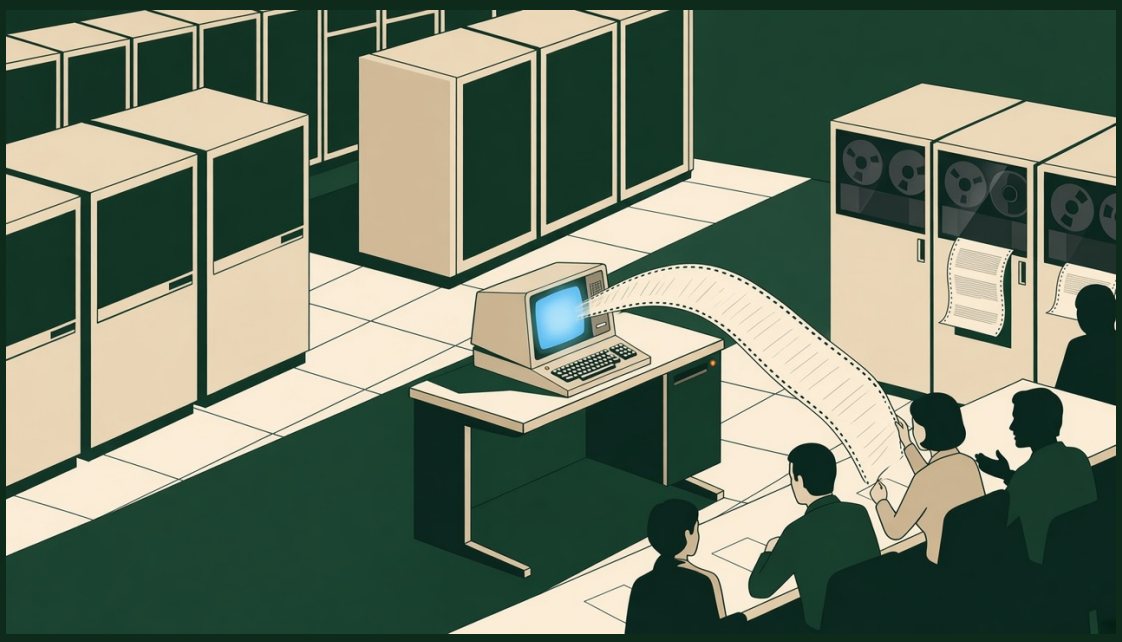
DG HUMANA INSTITUTE

# Truth and Method

## The Arguments Mapped

*A Reader's Companion to Gadamer's Five Chapters*



ARG-MAPS

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Full edition $79

*Truth and Method: The Arguments Mapped. A Reader's Companion to Gadamer's Five Chapters.*

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Kerry Thornhill
Founder

# Why this book, and why now

Imagine correcting a record. The date is wrong, the clerk checks the document, and the date is changed. Now imagine that every date is right. What you dispute is what the institution has taken those dates to mean. The clerk can read the record back to you, with perfect accuracy, and leave your objection untouched. What would it take for the institution to understand you well enough even to disagree?

DG Humana Institute brings that question to *Truth and Method* through its work on human dignity where people encounter technological systems. An institution can assign a person the standing of patient, applicant, user, or risk before that person has had an opportunity to speak. A subsequent explanation may make the determination clear while leaving the person's objection unheard. We want to understand what would make the encounter answerable to the person whose life it concerns.

## Why we begin with Gadamer

Gadamer asks how a historian learns to judge what matters, what a work of art asks of its spectator, and what happens when a conversation leads its participants to reconsider their question. These inquiries take us a considerable distance from the clerk's desk. They also give us a way to ask what has happened when an accurate description leaves someone feeling misunderstood.

Understanding begins with anticipations that a text or another person may upset (§4.2). A concrete case can alter what we take a general rule to require (§4.23). Someone can understand an order by grasping what obedience would involve and then refuse it (§4.31). Each example makes a particular demand on an account of understanding. Together they give us reason to ask whether an institution can learn from a person it has already classified.

The distinction among three ways of meeting another person is especially consequential for our work (§§4.41–4.43). Predicting a person's response is one achievement. Recognizing the person while explaining away everything they say is another. Letting their claim put one's own judgment in question requires something further. We take this distinction into our examination of technological and institutional encounters. That application expresses the Institute's concern and requires arguments of its own.

## Where the Institute stands

Our position is that subject and object are standings assigned within an encounter, that meaning-carrying relations exist only as shared, and that

language is the fullest form of the relation, not its origin. We leave the origin of that relation open. This is the Institute's position. It guides our questions here, while the book's task is to reconstruct and assess Gadamer's argument.

We accept his account of understanding as situated, open to correction, and mediated by language. We withhold assent where it becomes a universal ontology at §5.51. We also ask what gives an objection force when the tradition or institution receiving it controls the terms on which it can be heard. The chapter assessments and the concluding essay develop those reservations. A reader should be able to follow Gadamer's case and locate the point at which our judgment becomes disputable.

This volume begins a larger inquiry involving Gadamer, Habermas, and Ricoeur. Habermas presses the question of how understanding can be tested when the conditions of agreement are distorted. Ricoeur examines the relation between interpretation and critique. Our work on those questions grows from the encounter with Gadamer developed here.

## What the maps make possible

A reader may accept an argument about performance and question its extension to pictures, or accept linguistic mediation and dispute the inference to ontology. The numbered entries give such disagreements a precise location. Each identifies a claim, its grounds, the warrant connecting them, and the conditions under which that connection might fail. The dependency sections show what later arguments ask the result to support.

This structure serves our institutional purpose as well. To contest a determination, a person needs to be able to ask what supports it and what could count against it. The form of this companion gives us a small, inspectable practice of that demand. Its usefulness will depend on readers being able to challenge our reconstructions as precisely as they challenge Gadamer's arguments.

The examples and connective essays invite sustained reading. The maps, glossary, and index support consultation at the point where a passage becomes difficult. The reader's guide that follows demonstrates one entry and explains how to move among these parts.

We offer the book as the Institute's working position, open to correction. Readers who find an error, a missing argument, or a better reconstruction can write to info@dghumana.com with the entry number and the relevant page. We will revise the maps where a correction holds.

# How to use this book

With Gadamer open, begin at the *Index of arguments*. Find his printed page in parentheses and turn to the companion page at the right. In the digital edition, the entry number is also a link. For a conceptual question, consult *Where each topic is treated*.

A reader interested in the difference between understanding someone and agreeing with them can start at §4.31. Someone hears an order, understands exactly what obeying it would involve, and refuses. What has understanding accomplished here?

### Try one entry

Turn to §4.2 with pp. 279–282 of Gadamer open. The **Pages** line identifies the passage. The **Role** line tells you what Gadamer is doing with Heidegger there. He adopts the insight that we come to a text already expecting something of it. His own question concerns what happens when that expectation fails.

The **Claim** is our formulation of what the passage establishes. A reader anticipates a meaning for the whole and can revise it in the course of reading. The **Grounds** are what Gadamer gives us to go on. A familiar word, used in an unfamiliar way, can arrest a reading that had been moving easily enough. In Gadamer's phrase the reader is "pulled up short by the text" (p. 280).

Stop at the **Warrant**. What licenses the inference from that interruption to a claim about objectivity? A surprise by itself proves very little. Suppose, though, that the reader can now point to several places where the old expectation failed and the revised reading makes sense of the words. There is a reason someone else can inspect. Our reconstruction locates the force of Gadamer's argument there. The **Backing** identifies what supports this way of reasoning, including Heidegger's account of fore-understanding and the practice of reading a passage against the text as a whole.

The last three fields give a reader room to disagree. The **Qualifier** limits what has been earned. An interpretation can answer to the text even where another tenable reading exists. The **Rebuttal** asks what might defeat the inference. A resourceful reader can sometimes rescue a bad interpretation by explaining away each difficulty in turn. The **Hidden premises** bring the issue into focus. What must be true of this text, and of its reader, for a frustrated expectation to count as a reason to change one's mind? At §4.15 Gadamer returns to the difficulty with a further demand. The very prejudice that directs our attention has to become available to us as a question.

## Whose argument am I reading?

The six fields from Claim through Rebuttal adapt Stephen Toulmin's layout in chapter III of *The Uses of Argument* (updated edition, pp. 87–134, especially pp. 89–100). We add hidden premises. The layout distinguishes what a passage says, our reconstruction of its inference, and our assessment. A Claim can belong to someone Gadamer is answering. The Role line identifies the speaker and Gadamer's relation to the claim. A Warrant often formulates a step he leaves unstated. The Qualifier distinguishes a limit Gadamer recognizes from a restriction we would put on his claim. The entry identifies objections and replies he anticipates.

The chapter openings and unnumbered essays among the entries have italic headings. They present the Institute's readings, as do the sections introduced by *Institute assessment*. An argument about pictures at §2.15, for example, comes to bear on a sentence about being at §5.51. One can see why Gadamer would make the move and still have an objection to it. The numbered maps let a reader say which step needs another reason.

## Finding your place

Entry numbers belong to this companion: §4.2 is the second argument of Chapter 4. The **Pages** line refers to Gadamer's revised second edition, Bloomsbury Revelations printing (2013), in the translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. Entries can share a page when an argument turns in mid-page. Quotations fall within the entry's range. For another printing, use Gadamer's headings in the chapter's *Pages and sections* table.

For a **first reading**, begin with the chapter's opening essay and *How the chapter argues*. The overview places the five chapters within Gadamer's three parts. Keep *The arguments in order* beside his text. For a **return visit**, the glossary traces a term's development, while *Two paths through the entries* follows fidelity and disagreement across chapters.

When a late claim seems to have arrived too easily, turn to *How the arguments depend on one another*. If the difficulty is whose premise Gadamer has borrowed, the preceding *Status of each argument* and its notes on backing identify what he takes from a thinker and where he parts company.

Each chapter assessment identifies its decisive issue, develops objections and alternatives, and reconstructs the strongest argument before giving an *Overall judgment*. After Chapter 5, *What the arguments have earned* brings these judgments together and returns to art.

We examine these five chapters, with Gadamer's interlocutors as he presents them. For the movement of his prose, and for a judgment against ours, the book to keep open is his.

# The whole-book argument

An argument can acquire a second life after it has reached its conclusion. Chapter 1 asks us to recognize knowledge in the experience of art (§1.19). Chapter 2 takes that possibility into an inquiry about the being of the work. By Chapter 5 the relation between a work and its presentation helps Gadamer formulate a claim about everything that can be understood (§5.51). The reader who accepted the first step has a fresh decision to make at each turn.

This overview follows what each result is asked to support. The master map below reconstructs the cumulative argument in Toulmin's terms. The chapter sequence shows where a result becomes available for further use. The topic locator and the two reading paths allow a reader to pursue a connection in either direction. After Chapter 5, *What the arguments have earned* considers the achievements we accept and the extensions for which we would ask further reasons.

Gadamer's challenge to the sufficiency of method gives the sequence its continuity. A performance, a historical inquiry, or a conversation involves someone whose participation matters to what becomes intelligible. Methods operate within such encounters. Whether participation also tells us something about the being of what is understood becomes the book's most ambitious question. In answering it Gadamer draws on thinkers he also criticizes. The status tables identify those debts and disputes. The synthesis here is the Institute's reconstruction of his five chapters, with entry numbers directing the reader back to each local argument.

### The argument in Toulmin's terms

**Claim.** Understanding is a finite, historically effected event in which a subject matter comes to presentation through the participation of the one who understands. Historically effected means that the interpreter is already formed by the history of the very thing being understood, so the encounter is never a first meeting. Method alone can neither exhaust nor secure the truth of what is understood. Application and language belong inside the event rather than following it. The culmination is ontological: "Being that can be understood is language" (p. 490). Entries: §1.19; §§2.23–2.25; §4.19; §4.51; §§5.51–5.52; §5.58.

**Grounds.** Three fields supply the evidence. Art: works address and change those who meet them, and they have their being in being presented, whether performed, viewed, or read. History: interpreters already belong to the history they investigate, and the historicist attempt to stand outside it fails on its own

terms. Practice: legal judgment, translation, and conversation require situated application, and genuine experience overturns what the experiencer expected. The three fields are chosen because in each the detached observer is visibly inadequate: a spectator who keeps aesthetic distance misses the play, a historian who stands outside history has nowhere to stand, and a judge who only subsumes has not yet judged. Entries: §§2.5–2.11; §2.21; §§3.21–3.27; §4.8; §§4.19–4.33; §§4.39–4.46; §§5.1–5.3.

**Warrants.** Three inferences carry those grounds to the claim. If participation is necessary for a meaning to be present at all, participation is not an optional addition to an already complete object. If historical conditions are what make understanding possible, they cannot all be removed as bias without removing understanding with them. If a matter becomes determinate only through application and through language, application and language belong within understanding rather than after it. Each warrant turns a condition of access into a feature of what is accessed. That is the book's characteristic move, and it is also where the hidden premises gather. Entries: §§2.7–2.8; §§3.34–3.36; §§4.2–4.5; §§4.19–4.20; §§5.8–5.12.

**Backing.** Each warrant rests on a tradition that Gadamer appropriates for one purpose and declines to adopt whole: humanist judgment and *Bildung*; Aristotle on practical wisdom and equity; Heidegger on understanding as the situated, projective mode of human being; Platonic dialogue led by its subject matter; Hegel's account of mediation and of reflection's power, kept without its absolute closure; and the theology of the inner word, kept for its model of the word as the completion of thought rather than a label added afterward. Entries: §§1.3–1.10; §§3.32–3.36; §§4.21–4.26; §§4.34–4.35; §4.46; §§5.19–5.24.

**Qualifier.** The claim is universal in intended scope and finite in every realization. Interpretations remain answerable to the matter; plural readings are not equal readings. Method keeps its legitimate uses, and the closing criticism concerns the sufficiency of method, not the legitimacy of science (p. 506). Language is not said to produce the world; Gadamer allows that a world can exist without human beings (p. 464). Entries: §2.8; §3.36; §4.2; §5.35; §5.44; §5.58.

**Rebuttals.** Three objections recur, and the book answers each with the same two resources, correction and openness, whose sufficiency remains disputed. Participation may project rather than disclose, so the first test asks what would defeat a given reading. Tradition may dominate rather than teach, so the second asks who can challenge an inherited claim and on what standing. Language may mediate every understanding without constituting all being, so the third asks whether the final ontology follows from the phenomenology that precedes it. Entries: §§4.6–4.8; §§4.43–4.46; §§5.9–5.10; §5.44; §§5.51–5.52.

**Hidden premises.** Four assumptions do work the text does not argue for in full: that disclosure can count as knowledge; that a matter can constrain the interpretations of those situated within history; that examples drawn from art and dialogue generalize to understanding as such; and that the conditions under which something becomes intelligible disclose something about its being. The last carries the heaviest burden. Entries: §1.19; §2.23; §4.2; §§5.51–5.52.

## The five-chapter progression

Gadamer's three parts divide the work. The first, Chapters 1 and 2, retrieves the question of truth through art. The second, Chapters 3 and 4, extends the question of truth to understanding in the human sciences. The third, Chapter 5, makes the ontological shift of hermeneutics, guided by language. The five chapters of this companion follow the same sequence. In the Bloomsbury printing, Chapter 1 occupies pp. 3–91, Chapter 2 pp. 106–168, Chapter 3 pp. 181–264, Chapter 4 pp. 278–387, and Chapter 5 pp. 401–506; the pages between chapters hold the notes.

| Chapter | Job in the argument | Core move | Entries |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Recover the question of truth | Art and cultivated judgment exceed both the model of method and the model of private aesthetic experience. | §§1.1–1.10; §§1.16–1.19 |
| 2 | Explain art as presentation | Play and presentation make participation constitutive of the work; aesthetics opens into hermeneutics. | §§2.1–2.8; §§2.21–2.25 |
| 3 | Expose historical self-detachment | Romantic and historicist hermeneutics end in the need to explain the interpreter's own historicity. | §§3.5–3.10; §§3.17–3.27; §§3.32–3.36 |
| 4 | Give the positive account | Prejudice, application, experience, and question-and-answer dialogue explain situated understanding. | §§4.1–4.20; §§4.39–4.51 |
| 5 | Make the linguistic and ontological turn | Language mediates understanding; self-presentation becomes the proposed universal structure. | §§5.1–5.12; §§5.40–5.58 |

The table gives the direction of the argument. Readers entering at Chapter 4 can follow its account of prejudice back through the historian's situation in Chapter 3. Readers questioning the final ontology can trace presentation back

to the work of art in Chapter 2. The dependency sections in each chapter identify the particular inferences along those routes.

## Where each topic is treated

The following table locates the topics a reader is most likely to bring to the book. Entries are numbered in reading order within each chapter. Each opens with the pages it covers, allowing a reader to move between the map and Gadamer's text. Where two entries share a page, an argument begins or ends in mid-page.

| Topic | What is at issue | Entries |
|---|---|---|
| Method and truth | The limits of method's sufficiency, not the rejection of inquiry. | §§1.1–1.5; §§5.37–5.39; §5.58 |
| *Bildung*, tact, judgment | Formation of the knower; rules do not apply themselves. | §§1.3–1.10 |
| Kant, genius, *Erlebnis* | Aesthetic subjectivization and its historical limits. | §§1.11–1.18 |
| Play, work, presentation | Identity through plural, constrained realizations. | §§2.1–2.11 |
| Picture and architecture | Presentation, place, and purpose belong to the work. | §§2.13–2.20 |
| Literature and reconstruction | Reading actualizes meaning; origins do not exhaust it. | §§2.21–2.25; §§5.4–5.8 |
| Schleiermacher | Reconstruction, individuality, and the circle. | §§3.4–3.10 |
| Historicism and Dilthey | Finite investigators against a total historical standpoint. | §§3.11–3.27 |
| Husserl and Heidegger | Horizon and life-world; understanding as situated being. | §§3.28–3.36 |
| Prejudice, authority, tradition | Conditions of access must still be distinguished from error. | §§4.2–4.8 |
| Circle and temporal distance | Whole and parts; testing inherited anticipations. | §§4.11–4.15 |
| *Wirkungsgeschichte* and horizons | History of effect forms the encounter; fusion preserves a tension. | §§4.16–4.18; §4.51 |
| Application, *phronesis*, law | Universal and particular acquire concrete meaning together. | §§4.19–4.33 |
| *Erfahrung*, finitude, Hegel | Experience overturns expectation; no final self-mastery. | §§4.34–4.43; §§5.45–5.46; §5.50 |

| Topic | What is at issue | Entries |
|---|---|---|
| Question and answer | Claims answer questions and can question the interpreter. | §§4.44–4.51; §§5.49–5.50 |
| Translation and interpretation | Expression participates in understanding itself. | §§5.1–5.12 |
| *Logos*, *verbum*, concepts | Word and thought; metaphor and finite concept formation. | §§5.13–5.30 |
| Humboldt, world, science | Open language-worlds; factualness differs from objectivity. | §§5.31–5.39 |
| Speculative language | Finite words open an unsaid, unexhausted horizon. | §§5.40–5.50 |
| "Being that can be understood is language" (p. 490) | The move from interpretive experience to universal ontology. | §§5.51–5.52 |
| Beauty, evidentness, truth | Disclosure can have force before proof or final assent. | §§5.53–5.58 |

## Two paths through the entries

**When fidelity calls for a change.** Start with §1.10, where a particular case brings out something that a rule leaves open. Read §2.8 with that result in mind. An actor can discover in a familiar speech a possibility that a revered earlier performance obscured. The difference between the performances can count in the later actor's favor. What gives the difference that force is specific to the work. One can ask what the actor has heard in this line and whether the rest of the scene bears it out. In §4.23 equity poses a related question under a different obligation. A judge who departs from the usual application owes an account of how the departure does justice to the law in this case. The actor and the judge answer to different authorities. Seeing why the analogy holds at all helps locate its limit.

Now turn to the translator in §5.2. Two translations may be defensible even though each gives up something the other preserves. Here fidelity can require the translator to choose which loss the passage can sustain. Read backward from that predicament to §4.19. Gadamer calls application internal to understanding. The translator puts pressure on the idea of an earlier moment when one already possessed the full meaning and had only to find words for it. Choosing the words can be the occasion on which one first sees what the choice will cost.

**What disagreement discloses.** Begin near the end, at §5.56. Something has become evident to a reader who can still withhold assent. Turn back to §4.31,

where a person shows how precisely an order has been understood by refusing what carrying it out would require. The two entries separate achievements easily confused in an account of dialogue. A claim has reached me when I can grasp what accepting it would commit me to. I may then have a reason to resist it that I could never have given before.

Read §4.43 in that light. The demand to hear what tradition has to say leaves room for a refusal whose reasons emerge through the encounter. That gives an unsettled conversation a possible achievement of its own. At §4.51, where Gadamer speaks of a common language, ask whether the parties can at last tell each other exactly where they differ. If so, something has happened between them that an inventory of their respective starting opinions could not record.

# Chapter 1: Transcending the Aesthetic Dimension

## *What did the historian hear?*

A historian has every date needed to put two letters in sequence. Only on a second reading does she notice a change of salutation. Two friends have become formal with each other. A colleague points out that the later letter was written for someone else to see. Now the formality may be a public performance the friends understood perfectly well. Both historians can check the date. What kind of knowledge enabled either of them to notice the salutation in the first place?

Start at §1.1. A law of regular succession would scarcely help here. The historian wants to understand what happened between these people on this occasion. By §1.4 Gadamer can give a richer account of her competence. An education in the language and customs of the period has taught her to hear a distinction that she might have some trouble explaining. Her colleague's objection matters precisely because she has made a judgment about the letters. She owes an answer to someone who hears them differently.

Taste enters this history with more at stake than a preference in art. A person of taste can find fault with a detail and sometimes persuade others to see what is wrong before anyone can state a rule (§§1.8–1.10). Kant preserves a remarkable feature of that encounter. Even without a proof, I can ask you to look again and reasonably expect your agreement (§1.12). What changes is the ground on which I can ask. If the claim of taste concerns a pleasure we can share, what have we learned about the thing we both see? For Gadamer the old question about the historian has resurfaced inside aesthetics.

The history that follows can show why the categories of genius and lived experience came to seem indispensable. A work made for ritual use can expose the limits of an account that takes private experience as its measure (§§1.14–1.16). Neither result establishes that a work tells the truth. The stronger case begins when a reading can be held answerable to the work (§§1.17–1.19). Return to the two historians. The salutation gives them something determinate to disagree about, though noticing it settles little by itself. When Gadamer asks us to count an encounter with art as knowledge, we would want at least that much from the work. Chapter 2 must explain how the work can constrain what we take ourselves to have learned.

## Pages and sections

Chapter 1 opens Gadamer's Part One, "The Question of Truth as It Emerges in the Experience of Art." It occupies pp. 3–91 of the Bloomsbury Revelations printing (2013) of the revised second edition, translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall; its notes begin on p. 91 and run to p. 105. Page references in this part are to that printing. Where an entry's page range overlaps its neighbor's, an argument begins or ends in mid-page.


| Section (Gadamer's headings) | Begins on |
|---|---|
| The significance of the humanist tradition for the human sciences | p. 3 |
| The problem of method | p. 3 |
| The guiding concepts of humanism | p. 9 |
| Bildung (culture) | p. 9 |
| Sensus communis | p. 18 |
| Judgment | p. 28 |
| Taste | p. 32 |
| The subjectivization of aesthetics through the Kantian critique | p. 39 |
| Kant's doctrine of taste and genius | p. 39 |
| The transcendental distinctness of taste | p. 39 |
| The doctrine of free and dependent beauty | p. 41 |
| The doctrine of the ideal of beauty | p. 43 |
| The interest aroused by natural and artistic beauty | p. 45 |
| The relation between taste and genius | p. 49 |
| The aesthetics of genius and the concept of experience (Erlebnis) | p. 51 |
| The dominance of the concept of genius | p. 51 |
| On the history of the word Erlebnis | p. 55 |
| The concept of Erlebnis | p. 58 |
| The limits of Erlebniskunst and the rehabilitation of allegory | p. 64 |
| Retrieving the question of artistic truth | p. 74 |
| The dubiousness of the concept of aesthetic cultivation (Bildung) | p. 74 |
| Critique of the abstraction inherent in aesthetic consciousness | p. 81 |
| Notes | p. 91 |

## How the chapter argues

The chapter's main moves, in the order Gadamer makes them. The chain states the progression he intends; it does not certify that each step follows.

1. The natural-science model misdescribes the human sciences
2. Recover Bildung, sensus communis, judgment, and taste
3. Kant preserves taste's universality but removes its object-directed knowledge
4. Post-Kantian aesthetics elevates genius and Erlebnis
5. Premodern art and allegory expose those criteria as historically limited
6. Aesthetic differentiation deworlds the work; pure perception proves impossible
7. Radical aesthetic subjectivism cannot preserve work-identity or interpretive normativity
8. Artistic Erfahrung is a finite, binding, historically mediated mode of knowledge
9. Art reopens the question of truth in the human sciences

The three movements do different work:

1. **Recovery (pp. 3–39):** Gadamer recovers a vocabulary for humanistic truth that modern method-consciousness and Kantian aesthetics had obscured.

2. **Genealogy and internal critique (pp. 39–74):** he reconstructs Kant's genuine achievement, follows its post-Kantian transformation into the aesthetics of genius and *Erlebnis*, and exposes that aesthetics as historically limited.

3. **Retrieval (pp. 74–91):** he criticizes aesthetic consciousness as an abstraction, argues that perception and art are always meaning-laden, and advances the provisional positive thesis that art is a hermeneutic truth-event.

## The chapter's argument as a whole

### Claim

The human sciences cannot understand or legitimate their truth either by importing the natural sciences' ideal of method or by consigning their distinctive insight to a merely subjective aesthetic faculty. Aesthetic consciousness must be transcended, and the experience (*Erfahrung*) of art recognized as a finite, historically mediated, binding mode of knowledge. The

artwork is a hermeneutical phenomenon whose truth opens the wider question of truth in the human sciences.

## Grounds

1. Historical research constitutively aims to understand unique historical concreteness and becoming, not merely to discover regularities or make predictions (pp. 4–5).

2. Even Helmholtz's and Dilthey's method-centered accounts must invoke memory, authority, tact, and cultivation, but cannot explain their cognitive status while induction remains the sole logical norm (pp. 5–9).

3. *Bildung*, *sensus communis*, judgment, taste, and practical application name historically formed, situational, non-rule-exhaustive capacities actually operative in humanistic inquiry (pp. 8–38).

4. Kant successfully explains the nonconceptual universal claim of taste but grounds it in the subject and denies that it knows the beautiful object. This removes the broader humanist faculties from the recognized domain of knowledge (pp. 37–51).

5. Kant's successors detach genius from his teleology of nature; *Erlebnis* then becomes the measure of artistic production and reception (pp. 51–64).

6. Premodern rhetorical, religious, functional, and allegorical works do not fit the *Erlebnis* paradigm. The supposedly necessary oppositions between symbol and allegory, aesthetic and mythical consciousness, and art and non-art therefore prove historically conditioned (pp. 64–74).

7. Schillerian aesthetic cultivation and "aesthetic differentiation" produce a decontextualized sphere of pure art, while the work and artist lose their place in a shared world (pp. 74–81).

8. Phenomenological analysis shows that pure seeing, pure hearing, and form without meaning are abstractions: aesthetic perception is always an articulation or understanding-as (pp. 81–84).

9. Romantic unconscious genius, reader-genius, and isolated *Erlebnis*, when treated as exhaustive foundations, cannot sustain the work's identity, completion, binding force, or criteria of appropriate interpretation without collapsing into hermeneutic nihilism (pp. 84–88).

10. Actual artistic *Erfahrung* mediates self-understanding through the otherness and integrity of the work, discloses a world, binds and changes the participant, and remains nonfinal and inexhaustible (pp. 87–91).

### Warrants

- **Domain-adequacy warrant:** a mode of inquiry must be assessed by the being and aim of what it seeks to know. A law-seeking predictive method cannot by itself exhaust understanding of unique historical meaning.
- **Practice-adequacy warrant:** an epistemology must explain the operations by which a field actually makes its successful judgments. Treating indispensable tact and application as merely psychological leaves the field's knowing unexplained.
- **Phenomenological-adequacy warrant:** a theory must preserve the constitutive features of the object and experience it explains: meaning, world, identity through time, binding force, and transformative self-understanding.
- **Immanent-consistency warrant:** a position that destroys its own object or generates the opposite of what it promises is inadequate. Pure aesthetic differentiation eliminates art's meaningful being; isolated *Erlebnis* dissolves work and experiencer into momentary points; reader-genius abolishes appropriate understanding.
- **Epistemic-plurality warrant:** nonconceptual, historically mediated, situational understanding can disclose truth. Natural-scientific conceptual knowledge is one mode of knowledge, not the definition of all knowledge.
- **Genealogical warrant, used cautiously:** showing that allegedly universal categories arose from a specific historical constellation defeats their self-evidence and shifts the burden of proof. Genealogy alone does not prove them false; it needs substantive counterexamples and phenomenological critique.

### Backing

- The humanist-rhetorical and Aristotelian traditions of *Bildung*, *sensus communis*, *phronesis*, judgment, tact, taste, and application.
- The actual practices of history, philology, jurisprudence, and interpretation.
- Kant's transcendental achievement, carefully delimited, and the history of its post-Kantian transformation.
- The history of rhetoric, religious art, allegory, and premodern artistic production.
- Phenomenology, Gestalt psychology, and Heideggerian understanding-as and temporal ontology.
- Kierkegaard's critique of aesthetic immediacy and Hegel's recognition of art as historically mediated truth, both selectively retained and limited.

### Qualifier

The conclusion is **programmatic, domain-specific, and anti-exclusivist**:

- Gadamer does not deny that induction, empirical regularities, criticism, or explicit method have legitimate uses.
- "Art is knowledge" does not mean art supplies natural-scientific propositions, moral demonstrations, or fully conceptual knowledge.
- Artistic truth is finite, historically mediated, nonfinal, and inexhaustible.
- Aesthetic differentiation has a positive function when it lets the work stand out "in its own right"; it becomes falsifying only when made sovereign.
- Chapter 1 retrieves and frames the problem. It does not yet provide the complete ontology of work, play, presentation, interpretation, and truth developed later.

### Rebuttals and replies

- **Human sciences use induction and universals.** Gadamer agrees, but argues that their constitutive aim is not exhausted by treating concrete phenomena as instances of predictive laws.
- **Kant legitimately grounds taste subjectively.** Gadamer agrees within Kant's restricted transcendental task; he challenges the later ontological generalization and the exclusion of artistic truth.
- **Aesthetic autonomy protects art from moral, religious, or instrumental reduction.** Gadamer grants the protective function but argues that sovereignty severs constitutive relations and neutralizes the work's truth claim.
- **Open-ended art licenses free interpretive creation.** Gadamer distinguishes inexhaustibility from equivalence: plural interpretations can remain answerable to a work whose claim is binding.
- **Historical plurality entails relativism.** Gadamer's reply is that finite truth need not be final or singular; the human sciences seek truth within plurality rather than surpassing plurality from an absolute standpoint.
- **Hegel secures art's truth through conceptual mediation.** Gadamer retains Hegel's move beyond subjective mind but argues that the omnipotent concept disavows art's distinct way of truth.

### Hidden premises

1. The human sciences have a constitutive aim, understanding historical meaning, which is not reducible to prediction.

2. Actual practice and phenomenological description can correct a discipline's methodological self-description.

3. Nonconceptual and tacit discernment can be truth-bearing without becoming arbitrary.

4. Work, world, artist, and recipient possess sufficient diachronic identity for interpretation to be answerable.

5. Meaning, context, and function are at least sometimes constitutive of a work's identity rather than merely external background.

6. Transformative self- and world-disclosure can be epistemically significant, not merely affectively forceful.

7. Truth can be finite, plural in manifestation, and nonpropositional without collapsing into relativism.

8. Historically situated understanding is constitutive of human finitude, not merely a defect to be eliminated by method.

## The arguments in order

### §1.1 Historical understanding is not exhausted by inductive regularity

**Pages:** pp. 3–5.

**Role:** Opens the negative case against methodological monopoly.

**Claim:** Measuring the human sciences by progressive knowledge of regularities fails to grasp their distinctive cognitive aim.

**Grounds:** Mill and Hume treat moral and social inquiry as induction aimed at similarities, laws, and prediction; incomplete data supposedly explains weaker social prediction. Historical research, by contrast, seeks to understand this person, people, state, or event in its unique becoming, not merely as confirmation of a law.

**Warrant:** A method designed to subsume repeatable cases under regularities cannot, by itself, satisfy an inquiry whose defining aim is understanding the historically individuated phenomenon as such.

**Backing:** The avowed practice and ideal of historical research; the distinction between prediction and genetic-historical understanding.

**Qualifier:** Historical knowledge uses experiential universals, and inductive social science has genuine successes such as social psychology. The claim is non-exhaustion, not total incompatibility.

**Rebuttal:** A naturalist may argue that sufficiently complex laws could explain individuality. Gadamer replies that historical research does not seek to grasp the individual case as an instance of a law but to understand how it became what it is (p. 4).

**Hidden premises:** Historical individuality is not reducible without remainder to class-membership; genetic understanding is genuine knowledge; epistemic aims help determine appropriate logical form.

## §1.2 Helmholtz and Dilthey do not secure the autonomy they seek

**Pages:** pp. 5–8.

**Role:** Turns the unexplained residue of tact, memory, and authority into the constructive problem.

**Claim:** Helmholtz and Dilthey remain governed by the natural-scientific norm and therefore describe the human sciences' difference only negatively or psychologically, not as a distinctive mode of valid knowing.

**Grounds:** Helmholtz calls their inference "artistic-instinctive" but still treats it as induction; the difference becomes unconscious psychology. Dilthey defends a distinct object yet retains one general concept of method, scientific distance, and Baconian mastery. Helmholtz's appeal to Kantian freedom fits neither Kant's project nor inductive logic.

**Warrant:** If natural science remains the uncontested logical norm, deviations can appear only as weaker exactness, unconscious inference, or special psychology; that cannot establish epistemic autonomy.

**Backing:** Droysen's demand for an autonomous historical science; Gadamer's historicization of Newtonian method; Helmholtz's own recognition of tact, memory, and authority.

**Qualifier:** Gadamer credits both thinkers' intention, credits Helmholtz's clues, and accepts that object-difference matters. He rejects the adequacy of their explanation.

**Rebuttal:** A common method applied to different objects might seem sufficient. Gadamer replies that this leaves the field's indispensable discriminative operations unexplained and treats history as meteorology with worse data.

**Hidden premises:** Genuine autonomy requires an account of distinctive validity; psychology cannot substitute for epistemic justification; natural science's self-image as purely explicit inference is itself one-sided.

## §1.3 *Bildung* is formation of the knower, not technical skill-acquisition

**Pages:** pp. 9–11.

**Role:** Introduces the ontological category needed to reinterpret humanistic tact.

**Claim:** *Bildung* names ongoing, internally appropriated formation of the whole person in which formative contents are preserved; it is not a technique or means directed to an externally fixed result.

**Grounds:** The concept moves from natural form and talent-cultivation toward Herder's rise to humanity and Humboldt's inward intellectual-moral disposition. Unlike training, whose content can become a discarded means,

what is received in *Bildung* becomes one's own and continues to structure the person. Like *physis*, it has no goal external to itself.

**Warrant:** A process that transforms the agent's disposition and preserves what has been assimilated is constitutive of how that agent perceives and judges; it cannot be represented as an externally deployable procedure.

**Backing:** The conceptual history of *Bild*, formation, culture, and Hegel's philosophical articulation of *Bildung*.

**Qualifier:** Particular educational goals remain possible; Gadamer criticizes only the reification of *Bildung* itself into an externally specified endpoint.

**Rebuttal:** One may reduce *Bildung* to education, trained ability, or cultural capital. Gadamer distinguishes it by the continuing formative presence of what has been appropriated.

**Hidden premises:** Formation has epistemic consequences; conceptual history can recover philosophically important distinctions; the knowing subject is historically changed by what it learns.

### §1.4 *Bildung* enables historical and aesthetic tact

**Pages:** pp. 11–16.

**Role:** Principal positive answer to what makes humanistic tact possible.

**Claim:** The human sciences presuppose a formed consciousness capable of distancing itself from private immediacy, opening itself to other standpoints, and making tactful distinctions in concrete historical and aesthetic cases.

**Grounds:** Hegelian work restrains desire and forms the worker; theoretical formation enters the alien and returns transformed. Every individual already appropriates a linguistically and institutionally constituted world. Memory is selective and historically formed; forgetting can enable renewal. Aesthetic and historical tact distinguish quality and historical possibility without exhaustive rules.

**Warrant:** Correctly perceiving a historically individual object requires freedom from immediate self-interest and receptivity to its otherness; those orientations are acquired formations, not algorithms detachable from the knower.

**Backing:** Hegel's practical and theoretical *Bildung*, Nietzsche's account of forgetting, and Helmholtz's own description of historical and philological practice.

**Qualifier:** Gadamer retains Hegel's movement of alienation and return but rejects classicist privilege and completion in absolute knowledge. The relevant universality is openness to possible standpoints, not a fixed conceptual yardstick.

**Rebuttal:** Unformulable tact may appear to be subjective feeling. Gadamer answers that it is a historically formed mode of being and knowing oriented beyond private preference.

**Hidden premises:** Self-distance and openness are truth-conducive; a disposition can be norm-governed without rule-exhaustion; perception of relevant differences can count as knowledge even without complete articulation.

## §1.5 Humanist formation better explains the human sciences than exclusive method

**Pages:** pp. 16–18.

**Role:** Justifies the turn from nineteenth-century methodology to the older humanist concepts.

**Claim:** What makes the human sciences sciences is more adequately understood through the humanist tradition of *Bildung* than through the exclusive modern concept of method.

**Grounds:** Cultivated consciousness functions as a universal sense open in multiple directions. The human sciences tacitly live from humanist formation even when they deny it epistemologically. Port-Royal-style rules for historical truth are either trivial or, when made exclusive, dissolve the traditional materials they were meant to assess.

**Warrant:** The better epistemology explains a field's real discriminative capacities and truth-oriented practice. A framework whose prescriptions are trivial and whose monopoly delegitimizes the field's object cannot be its sole foundation.

**Backing:** The humanist resistance of rhetoric and practical wisdom to scholastic and methodological exclusivism.

**Qualifier:** Critical method can test testimony and expose false claims. The target is exclusivity, not criticism.

**Rebuttal:** Methodological criticism may overturn false tradition. Gadamer's stronger "self-annihilation" claim is announced here rather than fully established; criticism need not obviously abolish historical inquiry.

**Hidden premises:** Traditionary materials can bear truth, not only causal data; destructive criticism is not yet understanding; a practice's survival under an inadequate self-description suggests tacit conditions.

## §1.6 *Sensus communis* is a practical-historical source of truth

**Pages:** pp. 18–22.

**Role:** Reconstructs a form of communal judgment that is neither demonstrative science nor private feeling.

**Claim:** The human sciences depend on a communal and practically oriented sense capable of discerning what is true and right in concrete circumstances, even where universal demonstration is unavailable.

**Grounds:** Vico supplements Cartesian *critica*, "modern critical science" (p. 19), with the older *topica*, "the art of finding arguments" (p. 20), and treats eloquence as truth-directed rather than as mere verbal technique; education in common sense and persuasive practical reasoning must supplement modern science. The Roman tradition connects *sensus communis* with civic life. Aristotle's *phronesis* is not the application of a neutral technique but a cultivated disposition toward the good. History and testimony often command rational conviction without apodictic proof.

**Warrant:** Where the object is a historically and socially constituted practice, knowing it requires participation in the shared distinctions through which agents recognize relevance, justice, plausibility, and the common good.

**Backing:** Vico, the Roman rhetorical tradition, Cicero, Bacon, d'Alembert, and Aristotle's account of practical wisdom.

**Qualifier:** This knowledge is probable or verisimilar, case-sensitive, and capable of conviction without apodictic proof. Gadamer presents it as a supplement and alternative source of warrant, not as a substitute for demonstration wherever demonstration is possible.

**Rebuttal:** Rhetorical conviction may be mere persuasion or conformity. Gadamer replies that Vico defends more than rhetorical persuasion: he draws on Aristotle's practical knowledge, *phronesis*, which presupposes a moral disposition (p. 20). The analysis adds that the absence of proof does not eliminate the distinction between responsible judgment and manipulation; it relocates the standards to formed practical reason and answerability to a shared matter.

**Hidden premises:** Communities can preserve insight as well as prejudice; practical orientation can have epistemic value; testimony and historically sedimented judgment can warrant belief without deductive certainty.

## §1.7 The modern narrowing of *sensus communis* obscures its hermeneutic function

**Pages:** pp. 22–28.

**Role:** Genealogically explains why the older epistemic vocabulary became unavailable and uses Oetinger as a counter-tradition.

**Claim:** The depoliticization and formalization of *sensus communis* in the German Enlightenment stripped it of its positive social, moral, and interpretive content; the Pietist tradition nevertheless preserves the insight that understanding a whole requires formed, applicative sense rather than rules alone.

**Grounds:** Shaftesbury's civic and moral sense survives more fully in Scottish and French discussions than in German philosophy, where the concept tends toward a merely formal power or a negative check against absurdity. Oetinger, by contrast, treats *sensus communis* as *sensu plenus*: an organic, generative apprehension of wholes, involving part–whole relations and application to oneself, which cannot be reduced to Cartesian clarity.

**Warrant:** If a concept loses the substantive orientations through which it once distinguished fitting from unfitting and whole from fragment, it can no longer articulate the situated knowledge operative in interpretation.

**Backing:** The comparative conceptual history of the Scottish, French, German, and Pietist traditions; the whole–part and self-application structure preserved in Oetinger's counter-traditional example.

**Qualifier:** Gadamer calls Oetinger's position a "spiritualistic extreme" and does not appropriate its appeal to divine instinct. He retrieves the structure of applicative whole-understanding while bracketing the theology that supports it.

**Rebuttal:** Formalization may seem to purify common sense of parochial content. Gadamer's reply is that complete purification also removes the positive discriminations by which judgment knows anything concrete.

**Hidden premises:** The history of a concept can expose losses that systematic definitions conceal; interpretation is an organic part–whole process; application to the interpreter is constitutive rather than an optional after-stage.

## §1.8 Judgment cannot be exhaustively governed by rules, and sound practical judgment is not morally neutral

**Pages:** pp. 28–32.

**Role:** Establishes the logical and ethical need for case-sensitive judgment.

**Claim:** Applying a universal rule to a particular case requires a cultivated capacity that cannot itself be fully specified by further rules; judgment "in the

highest sense," when joined to *sensus communis*, also includes sensitivity to right standpoints and the common good, not merely formal subsumption.

**Grounds:** Kant observes that any rule offered for applying another rule would itself require judgment in its application, generating a regress. Judgment is learned through practice and examples. A calculating swindler may reason coherently yet lack sound judgment because he adopts the wrong ends and standpoints. The older tradition links judgment with *sensus communis*, whereas Kant excludes that tradition's moral-social content, gives ordinary logical judgment no principle of its own, and leaves aesthetic taste as the properly communal form of judgment.

**Warrant:** A rule cannot completely determine the recognition of its own relevant circumstances of application; and formally correct subsumption cannot count as sound judgment if it is indifferent to the practical significance of the case.

**Backing:** Kant's analysis of judgment, case-by-case practice, Aristotelian practical philosophy, Vico and Shaftesbury, and the ordinary distinction between cleverness and sound judgment.

**Qualifier:** Judgment can be educated by rules, precedents, and examples, and Gadamer does not make feeling the source of the moral law. His claim is underdetermination, not rulelessness.

**Rebuttal:** A sufficiently complete decision procedure might seem able to encode application. Gadamer replies, with Kant, that following any principle of application would itself require judgment (p. 29), so recognizing which description, rule, and purpose are relevant already exercises the judgment the procedure was meant to replace.

**Hidden premises:** Relevance is not mechanically given; correct judgment includes orientation toward legitimate ends; practical and interpretive rationality share a structure of application.

### §1.9 Taste is a normative, nonconceptual mode of knowledge

**Pages:** pp. 32–35.

**Role:** Shows that the pre-Kantian concept of taste extends beyond private aesthetic preference.

**Claim:** Good taste is a socially formed and normatively answerable capacity to distance oneself from private inclination and judge what fits a whole; it therefore has cognitive significance even though it cannot supply a conceptually demonstrative rule.

**Grounds:** In Gracián, taste is a cultivated ideal of social humanity. A person can reject what he likes because it is in bad taste. Judgments of taste claim the

assent that others *ought* to give rather than merely reporting what most people happen to prefer. Unlike fashion, taste can oppose prevailing custom, and it often works through a negative sensitivity to what is unfitting.

**Warrant:** A judgment that transcends the judge's private desire, discriminates a case in relation to a whole, and makes a normative claim to ideal agreement is more than a report of sensation.

**Backing:** Gracián's social ideal, the humanist tradition, and the phenomenology of ordinary taste judgments.

**Qualifier:** Taste does not yield universal propositions or compel agreement by proof; its ideal community is normative, not an empirical majority.

**Rebuttal:** The standards of taste may simply encode class prejudice. Gadamer's reconstruction shows the form of the validity claim but does not by itself prove that any inherited canon deserves authority.

**Hidden premises:** Nonconceptual discrimination can be rationally assessable; an orientation to the whole is epistemically relevant; normative agreement is distinguishable from social conformity.

### §1.10 Application is productive, not merely reproductive

**Pages:** pp. 35–37.

**Role:** Generalizes taste and judgment into a model of how universals acquire concrete meaning.

**Claim:** Because laws and norms underdetermine their concrete cases, tasteful and tactful judgment does not merely reproduce a universal; it supplements, corrects, and develops the universal through application.

**Grounds:** Legal and moral norms are incomplete apart from the situations in which they are realized. Judicial practice can develop law. Exemplary cases illuminate more than a list of instances because they exhibit how a norm becomes determinate. Taste may complete moral judgment without serving as the foundation of morality.

**Warrant:** When the content of a general norm cannot be specified independently of relevant cases, responsible application feeds back into the norm's practical meaning.

**Backing:** Jurisprudence, moral deliberation, the role of examples, and the preceding analyses of judgment and taste.

**Qualifier:** Application is constrained by the norm and the matter; it is not discretionary invention. Gadamer's statement that all moral decisions require taste is best read as a claim about concretization, not about the ultimate ground of obligation.

**Rebuttal:** Productive application may appear to authorize judges to rewrite norms. On Gadamer's behalf, the analysis replies that application is already unavoidable; the real question is whether it is disciplined by the norm, precedent, the case, and the relevant common good.

**Hidden premises:** Universals possess an open texture; concrete realization can disclose rather than corrupt meaning; interpretive judgment can be creative and constrained at once.

### *Who can ask someone else to agree about taste?*

Two people disagree about whether an addition suits an old building. Each can point to features the other has overlooked. Each also knows that listing the features will never compel agreement. What entitles either person to go on giving reasons once both have acknowledged that their tastes differ?

Gadamer turns to Kant for an account of that demand. The humanist discussion at §§1.8–1.10 gave taste a place in judgments about how things fit together in a shared world. Kant can explain why a judgment of taste makes a demand on someone else even in the absence of a rule that would decide the case. Gadamer takes that achievement seriously. His difficulty concerns its price. Once the ground of the demand has been located in the subject, what can the judgment tell either person about the building? In §§1.11–1.13, follow Kant's explanation of the demand before deciding whether it can also answer Gadamer's question about the object.

## §1.11 Kant's restriction of taste narrows what can count as knowledge

**Pages:** pp. 37–39.

**Role:** Concludes the humanist genealogy and sets up the internal critique of Kantian aesthetics.

**Claim:** By restricting taste to subjective aesthetic universality and recognizing knowledge chiefly in theoretical and practical reason, Kant makes the older humanist capacities epistemically invisible and leaves the human sciences exposed to the natural-scientific model.

**Grounds:** The earlier tradition lets taste, judgment, and common sense operate across social, moral, legal, historical, and aesthetic matters. Kant confines their cognitively relevant content and separates the validity of taste from knowledge of the object. What remains outside demonstrative knowledge tends to be redescribed as feeling.

**Warrant:** A philosophical framework that identifies knowledge with conceptual determination cannot recognize the truth claims of historically

formed, non-rule-exhaustive judgment; disciplines relying on such judgment will then seek legitimacy from natural method or retreat into subjectivity.

**Backing:** The foregoing conceptual history and the nineteenth-century methodological predicament with which the chapter began.

**Qualifier:** Gadamer grants the legitimacy and precision of Kant's transcendental question. The objection concerns its historical consequences and its insufficiency as a general philosophy of art and humanistic knowing.

**Rebuttal:** Kant's restriction may be necessary to protect objective science and autonomous morality. Gadamer's reply is not to relax their standards but to deny that they exhaust the forms in which truth can be experienced.

**Hidden premises:** Kant's settlement significantly shaped the later epistemic self-understanding of the human sciences; excluded forms of judgment are genuinely cognitive; expanding knowledge need not blur distinctions among fields.

### §1.12 Kant secures the validity of taste at the price of objective knowledge

**Pages:** pp. 39–41.

**Role:** Begins an immanent reconstruction: Kant is first credited, then delimited.

**Claim:** Kant successfully explains why a judgment of taste can claim nonempirical universality without proof, but because he grounds that validity in the subject's free play of cognitive faculties, the judgment yields no knowledge of the beautiful object and cannot serve as a philosophy of art.

**Grounds:** Taste is neither a report of sensory liking nor a conceptually demonstrable judgment. Its claim rests on the universal communicability of the harmonious play of imagination and understanding. The representation of the object is characterized by its suitability to the subject's cognitive faculties, while common sense becomes a formal condition of communicability and substantive content enters only secondarily.

**Warrant:** If a judgment's warrant consists exclusively in a universally shareable subjective state, then its validity does not yet establish what the object is or what truth it presents.

**Backing:** Kant's transcendental analysis and the broader humanist senses of common sense, judgment, and taste recovered in the preceding section.

**Qualifier:** The achievement is real: Kant avoids both sensualism and rationalist rule-aesthetics and explains reflective rather than determinant judgment. Gadamer challenges the extrapolation from this limited task.

**Rebuttal:** Reflective judgment may disclose purposiveness in the object without determining it conceptually. This is a serious Kantian reply: it weakens

any simple equation of "subjective" with "noncognitive," though it does not by itself supply the ontology of the work that Gadamer seeks.

**Hidden premises:** Knowledge of art requires answerability to the work and not only intersubjective communicability; a theory of aesthetic judgment is not automatically a theory of art; object-directed but nonconceptual cognition is possible.

### §1.13 Kant's own account of art exceeds pure taste but still stops short of artistic truth

**Pages:** pp. 41–51.

**Role:** Uses tensions within Kant to show both the inadequacy of pure formalism and the limited function of genius.

**Claim:** Kant's discussions of dependent beauty, the ideal of beauty, aesthetic ideas, and genius already show that art involves concept, purpose, moral significance, and a definite yet inexhaustible address; nevertheless, his system retains the subjectivization of aesthetics and does not recognize an autonomous truth claim or mode of being of the artwork.

**Grounds:** Dependent beauty is legitimately judged in relation to a concept or end; such restrictions may be morally justified and need not abolish imaginative freedom. Only the human figure admits an ideal of beauty because it can embody the moral. Natural beauty offers an indeterminate hint of moral significance, whereas art speaks more definitely while still setting thought in motion beyond determinate concepts. Aesthetic ideas expand conceptual understanding. Nature gives art its rule through genius; the aesthetic ideas of genius make free play communicable, while taste disciplines and judges the work. Yet genius is introduced as the complement needed to make art appear like nature within a critique whose governing problem remains subjective judgment and natural teleology.

**Warrant:** If meaningful content and purposive form can be constitutive of successful art without reducing the work to a concept, then pure free beauty cannot be the exhaustive model; but an account of the subjective conditions of judging such work still does not explain the work's own being or truth.

**Backing:** Kant's distinctions between free and dependent beauty, natural and artistic beauty, aesthetic ideas and determinate concepts, taste and genius.

**Qualifier:** Gadamer's interpretation deliberately presses beyond Kant's explicit conclusions. Kant provides resources for resisting formalism, and genius has a legitimate transcendental role; the failure arises when that analysis is treated as the whole philosophy of art.

**Rebuttal:** A Kantian can argue that reflective cognition already gives an object-sensitive account without constitutive knowledge. This is the strongest

internal objection: Gadamer must show why purposiveness and aesthetic ideas are insufficient to account for the work's binding truth rather than merely asserting that they remain subjective.

**Hidden premises:** Art has a definite claim or address irreducible to occasioning mental free play; inexhaustibility is compatible with object-directed constraint; a philosophy of art must explain ontology as well as judgment.

### §1.14 The post-Kantian elevation of genius prepares the aesthetics of *Erlebnis*

**Pages:** pp. 51–64.

**Role:** Traces the route from Kant's limited category to the modern identification of art with lived experience.

**Claim:** Once Kant's teleology of nature recedes, genius rather than taste becomes foundational, and the modern concept of *Erlebnis* comes to define both artistic creation and aesthetic reception; this is a historically powerful but not self-evidently universal model of art.

**Grounds:** Schiller and post-Kantian idealism privilege creative production and criticize taste as leveling. Nineteenth-century philosophy increasingly treats life, originality, and immediate experience as the source of art. The noun *Erlebnis* emerges late despite the older verb *erleben* and combines two senses: immediate lived-through presence and a lasting yield that acquires significance within a life. Goethean biography, Rousseau, Romanticism, and resistance to industrial modernity form its semantic field. Dilthey and Husserl improve on atomistic sensation by treating experience as an intentional, meaningful unity; in Simmel's "adventure," the event is set apart yet related to the whole of life. Aesthetic experience appears to exemplify this structure, and *Erlebniskunst*, "art based on experience" (p. 64), is consequently treated as art *as such*.

**Warrant:** When art is grounded in original production and meaningful immediacy rather than public taste, the exceptional lived unity of production and reception becomes a plausible paradigm; but a paradigm generated by a particular modern history requires testing against art outside that history.

**Backing:** The conceptual history of genius and *Erlebnis*; Dilthey's and Husserl's accounts of meaningful experience; Natorp, Bergson, and Simmel on the part–whole structure of life.

**Qualifier:** Gadamer credits *Erlebnis* with overcoming psychophysical atomism and recognizes it as a genuine dimension of modern art. His historical word study does not by itself refute the phenomenon.

**Rebuttal:** The reality of lived experience predates the noun, and later reception may disclose an experiential truth in earlier art. Therefore the

genealogy supports contingency only when joined to the historical counterexamples in §1.15.

**Hidden premises:** Conceptual innovation can reveal a changed mode of consciousness rather than merely name a timeless fact; the categories used to define art must accommodate the full historical range of acknowledged artworks; meaningful unity does not yet explain its own relation to a larger historical whole.

### §1.15 Premodern and non-*Erlebnis* art refute the universality of modern aesthetic consciousness

**Pages:** pp. 64–74.

**Role:** Supplies the historical counterexamples needed to turn genealogy into substantive critique.

**Claim:** The identification of *Erlebniskunst* with art as such, the superiority of spontaneous symbol over intentional allegory, and the absolute separation of aesthetic from mythical consciousness are historically specific constructions, not universal structures of art.

**Grounds:** Much pre-Goethean art is formed through fixed forms and modes of statement, rhetoric, dogmatic traditions, and religious or secular functions rather than the artist's sovereign lived experience. Symbol and allegory both present one thing through another; their descriptive difference became a value hierarchy only in the modern aesthetics of genius. Kant's distinction between symbolic and schematic presentation supplies an important conceptual resource, but not yet the symbol–allegory hierarchy; Goethe and his circle begin the aesthetic opposition, Schelling and Solger universalize the symbolic conception of art, and nineteenth-century classicism completes allegory's devaluation. Yet Romanticism itself permits positive allegory, and the recovery of Baroque art demonstrates the artistic power of forms once dismissed by that hierarchy. Whole art cultures exist without the modern separation of aesthetic from religious or mythical consciousness.

**Warrant:** A purported essence of art is inadequate if recognized, historically central artworks depend on features that the definition classifies as aesthetically inferior or extrinsic.

**Backing:** The histories of rhetoric, religious and Baroque art, iconography, allegory, and Romantic aesthetics.

**Qualifier:** Gadamer does not erase the distinction between symbol and allegory or deny the value of *Erlebniskunst*. He denies their conversion into a timeless criterion of artistic legitimacy.

**Rebuttal:** A modern spectator may experience premodern works aesthetically regardless of their origin. Gadamer's reply is that reception detached from

original function can reveal something, but cannot determine the work's whole mode of being without begging the question in favor of aesthetic consciousness.

**Hidden premises:** Original function and inherited convention can be constitutive of artistic identity; the accepted history of art constrains philosophical definitions; later reception does not possess automatic ontological priority.

### §1.16 Aesthetic differentiation gains autonomy by deworlding the work

**Pages:** pp. 74–81.

**Role:** Converts the historical critique into a genealogy and cultural-ontological diagnosis of modern aesthetic consciousness.

**Claim:** Schillerian aesthetic cultivation and the sovereignty of "aesthetic differentiation" abstract the work from the world, function, content, and truth it presents; the result is a universal but indeterminate aesthetic culture in which both work and artist lose a stable place.

**Grounds:** Kant's methodological abstraction becomes, in Schiller, the substantive opposition of appearance and reality, play and seriousness, aesthetic and practical life. Education *by* art shifts toward education *to* art. Aesthetic consciousness isolates the "pure work" by disregarding religious, civic, historical, and practical relations, assembling all traditions simultaneously in museum, library, theater, concert, and tourism. Taste still selected by content, whereas sovereign aesthetic consciousness suspends all substantive standards. The artist becomes the free, socially displaced bohemian and can be asked to serve as secular savior. Gadamer interprets aesthetic consciousness through Hegel's category of alienated spirit.

**Warrant:** An abstraction introduced to isolate one aspect of experience cannot be turned into the ontology of the object if the bracketed relations help constitute what that object is and what claim it makes.

**Backing:** The phenomenological requirement that a theory preserve aesthetic experience's claim to genuine truth; the internal relation of work and world; and Hegel's category of alienated spirit, selectively appropriated.

**Qualifier:** Aesthetic differentiation performs the positive service of allowing the work to emerge "in its own right" and protecting it from reduction to use or doctrine. The error is its sovereignty, not every act of focused attention.

**Rebuttal:** Museums and cross-historical collections can disclose formal relations otherwise invisible. On Gadamer's behalf, the analysis grants this while maintaining that recontextualization yields a new encounter rather than a context-free work.

**Hidden premises:** Function, content, and world are sometimes internally related to work identity; cultural simultaneity differs from living historical integration; autonomous attention can become distortive when treated as exhaustive.

### *Trying to hear a melody disappear*

Try to hear a familiar melody as a succession of pitches stripped of every anticipation of the next note. To the extent that the exercise succeeds, the object of attention changes. One hears a sequence of sounds. The very relation one had hoped to examine, the one that made the phrase hang unfinished until the last note, has slipped away.

The example asks something different of the reader than the genealogy of taste. Showing when a way of looking at art arose can loosen its claim to be self-evident (§§1.14–1.16). Here the reader can try doing what the theory requires and ask whether the work survives the operation. The result gives §1.19 a reason to count understanding as internal to artistic perception. Recognizing a melody is already an achievement. Gadamer still has to explain what can be *learned* in the encounter.

## §1.17 Pure aesthetic perception and the form–content split are abstractions

**Pages:** pp. 81–84.

**Role:** Provides the phenomenological warrant for rejecting aesthetic differentiation at the level of perception.

**Claim:** There is no epistemically innocent "pure seeing" or "pure hearing" of aesthetic form from which recognition, significance, and content are later added; perception of an artwork is already an articulated understanding-as.

**Grounds:** The idea of isolating pure sensation requires subtracting the very recognition by which something is perceived as a picture, text, melody, gesture, or work. Gadamer appeals to Aristotle's observation that *aisthesis* tends toward a universal: we perceive the sensory particular in relation to something universal, such as perceiving the white phenomenon *as* a human being. He appeals also to Gestalt psychology's evidence that perception organizes wholes rather than accumulating sensory atoms. Even what Richard Hamann calls "significant in itself" and nonrepresentational form are experienced through meaningful differentiations. Kant's separation of pure form from the purely sensuous attractiveness of the material becomes dogmatic when made into the whole structure of art.

**Warrant:** If removing recognition and meaningful articulation also removes the identity of what is perceived, then those features are constitutive of the perceptual object, not contaminating additions.

**Backing:** Phenomenology, Aristotle, Gestalt psychology, and Heidegger's analysis of understanding and interpretation.

**Qualifier:** Aesthetic attention can dwell on color, rhythm, material, or form, and artistic meaning can remain indefinite and nonpropositional. The claim is that such attention is still structured and intelligible.

**Rebuttal:** Abstract painting or "absolute" music might seem to instantiate pure form. Gadamer replies that even absolute music must be understood and so stands in an indefinite relation to meaning (p. 83), and that an abstract motif still forms a unity of meaning (p. 84). The analysis adds that their identities still depend on organized relations, genre expectations, temporal articulation, and the distinction between significant form and noise.

**Hidden premises:** Perception is conceptually or hermeneutically structured without necessarily being propositional; artwork identity is inseparable from intelligible articulation; phenomenological indispensability indicates ontological significance.

### §1.18 Unconscious genius and isolated *Erlebnis* cannot explain the work's binding identity

**Pages:** pp. 84–88.

**Role:** Develops an immanent reductio and places aesthetic experience within historical continuity.

**Claim:** Romantic unconscious genius cannot ground the artwork, but transferring genius to the reader or treating creation and reception as discontinuous *Erlebnisse* dissolves the work's identity, completion, and standards of better and worse understanding; aesthetic discontinuity must instead be situated within the historical-hermeneutic continuity of self-understanding.

**Grounds:** Actual artists work through craft, correction, technique, and reflection. Yet Kant's distinction between art, craft, and the potboiler still poses a real problem about what makes a work binding. Valéry holds that the work is not intrinsically completable; Gadamer then argues conditionally that, if this is so, production is arbitrarily broken off and there can be no obligatory criterion of reception. If every reception completes a new work, there is no shared object to constrain interpretation. Lukács supplies the conception of the work as an empty nodal point and Becker the formulation of a momentary work; Gadamer draws the consequence that the work and experiencer dissolve into an absolute series of discontinuous points. Kierkegaard's critique of aesthetic immediacy

shows that such immediacy undermines the unity it presupposes. Experiences of rupture, opacity, nature, and myth nevertheless occur within a continuing finite life and history.

**Warrant:** An adequate theory of art must explain how a work remains identifiable through production and plural reception, why some interpretations are more fitting than others, and how experience belongs to a temporally continuous subject. A theory that makes all completions equivalent cannot explain art's binding character.

**Backing:** Ordinary and artistic practices that distinguish work from craft and better from worse reception; Kant's still-valid transcendental problem of artistic exemplarity; Kierkegaard's critique of immediacy; and the phenomenology of temporal self-understanding.

**Qualifier:** Authorial intention does not fix the work exhaustively; works are genuinely inexhaustible and reception can disclose new meaning. Continuity need not eliminate rupture.

**Rebuttal:** Social practice, genre, material form, and interpretive communities might sustain identity without a metaphysics of the work. This is the practice-based account of work identity set out under Third options, item 3, and in fact can complement, rather than simply oppose, Gadamer's later ontology.

**Hidden premises:** Inexhaustibility differs from indeterminacy; continuity is a necessary condition of intelligible transformation; the work has normative identity beyond both maker and reader.

### §1.19 Artistic experience is finite, binding knowledge and a preparatory hermeneutical case for the human sciences

**Pages:** pp. 88–91.

**Role:** States the chapter's constructive conclusion and opens the ontology developed in the following chapters.

**Claim:** Encountering art is a genuine experience of knowledge: the work discloses a world, mediates self-understanding through otherness, addresses and changes the participant, and remains an unfinished, finite truth-event. Aesthetics must therefore ask the mode of being of this experience, and the question of art can prepare the way for the question of truth in the human sciences.

**Grounds:** In artistic *Erfahrung* one encounters not merely one's own mental state but the unity and integrity of an other. The work presents a world and lets the participant recognize something about that world and about oneself. Experience integrates what confronts us into a historical continuity and changes the experiencer. Hegel recognizes art's mediation of historical worldviews but finally absorbs its truth into the infinite concept. Heidegger's

analysis of finitude and temporality permits Gadamer to retain mediation without claiming final conceptual completion.

**Warrant:** An encounter that preserves the unity of its other, discloses a world and self-understanding, has a binding quality, and transforms the participant has cognitive force even if its truth is neither demonstrative nor exhaustively propositional.

**Backing:** The cumulative critique of aesthetic consciousness; Hegel's move beyond subjective mind; Heidegger's finite temporality; the experience of historically effective works.

**Qualifier:** The conclusion is expressly prospective. Artistic knowledge is distinctive, plural, finite, and nonfinal; Chapter 1 does not yet explain the precise ontology that makes the truth-event possible.

**Rebuttal:** Propaganda, kitsch, religious conversion, and entertainment can also transform recipients. Transformation alone therefore cannot warrant truth. Gadamer needs the further constraints of work-integrity, disclosure of a shared matter, resistance, interpretive accountability, and the possibility of correction: constraints developed more fully later but not demonstrated in full here.

**Hidden premises:** World-disclosure can be epistemic; the integrity of the work entails sufficient resistance and interpretive accountability to discriminate insight from projection; self-understanding is corrigible through encounter; a structure illuminated by art can be transferred, with field-specific adjustments, to the human sciences.

## Status of each argument

Gadamer frequently reconstructs another thinker's position before appropriating, revising, or rejecting it. Treating every sentence as his own premise would therefore produce a misleading map.

| Position or concept | Status in Gadamer's argument | Function in the argument |
|---|---|---|
| Mill's inductive moral science | Criticized as an exhaustive model | Initial foil/data for §1.1 |
| Helmholtz's tact and unconscious induction | Observation retained; explanation rejected | Data for the practice-adequacy warrant |
| Dilthey's autonomy of the human sciences | Aim retained; method-centered grounding criticized | Transitional foil |

| Position or concept | Status in Gadamer's argument | Function in the argument |
|---|---|---|
| Hegelian *Bildung* | Selectively appropriated; absolute completion rejected | Backing for formed openness and historical mediation |
| Vico's *sensus communis* and *topica* | Substantially retrieved | Backing for practical-historical truth |
| Oetinger's whole-sense | Hermeneutical application and part–whole structure selectively retained; spiritualistic and theological grounding qualified rather than adopted | Counter-tradition backing |
| Kant's theory of taste | Transcendental achievement affirmed; epistemic and ontological restriction criticized | Major internal interlocutor |
| Kantian genius | Legitimate complement within Kant; inadequate as ontology of art | Bridge to post-Kantian critique |
| Dilthey's and Husserl's meaningful *Erlebnis* | Advance over atomism; elevation to essence of art rejected | Qualified backing and target |
| Symbol over allegory | Reconstructed as a historical hierarchy, not endorsed as timeless | Genealogical data |
| Schillerian aesthetic education | Historic achievement acknowledged; separation of art and reality criticized | Data for aesthetic differentiation |
| Hegel's art as mediation of truth | Retained against subjective aesthetics; infinite conceptual sublation rejected | Backing for the positive thesis |
| Heideggerian finitude and understanding-as | Affirmatively appropriated | Backing for finite truth-event and meaningful perception |

## Backing and qualifiers in this chapter

The layout of an entry is explained in *How to use this book*. Three features of the layout do particular work in this chapter.

The first is backing. No single field authorizes the chapter's warrants; they draw in turn on Aristotelian practical philosophy, humanist rhetoric, legal application, the history of concepts, phenomenology, Gestalt psychology, and

Heidegger's analysis of understanding. Ask of each warrant which field carries it, because conceptual history can show that a category is contingent, and only practice or the phenomenon can show that it fails.

The second is the qualifier. Gadamer repeatedly grants part of an opponent's case before restricting it: the human sciences do use induction; Kant's transcendental question is legitimate; aesthetic differentiation does let the work stand out. The qualifier records how much is conceded; the rebuttal records what Gadamer, or the analysis, still has to answer. A claim read without its qualifier will usually come out stronger than Gadamer made it. The chapter is preparatory, so a qualifier that calls a conclusion programmatic states its scope, not a flaw.

The third is nesting. A proposition that is the claim of one entry becomes a ground of another: that perception is always understanding-as is the claim of §1.17, a ground of the chapter's master map, and backing for §1.19. Many historical reconstructions are conditional premises in an immanent critique, not positions Gadamer holds; §1.18 borrows Valéry's premise that no work is intrinsically completable in order to reject its consequence. A thinker Gadamer discusses is therefore not automatically a rebuttal, nor a position he reconstructs automatically his. The preceding status table records, position by position, what is retained and what rejected.

## How the arguments depend on one another

The maps are nested rather than merely serial. The principal dependencies are:

1. §§1.1–1.2 create an **explanatory deficit**: method-centered epistemology cannot explain the human sciences' actual judgments.

2. §§1.3–1.10 supply a **positive historical vocabulary** for the missing capacities: formed openness, communal-practical reason, judgment, taste, and application.

3. §§1.11–1.13 explain how **Kant's settlement makes that vocabulary epistemically marginal** while also yielding resources that exceed pure taste.

4. §§1.14–1.15 show that **genius and *Erlebnis* are historical developments**, then test them against premodern and allegorical art.

5. §§1.16–1.18 add the decisive **phenomenological and immanent critiques**: sovereign aesthetic abstraction deworlds the work, pure perception cannot isolate meaningless form, and reader-genius cannot preserve work identity or interpretive accountability.

6. §1.19 converts the accumulated negative result into a **programmatic positive claim**: art must be understood as a finite hermeneutic event of knowledge.

The dependence matters. The genealogy in §§1.12–1.15 does not prove the conclusion by itself. It defeats the self-evidence of the categories under criticism. The positive inference depends more heavily on the practice-based and phenomenological warrants in §§1.16–1.19.

INSTITUTE ASSESSMENT

## Where the argument is strong and where it is exposed

The decisive issue is what the critique of aesthetic abstraction licenses. §§1.8–1.10 show why judgment matters, and §§1.16–1.18 make a work difficult to detach from understanding. The positive claim at §1.19 asks for something further from the encounter. In assessing it, distinguish a criticism that defeats an exclusive account of knowledge from an argument establishing artistic truth.

### Strongest inferences

1. **Rules do not completely determine their own application.** The regress problem and the need to identify relevant descriptions make §1.8 difficult to avoid. An algorithmic reply would relocate rather than eliminate judgment unless it could noncircularly determine which descriptions, purposes, and exceptions count.

2. **A theory of humanistic inquiry must explain tacit discrimination, not rename it.** Gadamer's criticism of Helmholtz and Dilthey is strong as an explanatory challenge. Calling tact unconscious induction does not show how it distinguishes a historically significant difference from an incidental one.

3. **A theory of art cannot universalize a historically narrow corpus without argument.** Premodern, liturgical, rhetorical, commissioned, and allegorical works are genuine counterexamples to any definition that makes sovereign expression or isolated *Erlebnis* necessary for art.

4. **Pure perception cannot preserve the identity of the artwork it purifies.** Once recognition of melody, image, text, gesture, genre, or relation is removed, the intended aesthetic object disappears with it. This supports the constitutive role of understanding.

5. **Inexhaustibility does not entail interpretive equivalence.** Gadamer correctly identifies a problem for radical reader-genius: if there is

no persisting work that can resist an interpretation, "completion" becomes indistinguishable from replacement.

6. **Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment is not automatically a complete ontology of art.** Even a successful account of the conditions under which a judgment claims universal communicability leaves open what kind of being a work has and whether it can disclose truth.

## Inferential vulnerabilities and unresolved objections

1. **Irreducibility does not establish reliability.** Showing that judgment cannot be replaced by rules proves the necessity of judgment, not that a particular formed judgment is true. Gadamer still needs standards for distinguishing tact from bias, prejudice, conformity, or cultivated error.

2. **Genealogy does not equal refutation.** The late emergence of *Erlebnis* or the historical origin of the symbol–allegory hierarchy makes those categories contingent, but a contingent category can still identify a real structure. Gadamer's case succeeds only where genealogy is paired with counterexamples and phenomenological inadequacy.

3. **Community is epistemically ambivalent.** *Sensus communis* can preserve practical wisdom, but it can also transmit ideology, exclusion, domination, and prejudice. The chapter offers no sufficient social epistemology of distorted common sense.

4. **Taste risks circular elitism.** "Good taste" is explained by sensitivity to what the well-formed judge recognizes, while formation may in turn be identified by possession of good taste. Without public criteria of correction, the account can ratify class-coded canons.

5. **Kant may be under-read.** Reflective judgment, purposiveness without a determinate purpose, and aesthetic ideas may support a nonconceptual but object-responsive cognition. If so, the transition from subjective grounding to absence of objective significance is too quick.

6. **The causal burden placed on Kant is heavy.** Kant's restriction helps explain later aesthetic subjectivism, but institutional change, secularization, markets, Romantic politics, museums, and changes in artistic labor also shape aesthetic consciousness. The genealogy is philosophically selective.

7. **Original function is not always ontologically decisive.** A work can acquire meanings and uses beyond its production context. Correcting aesthetic decontextualization must not turn original context into an exhaustive authority over later reception.

8. **Meaningfulness does not yet equal truth.** That perception is structured, that a work presents a world, or that an encounter transforms

the recipient establishes intelligibility and force. It does not alone establish correctness. Propaganda can be coherent, world-disclosing, resistant, and transformative.

9. **"Binding force" needs criteria.** Gadamer invokes the work's integrity and the binding quality of artistic experience; this analysis reconstructs resistance and interpretive accountability as needed constraints. Chapter 1 does not yet specify how these distinguish disclosure from projection or responsible plurality from error.

10. **Continuity may be overprivileged.** Discontinuity can fragment a life, but rupture, trauma, conversion, avant-garde estrangement, and opacity can also disclose realities that a narrative of continuity suppresses.

11. **Art's structure may not transfer unchanged to every human science.** Toulmin's own emphasis on field-dependent warrants is relevant here. History, law, philology, sociology, and theology share interpretive features but differ in evidence, rebuttals, institutional checks, and the kinds of claims they can warrant.

12. **The positive thesis is delayed rather than fully proved.** Chapter 1 clears the ground and identifies desiderata for an ontology of art. The decisive account of play, presentation, work, mediation, and interpretation comes later, so the chapter's conclusion is intentionally promissory.

### Reconstructed strongest version

The most defensible version of Gadamer's argument is **anti-monopolistic rather than anti-methodological**:

> *Explicit method is necessary for criticism, evidence control, replication where applicable, and exposure of error, but it cannot by itself identify historical significance, determine the relevant description of a case, apply universals, or explain how works address interpreters. Historically formed judgment is therefore a necessary component of humanistic knowledge. Its claims become epistemically responsible when disciplined by evidence, the resistance of the object, alternative interpretations, historical context, public reasons, and the possibility of correction.*

This reconstruction retains Gadamer's central achievement while supplying constraints that Chapter 1 often leaves implicit.

## Third options

The third options below are ours, not Gadamer's. Each proposes a position between the poles of an opposition the chapter treats.

### 1. Layered epistemic pluralism

Instead of choosing between natural-scientific method and humanist tact, treat them as different layers of inquiry. Methods test provenance, chronology, causal claims, textual transmission, and empirical regularities. Formed judgment determines relevance, significance, application, and the relation of part to whole. Neither layer is sufficient alone, and each can expose the other's failures.

### 2. Kantian–hermeneutic synthesis

Rather than treating Kantian reflective judgment and Gadamerian truth as mutually exclusive, read reflective judgment as a preliminary model of nonconceptual, object-responsive cognition, then add Gadamer's account of historical mediation, work identity, and application. On this view, Gadamer corrects and ontologizes Kant rather than simply escaping subjectivization.

### 3. Practice-based work identity

Between authorial sovereignty and reader-genius lies a social-practice account: material form, genre, production history, performance traditions, interpretive institutions, and recurrent critical contestation jointly stabilize a work without fixing one final meaning. This supplies concrete mechanisms for the "binding" identity Gadamer invokes.

### 4. Critical *sensus communis*

Community should be treated neither as an automatic source of truth nor merely as prejudice. Shared judgment can be provisionally authoritative when it is open to excluded standpoints, counterevidence, historical self-critique, and revision. This turns *sensus communis* from inherited consensus into an accountable practice of common-world formation.

## If the central framing is wrong

If Kantian aesthetics already provides adequate object-directed knowledge, or if artistic meaning can be fully explained as a set of subjective but intersubjectively regulated responses, the whole analysis changes in three ways:

1. Gadamer's genealogy would remain a valuable history of aesthetic categories but would no longer compel an ontology of artistic truth.
2. The humanist concepts would describe cultivated interpretive competences without establishing an independent mode of knowledge.
3. Art could still function as a powerful model of meaning-making and self-transformation, but its truth would need to be reconstructed in response-

dependent, intersubjective, or pragmatic terms rather than as Gadamerian disclosure of a matter.

Conversely, if Gadamer is right that a work can correct the interpreter and disclose aspects of a shared world that are not reducible to response, then subjectivist aesthetics cannot account for the very normativity it presupposes. The decisive issue is therefore not whether art affects us, but whether and how the work can make a corrigible claim about something beyond the occurrence of that effect.

## Overall judgment

Chapter 1 earns a place for cultivated judgment within an account of knowledge. A rule needs an interpreter able to recognize a relevant case, and an artwork needs capacities of understanding even to be perceived as the work it is. These arguments give the humanist vocabulary a continuing explanatory role.

The historical criticism of aesthetics has a narrower success. It can expose a category's contingency and identify works that the category handles poorly. Whether Kant's resources can answer more of Gadamer's question remains disputable. Our strongest reason to follow the chapter is the account of what aesthetic abstraction loses in the encounter itself.

The positive thesis at §1.19 therefore has a precise task ahead of it. Art must make a claim whose force can be attributed to what is disclosed in the work.

### *The work that answers back*

The reader of §1.18 can object to an account that leaves the work entirely in the recipient's hands. If we could complete a work however we pleased, on what grounds could anyone recognize a misreading? Gadamer's positive claim in §1.19 gives the work that power of resistance. At the close he says the inquiry into its mode of being opens a dimension in which "the question of truth is raised in a new way" (p. 91). He has raised a question. The integrity of the work explains how an encounter can upset an expectation. We still need to understand why that upset should count as learning something true.

Take this difficulty into the discussion of play. Chapter 2 gives the work a history longer than any particular performance (§2.5) and makes recognition a way of learning something about what is presented (§2.6). A telling disagreement can now arise between two spectators who both grant that a performance has changed them. One may ask the other to point to something in the work that the performance has enabled them both to see. That request gives the question of artistic truth a subject matter on which to turn.

# Continue the argument

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