assess humanity. For this reason, Lee

[41] Peter Lee and Rosalyn Ashby, "Knowing, teaching, and learning history: national and international perspectives," in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives*, ed. P. Seixas, S. Wineburg, and P. Stearns (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 199.
[42] Sometimes described as metahistorical concepts. In this thesis, I will refer to them as second-order thinking concepts.
[43] Peter Lee, "Understanding History," in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, ed. Peter Seixas (n.p.: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 131.
[44] Ibid., 131.
[45] Lee and Ashby, "Knowing, teaching, and learning," in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning,* 200.

argues that history education is an important element of how humans understand the world.[46]

Progressive scaffolding (i.e., the slow progression of skills and understanding) is an important element in the history classroom as it is beneficial for developing competency in historical thinking and ensuring that the historical thinking concepts are a primary focus of history education. Lee and Shemilt argued that student progression in history education cannot be calculated by the quantity of facts remembered and regurgitated on an exam.[47] Progression becomes more complicated as it must take into account the intellectual development of students' ideas about history. In other words, students progress over time and develop greater competencies and more sophisticated ideas about the study of the past.

Lee and Shemilt argued that progression models for history education must be developmental and take into account students' ideas about the past. Models cannot be hierarchical and ignore the developmental stages of youth.[48] Lee and Shemilt determined that any method or tools designed to teach the historical thinking competencies should acknowledge student's prior conceptions about history. To ignore how students think about history prior to entering the classroom would be, "little more than 'firing blindly into the dark: we may get lucky and hit one of our targets, but we are much more likely to damage our own side'."[49]

In the United States, Wineburg argues that when students enter the history classroom, they think and speak about history differently than historians.[50] Thereby, since students have yet to develop competency in historical thinking, they rely on concepts

[46] Lee, "Understanding History," 131.
[47] P. Lee and D. Shemilt, "A Scaffold, not a Cage: Progression and Progression Models in History," *Teaching History* 113 (2003): 13.
[48] Ibid., 17.
[49] Peter Lee and Denis Schemilt, "I just wish we could go back in the past and find out what really happened': Progression in Understanding about Historical Accounts," *Teaching History*, no. 117 (December 2004): 25.
[50] Wineburg. *Historical Thinking*.

provided by teachers to help them understand the processes of studying history.[51] Consequently, a student's improved ability to think historically and construct historical narratives can be achieved through a curriculum predicated on historical thinking. This includes material that propagates an approach to history teaching and learning predicated on the development of competencies in historical thinking. Student competence in historical thinking and understanding the problems associated with historical study (a disciplinary approach to history teaching and learning) is a crucial aspect of achieving the purposes of history education outlined in the previous section.

Bain argued that a simple demonstration of the historical thinking processes leads to an elementary or surface level of student competency.[52] He also advocated for the scaffolding of ideas and language to allow student progression from easier to difficult concepts. He termed this scaffolding "history specific social assistance" in which the teacher aids students in their development of competencies in historical thinking. Lendol Calder supported Bain's thesis that historical thinking does not come naturally to students; he suggested that rather than covering history in class, history education should focus on uncoverage.[53] Calder argued that "the very things hidden away by traditional survey instruction: the linchpin ideas of historical inquiry that are not obvious or easily comprehended…"[54] can be taught to students. In other words, the metahistorical concepts should be taught to students in history education.

Bain iterated that history was, "one of the driest of school subjects."[55] Assessment of students' abilities to recall from memory factual information presented by the teacher in

[51] Ibid.
[52] Bain, "They thought the world was flat?", 188.
[53] Lendol Calder, "Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey," *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (March 2006).
[54] Ibid., 1363.
[55] R. B. Bain, "They thought the world was flat?' Applying the Principles of How People Learn in Teaching High School History," in *How Students Learn: History, Mathematics, and Science in the Classroom*, ed. J. Bransford and S. Donovan (Washington: The National Academies Press, 2005): 179.

the classroom quantifies student knowledge of the past and has the potential to uphold dominant historical iterations, preserve a dominant collective identity and public memory. Thus, this type of history classroom fails to provide students with the skills and competencies necessary to become critical participants in a democratic society. In response, the contemporary research in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States proposes the curtain be pulled up and students be allowed to attend rehearsals. The history classroom can provide opportunities for students to understand the historical thinking process used by historians, to "think about how historians transform the past into history,"[56] and to "begin constructing history themselves."[57] History teaching and learning gets transformed in the classroom predicated on historical thinking.

Bain argued that research questions, the positing of historical problems, motivates students to find "history engaging, relevant, and meaningful if they understood the fundamental puzzles involved.[58] In concordance with Bain, Lesh argued for a break away from transmission to a curriculum that identifies important historical questions that students then investigate using primary and secondary sources.[59] After an analysis of historical thinking in sixth graders, Viator argued that the research question is crucially important for history education.[60] He proposed that the teacher ask big questions of the students in order to facilitate their study of the past. Through the discussion of big ideas and essential questions, sixth graders learned the "critical thinking skills of historical thinking,"[61] deemed necessary for a student in history education. For Viator, the purpose of asking questions is to ensure students "understand that history is complex and multifaceted". Asking questions provides students with opportunities to piece together the

[56] Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six*, 3.
[57] Ibid., 3.
[58] Bain, "They thought the world was flat?"
[59] Bruce Lesh, "Making Historical Thinking a Natural Act," *Historically Speaking* 12, no. 3 (June 2011): 18.
[60] Martha Graham Viator. "Developing Historical Thinking through Questions." *The Social Studies* 103 (2012): 198.
[61] Ibid., 198.

past from various sources revealing diverse perspectives."[62] Viator argued that teachers and students may benefit from constantly referring to the inquiry questions throughout the unit. This reminder reinforces the objectives in the students' minds. Seixas and Morton stated that inquiry is "integral" in their approach to teaching history as it "prompt[s] [students] to take an active stance towards engaging with the past."[63] The inquiry question is a guide driving student creation of historical accounts while relying on constant referral to the historical thinking concepts. Inquiry leads students away from memorization, teachers away from mere transmission, and transitions the classroom to a place predicated on asking important questions of history.

The study of the past has consequences for the present. The ability to think critically and make judgments is an important aspect of understanding the world. History education provides students with the ability to be independent thinkers and contribute to their own lives.[64] Laville stated that the development of historical thinking "will hold the key to independence of thought and freedom of choice."[65] However, he expanded on historical thinking to state that it not only fosters independence but protects against the imposition of an alien historical consciousness and allows for the creation of one's own historical consciousness.[66]

To overcome students' lack of knowledge in regards to historical thinking, Frederick Drake and Sarah Drake Brown argued for a systematic approach to student's interactions with primary sources.[67] Their approach harnesses pre-selected documents, which are vetted by the teacher, for use in class. Students analyze these documents

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[62] Ibid., 198.
[63] Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six*, 9
[64] Schools History Project, *A New Look at History*, 9.
[65] Laville, " Historical Consciousness and Historical Education: What to Expect from the First for the Second," 177.
[66] Ibid., 177.
[67] Frederick D. Drake and Sarah Drake Brown, "A Systematic Approach to Improve Student's Historical Thinking," *The History Teacher* 36, no. 4 (August 2003).

mimicking the practice of historians.[68] They then use these documents to answer inquiry questions and construct narratives about the past. According to Drake and Brown, "the object is to provoke students positively to the end that they become engaged in historical inquiry and interpretation."[69] Thereby, students unlearn their pre-conceptual biases and pre-judgments in regards to historical study and history teaching and learning.

In Canada, Seixas and Morton defined historical thinking as the creative processes historians use in the construction of historical narratives.[70] They highlighted six concepts[71] of historical thinking; "*Historical Significance, Evidence, Continuity and Change, Cause and Consequence, Historical Perspectives* and the *Ethical Dimension of History"* which originate in the problems historians face that are "inherent in the construction of history."[72] According to Seixas and Morton, "these concepts constitute a six-part framework for helping students to think about how historians transform the past into history."[73]

Seixas and Morton supported the use of a progressive scaffolding model tied to concepts and language. They argued that the historical thinking concepts provide teachers with vocabulary to use while teaching students the processes in the construction of history and how to critically assess historical arguments.[74] Seixas and Morton detailed that the framework provided by the six concepts "allows for progression,"[75] where students "move from depending on easily available, common sense notions of the past to using the culture's most powerful intellectual tools for understanding history."[76] In other words, students become critical participants in the construction of history.

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[68] Ibid., 465.
[69] Ibid., 467.
[70] Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six*, 2.
[71] Framework called the Historical Thinking Concepts.
[72] Ibid., 4.
[73] Ibid., 3
[74] Ibid., *3*.
[75] Ibid., *3*.
[76] Ibid., *3*.

Seixas and Morton reiterated the importance of using primary documents in the classroom. They stated that historical claims are founded on "the traces"[77] that remain from the past. Historians' secondary accounts of past events are therefore based on these traces. Reconstructing the past and making historical accounts and claims requires "finding, selecting, contextualizing, interpreting, and corroborating sources."[78] In agreement with Wineburg, Seixas and Morton agreed that we ask questions of sources to turn the responses into evidence to use in the construction of historical accounts.[79] An important aspect of using historical sources is sourcing—questioning where the source originated, its author and their "purpose, values, and worldview"[80]— which establishes the validity of a source. Lastly, Seixas and Morton argued that we can never rely on one source when studying the past. It is important to corroborate evidence to construct the most detailed and justified account of the past.

Working concurrently with Seixas and Morton in Canada, Stéphane Lévesque expanded on the five concepts (first delineated by Peter Seixas[81]) to guide students' understanding of the historian's processes. Lévesque highlights five concepts: "*Historical Significance, Continuity and Change, Progress and Decline, Evidence, and Historical Empathy*."[82] Regardless of which concepts we focus on, both sets provide a "vocabulary to use while talking with students"[83] about history. In other words, the concepts provide the

[77] Ibid., 5.
[78] Ibid., 5.
[79] Ibid., 40.
[80] Ibid., 40.
[81] Peter Seixas. Conceptualizing the growth of historical understanding. In *Handbook of education and human development: New models of learning, teaching and schooling,* Edited by D.R. Olson & N. Torrance (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1996).
[82] Stéphane Lévesque. Thinking Historically: Educating students for the twenty-first Century. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).
[83] Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six,* 3.

"path from the historian to the classroom."[84] The development of a disciplinary approach to education bridges the gap between the theory and practice of history education.

Curricula designed to develop historical thinking in students have the potential to transform the history classroom. Seixas argued that the history classroom based on the memorization and recollection of a quantifiable amount of "historical facts" results in history being "devoid of any meaning for students…[and] devoid of any educational purpose."[85] Mike Denos and Roland Case argued that history taught as an, "informational subject,"[86] —the prevalence of assessing quantifiable or verifiable facts designed to inform students—requires no critique or study of the propositional narratives taught by teachers to students. As a result, students are seldom, if ever, given opportunities in the history classroom to engage in critical thinking, or work towards an understanding of the historical thinking processes used by historians, which in turns leads to critical participation in a democratic society.[87] Jocelyn Létourneau and Sabrina Moisan argued that teachers become the most authoritative historical source for students' reference. Therefore, the narratives teachers present become a primary means of historical memory for students.[88] Seixas and Morton described this situation:

> Commonly we read in their [historians] histories only the end product—their historical narratives. In some sense, they are like directors of a play. Too often, our students see only the play. We want them to peer backstage, to understand how the ropes and pulleys work that make the play possible.[89]

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[84] Ibid., 8.
[85] Ibid., v.
[86] Mike Denos and Roland Case, *Teaching about Historical Thinking*, ed. Peter Seixas and Penney Clark (Vancouver: The Critical Thinking Consortium, 2006): 2.
[87] Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six*, v.
[88] Jocelyn Létourneau and Sabrina Moisan, "Young People's Assimilation of a Collective Historical Memory: A Case Study of Quebeckers of French-Canadian Heritage," introduction to *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (n.p.: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 113.
[89] Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six*, 3.

As a result, history was often conceived as boring and tedious. Teachers often rely on textbooks, lectures, and the recitation of facts to be recalled on standardized assessments.

2.2 Discussion, conversation, and a community of practice

The Anglophone literature describes discussion between individuals in the classroom as an irreplaceable method of developing student competencies in historical thinking, while generating a greater understanding of the past.[90] However, discussion is often a ill-defined, vague term used to describe an element of classroom practice associated with sharing of ideas.[91] The *NLH report* alludes to discussion as an important element for students in terms of developing second-order thinking skills and shedding light on the usefulness of history for understanding one's identity and place in the world. The report states that a "syllabus framed with the educational uses of history in mind… and frequent discussion with pupils about history, its interest and its values, are suggested as ways in which pupils may come to see that history has its uses for them."[92] This means that classroom discussions become an "indispensable" aspect of a disciplinary or second-order approach to history education.

In the United States, Sam Wineburg, Daisy Martin, and Chauncey Monte-Sano argued that discussions concerning evidence can lead to a greater understanding of sourcing and analyzing primary documents. They stated that discussion allows the class to revisit "the guiding question and prompt students to defend their answers with evidence

[90] Schools History Project, *A New Look at History*, 12.
[91] Conversation and discussion will be considered synonymous for our purposes in this thesis. However, I purport (later) that dialogue is a different entity than discussion and conversation. Although Gadamer uses dialogue and conversation seemingly synonymously, I relate conversation more to discussion and dialogue as something separate.
[92] Schools History Project, *A New Look at History*, 23.

from the documents."[93] Discussions enable students to listen for classmates' questions and thus "highlight how historical digging often leads to more questions."[94]

Michael Lovorn's contemporary research on historical thinking with elementary school students posited that discussions may help students to compare various narrative accounts of the past.[95] In his study of elementary students, he concluded that discussions help "offer explanations about life in the past."[96] Discussion is a process where students share information and ask questions not only about the past but why various accounts differ in their interpretations of events. Like the *NLH* report, the work of Wineburg, Martin, and Monte-Sano, Lovorn, et al., does not describe dialogue. Rather, the works make broad claims that dialogue helps student to source documents, understand the process of historical inquiry, and ultimately leads to a reconstruction of the past.

The history classroom provides students opportunities to become a community of thinkers who contribute to an enriched conversation of the subject matter. Drake and Brown argued that discussion is a necessary prerequisite in history education; they state that: "history teaching is a co-investigation in which the teacher and students shape and re-shape their interpretations about the past."[97] However, Drake and Brown's description of discussion does not refer to dialogue in the Gadamerian sense of the word as we shall see in chapter four. In the same vein, Avishag Reisman tied discussion to the principle inquiry question that focuses students' study; questions provide the initial direction to a conversation and thereby provide it with boundaries or constrain it.[98] Students develop and

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[93] Samuel Wineburg, Daisy Martin, and Chauncey Monte-Sano, *Reading like a Historian: Teaching Literacy in Middle and High School Classrooms* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2011): 5.
[94] Ibid., 5.
[95] M. Lovorn, "Focus on Elementary: Deepening Historical Themes in the Elementary School: Four Developmentally Appropriate Ways to Engage Young Students in Historical Thinking and Historiography," *Childhood Education* 90, no. 5 (2014): 371.
[96] Ibid., 371.
[97] Drake and Brown, " A Systematic Approach to Improve Student's Historical Thinking," 971.
[98] Avishag Reisman, "Reading like a Historian: A Document Based History Curriculum Intervention in Urban High Schools," *Cognition and Instruction* 30, no. 1 (January 2012), 91.

critique various interpretations of history by answering inquiry questions. Reisman argued that following the interpretation of evidence in the classroom, discussion allows students to become "arbiters of others' truth claims."[99] Jada Kohlmeir continued the focus on dialogue and discussion in her article on using Socratic dialogue to teach historical empathy.[100] Through a series of questions and answers, students are guided towards a greater understanding of empathy.[101] Building on the contributions of Kohlmeir, Wayne Journell's article on asynchronous discussions conceptualized the contribution of discussion in the online history classroom.[102] Journell argued that through discussion, students are able to test their beliefs, challenge the beliefs of others, and gain new understandings. Despite the omission of face-to-face dialogue in his practice, he began to describe dialogue's place in history education. In the Anglophone literature, discussion is seen to aid students both in their understanding of the historical thinking processes, while allowing for a comparison of understandings that can lead to discussions of evidence and its suitability for understanding the significance of past events. What the literature does not address is the particular dialogue espoused in *Truth and Method* and its application to the interpretation of past texts.

Historians belong to a scholarly community predicated and sustained upon conversation, scholarly conversation, peer critiques and feedback, and communally constructed knowledge. This contrasts the community of learners that comprise that of the elementary or high school or other classroom filled with non professionals—that is, not trained historians. Peter Seixas described the differences in education, training, authority,

[99] Ibid., 97.
[100] Jada Kohlmeier, "'Couldn't she just leave?': The Relationship Between Consistently Using Class Discussions and the Development of Historical Empathy in a 9th Grade World History Course," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 34, no. 1 (2006).
[101] Ibid.
[102] Wayne Journell, "Facilitating Historical Discussions Using Asynchronous Communication: The Role of the Teacher," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 36, no. 4 (2008): 319.

and inclusiveness that make these two communities different.[103] While the scholarly community comprised of historians is exclusive and only includes professionally qualified historians, the school classroom is inclusive. In relation to the study of history, the knowledge or truth produced by historians is substantiated, critiqued and either upheld or cast adrift—students' knowledge is often not grounded in evidence and authoritative review.[104] Seixas acknowledged that problems arise when the knowledge from historians is conveyed outside the community as it is too often construed as dogmatic and not held up for examination or critique. Despite the differences between the two communities, Seixas argues that schools' reliance on the "products of the scholarly community" is problematic and not "consistent with the way the scholarly community itself sees its activities."[105] The problem that Seixas acknowledged is that while the vocabulary is often too difficult to allow students to enter into the scholarly community, they can begin to question and examine their own culture and beliefs in the classroom:

> Starting points would include student's identification of events of historical significance, justification of their choices, articulation of their sense of historical progress and/or decline, judgments about historical authorities and historical evidence, and appreciation of human agency in the past… Such an approach would focus on history as meaning making, and would constitute the classroom into a community of inquiry analogous to the community of inquiry of historians.[106]

The history classroom predicated on collaboration can be seen as a unique community of inquiry which benefits students and how they derive meaning from history. The last argument Seixas made references the role of the teacher in the history classroom. He

[103] Peter Seixas, "The Community of Inquiry as a Basis for Knowledge and Learning: The Case of History," *American Educational Research Journal* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 313.
[104] Seixas, " The Community of Inquiry as a Basis for Knowledge and Learning: The Case of History," 310.
[105] Ibid., 313.
[106] Ibid., 315.

argued it is the teacher's responsibility to construct the relationship between the two communities for the benefit of the students.[107] Seixas stated that students rely on the teacher to construct, reinforce and police the community of inquiry in the classroom.[108] The current Anglophone literature on history education demonstrates that classroom or small group discussions may take many different forms, and include anything from free class discussions, to organized and monitored small group discussions. I now turn our attention to the contributions that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic can make for our understanding of interpretation and the interactions that allow for understanding in the history classroom.

2.3 Bridging history teaching and learning with Gadamerian hermeneutics

Interpretation and understanding in Gadamerian hermeneutics is dialogical in nature. The application of understanding in dialogue can add to and enrich an understanding of history education. Therefore, the inclusion of both historical thinking and dialogical understanding in the classroom can make history education a richer experience for students. What is of concern for dialogical understanding (as with particular aspects of the disciplinary approach) is understanding how the past effects us. However, in addition to teaching the historical thinking processes Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics offers a different idea of understanding that can be applied to the interpretation of texts in the history classroom. Warnke argues that "Gadamer conceives of understanding as dialogue…in which we test our fore-meanings against those of others and come to a

[107] Ibid., 315.
[108] Ibid., 320.

consensus with others about a subject matter."[109] An interpretation of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* has something to offer that history education theory has not yet confronted.

Similar to the disciplinary approach to history education, dialogical hermeneutics is concerned with the interpretation of primary documents. Secondary and tertiary texts are of less concern. Thus both approaches to history education recognize the importance of original texts. An important aspect of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is the contention that the meaning in texts is exiled and needs to be brought back to the present through dialogical interpretation. In other words, the meaning of a text is alienated the instant it is written down. Gadamer stated that, "texts are 'enduringly fixed expressions of life' that are to be understood; and that means that one partner in the hermeneutical conversation, the text, speaks only through the other partner, the interpreter. Only through him are the written marks changed back into meaning."[110] Texts cannot make a truth claim about the subject matter until the temporal distance between the text and its interpreter is bridged. Therefore, historical hermeneutics is concerned with the task of application as it, "explicitly and consciously bridges the temporal distance that separates the interpreter from the text and overcomes the alienation of meaning that the text has undergone."[111] Once brought back into the living conversation of the present, through the question—our interpretation of past texts provides experiences of historical effect—inherently negative experiences which lead us to understanding. An individual has a negative experience when something shocks us or leads us to realize that something is not as we thought it was.[112] Our prior meanings or thinking is negated as it changes or expands. This can be applied to history education. The history classroom is a space for the dialogical interpretation of past

[109] Georgia Warnke. "The Hermeneutic Circle Vs Dialogue." *The Review of Metaphysics* 65 no.1 (September 2011): 91.
[110] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 387.
[111] Ibid., 311.
[112] Ibid., 366.

texts where we generate new understandings concerning the human world. While historical thinking is also concerned with the reconstruction of the past which is empirical in nature, both hermeneutics and historical thinking are concerned with understanding the human world. But, they do so differently.

2.3.1 Gadamerian hermeneutics and past texts

In encounters with past texts, the principle task is not only to reconstruct the questions that the author was trying to answer when writing the text. Gadamer asserted that the "task of understanding is concerned above all with the meaning of the text itself… the question we are concerned to reconstruct has to do not with the mental experiences of the author but simply with the meaning of the text itself."[113] He also stated that, "the hermeneutical reduction to the author's meaning is just as inappropriate as the reduction of historical events to the intentions of their protagonists."[114] Understanding is not solely concerned with the original question that the author was trying to answer, although this is part of what we are trying to achieve; it is also understanding what is written in the text. It is understanding the text as an answer to a question. Our experiences of the world effect the questions we bring to past texts. For example, the meaning we derive from the text might be different than the author had originally intended. It is this meaning in text, the one associated with the subject we are trying to understand and the questions we ask, which is the concern of philosophical hermeneutics. To illustrate, if we read a text pertaining to the First World War, or the Crusades, or any other war in human history, we work to determine the question to which the text is an answer. We may work out the question the author was trying to answer. However, we are not trying to understand the psychological state of the author or critique their understanding of the past events as we

[113] Ibid., 372.
[114] Ibid., 373.

would do if we were looking for historical evidence. Subsequently, we may interpret the text as an answer to a question we have brought to it based on our tradition. This may be a question the author had never intended to answer, but nonetheless the text does so anyways.

We elucidate these answers through dialogue or the process of question and answer with the text. Dialogue and the asking of questions brings the various meanings of a text to light. According to Gadamer, "we cannot have experiences without asking questions."[115] We are concerned with the thoughts of the author, but, various meanings which the author may not have intended, but are within the spirit of the text may arise from such questions. For example, if we study a First World War participant's letters, biography or journal (I have used texts such as these in the classroom) we approach it to try and better understand a subject matter such as, the human predisposition to violence, or we may be trying to understand the notion of overcoming adversity. Whatever the subject we are trying to understand, we look to the text for some kind of truth related to the subject matter. We do this by asking a question—the reader reveals a text by asking questions. The questions we ask of the text come from a desire to better understand the subject of inquiry. Therefore, the subject of a text directs the process of question and answer which in turn reveals the meaning of the text. Akin to dialogue between two people, Gadamer iterated that the hermeneutic situation of understanding a text occurs dialogically through "the structure of question and answer."[116] An individual in the present asks a question of a text to make it the object of interpretation. But, what does questioning look like?

Gadamer argued that to reveal a text, readers should pay careful attention to the structure of the question. Particular to the experience of dialogue, the reader must desire some form of knowledge from the text. This knowledge is not a tool to be used for

[115] Ibid., 362.
[116] Ibid., 369.

utilitarian purposes. Rather it is to come up against our prejudices and either affirm or discard them. An open question leads to more open questions. But, in order to know, one comes to realize that one does not know something. When a person comes to this realization, then they can begin to ask authentic questions. When we ask authentic questions we experience a, "discourse that is intended to reveal something."[117] This discourse requires that the text be broken open and revealed by a genuine or open question.

Closed questions fail to open up a text to dialogical understanding. Closed questions can be answered simply and quickly. They do not initiate or sustain a conversation. These types of questions provide facts and keep the control of the conversation with the questioner. For example, if we were looking at a journal from the First World War, we may ask questions such as, "Did the soldier participate in the battle of the Somme? or "What wounds did the soldier suffer during the war?" These are easily answered with facts from the text itself. They do not break open the text and initiate an open and prolonged dialogue about a particular subject.

Genuine questions initiate dialogue and open up a journey of understanding characteristic of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. A journey of understanding can happen with teachers and students in the classroom. Open questions allow for a multitude of answers and are not handled easily. These questions require lengthy, well-developed answers, and often produce more questions. For example, if we look at documents from the First World War we may ask: How do humans respond to experiences of extreme suffering and violence? Why do humans continue to fight when they have lost hope? How can we maintain a will to live while surrounded by death? Examples such as these are concerned with understanding the human condition through a series of questions (dialogue) with past texts. Open questions typically begin with What, Why, How and allow for an answer that

[117] Ibid., 363.

is unknown. These questions could be asked of many different texts. Each different text has an answer to provide for each question. Each text would be a different dialogical experience.

Another example could relate to casualties in the First World War. A history teacher could be talking about casualties in the world wars. A non-dialogical question that is not open would be one like "how many Canadian soldiers were sent overseas and returned in WW I and WW II?" The "correct" answers would be about 400,000 for each war, with more than twice the number dying in WWI than in WWII. This would be a closed question, one with right vs. wrong answers. An open question might be: "Despite points of comparison, the wars have been memorialized in Canada in very different ways (with WWI commemorated very widely and visibly, and WWII much less). Why?"

Open questions provide a structure to the dialogue as they pertain to a particular subject matter, but they do not designate a guaranteed end point or destination. The question can take the dialogue in a number of possible directions. But, most importantly, the question cannot stultify the voice of the text; it must open the text up so we may discover multiple meanings and truth claims.

Gadamer's important argument that the art of asking questions proves its value because we are able to persist in asking questions— which involves being able to preserve an orientation toward openness—aids in our understanding of what occurs to teachers and students who engage in authentic dialogue with each other or with texts.[118] In dialogue (bringing questions to texts) with texts, we ask open questions of the text which are answered by what we read in the pages. This answer alters our understanding of the subject matter and results in further questions. This preserves questioning and dialogue. In relation to dialogue between individuals in the classroom, if a student asks a question, the teacher

[118] Ibid., 367.

does not provide a closed answer that shuts off further conversation. The teacher will work to understand the question and the reason for it and guide the student into deeper areas of understanding.

Dialogue requires genuine questions. Rhetorical and pedagogical questions are distinguished from genuine questions. Rhetorical questions provide their own answer and end a conversation before it begins. A pedagogical question gives direction to a conversation but does not ensure the conversation is open and sustainable.[119] The right type of question may open up the hidden meaning in a text, or the hidden meaning in the answers of another individual (student or teacher). This answer is an important truth about the subject of study. In Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, we can see how dialogical understanding has a fluid nature.

As we have seen, there is a gap in the Anglophone literature pertaining to history education that can be filled with a discussion of Gadamerian hermeneutics and dialogue. We now turn our attention to how an interpretation of *Truth and Method* can enrich an understanding of history education.

[119] Weinsheimer, Joel. *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985): 207.

3 Philosophical Hermeneutics and History Education

In the preceding chapter, I reviewed the curricular and philosophical developments in the contemporary approach to history teaching and learning. Historical thinking has increasingly been researched and implemented in many classrooms across Great Britain, Canada, and the United States. The first task of the previous chapter was to describe the disciplinary approach to history teaching and learning— an approach concerned with students' development of the historical thinking competencies which mirror the processes of professional historians.[120] The development of historical thinking competencies aids in student's critical interpretation of past texts, the construction of historical narratives and understanding the significance of past events. Also, the previous chapter bridged the contemporary research in history education with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. This foreshadowed an understanding of history education based on the application of philosophical hermeneutics to interpretation in the history classroom. We now turn our attention to the central question which this chapter answers: How might an interpretation of *Truth and Method* inform and enrich an understanding of history education? This chapter presents a hermeneutic dialogue with *Truth and Method* focused on understanding the interpretation of past texts in the history classroom.

The hermeneutic interpretation of past texts occurs through dialogue. Dialogue transforms historical records to subjects that speak (through asking questions) to us about human experiences and meaning. Gadamer contended that the meaning of past texts—records that emerge from the past—lie dormant until brought to life in the present. To understand the past, sources must be brought back into a dialogue between reader and text. Charles Taylor stated a specific movement occurs in the dialogue between reader and

[120] Seixas & Morton, *The Big Six*, 2.

text.[121] This specific movement from textual record to dialogue explicates an understanding of history education.

Gadamer argued that a fundamental difference exists between the historian's engagement with historical sources and hermeneutic engagement with past texts. He contends that:

> The historian has a different orientation to the texts of the past, in that he is trying to discover something about the past through them. He therefore uses other traditionary material to supplement and verify what the texts say. He considers it as more or less of a weakness when the philologist regards his text as a work of art. A work of art is a whole, self-sufficient world. But the interest of the historian knows no such self-sufficiency.[122]

In our understanding of what occurs during interpretation of texts in the history classroom, I do not refer to historical texts as needing corroboration or verification—as one would rightly do if they were critically reconstructing the past and determining the significance of a text. Rather, we engage in the art of strengthening or through a dialogue with the text (and perhaps subsequent dialogue about the text with another person) we look for how the text influences our understanding of the subject matter. Gadamer stated that the text "preserves itself because it is significant in itself and interprets itself, i.e., it speaks in such a way that it is not a statement about what is past—documentary evidence that still needs to be interpreted—rather it says something to the present as if it were said specifically to it."[123] The truth claims of a past text—the answer to the question we recognize the text as answering— needs no corroboration as a text itself possesses a self-contained claim to truth. For example, in an interpretation of the journal from the First World War to

[121] Charles Taylor, "Gadamer on the Human Sciences," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 126–127.
[122] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 335.
[123] Ibid., 289–290.

understand what occurred in the war or to reconstruct the past, the facts and evidence presented must be corroborated with other sources. In a hermeneutic reading of the text, an individual does not corroborate the claims a particular text has about the questions we ask it. Corroboration is a necessary aspect of historical thinking and a crucial task of the historian concerned with the construction of historical narratives. Gadamer stated that hermeneutics views the past text as a work of art and, "a whole, self-sufficient world,"[124] that presents an understanding of a subject that does not need corroboration. Rather, we find strengths in what such a text has to say about the subject matter we are engaged in trying to understand. The reading of the text causes us to realize that our understanding of a subject may not be complete. It makes us aware that we in fact, might not know. A journal from the First World War has meaning for us in that it provides an understanding of human violence or human suffering. When a student or teachers interpret such records, our horizons expand or shift and our understanding of the world is altered. What seems alien to us could in fact have value in this particular description of understanding.

This thesis describes an understanding of history education where hermeneutic dialogue with past texts occurs in the classroom alongside mastering the proper processes of historical thinking, the creation of historical narratives, and sourcing: it is not a one or the other affair.[125] Gadamer stated that we work to "describe individual interpretive experience, and thereby the movement of history in general, more adequately than philosophies based in epistemological frameworks."[126] This means that we describe the unique experience of interpretation that a person finds themselves in when they engage in dialogue with a past text. This engagement in dialogue reveals that we are situated in a tradition which creates our prejudices and thus conditions our understanding of a text.

[124] Ibid., 335.
[125] Ibid., 335.
[126] Veith, *Gadamer and the Transmission of History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 2.

Therefore, it is also a task of the history educator to provide texts for students to interpret resulting in opportunities to understand how their interpretations of texts shapes their prejudices and beliefs. Interpretation can thus be a formative experience for students.

In chapter three, I present an interpretation of *Truth and Method* and apply it to an understanding of historical hermeneutics in the experience of history education. The history classroom has the potential to be a space where students interpret past texts and apply their meaning to the study of a particular subject. This is achieved through dialogue with the text. The history classroom provides opportunities for students to experience historical effect.[127] Historical effect is where reading a text provokes our beliefs or prejudices. This effect is negative as it shocks us and may lead to the realization that something is not as we thought it was. It then becomes a positive effect because due to this provocation our understanding of the subject grows and we can see in something foreign or alien to us some truth. These negative and positive effects of history are inherent in dialogue. Historical effect may occur when we engage with a text from the past.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, (1) I describe Gadamerian hermeneutics and the engagement with texts. Then, (2) I discuss the hermeneutic circle, and the effects of tradition on our presuppositions, prejudices and fore-conceptions in understanding. This section also provides an interpretation of historical effect and the experience of productive negativity for understanding obtained in dialogue with a text. Finally, (3) I apply Gadamerian hermeneutics in *Truth and Method* to the matter of history education. I develop an understanding of history education based on a reader's dialogue with past texts.

[127] Historical effect—inherently negative experiences which lead us to understanding.

3.1 Engagement with past texts

The written word becomes alienated the instant it is written down. An important aspect of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is contention that texts are exiled and must be brought back to the present in interpretation. Gadamer stated that, "texts are 'enduringly fixed expressions of life' that are to be understood; and that means that one partner in the hermeneutical conversation, the text, speaks only through the other partner, the interpreter. Only through him are the written marks changed back into meaning."[128] Texts cannot make a truth claim about the subject matter until the temporal distance between the text and its interpreter is bridged. Therefore, historical hermeneutics is concerned with the task of application as it, "explicitly and consciously bridges the temporal distance that separates the interpreter from the text and overcomes the alienation of meaning that the text has undergone.[129] Once brought back into the living conversation of the present, our interpretation of past texts provides us with experiences of historical effect—inherently negative experiences which lead us to understanding. The effect is negative as it negates the validity of our previously held beliefs or prejudices. Something is negated as we go through the process of dialogue. We can see the application of this idea for history education. The history classroom is an opportunity for students to experience the effects of history handed down through important cultural texts; the students and teachers interpretation of texts reveals the meaning of past texts to teachers and students. In the history classroom we can take these written marks and through questions turn them back into meaning. We reveal what the text has to say about a particular subject.

As historical hermeneutics has the task of bridging temporal distance; so does history education. But, historical distance cannot be seen as something that separates the interpreter from the texts of the past, thus creating a divide. Although we must bridge

[128] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 387.
[129] Ibid., 311.

temporal distance to speak with the text, this distance is not something that we overcome; instead, we embrace and recognize its effect.

Historical distance[130] provides the temporal abutment for understanding and allows for the development, maintenance and revision of the often opaque prejudices that affix limits on the conditions of human understanding. Historical distance is the temporal space between the past and the present. History is created in this temporal space. Tradition is created in this temporal space. Beliefs, and ways of thinking are passed down in this temporal space. Our prejudices are a product of historical distance. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer argued that historical distance serves as the foundation for the hermeneutic traditions that allow for productive thought and understanding.[131] Therefore, he stands in opposition to the modernist notion that historians must alienate their own thinking and harness the thinking of those agents of the past. He defines this as the naïve view of historicism. Temporal historical distance is not a "yawning abyss" that allows for objectivity; rather than ensuring objectivity, temporal historical distance not only provides us with beliefs and prejudices, but is the space where texts from a multitude of traditions are created; the interpretation of such texts, may in turn, expose our prejudices. Historical distance provides us with our prejudices, beliefs and ways of viewing the world because in the temporal distance from the past history has been created by humans. This history becomes a part of tradition which provides us with our beliefs. The temporal distance between the past and present becomes the tradition in which we find ourselves and our thinking situated. Gadamer argued that when historians construct their own truths about the past, this construction is not better than previous truths or understanding; it is simply different, a new way of understanding.

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[130] Temporally, historical distance is an impassable barrier to any understanding of the past. But for Gadamer, we can overcome this barrier in our hermeneutic interpretation of texts. Thus, historical distance is not a problem.

[131] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 297.

3.2 The hermeneutic circle and the effects of tradition

3.2.1 Tradition

Tradition is what comes to be handed down through time; it survives change.[132] In hermeneutics, tradition extends beyond being additions to life, neglected in our everyday existence. Tradition encompasses history, language and culture as embedded in our lives. Therefore, tradition is not an arbitrary force we come up against due to inertia. Warnke argued that, "texts have the meaning they have for us in the context of our practical concerns and projects."[133] Tradition is bound interpretation and influences our thinking and the questions we bring to understanding. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer wrote that, "in tradition there is always an element of freedom and of history itself."[134] Tradition must be "affirmed, embraced, cultivated. It is preservation, and is active in all historical change."[135] Veith contributed to this understanding of tradition when he stated that, it is not a fragmented past unreasonably carried forward; tradition is the transmission of history.[136] Elements of tradition are discarded while others are added. Humans create histories, written, oral, visual, etc., and consequently perpetuate and preserve tradition.[137] This thesis focuses on past texts. Warnke detailed that Gadamer incorporates history as a crucial element of tradition. She stated, "the hermeneutic circle is not primarily a method of interpretation, but a condition of our understanding at all, it is also embedded in historical traditions handed down from one generation to the next. The web of belief and practice in which we operate is one we inherit."[138] This active participation in tradition is necessary for understanding. Gadamer accounted for tradition in *Truth and Method* in his argument concerning research:

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[132] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 281.
[133] Warnke. "The Hermeneutic Circle Vs Dialogue," 98–99.
[134] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 281.
[135] Ibid., 281.
[136] Veith, Gadamer and the Transmission of History, 26.
[137] Ibid., 26.
[138] Warnke. "The Hermeneutic Circle Vs Dialogue," 99.

> Research cannot regard itself as in an absolute antithesis to the way in which we, as historical beings relate to the past…We have to recognize the element of tradition in historical research and inquire into its hermeneutic productivity...Modern historical research itself is not only research, but the handing down of tradition…In the human sciences the particular research questions concerning tradition that we are interested in pursuing are motivated in a special way by the present and its interests[139]

Human tradition consists of, "the history of our civilization, and the texts and works that belong to this. What we study will be in one way or another internal to our identity. Even where we define ourselves against certain features of the past, as the Modern Enlightenment does against the Middle Ages, this remains within our identity as the negative pole, that which we have overcome or escaped."[140] Whether these texts are literary works tied to national identity, or constitutional documents detailing the laws of nation, we must "remain open to the inexhaustible possibilities presented by traditions, and must do so by recognizing how traditions work to present these possibilities."[141] In other words, our interpretations are anchored in our social and individual histories.[142]

Gadamer argued that being situated in tradition means that our relationship to the past need not be that of foreignness.[143] The past need not be seen as a stranger, as an alien of unknown origin with nothing to say in the present. Rather, being situated in tradition means we need not attempt to free ourselves from the past and view it from some transcendent, objective position. Life is constantly addressed by tradition. Consequently, the experience of understanding in the human sciences itself must be "addressed by

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[139] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 282.
[140] Taylor, "Gadamer on the Human Sciences", 142.
[141] Shaun Gallagher, *Hermeneutics and Education* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 95.
[142] Ali Sammel, "An Invitation to Dialogue: Gadamer, Hermeneutic Phenomenology, and Critical Environmental Education," *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 8 (Spring 2003): 158.
[143] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 282.

tradition."[144] We can see that the temporal problem of historical distance does not substantiate a clean break from past.

Tradition conditions an interpreter's dialogue with a text. We are addressed by tradition, and our prejudices, which condition understanding, are inherited from being situated in such a tradition. An encounter with a past text is done with the full magnitude and weight of tradition at our backs. This interpretation of texts is an event of tradition because we add to our understanding of our place in the world and thereby shape the fabric of tradition which gets passed on to others. Consequently, learning and understanding occurs within tradition. Understanding belongs to humankind and its life-world experiences, and contemporary concerns. Tradition is the foundation of the prejudices we carry with us when we interpret a text. An individual is immersed in a tradition which provides the subject matter of study, while simultaneously supplying prejudices. These prejudices lead to the development of meanings (fore-conceptions projected on to a text) in regards to the subject matter we are in the process of understanding.

3.2.2 Prejudice, and fore-conceptions

Tradition creates prejudices. Therefore, an individual's prejudices (which are historically effected) effect the interpretation of past texts.[145] Gadamer rehabilitated the term prejudice from its infectious iteration by enlightenment thinkers[146] and contests the reliance on method as the sole means of understanding.[147] He argued that enlightenment thinkers wanted an understanding of tradition free from error and to achieve this they

[144] Ibid., 282.
[145] While I refer primarily to written texts in this thesis, texts that are the fabric of tradition can also encompass recordings, video, spoken word, pictures, etc.
[146] Gadamer argues that enlightenment thinkers sought to overcome the infectious effects of prejudice through a rationale historic methodology. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 270
[147] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 272.

relied on a "methodologically disciplined use of reason,"[148] to prevent error in understanding. In other words, they wanted to understand history in a rational way, without prejudice or being effected by prejudice. Gadamer stated that enlightenment thinkers' reliance on reason discounted any role prejudices might hold in the process of understanding. Gadamer argued that the enlightenment stance that prejudices hinder understanding is unacceptable; therefore, he gave the critical theory of prejudice a positive value.[149] We are historical beings and to do justice to this, "it is necessary to fundamentally rehabilitate the concept of prejudice and acknowledge the fact that there are legitimate prejudices."[150]

In the experience of understanding, we project meaning on to texts. Gadamer stated that, "A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting."[151] Before we read, we project what we think the meaning of the text will be. These projections arise from our prejudices which have been created by our participation in a tradition. Gadamer stated that prejudice is a "judgment that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been fully examined."[152] In other words, we develop what Gadamer called fore-conceptions about what the text says. The interpreter projects meaning onto text, before experiencing the text in its entirety.

A task of understanding is to work out our prejudices[153] and to constantly seek new ones through interpretation and dialogue (question and answer) with a past text.[154] In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer wrote that "interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones… A person who is trying to understand is exposed to

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[148] Ibid., 277.
[149] Ibid., 277.
[150] Ibid., 277.
[151] Ibid.,267.
[152] Ibid., 270
[153] The meaning that we project on to a text based on our prejudices arising from our place in tradition and history.
[154] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 267

distraction from fore-meanings that are not borne out by the things themselves."[155] In the dialogical understanding of a text, an individual may begin to recognize and revise their prejudices and how they influence the fore-conceptions or meaning projected on a text. Students and teachers bring fore-conceptions to the interpretation of a text. These are related to a current understanding of the subject matter derived from our horizon. We think that the text will corroborate these fore-conceptions rather than force us to revise them. This understanding is derived from our place in tradition and the subsequent prejudices tradition supplies. An individual attempt to recognize the prejudices that condition understanding, while recognizing that many remain partially understood or hidden from view.

Suitable fore-conceptions are generated after reading portions of the text or having our prior fore-conceptions provoked and discredited. We then carry forward these suitable fore-conceptions until they too are found wanting in our continued dialogue with texts (or people). Such conceptions are influenced and shaped by our encounter with this text, which makes up part of the tradition in which we are situated. Unsuitable fore-conceptions are those which stem from our prejudices, or the texts we read, but are then discarded as we come up against something in a text that discredits them. These unsuitable projections have been created prior to an encounter with the whole of the texts. Despite prejudice as a condition of understanding and textual interpretation, the interpreter must not succumb to prejudice. For Gadamer, understanding emerges when we overcome prejudice through the interpretation of texts. An encounter with texts from the past is an encounter or dialogue with tradition). A dialogue with past texts or other expressions is a dialogue with tradition, since tradition is comprised in part of historical texts and expressions. In the history

[155] Ibid., 267

classroom, this dialogue with tradition is the student's interpretation of important past texts, such as a federal constitution.

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer rehabilitated the importance of recognizing our prejudices in the experience of understanding. Contextualization and acknowledgment of an inherited presentism and its influences are important for understanding the meaning of past texts. This does not mean that the interpreter places present demands onto the actors of the past; rather it is to demonstrate that understanding and analysis of a text occurs amidst the concerns of the present.

The interpreter cannot escape prejudices as they are crucial for understanding.[156] According to Gadamer: "a person who is trying to understand a text has to keep something at a distance — namely everything that suggests itself, on the basis of his own prejudices, as the meaning expected — as soon as it is rejected by the sense of the text itself."[157] When we ask questions—which are conditioned by our prejudices—of a text we either see the affirmation of the prejudices in the text or their dismissal. The truth claims of the text—the answer to the question the interpreter asks of the text can reject prejudices. What we thought we knew can be altered in encounters and readings of past texts. Gadamer stated that when we make our conjectures, we can take them back again based on the sense of the text. These conjectures or interpretations can be cancelled by the assertions of the text itself. When we read a text from the past, the questions for which we seek answers and the conceptualizations we project onto the text are conditioned by our prejudices, which have emerged in the time between the events of the past and the present—tradition.[158]

Gadamer argued that our situation in the world, our being in the world, provides us with prejudices. We then project these prejudices as fore-meaning or presuppositions on to

[156] Ibid., 490.
[157] Ibid., 465.
[158] Ibid., 465.

the subject we study. Gadamer said that we are not objective in the sense that we can know and set aside our prejudices in understanding and approach a subject free of prior ways of understandings and prior beliefs.

Gadamer carried forward the work on hermeneutics and gave justice to the concept of historical effect, where history effects our thinking and the questions we ask in the present. The recognition of this freedom caused Gadamer to reflect on the role of tradition and language in understanding (historical effect). Gadamer stated that Heidegger was not working on a "prescription"[159] for understanding. Rather, he was working on "a description of the way interpretative understanding is achieved."[160] In interpretation, we are influenced by tradition. We must guard against the arbitrary fancies or habits of thought and focus on the object of study or what Gadamer calls "the thing itself."[161] The interpreter cannot be guided by their fore-meaning but instead must be taken by the object of study. This is the constant task of hermeneutics. But, this is not to say we abandon our fore-meaning as Enlightenment thinkers sought to do. The provocation of our prejudices from their deep slumber is necessary to achieve the type of understanding achieved in dialogue. This provocation occurs through an encounter with particular texts and consequent experience of historical effect.

3.2.3 The hermeneutic circle

An interpretation of the hermeneutic circle in philosophical hermeneutics applies to an understanding of history education as a series of encounters with past texts. In the process of reading a text, we are trying to understand the whole meaning of the text. We do this by understanding parts of the text before referring back to the whole text. But then, our

[159] Ibid., 266.
[160] Ibid., 266.
[161] Ibid., 267.

understanding of the whole text changes the meaning of its individual parts. In this way, our understanding evolves, but is never fixed or final. The hermeneutic circle is also a process of asking questions.

Grondin stated that at its basic form, the hermeneutic circle, "is the idea that we always understand or interpret out of some presuppositions."[162] Gadamer argued that these presuppositions are prejudices developed from the effects of tradition.[163] These prejudices can be productive and generate greater understanding or misleading and guide us away from an enriched understanding of the matter at hand. Grondin argued that thinkers such as Gadamer[164] viewed the hermeneutic circle favorably, "since it constitutes for them an inescapable and positive element of understanding: as finite and historical beings we understand because we are guided by anticipations, expectations and questions."[165]

Grondin argued that Gadamer's key idea was not that we seek to escape the hermeneutic circle, but following Heidegger's famous phrase, to enter into it the right way—done through the question.[166] We do this through the question. Thus, an acknowledgement of tradition's effect on us is important for our description of the type of understanding that may occur in our definition of history education.

Gadamer was concerned with the effects that history had on understanding and how, "hermeneutics…can do justice to the historicity of understanding."[167] Gadamer argued that when we understand a text, or understand another person, we are always "projecting a meaning"[168] for the text which arises out of our tradition, comprised in part by history and language. One task of understanding is then to work out this fore-meaning

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[162] Jean Grondin. "The Hermeneutic Circle." in *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics*, edited by Niall Keane and Chris Lawn. (John Wiley & Sons Inc. 2016): 299.
[163] Comprised in part by history and tradition but also the everyday reality of our life.
[164] Also Heidegger, Bultmann, Ricoeur.
[165] Grondin. "The Hermeneutic Circle," 299.
[166] Also Heidegger, Bultmann and Ricœur.
[167] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 265.
[168] Ibid., 267.

or prejudice which conditions our understanding. We enter the hermeneutic circle, and thus understanding through the recognition of our prejudiced understanding.[169] Grondin stated this is what Gadamer called, "the 'ontological' and positive aspect of the hermeneutical circle."[170] We now turn our attention to the historical effect and the production that comes from moments of negativity.

3.2.4 Effects of history and productive negativity

Gadamer argued in *Truth and Method* that our beliefs are continually in the process of being formed as we test our prejudices when we encounter texts that provoke us (force us to realize things are not as they seem, ie involved in the hermeneutic circle).[171] A crucial aspect of this continual formation and testing occurs when we encounter the past and "in understanding the tradition to which we belong."[172] This formation and testing is forever in motion as we continually form new beliefs (horizons) and continually seek out and test our prejudices. Thus we remain within the hermeneutic circle, continuously testing our prejudices. We continually play in the hermeneutic circle as we encounter prejudices, work out how they condition our understanding, revise our fore-conceptions, and then project new meanings into the dialogue we are part of. Then we continue on and test these new projections, presuppositions and prejudices. We remain in the hermeneutic circle while understanding.

The interpreter has the potential to experience historical effect in every encounter with a historical text. This encounter has the potential to cause moments of negative thought for the reader in regards to prior held beliefs. In this moment, the realization that hidden prejudices have disallowed a clear view of the subject matter (we have seen things

[169] Grondin, "The Hermeneutic Circle," 300.
[170] Ibid., 300.
[171] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 306.
[172] Ibid., 306.

incorrectly) occurs. This moment demonstrates the limitations of understanding and allows the reader to move forward and listen openly to the text in order to generate new understandings.[173] Gadamer turned to dialogue in his efforts to reject the notion that objectivity and scientific methodology were the only way to obtain truth.[174] In an experience of negativity—or determining that something is not as we thought it was—we may recognize that our horizon has limits. We may realize that what we thought before was not correct. We thought we held a universal view of a subject. Recognition may allow us to better ascertain and revise certain prejudices and arrive at new understandings. We must recognize the finitude of our understanding and we must also recognize that we are thrown into history and therefore understanding does not "occur from the ground up,"[175] but is constantly shaped, "constructed and reconstructed."[176] The experience of historical effect has the potential for the reader to develop truthful understandings about the subject matter placed before us in dialogue.

Experiences of historical effect are a phenomenon of positive negativity or the recognition and revision of false prejudices. Gonzalez characterized experience as a moment of successive destructive moments, wherein we realize things are "not as I thought, not as I expected."[177] Gadamer purported that experience is inherently risky and involves the discovery of the unexpected. However, and paradoxically, this experience of negativity, while seemingly an act of existential destruction, is a positive negativity. But, what experiences occur to participants in history education? How can history education provide students with experiences wherein they build not only an understanding of the

[173] Gonzalez, "Dialectic and Dialogue in the Hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur and H.G. Gadamer." *Continental Philosophy Review 39* (2006): 333.
[174] Gadamer does not reject objectivism or scientific method; he argues that it is does not possess a monopoly on truth or the processes of obtaining truth.
[175] Gonzalez, "Dialectic and Dialogue in the Hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur and H.G. Gadamer," 333.
[176] Ibid., 333.
[177] Ibid., 333.

historical subject matter but of their historically developed prejudices? I develop this idea in the fifth chapter.

3.3 Application and dialogue

Gadamer argues that the truth claims of a text are applicable to the interpreter and their particular situation is an important element of his philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer stated that, "the interpreter dealing with a traditionary text tries to apply it to himself. But, this does not mean that the text is given for him as something that can be applied the same way to all situations.[178] This application to self occurs when the interpreter understands their situation and immersion within tradition. In the history classroom, teachers and students, in the process of question and answer with past texts, apply their enriched understandings from the text to inquiries they have generated in the present. A teacher or student's situation in a particular culture, and their unique view of the world gives rise to these inquiries. Looking back on our example of studying a text from the First World War, we would interpret the text and then apply the understandings gained from the text to the unique questions we have generated: questions which are influenced by tradition and prejudices.

In understanding, the interpreter relates the text to their particular situation. Veith correlated this in his discussion of the problem with attributing universal lessons and challenges throughout history. Veith discusses the problem of treating the past as a container of recurring problems. Gadamer stated that *Problemgeschichte* was inappropriate for historical study. *Problemgeschichte* is the idea that the past is an "arena of recurring

[178] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 324.

problems,"[179] and trying to derive perennial patterns from the past. Veith contended that *Problemgeschichte*:

> fails to recognize the retrospective projection of its own peculiar questions as presently motivated concerns – not to mention its failure to capture the way in which genuine questions arise to begin with. In taking problems to remain the same across time, it imposes an artificial framework of sameness upon historical effect, normalizing language in the process and creating an insidious demand for identity– what amounts to a confirmation bias.[180]

An approach to historical study developed from *Problemgeschichte* attempted to answer perennial questions that seemingly occurred continuously from era to era. How people addressed the problems in the past becomes material for research in the present.[181] The situation of understanding being discussed in this essay is understanding that occurs in history education. Therefore, application is the interpreter understanding the significance of the text for the particular situation of understanding that occurs in the present. In other words, the interpreter understands how the answers in the text enrich their understanding of the subject matter. Grondin explained that understanding does not mean to merely "swallow" intellectual meaning. He argued that knowledge effects us when we are then able to translate this knowledge into our own words and then change our fore-conceptions related to the subject matter we are studying.[182] For example, students would not read a text to repeat back its intellectual meaning. Application is not being a parrot. Students would be able to translate the meaning of the text into their own words and then, again in their own words speak about how their understanding of the subject matter has changed

[179] Veith, *Gadamer and the Transmission*, 16.
[180] Ibid., 18.
[181] Ibid., 17.
[182] Jean Grondin, "Gadamer's Experience and Theory of Education: Learning That the Other May Be Right," in *Education, Dialogue, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Paul Fairfield (London: Continuum, 2012), 15.

due to engagement with the text. This is the application of understanding to a question in the present. Our unique situation of understanding cannot be seen a perennially looping problem from the past. Rather, we must apply our understanding to our present situation. *Truth and Method* accounts for Gadamer's argument that understanding sets as its task the recognition of appropriate prejudices. Prejudices may become less opaque as they are provoked by the subject of study. This expansion brings forward new understandings and expanded horizons — enriched ways of seeing the world. The recognition of prejudice and expansion of horizons occurs in dialogue; we posses the potential for understanding within the experience of dialogue—an experience effected by history, tradition, and language.

Individuals belong to a tradition which influences which texts will be easily accessible. Gadamer argued that we cannot rise above our situation and view history as a bird views the earth below; therefore, "as historical beings, we may not be able to raise ourselves above history to ascertain its course, necessity, or overall purpose, but we have the capacity to understand our history from within, and to always do so differently."[183] Our prejudices, the fabric of our limited horizons, are influenced by a multitude of concerns and we each reach new understanding based upon our individual concerns. Students enter the classroom as historically and linguistically effected individuals, but who are also effected by the numerous influences in their lives. Through these influences people developed prejudices which in turn construe the limits of their horizons. This chapter posits that humans enter into dialogue already situated in a tradition of language, tradition, and history and this contributes to our prejudices. We must engage with texts outside of our familiar tradition so as to awaken our prejudices from their slumber.

[183] Veith, *Gadamer and the Transmission*, 12.

The logic of question and answer in dialogue has the potential to overcome the "alienation of meaning that the text has undergone"[184] by being written down. In other words, through the application of hermeneutics and the initiation of dialogue, the meaning of a text is brought forward —through the question— from the past to enrich our understanding in the present. The interpreter comes to an understanding about the subject matter, in this case a past event as revealed through the text in dialogue. But, what does the dialogue which begins with the reintegration of texts back into the present and allows for students to experience historical effect and productive negativity resemble?

[184] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 311.

4 Dialogical Understanding in the History Classroom

In the previous chapter, I described an understanding of history education; an understanding generated from the interpretation[185] and application of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as espoused in *Truth and Method.* In this chapter, I expand the description of dialogue and its role in reducing the separation of time and meaning between interpreter and text. It is through the process of dialogue that we translate the text and remove it from exile (making the meaning significant in the present). It is through dialogue that we recognize our prejudices, experience historical effect and undergo productive negativity. In this context, dialogue is the activity of thinking together to generate new understanding.[186]

Chapter four describes dialogue. The chapter is divided into four sections. First, (1) I describe necessary conditions for dialogue. I focus on the serious nature of dialogue, and openness; openness of the individual for dialogue and openness to the truth claims of others. Then, (2) I describe the initiation of dialogue through the asking of questions and the entry into the hermeneutic circle. It is when we ask authentic questions which stem from our presuppositions and prejudices that we break open dialogue and carry it forward. Third, (3) I argue that dialogue receives its direction from a series of questions asked and answers given; this has the potential to develop an enriched, common understanding of the subject matter. Finally, (4) I account for how dialogue merges our horizons and leads to an expanded understanding of our prejudices. Gadamer called this the "the fusion of horizons."

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[185] Interpretation requires application. Application is not a supplement to interpretation, it is an integral part. Gadamer argues that if a text is to be stood correctly then it must be understood in very concrete situations. For Gadamer, "Understanding here is always application."(p. 309) We understand in our own concrete situation.

[186] Linda Binding & Dianne Tapp. "Human Understanding in Dialogue: Gadamer's Recovery of the Genuine." Nursing Philosophy 9 (2008): 122.

4.1 Necessary conditions for dialogue

4.1.1 Serious nature of dialogue

Dialogue is a deliberate endeavor which requires an internal seriousness focused on thinking together with texts, and other people. A disconnect from the problems of the outside world occurs. This disconnect is not the abandonment of beliefs or influences; rather, dialogue is disconnected from the purposeful, instrumentalist and technological power relations that often characterize our existence. It may be naïve to assume that such technological and instrumental aims are antithetical to hermeneutic dialogue. However, such aims are not eradicated —they are suspended, or rendered inanimate.[187] We attempt to leave the problems of the outside world at the door when we enter into dialogue. We do not abandon these problems; we suspend them for a period of time. The player loses himself or herself in the seriousness of dialogue. In fact, if someone does not take dialogue seriously—an internal seriousness and not something outside it—then it can be difficult to engage in authentic dialogue.[188] We do not solve the problems of the world in dialogue. We expand our understanding of the subject matter. A subject matter understood in its own right and not in relation or application to the problems of the world. Gadamer argued that someone who does not take dialogue seriously is "a spoilsport,"[189] and not pursuant of a greater understanding of the subject matter. In other words, they are not engaged in the open, continuance of dialogue, and its pursuit of truth.

Dialogue has the potential to be a difficult endeavor. Kazepides claimed that dialogue must have a "serious, challenging, and demanding character."[190] In reference to understanding texts, teachers and students must be open to a text's claims about the subject, otherwise they fail to engage in dialogue. In other words, if an individual uses the

[187] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 102.
[188] Ibid., 102.
[189] Ibid., 102.
[190] Kazepides, "Education as Dialogue," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 44 no. 9 (2012): 914.

text to meet their own needs and goals, and not the goal of prolonging the openness inherent in the dialogical process of seeking truth, dialogue fails. If an interpreter does not let a text speak by asking it questions, dialogue fails. But, if not connected to the utilitarian aims[191] of the world, what is the intended direction for the seriousness of dialogue?

Dialogue's purpose is to continually expand the understanding of a particular subject. This is a difficult task if people undertake dialogue with aims to achieve a pre-determined outcome; dialogue is not a tool to achieve competencies or learning outcomes.[192] We do not engage in dialogue for credit, accolades, grades, assessment or certification. Ramsey stated, our purpose in dialogue is to "find words and ways to say how seeing and sharing in communication is possible."[193] We speak seriously to each other in order to develop a greater understanding of the human condition.[194] This is a purpose of hermeneutic dialogue and an important aspect of interpretation and understanding in the history classroom.

Dialogue is a serious undertaking because the subject before the interlocutors—the being of the object of dialogue—deserves serious attention in so much as we must constantly strive to better understand. We speak together to enrich then understanding of the subject matter; even though this understanding will always be imperfect and in constant flux. According to Fairfield, objectives, competencies or goals do not preside in an authoritarian manner over dialogue.[195] Our desire to understand the subject and our

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[191] A utilitarian aim could be education for democratization, socialization, politicization, technological, etc. Often touted as the aims of teaching, learning, and education.

[192] This is not an argument against educational objectives, learning outcomes or the development of competencies (such as historical thinking). I am merely providing a description of dialogue. These goals, learning outcomes, objectives or competencies are not antithetical to dialogue, they are merely suspended upon the undertaking of authentic dialogue.

[193] Eric Ramsey, "On the Dire Necessity of the Useless," in *Education, Dialogue and Hermeneutics*, edited by Paul Fairfield, (2005): 101.

[194] Graeme Nicholson, "The Education of the Teacher," in *Education, Dialogue, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Paul Fairfield (London: Continuum, 2012), 118.

[195] Paul Fairfield, "Dialogue in the Classroom," in *Education, Dialogue and Hermeneutics* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 79.

openness to asking questions about what we do know provides dialogue with its flexible and constantly changing direction.

4.1.2 Openness as a condition of dialogue

Dialogue requires openness. The reader, when engaged in the interpretation of a past text, should be prepared to listen to what the text has to say. We must commit to letting go of the meaning we projected on to a text. Then we are open to new understanding. The interpreter challenges his or her prejudices and fore-conceptions by remaining open to what is other.[196] An openness to the truth of the text is required. For hermeneutic dialogue, openness equates to considering the weight of opinion presented and then providing an answer.[197] Gonzalez argued that this openness is predicated upon a desire to take seriously the truth claims of the partner with whom they speak with in dialogue.[198] Gadamer stated that a person who truly understands a text, "is prepared for it to tell him something."[199] He argues that, "the important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings."[200] In regards to texts handed down from the past, an individual must be open to the truth claim of the text—its answer to our question. Gadamer argued that "the openness to tradition characteristic of historically effected consciousness," is the highest form of hermeneutic experience. We do not reconstruct the thoughts of the author but remain open to the text itself. In other words, an individual interprets answers from the text that were never intended by the author. That is being open to the text. In

[196] Paul Fairfield, "Introduction," in Education, Dialogue and Hermeneutics (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 11.
[197] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 367.
[198] Gonzalez, "Dialectic and Dialogue in the Hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur and H.G. Gadamer," 333.
[199] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269.
[200] Ibid, 269.

addition to a personal and internal openness, an interpreter must work towards the perpetuation of openness in the dialogical process of thinking together.

Being experienced equates to travelling beyond the accumulation of knowledge or a repertoire of positivistic statements taken to prove one's superiority. To be experienced means admitting one does not know, and being open to new experiences. An individual who has amassed an "impressive repertoire of certainties"[201] is not necessarily educated. An individual who, simply uses experiences to gain these propositional certainties, may remain closed to understanding the finitude of understanding, and the tumultuous nature of interpretation and the acquisition of knowledge. As one who is cultured does not display their supposed "superior knowledge," but, instead remains cognizant of their ignorance, being experienced ensures one remains open to the truth claims of others in the recognition that one's prejudices, fore-meaning, and horizons can change and expand. Therefore, dialogue between people (or a text and an interpreter) is a productive experience.[202] Despite the seemingly negative state of having our prejudices contradicted, Gonzalez accounted for this negativity when he states that "the ability of dialogue to distinguish between true and false presuppositions is the continual confrontation with otherness."[203] An individual continually revises and tests their prejudices and fore-conceptions in dialogue. This negative act is paradoxically productive in that we recognize and discredit certain prejudices in the experience of dialogue.

4.2 Initiation of dialogue

When language fails us, or we cannot grasp the words necessary to describe an understanding of the subject understanding may begin. Wirth said, "all efforts at trying to

[201] Fairfield, "Introduction," 11.
[202] Gonzalez, "Dialectic and Dialogue in the Hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur and H.G. Gadamer," 335.
[203] Ibid, 333.

understand something begin when one comes up against something that is strange, challenging, distorting."[204] The Greeks had a word for what happens when we can't put things into words: *Atopon*. It means that which brings our understanding to a standstill.[205] Language is bound with understanding. Gadamer stated:

> Experience is not wordless to begin with, subsequently becoming an object of reflection by being named, by being subsumed under a universality of the word. Rather, experience of itself seeks and finds words that express it. We seek the right word –i.e., the word that really belongs to the thing—so that in it the thing comes into language.[206]

When we fail to describe something with language—we cannot put words to something, we can initiate dialogue.

While this relationship to language may be seen to provide great difficulties when we try to understand something, Jerome Veith argued it is precisely our, "thrownness into language," which provides us with the freedom to experience what he calls infinite discourse (dialogue or conversation).[207] Therefore, *Atopon* leads us down a path of enquiry. Ali Sammel stated: "enquiry is an invitation to dialogue." The question posed to us is an invitation to speak with another in dialogue. What we fail to understand in isolation may perhaps come out in dialogue.

The question which initiates dialogue emerges from the inquisitive mind. This inquisitive nature surfaces when we are unable to describe something in language. Upon realization that we are unable to describe something in language, or we come up against something that is not as we think it should be—what Gadamer called "being pulled up

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[204] Arthur G. Wirth, "Basal Readers - 'Dominant but Dead' vs Gadamer and Language for Hermeneutic Understanding," *Journal of Thought* 24, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 1989): 14.
[205] Ibid, 14.
[206] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 417.
[207] Veith, Gadamer and the Transmission, 13.

short,"[208] by the subject itself—we ask questions of the text we are trying to understand. Through the question, dialogue is initiated. Gadamer argued that a discourse intended to reveal something "must be broken open by a question."[209] This question comes to us when we undergo an experience that questions our current beliefs, knowledge, and values. Fairfield argued that the hallmark of a humanist education is to enable one to raise the right type of questions.[210]

A true question is one in which the answer is unknown. Fairfield argued that, "the so-called pedagogical or rhetorical question which one already knows the answer was for Gadamer not a real question,"[211] and as such does not initiate dialogue between reader and text or teacher and student. The asking of a pedagogical or rhetorical questions serves the same purpose as making statements; they fail to initiate dialogue as they close off conversation. Gadamer stated that, "As the art of asking questions, dialectic[212] proves its value because only the person who knows how to ask questions is able to persist in his questioning, which involves being able to preserve his orientation toward openness."[213] We see that dialogue necessitates a question that creates impermanence and thus, "the real and fundamental nature of a question: namely to make things indeterminate,"[214] allows us to realize that a question which is open to unlimited possibilities allows for conversations to occur

Dialogue receives direction and momentum, "from a line of questioning,"[215] that occurs in an exchange between partners. The question motivates and guides the learning process. According to Gallagher, if a student has a question about the subject then that

[208] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 363.
[209] Ibid, 363.
[210] Fairfield, "Introduction", 13.
[211] Paul Fairfield, "Introduction," 13.
[212] The art or process of discussing the truth of opinions.
[213] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 367.
[214] Ibid, 375.
[215] Fairfield, "Dialogue in the Classroom", 80.

student will be motivated to learn, as the subject matter will be relevant. This relevancy relates not to a quantifiably assessed product. Rather the relevancy is to the application of understanding and towards the possibility of expanding one's horizons. Gallagher argued that a student becomes uninterested and unmotivated when the questions involved are asked with the intention of eliciting a particular answer.

4.3 Question and answer and the direction of dialogue

Dialogue is characterized by the participants asking open questions—aimed at each other in regard to the subject matter—that perpetuate infinite openness. This back and forth movement is characterized by the dialectic of question and answer. This means the dialogue has the structure of continual questioning.

Gadamer argued for the impermanence brought forward by the question. He argues that the purpose of the question is to create impermanence. Gadamer's argument that "the real and fundamental nature of a question: namely to make things indeterminate,"[216] allows us to realize that a question which is open to unlimited possibilities allows for conversations to occur. The question does this as it allows for indeterminacy. In other words, the questions allow for situated possibilities brought forward by each partner in conversation. The subject matter, not the subjects involved in the questioning, is the most important aspect of a conversation. Wentzer built on the works of Gadamer, and wrote about the phenomenology of questioning, or the happening of questioning. For Wentzer, when we read a text we are already involved in the process of questioning. He argues that "acquiring a question means the suspension of the corresponding belief. It discloses the openness of the actual issue by urging to withhold one's consent and to question one's

[216] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 375.

prejudice. In fact, the suspension of a belief is equivalent to the act of questioning."[217] Wentzer stated that the suspension of beliefs means one becomes open to the possibilities that arise from the question.

Gallagher extrapolated Gadamer's reference to play as they both use the metaphor to aid our understanding of dialogue. Gallagher argued that, "all play has the structure of a question which interrogates not only the world but also the player's own preconceptions so that the familiar gets encountered precisely as the unfamiliar."[218] What is familiar to us should be viewed as unfamiliar so that we constantly strive to understand it and question our understanding of a subject. Thinking that something is unfamiliar brings forth questions and allows dialogue to be initiated. The art of questioning is an important catalyst for dialogue.

This movement of questions—and subsequent answers—allows dialogue to move forward rather than wither and die. Gadamer argued that if a player has nothing to respond to, no reason for a countermove; conversation ceases.[219] He uses the metaphor of a cat playing with a ball of string. The cat responds to the movement of the ball—which can go in any direction—and because the ball can move in any direction, the game continues.[220] The person with the instrumentalist aims or ulterior motives pulls the ball of string away from the cat. Without the cat or the ball, the game stalls. If another player is pulling the string and thus the cat, then play ceases.

To ask a question, to which the answer is known, not only ensures a failure of initiation into dialogue, but also fails to propel dialogue forward thus closing off any potential of an open dialogue, or what Gadamer called conversation and we call dialogue.

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[217] T. Wentzer, "Toward a Phenomenology of Questioning: Gadamer on Questions and Questioning.," in Gadamer's Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation, ed. A. Wierciński (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011): 259.
[218] Gallagher, p. 162.
[219] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 102–103.
[220] Ibid, 102–103.

In other words, the questions allow for situated possibilities brought forward by each partner in conversation. Wentzer built on the work of Gadamer, and writes about the phenomenology of questioning, or the happening of questioning. Wentzer argues that "acquiring a question means the suspension of the corresponding belief. It discloses the openness of the actual issue by urging to withhold one's consent and to question one's prejudice. In fact, the suspension of a belief is equivalent to the act of questioning."[221] Wentzer stated that the suspension of beliefs means one becomes open to the possibilities that arise from the question.

An extended example of questioning aids our discussion of questioning as it pertains to the history classroom. A history teacher could be discussing why soldiers went to war in 1914 (the beginning of the First World War). To accompany a lecture or presentation, the students may be presented with letters, journals, postcards, propaganda pictures, newspaper articles, or a range of past texts. If the students are studying a letter, a closed, or non-dialogical question could be, "According to the letter, why did soldiers enlist in the army? How many men enlisted in the Canadian army in 1914? The "correct answers for these questions may be, "the soldier enlisted because he felt loyalty to Great Britain." The first Canadian contingent overseas consisted of roughly 30, 000 soldiers. By the end of the war, close to 600, 000 Canadians enlisted to fight overseas. If students were studying a secondary source a closed question could be: "List 10 reasons why men enlisted in the army during the First World War." The students would find these answers in the textbook. These would be closed questions with right or wrong answers. If studying the topic about motivations for going to war or enlisting in the army, or why human beings choose to fight one another, students could study the same resources. But, rather than closed questions designed to provide students with facts about the past, open questions

[221] T. Wentzer, "Toward a Phenomenology of Questioning, 259.

promote discussion and an enriched understanding of human nature. An example of an open question could be: Why do people choose to go to war? How have citizens' responses to war changed since the First World War? These could lead to questions and answers directed by the subject matter but not about the First World War. Students and teachers would focus on interpretation and meaning. It could be about historical horizons and how (self) understandings both collective and individual differ today vs. 1914. There is a different aim for teachers and students: that of enriching our understanding of human beings and conflict or war.

4.4 Dialogue and the fusion of horizons

One aspect of successful dialogue is the realization that a "fusion of horizons," or consensus has been reached. Consensus, or the "fusion of horizons" is not an agreement of understanding over the subject matter, rather it is a shared awareness of how differences enrich one's understanding. In dialogue, the interlocutors do not have to reach agreement for it to be successful. Vessey's work on dialogue aids our understanding of what Gadamer meant in his writing on the fusion of horizons. Vessey stated that this fusion of horizons which Gadamer stressed as a fundamental outcome of authentic dialogue occurs when those engaged in dialogue reach a "shared awareness of how their differences nevertheless improve their understanding of the subject matter."[222] A shared awareness stresses the importance of the subject matter for dialogue. Dialogue is only successful when a greater personal understanding of the subject matter occurs. Vessey expanded his interpretation of Gadamer's fusion of horizons:

> First, the fusion of horizons does not occur through grasping the intended meaning of the speaker, but through both interlocutors, together, grasping the words that best

[222] David Vessey, "Gadamer and Davidson on Language and Thought," Philosophy Compass 7, no. 1 (2012): 36.

> bring the subject matter to intelligibility; second, the fusion of horizons always generates new insights about our previously hidden prejudices.[223]

In history education, a fusion of horizons occurs when we develop an enriched understanding of the subject matter, rather than understanding the meaning which the speaker or author intended. A fusion of horizons occurs when those engaged in dialogue recognize they have achieved an enriched understanding of the subject matter. The fusion of horizons could occur between students, between a teacher and student in the history classroom. The fusion occurs via this explicit dialogue. To clarify this, the fusion means that a shared understanding has occurred between you and your partner in dialogue. There is a shared understanding of the object or subject of study between the text and the reader. In other words, the reader has gained clarity in what the text says about a certain subject matter.

The partner in dialogue work together to generate new interpretations of the subject matter which in turn are opened up with more questions, which too generate new interpretations. The teacher may introduce a text and a subsequent line of questioning to students. This occurs most often through lecture. Fairfield states that:

> Most often it is the educator who introduces this, generally after having lectured for some period of time. Lecturing on the text or whatever subject matter is being discussed serves the dialogical purpose not of speaking in place of a text but of providing an interpretation of its major themes and clarification of some finer points…Lecturing is not an alternative to reading or thinking but is a means of ensuring that such thinking and discussion are based on adequate understanding of the subject matter.[224]

[223] Ibid, 36.
[224] Fairfield, "Dialogue in the Classroom", 81.

Students have the task of reading the text and understanding the subject matter so they can converse with others. Fairfield notes, “nothing is more hopeless than the classroom discussion in which students have not read the material and choose to rely on a professor’s interpretation.” One aspect of the relationship between teachers and students in the history classroom is that of partners in dialogue. I discuss this, and describe the relationship between the student and teacher in chapter five. However, despite the best work of students and teachers, the path of dialogue is unknown, foreign and cannot be guided by predetermined goals. It must be noted, not all dialogue is successful. Dialogue is difficult; it often fails.

5 Implications for *Bildung*, Pedagogy, Curriculum, Materials, and Teacher Education

This chapter describes the implications our understanding of history education has for teachers and students.[225] Neither the teacher nor student presides as autocrat over dialogue, but if the proper conditions exist in the classroom then dialogue can unfold and all those involved have the potential to be, as Fairfield notes, "swept along in a process,"[226] in which we think together. No proper techniques, toolkits or teaching methods ensure dialogue occurs. Fairfield argued that there is no technique ascertainable by psychological or pedagogical science for dialogue."[227] This may be difficult to reconcile amidst the modern craving for toolkits, competency development, and production orientated notions of teaching and learning. Nonetheless, I shall strive to describe the implications for the history classroom.

The application of philosophical hermeneutics to the experience of understanding in the history classroom does not supplant or eradicate the work of academics or teachers documented in the second chapter. Rather, it adds to and expands an understanding of history education.

This chapter is divided into three parts. First, (1) I return to the educational purposes of dialogue and hermeneutics for history education. I do this through discussion of *Bildung* or the formation of one's self. Then, (2) I discuss the implications for pedagogy in history education and the role of the teacher—roles which are commensurate with *Bildung*. Third, (3), I explicate the implications the first three chapters have on the curricula of history education. Fourth, (4) I describe the implications on materials and resources used in the history classroom. Finally, (5) I demonstrate the implications for teacher education.

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[225] I do not intend to provide a method or procedure that guarantees dialogue in the history classroom. I have described the conditions for dialogue and what may occur in dialogue. Fairfield notes, "dialogue has a lack of formal structure," and thus I cannot prescribe methods, techniques or tools for teachers to use to ensure dialogue occurs. I have deliberately not engaged in any description of procedure because it cannot be done.
[226] Fairfield. "Dialogue in the Classroom," 82.
[227] Ibid, 86.

5.1 *Bildung*

The dialogical approach to understanding in the history classroom, alongside generating enriched understandings of the world, may result in a student's continual self-formation. Students and teachers engaged in dialogue are also within *Bildung*— a process of self-formation. The individual ultimately becomes open to the what seems foreign, alien or against their beliefs through encounters with art, culture, literature, science and history. In *Bildung*, Horlacher stated that when "individuals gain experiences,"[228] they exceed their previous ways of understanding and being in the world. For her, "*Bildung* (which enables and promotes educational action) can fundamentally transform the way an individual behaves towards the world and his her self."[229] Individuals find way to cope with being in the world. In other words, from these encounters[230] teachers and students can expand not only their understanding of, but the ability to make sense of the world they live in.

An interpretation of *Bildung* in education is helpful in understanding the formative and educative processes that occur in the process of dialogical understanding. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer stated that, "education is to educate oneself; cultivation, or formation (*Bildung*) is self cultivation."[231] The classroom does not exist solely for the purposes of teaching skills and developing competencies. An understanding of history education can be approached through a discussion of *Bildung*.

Gadamer stated that a crucial aspect of being educated is the ability of an individual to form questions and answers and to hold an opinion. He wrote that, "the most important feature in my own view is to be able to answer when one is asked, to be able to formulate questions oneself and to be able to accept corresponding answers." This occurs in the

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[228] Horlacher, Rebekka. *The Educated Subject and the German Concept of Bildung: A Comparative Cultural History*. (New York: Routledge 2016): 125.
[229] Ibid, 125.
[230] For example: with past texts
[231] Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Education as Self-Education." Journal of Philosophy of Education 5 no. 4 (2001): 529.

process of question and answer. If students are unable to accept corresponding answers, and develop further questions, dialogue ceases to exist. The continual formulation of questions expands one's horizons and a result is continual self-formation.

Fairfield wrote that true education "reside[s] in the ability to question acquired knowledge in order to open up new perspectives."[232] He said the same of *Bildung*. Fairfield was writing on the implications of philosophical hermeneutics for education when he wrote this. This sentence echoes the account of *Bildung* presented by Gadamer. When one listens they do so not reaffirm their perspectives. We listen so that we open up questions which generate new ways of understanding the world. We take what is said, make it ours in that we come to understand how what the other says may be right, and then let it expand our understanding. When we engage in dialogue and come up against our prejudices this effects the scope of the horizon in which we view the world. Since our horizons are limits in and of themselves, coming to questions and expanding our view of the world is effected by these horizons. *Bildung* describes the formative process of which humans are embedded.

Gadamer discussed the above idea in relation to the senses. According to Gadamer, developing a cultivated consciousness "has more the concept of a sense" than a technical skill or some measurable psychological entity. Gadamer described that senses (e.g. sight, taste) are already universal senses in that they embrace the sphere around them, identify and remain open to the particular distinctions in each field and then grasp such distinctions.[233] However, each sense is only open to one particular sphere at a time. On the other hand, a cultivated consciousness is active all the time and in all directions. For

[232] Jean Grondin, "Gadamer's Experience and Theory of Education: Learning That the Other May Be Right," in *Education, Dialogue, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Paul Fairfield (London: Continuum, 2012), 12.
[233] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 17.

Gadamer it was a universal sense.[234] This universal sense is what is shared amongst humans and what makes our humanity possible. In French this is often referred to as "*bons sens*."[235] One tiny aspect (among many) of history education is to nurture this sense so that we can recognize our ignorance, see the value in others and begin to ask questions in order to form an understanding of the subjects studied in the humanities.

History education has the potential to provide opportunities for students to experience the specific movement from textual record to speech. Through these dialogical processes where texts are brought from written word into conversation students may enrich their education. The pedagogical relationships between the teacher and student described below is commensurate with the educational aims of *Bildung*.

5.2 Implications for pedagogy

An understanding of history education predicated on dialogically understanding the meaning in past texts has pedagogical implications. Understanding the educational implications requires a section on the role of the teacher in dialogue and *Bildung*. Fairfield argued that, "if the appropriate conditions are in place, the conversation unfolds according to a dynamic of its own and all are swept along in a process over which no one altogether presides."[236] The teacher is in a position to initiate and provide the direction for dialogue. There are certain pedagogical ideas that can help us understand certain conditions that may allow for dialogue, enriched understanding, and ultimately *Bildung* to occur in the history classroom.

[234] Ibid, 17.
[235] Grondin, " Gadamer's Experience and Theory of Education: Learning That the Other May Be Right," 12.
[236] Fairfield, "Dialogue in the Classroom," 82.

5.2.1 Teacher as *Maître à penser*

The teacher must transform from the transmitter of knowledge to a master of thinking. Ann Chinnery's writing on the teaching of Emmanuel Levinas provides insights into the relationship between the teacher of history and the student. Chinnery described a conception of the teacher not strictly based on being a master of content, or a mentor, but rather a *maître à penser*.[237] The French term *maître à penser* has no direct translation in English but according to Chinnery it encompasses but is not limited to being a mentor, master of thinking and master of thought. A mentor listens and converses with students. A master of thought is committed to the activity of intellectual labour itself, reading a text, dissecting, analyzing and then returning, because there is always something new to gain. A master of thinking does not simply transmit knowledge. The teacher as *maître à penser* requires humility; humility before the text and before others. A *maître à penser* remains untouched by aspirations of notoriety; they forever remain a student as well as a teacher. Masters don't design lessons or lectures to show that they have figured everything out; instead a; lesson delivers a way of thinking and demonstrates the teacher is still a student of thought.

Wierciński argued the traditional role of the teacher must be transformed. He stated that, "to educate a human being is not to teach someone an art or a trade, but to cultivate sensitivity toward exercising one's freedom…education is critical awareness and the desire to understand the complexity of one's life and life circumstances."[238] This echoes Gadamer's argument that while we confront and revise our prejudices, they continually provide the basis for our understanding of the world. Prejudices influence the fore-

[237] Chinnery, Ann. "Encountering the Philosopher as Teacher: The Pedagogical Postures of Emmanuel Levinas." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26 (2010): 1706.
[238] Andrzej Wierciński. "Hermeneutic Education to Understanding: Self-Education and the Willingness to Risk Failure." In in Education, Dialogue and Hermeneutics (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 107–109.

conceptions we project on to texts or what partners say in dialogue. The world is comprehensible only through our cultural world, and thus through prejudices. Teachers and students are immersed in understanding and consequently embedded in the hermeneutic circle. This entry into the hermeneutic circle and recognition that we have prejudices must be modelled by the teacher. But this is difficult, as it cannot be reduced to a method or skillset. Wierciński argued that a "thinking teacher is the model for the educator."[239] Wierciński also argued that we must not forget our prejudices in the daily reality of the classroom. He states, "our prejudices must remain under control so that the other does not become invisible." We must work to confront and revise our prejudices so that we do remain closed to what the text or other partners in dialogue have to say.

The thinking teacher and teacher as *maître à penser* has the potential to demonstrate dialogue with past texts to students. Through the ruminations and demonstrations of the teacher dialogue and a way of thinking together is shown to students. There are no expectations students will be successful in their attempts at dialogue, but they will be shown that it is indeed possible. Consequently, when students fail, they must be shown that this is not the end. They must try again. Fairfield wrote that, "with no definitive end or answer, students will often feel they have been shortchanged. The teacher must demonstrate that dialogue is never finished so students can learn to understand they are constantly seeking out their prejudices to enrich their understanding of a subject. This dramatically changes the role of the teacher and the relationship structure in the classroom.

5.2.2 The hospitable environment

Dialogue can be negative. It entails risk. In dialogue we risk our pre-conceived ideas about a subject. The openness to risk in dialogue requires a hospitable environment.

[239] Ibid, 109.

The understanding of such a hospitable environment comes from a series of lectures Jacques Derrida gave on the subject of hospitality Claudia Ruitenberg stated that hospitality for Derrida is not based on an "economy of exchange;"[240] instead, it is an invitation to bear witness to another and their thinking—it bears a resemblance to the teacher as a master of thinking. In the classroom, the teacher is often deemed as the overseer of the classroom. Thus, the teacher must be hospitable. The hospitable teacher resembles the teacher as *maître à penser* from the previous section. I wish to make a distinction between two types of classroom activities; the first is aimed at instruction; and the second is aimed at dialogue or thinking together. According to Ruitenberg, "instruction is that mode of teaching which aims for students to acquire pre-determined knowledge or skills"—whether they be scientific principles or the concepts of historical thinking.[241] This is an important aspect of history education. Ruitenberg stated that the second aim of education —one that applies to the subject matter we might happen to study in history education– is that "an object, concept, or text is taken out of its usual context in order to examine it and understand it better, without a pre-defined 'learning outcome'."[242] This pertains to dialogue with texts in the history classroom. Rather than imparting information to students, the hospitable classroom presents ideas, concepts, or texts that are worth engaging with through dialogue. I will discuss this further in section two of this chapter.

The history classroom focused on the specific movement of written records to speech through dialogue requires teachers and students to work within a community of thinking. The classroom becomes a hospitable environment where the teacher-student dynamic is not about power, but mutual commitment to dialogue and thinking together to better understand the subject matter.

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[240] Claudia Ruitenberg, "Hospitable Gestures in the University Lecture: Analysing Derrida's Pedagogy." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 48, no. 1 (2014): 150.
[241] Ruitenberg, "Hospitable Gestures in the University Lecture: Analysing Derrida's Pedagogy," 151.
[242] Ibid, 151.

5.3 Implications for curriculum

The understanding of history education described in the previous chapters has implications for the overt and hidden curricula in history education. In dialogical understanding, no learning outcomes exist, and no goals must be met —other than ensuring the continuation of dialogue. Consequently, there is not a formal curriculum for this understanding of history education. However, there are important achievements or curricula that are important.

5.3.1 Recognition and revision of prejudice

Truth and Method provides Gadamer's contention that while we may become aware of our historical situation (i.e. the historicity of our being) we can never retrieve what Veith calls "the pure outset of this embeddedness."[243]. In other words, we can never gain absolute certainty as to the preconditions of our belonging to this tradition.[244] Gadamer determined that we have a finite understanding of historical effect. For Gadamer, this led to the rehabilitation of prejudice. In *Truth and Method,* he sought to move beyond the enlightenment discrediting of prejudice in favor of the rational methodology.

Gadamer contested the enlightenment reliance on method as the sole means of understanding.[245] He argued that enlightenment thinkers wanted an understanding of tradition free from error. In order to achieve this rational understanding of tradition, enlightenment thinkers relied on a "methodologically disciplined use of reason,"[246] to prevent error understanding. In other words, they wanted to understand history in a rationale way, without prejudices. Gadamer stated that enlightenment thinkers' reliance on reason discounted any role prejudices might hold in the process of understanding.

[243] Veith, Gadamer and the Transmission, 113.
[244] Ibid, 113.
[245] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 272
[246] Ibid, 277.

Prejudices were deemed to hinder understanding and oppose reason. Gadamer argued submission to the authority of the enlightenment stance towards prejudice is unacceptable; therefore, the critical theory of prejudice needs to be given a positive value.[247] Humans are historical beings and to do justice to this, "it is necessary to fundamentally rehabilitate the concept of prejudice and acknowledge the fact that there are legitimate prejudices."[248]

The prejudices that students and teachers arrive in the history classroom with provide the foundation for understanding. Teachers and students are rooted in a situation marked by language, customs, values, and ways of thinking when they enter into a dialogue. The teacher and student, in dialogue with a text are exposed to a multitude of possibilities. Thinking is deciding amongst these possibilities in light of one's tradition and prejudices. By questioning the past text is brought into the present situation so that it may speak to us, expose possibilities and tell us something new and valid. The type of understanding that occurs is therefore self-understanding.

Education provides students opportunities to place their pre-constructed knowledge and ways of knowing and beliefs at risk.[249] Prejudices are not to be discarded ad hoc but recognized and judged valid or illegitimate. Gadamer argued that "it is quite right for the interpreter not to approach the text directly, relying solely on the fore-meaning already available to him, but rather explicitly to examine the legitimacy—i.e., the origin and validity—of the fore-meanings dwelling within him."[250] We do approach a text with the weight of tradition behind us, a tradition which has given us prejudices and presuppositions. But, as Gadamer wrote, we must not approach a text without first examining the legitimacy of these prejudices. We don't trust our prejudices blindly; we question whether they are legitimate. Similarly, Weinsheimer argued that the interpreter (in

[247] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 277.
[248] Ibid, 277.
[249] Weinsheimer, Gadamer's Hermeneutics, 208.
[250] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 267

education, the student or the teacher) "needs the text in order to place his own prejudices at risk and to point out the dubiousness of what he himself takes for granted, thus disclosing new possibilities for questioning and extending his own horizon by fusing it with that of the text."[251]

The provocation of prejudices expands the finite historical horizons in which humans the world. Gadamer argued that education entails the teacher and student ask open questions of tradition to gain perspectives or what Gadamer named "horizons."[252] Gadamer argued that humans understand based on the perspectives or horizons that we can see. As an example, if you are standing on a street, surrounded by tall buildings, you can only see what is directly in front of you. That is the horizon you can see from that particular vantage point. Similarly, Fairfield argued that true education resides in the ability to gain new perspectives which may expand our horizons.[253] In order to gain horizons, one must be open to asking questions that hold no definitive answer. Weinsheimer argued that when a teacher or student makes a definitive statement (not one open to dialogue), "it closes off the future, for a definitive answer is one that obviates further questioning."[254] We see this in *Truth and Method* as well when Gadamer stated that "The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings."[255] The students' and teacher's prejudices lead them to questions which take them into the hermeneutic circle. Thus, an important curricular aspect of history education is the art of the question.

[251] Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, 211.
[252] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.
[253] Fairfield, "Introduction," 13.
[254] Gadamer's Hermeneutics — Joel C. Weinsheimer, 206.
[255] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269.

5.3.2 The importance of questioning

An important aspect of the curricula for history education is asking questions. The teacher must demonstrate openness and the pursuit of question and answer so that students work to keep the dialogue open and infinite.[256] Those involved in history education engage in dialogue to think together deeply, honestly, and authentically to pursue a shared, or enriched understanding of the world. It is in this manner that dialogue is a serious endeavour. Philosophical hermeneutics raises the question to a place of eminent importance for education. In the introduction to the book *Education, Dialogue, and Hermeneutics*, Paul Fairfield argued that for Gadamer, the hallmark of a humanist education is to enable one to raise the right type of questions."[257] Asking the question is much more difficult than answering a question. In order to ask a question, a person must recognize that they do not know. In education, this means that an authentic question is one to which the answer is unknown. Fairfield argued that, "the so-called pedagogical or rhetorical question to which the teacher knows the answer was for Gadamer not a real question."[258] Asking questions allows the student and teacher to enter into a dialogue with the subject matter. In the case of history education, this is a dialogue between past and present or between present understanding and the truth claim of a text in relation to a specific question.[259] The subject of a text is not always a past event, but may be a topic of importance in the present. I will illustrate this point with an example: in reading a text on the First World War, one moment might involve understanding the factual claims the text entails. But, a second moment might be to understand the functions of the text and its significance for the people, in their conditions, at the time. An example of these texts could be a propaganda poster, a postcard, or a newspaper article. These are examples of teaching

[256] Fairfield, "Dialogue in the Classroom," in *Education, Dialogue and Hermeneutics*, 83.
[257] Fairfield, "Introduction," 13.
[258] Ibid, 13.
[259] Ibid, 13.

students historical thinking, and the critical interpretation of texts. Activities and objectives such as these are crucial in the history classroom. However, another purpose to add to a student's education in the history classroom, would be to understand the text as an answer to a question not tied to understand the past. For example, what is hatred? What purpose does communication serve for humans? The purpose is not to reconstruct the events of the past but to enter into a dialogue around a particular question about human nature or the experience of being human. For education, asking questions opens up new perspectives for the teachers and students. These perspectives, or as Gadamer called them "horizons", are various ways in which we see the world. Fairfield argued that when gaining a horizon, one "learns to look beyond what is close at hand—not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion."[260]

There is no absolute, scientific methodology of questioning that can be applied to teaching dialogue in the classroom. An individual's recognition of the appropriate questions comes in response to what has been said in conversation. Therefore, in a conversation we are engaged in an event of questioning. No universal mode of questioning can be applied to this event. Wentzer argued that "a question pops up, comes into one's mind or occurs—all of these expressions display the *event character* of questioning."[261] We do not learn how to question as a form of *technē*, there is no universal rule on how to question. Wentzer wrote that questioning "can be shown, but not taught; it has a role model in Socrates, but no manual separable from its operator."[262] For education, the teacher cannot teach how to ask questions, they can be a *maître a penser* and model how to ask questions. Consequently, this will be a difficult task for both student and teacher. The teacher will often fail to ask questions that move dialogue along. Students will often fail at

[260] Ibid, 13.
[261] Wentzer, "Toward a Phenomenology of Questioning: Gadamer on Questions and Questioning," 261.
[262] Ibid, 261.

the same task. The emphasis becomes refining one's ability to ask questions that propel dialogue forward and allow for richer understanding to occur. This occurs in failure, and then trying again.

A text speaks to us only when we ask it questions. The understanding generated from the process of question and answer contributes to the continual passing down of material in tradition. History education requires an awareness of being influenced by a tradition. Gadamer argued that it is important to "rescue the phenomenon of memory from being regarded as merely a psychological faculty."[263] We need to go beyond the factual recall of information in support of our certainties so that we may be aware of our limits and the finite historical nature of our understanding. However, this process of recognition cannot be taught as a skill or developed through technical construction.

5.4 Implications for classroom materials and resources

The introduction of complete texts from the past is a crucial element for our understanding of history education. Students should study the entirety of a text so that the full weight of tradition can be brought forward into dialogue. In other words, the selected texts should be whole to ensure potential engagement with the text's entire meaning. A common classroom material in history education is the textbook. These are problematic for the definition of history education espoused in this thesis. Textbooks often provide only snippets of primary documents, if they provide them at all. The literature on history education demonstrated that tremendous work is being done to introduce ways of ensuring students study primary documents. Teacher often use online and archive sources to secure primary documents. These same resources can be used in our definition of history education. In Canada, websites such as the Canadian War Museum, the Canadian archives

[263] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 16.

have a vast selection of primary documents available for use. These are just two examples among many. Teachers may visit various municipal, provincial or possibly federal archives in an attempt to secure primary documents. Teachers and students may also contact museums or universities in their quest to secure appropriate texts.

Students should read texts from a multitude of experiential backgrounds. Activities undertaken in the classroom must focus on providing will to students so they are able to initiate and immerse themselves in dialogue. Teacher education must overcome dogmatism and relativism and remain open to various processes and conceptions of education. In the conclusion I will draw out that further research can be done to determine the state of teacher education and the place for teacher candidates to be exposed to hermeneutics and dialogue.

5.5 Implications for teacher education

5.5.1 Pre-service teacher education

The exposure to varying and diverse experiences and situations and understanding of education has the potential to benefit teacher candidates as they embark on a career in education. Kerdeman argues that, "to learn about and understand life's purpose and meaning, it is necessary to live through a range of experiences that both affirm and shake up our orientation, such that understanding and self-understanding are not distorted or denied but clarified and furthered."[264] She states that education should focus on existential questions and what it means to be human. We can see something like this in education where prospective teacher's questions what it means to be a teacher.

Classes in teacher education programs have the potential to be opportunities for future teachers to engage in dialogue. These classes are also a place where dialogue as

[264] Deborah Kerdeman. "Hermeneutics and Education: Understanding, Control, and Agency." Educational Theory 48 no. 2 (Spring, 1998): 252.

described in this thesis may exist. Professors and teacher trainers may have opportunities to model dialogical understanding. Teacher candidates may find numerous spaces to confront their presuppositions on education and for our purposes, history education. This could bring teacher candidates into the hermeneutic circle.

5.5.2 Practicing teachers

A teacher's education does not need to cease upon leaving university. It may extend throughout one's career. Higgins argues that "vocations…are catalysts for shaping of 'effective worlds.'"[265] The experience of teaching can be an opportunity for teachers to continually engage in dialogue and lead to new understandings about education, history, and history education. This has the potential for the teacher to continually be immersed in the hermeneutic circle and engaged in the dialogue that is history education. Higgins argues that teachers are in a particular place in education. He states that they are "between tradition and innovation,"[266] between what has occurred and the latest developments in teaching and learning. Higgins argued that teaching as profession has an important role to play in a teacher's self-understanding. He states that:

> Teaching forces one to see one's discipline from the eyes of the uninitiated and to ponder how the voice of one's discipline contributes to the conversation. Teaching provides teachers with opportunities, as Dewey would say, for 'growing in childlikeness' (Dewey, 1916, p. 50). In addition to attending to learners and to what is to be learned, teachers also attend to learning itself. That is to say that the work

[265] C Higgins. "Teaching as Experience: Toward a Hermeneutics of Teaching and Teacher Education." Journal of Philosophy of Education 44 no. 2–3 (2010): 435.
[266] Ibid, 439.

> of teachers constantly puts them in touch with questions about the ends and means of human development.[267]

The teacher's recognition that continually asking questions has the potential to allow students to recognize hidden prejudices can be important for the education of students. This recognition may allow dialogue to go forward, always. In order to achieve this, teachers may continually engage in dialogue with the tradition of their vocation. Higgins argues that teachers' interest in human development, "connects them in turn to a third conversation with educators and educational thinkers past and present."[268] The teacher's unique situation in education allows them to develop rich conversations between generations, the various voices in education (science, math, history, etc.), and education thinkers past and present. Teachers have tremendous opportunities to engage in hermeneutic dialogue and continue a process of life-long thinking and understanding.

[267] Ibid, 441–442.
[268] Ibid, 441–442.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Summary

This thesis concerned itself with the subject of interpretation, understanding, and application in the history classroom. I applied an interpretation of philosophical hermeneutics and dialogue in Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* to the question of history education. I argued that the interpretation of texts—and shift from written record to speech— in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics can be applied to an understanding of history education. I strived to enrich and add to the important works that comprise the Great Britain, Canada, and the United States tradition of history teaching and learning. I did this by bridging history education, and Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutics. In this conclusion, I briefly summarize this thesis's research questions, findings, limitations, contributions to knowledge. I finalize my thesis with the reminder that the task of understanding is never finished. There are numerous avenues for further research on the application of philosophical hermeneutics to history education that must be taken.

This thesis sought to answer the primary question: How might an interpretation of *Truth and Method* enrich an understanding of history education? This question emerged from my situation both as a high school history and social studies teacher, as well as from the courses, readings, and conversations I experienced during the master's program at UBC. I entered the program with presuppositions regarding history education. These prejudices were constantly challenged over the past three years. Each chapter of this thesis is an attempt to answer a focused question. The answers generated in reading *Truth and Method*, enrich an understanding of history education.

The first chapter reviewed the Anglophone literature on education. I determined there is a gap in the literature in reference to dialogue and history education. The application of Gadamerian hermeneutics to an understanding of history education helps to

fill this gap. The second chapter applied an interpretation of *Truth and Method* to the understanding of history education. I described that the dialogical movement from written record to speech describes what occurs to us in understanding in the experience of reading texts in the history classroom. The third chapter described what dialogue might look like in the classroom. Finally, the fourth chapter theorized on the implications of the previous chapters on *Bildung*. I also described the implications of pedagogy, curriculum, classroom materials and teacher education orientated towards the education principle of *Bildung*.

6.2 Contributions to knowledge

Writing this thesis revealed the complexities of historical study and consequently understanding in the history classroom. Where the disciplinary or competency based approach to history education often focuses on the important skills and competencies of historical thinking, the understanding of history education exposed in this thesis turned to the study of past texts in an attempt to describe another means to understand the human experience. I argue that the application of philosophical hermeneutics to the history classroom —a space where teachers and students can come up against ideas and ways of thinking different than their own —enriches an understanding of history education. However, neither an approach based on historical thinking or dialogical understanding has a monopoly on understanding. Both are important for the education of students.

This thesis determined that students and teachers are situated in tradition (comprised partly by language and history) which effects how they approach texts. Tradition generates presuppositions or prejudices in regards to the subject matter at hand, and we then project meaning onto what a text or other person will say and whether it has merit. Consequently, the history classroom is a place where students wade through their prejudices as they encounter the effects of history in past texts.

6.3 Implications for further research

My interpretation of philosophical hermeneutics and the presentation of an understanding of history education is also an invitation for further dialogue. I did not undertake the writing of this thesis to have the last word on the subject of interpretation and understanding in the history classroom. This thesis is a small ripple in a giant pond. If successful, my writing simply creates more ripples which bump against other ripples. I hope for those that read this thesis more questions than answers arise. I realize this thesis is an imperfect object. It will never be complete. Understanding is never complete as we are always involved in testing our prejudices and presuppositions within the hermeneutic circle. Every reader turns to this with the weight of tradition at our back. We bring to it newly unearthed prejudices gained in the reading of subsequent texts. However, it is important now to detail some of the further implications for further research.

A review of the current state of schooling in countries such as Canada is necessary? to determine if the understanding of history education described in this thesis is feasible. Are there current structures in schools that promote dialogue? Are there structures that conspire against dialogue? This would be a massive undertaking, but, in my opinion a necessary one. Does the current structure of schooling and education in Canada allow for the inclusion of dialogue and hermeneutic understanding? I believe these are questions that further research may answer.

How can history education balance the necessary objectives of teaching historical thinking with a type of history education centered on dialogue and dwelling in the human world? As I have stated earlier, I strongly believe teaching students historical thinking is a necessary component of history education. However, I believe history education is complex and numerous understandings can be developed. I simply want to present one

such understanding of what occurs to teachers and students when they go through a journey of understanding in the classroom.

My thinking on history education rose from years of practicing this in a classroom. I wanted to enrich and add to an understanding of history education. Consequently, work needs to be done on the feasibility of incorporating these two understandings of history education together in a single classroom. Is it possible? I believe so with determined research on both the theoretical and practical aspects of this question.

Further research needs to be completed pertaining to the pedagogical and curricular relationship of history education, Gadamerian hermeneutics, and dialogue. I briefly touched on pedagogy and curricula in chapter 5, but this is an incomplete look into this crucial aspect. Understanding the overt and hidden curriculum of Gadamerian hermeneutics in its application to history education is an important undertaking. How are teachers and students effected by dialogue and the movement from written record to speech?

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