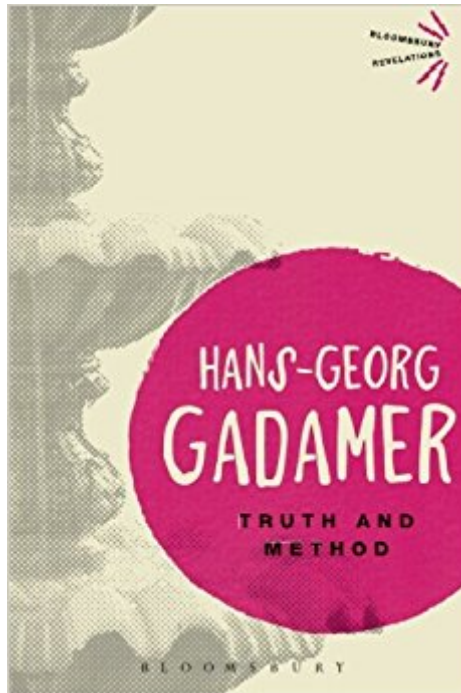




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# Truth And Method (Bloomsbury Revelations)



## Synopsis

Truth and Method is a landmark work of 20th century thought which established Hans Georg-Gadamer as one of the most important philosophical voices of the 20th Century. In this book, Gadamer established the field of 'philosophical hermeneutics': exploring the nature of knowledge, the book rejected traditional quasi-scientific approaches to establishing cultural meaning that were prevalent after the war. In arguing the 'truth' and 'method' acted in opposition to each other, Gadamer examined the ways in which historical and cultural circumstance fundamentally influenced human understanding. It was an approach that would become hugely influential in the humanities and social sciences and remains so to this day in the work of Jurgen Habermas and many others.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Truth and Method is a landmark work of 20th century thought...[it] is one of the two or three most important works of this century on the philosophy of humanistic studies...Truth and Method reinforces an insight that is threatened with oblivion in our swiftly changing age...The volume is Gadamer's magnum opus, the comprehensive and integrated statement of his rich and penetrating reflections. The translators have rendered Truth and Method with accuracy, which helps contemporary American readers understand Gadamer more fully. The material is powerful...The translation is readable and often powerfully eloquent as Gadamer's German, providing a bridge, not an obstacle, between Gadamer and his readers."

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Hans-Georg Gadamer's magnum opus, in which he explores the historical roots of human understanding.

Truth and Method is one of the most important works of philosophy of the 20th century, and this revised translation by Weinsheimer and Marshall is the authoritative translation. I give both the work and the translation a 5+ star rating. This edition, however, has mistakes all over the place; they obviously scanned the pages of the Continuum edition and did little to no proof reading. (For example, key German terms are misspelled.) The font is also horrible and the line spacing is weird; and there are no margins to write in. Spend the money and buy the Continuum edition.

a must read.

This is one of those great moments where a great student follows his master (Heidegger) yet gives us a new product and not simply a repetition of his master. In short, for Gadamer language is the horizon of being. As Kant was wrong to seek a thing-in-itself, so we also should beware of a "meaning-in-itself." Gadamer begins and ends his work on a strange note: the aesthetics and interpretation of art. It is not that art determines how we interpret text, but art allows Gadamer to illustrate (no pun intended) the tension given that great works of art are considered "timeless," yet they were produced in historical, finite circumstances. This tension points to the horizon, a key Gadamerian term. Every experience has implicit horizons of before and after and finally fuses with the continuum of experiences present in the before and after to form a unified flow of experience (246). Def. horizon = not a rigid boundary but something that moves with and invites one to advance further. Everything that is given as existent is given in terms of a world and hence brings the world horizon with it. As a horizon phenomenon "world" is essentially related to subjectivity, and this relation means also that it exists in transiency. Hermeneutical circle: possesses an ontological positive significance. We have already fore-projected before we even approach the text. This creates an openness which situates our meaning with other meanings. Understanding is a participation in the event of tradition and not so much a subjective act (302). Horizons are temporally-conditioned. Time is not a gulf to be crossed by a supportive ground in which the present is rooted. We cannot stand outside of our situation. "All self-knowledge arises from what is historically pre-given, what Hegel calls

“substance” (313). Horizon: every finite present has its limitations. Every situation represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Horizons move with us. When we understand something, we fuse the horizons between text and interpreter. Fusion of horizons: We regain concepts of a historical past in such a way that it also includes our own comprehension of them (382). This will go down as one of those truly great books. Ground-breaking works. It is not super-hard to read simply because it is well-written. However, he does presuppose a good bit of Hegel and Heidegger, so keep that in mind. A note about the reprint: I have the Bloomsbury edition and the text is fine. Shucks, I even got mine used. Yes, the spine will crease when you read it, but that's true of most books. The spine, though, will not break.

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) was a German philosopher, who wrote other books such as *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, *Truth and Method*, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age*, *Heidegger's Ways*, etc. [NOTE: page numbers below refer to the 1974 551-page hardcover edition.] He wrote in the Introduction of this 1960 book, “These studies are concerned with the problem of hermeneutics. The phenomenon of understanding and of the correct interpretation of what has been understood is not just a problem proper to the methodology of the human sciences. For a long time, there has been a theological and a legal hermeneutics, which were not so much theoretical as related to, and an aid to, the practical activity of the judge or clergyman who had completed his theoretical training. From its historical origin, the problem of hermeneutics goes beyond the limits that the concept of method sets to modern science. The understanding and the interpretation of texts is not merely a concern of science, but is obviously part of the total human experience of the world. The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically not a problem of method at all. In understanding tradition not only are texts understood, but insights are gained and truths acknowledged.” (Pg. xi) He continues, “The hermeneutics developed here is not, therefore, a methodology of the human sciences, but an attempt to understand what the human sciences truly are, beyond their methodological self-consciousness, and what connects them with the totality of our experience of world. It is not my intention to make prescriptions for the sciences or the conduct of life, but to try to correct false thinking about what they are.” (Pg. xiii) In the Foreword to the Second Edition, he clarified, “My revival of the expression *hermeneutics*, with its long tradition, has apparently led to some misunderstandings. I did not intend to produce an

art of technique of understanding, in the manner of the earlier hermeneutics. I did not wish to elaborate a system of rules to describe, let alone direct, the methodological procedure of the human sciences. Nor was it my aim to investigate the theoretical foundation of work in these fields in order to put my findings to practical ends. My real concern was and is philosophic; not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing. (Pg. xvi) He states, "If we want to know what truth in the field of the human sciences is, we shall have to ask the philosophical question of the whole procedure of the human sciences in the same way that Heidegger asked it of metaphysics, and that we have asked it of aesthetic consciousness. But we shall not be able simply to accept the human sciences on their own account of themselves, but must ask what their mode of understanding in truth is. The question of the truth of art in particular can serve to prepare the way for this wider-ranging question, because the experience of the work of art includes understanding, and thus itself represents a hermeneutical phenomenon---but not at all in the sense of a scientific method. Rather, the understanding belongs to the encounter with the work of art itself, so that this connection can be illuminated only on the basis of the mode of being of the work of art itself." (Pg. 89-90) He explains, "My thesis, then, is that the being of art cannot be determined as an object of an aesthetic awareness because, on the contrary, the aesthetic attitude is more than it knows of itself. It is a part of the essential process of representation and is an essential part of play as play." (Pg. 104) He observes, "The reality of profane and sacred is not only part of the dialectic of concepts, but can be seen as a reality in the phenomenon of the picture. A work of art always has something sacred about it. True, a religious work of art or a monument on show in a museum can no longer be desecrated in the same sense as one that has remained in its original place. But this means only that it has in fact already suffered an injury, in that it has become an object in a museum. Obviously this is true not only of religious works of art. We sometimes have the same feeling in an antique shop when the old pieces on sale still have some trace of intimate life about them; it seems somehow scandalous to us, a kind of offense to piety, a profanation. Ultimately every work of art has something about it that protests against profanation." (Pg. 133) He notes, "The classical discipline concerned with the art of understanding texts is hermeneutics; the real problem of hermeneutics is quite different from its common acceptance. It points in the same direction in which my criticism of the aesthetic consciousness has moved the problem of aesthetics. In fact, hermeneutics would then have to be understood in so comprehensive a sense as to embrace the whole sphere of art and its complex of questions. Every work of art, not only literature, must be

understood like any other text that requires understanding, and this kind of understanding has to be acquired. This gives to the hermeneutical consciousness a comprehensive breadth that surpasses even that of the aesthetic consciousness. Aesthetics has to be absorbed into hermeneutics. (Pg. 146) He clarifies, however, that "We shall entirely disregard the dogmatic interest in the hermeneutical problem that the old testament presented even to the early church and shall be content to pursue the development of the hermeneutical method in the modern period, which results in the development of historical consciousness." (Pg. 153) He adds, "In Dilthey's eyes hermeneutics acquires its own real nature only when it changes from serving a dogmatic task---which, for the Christian theologian, is the right proclamation of the gospel---into functioning as a historical organon. If, however, the idea of the historical enlightenment, which Dilthey pursued, should prove to be an illusion, then the pre-history of hermeneutics that he outlined will also acquire a quite different significance." (Pg. 156) He notes, "Heidegger's radical ontological reflection revealed the projective character of all understanding and conceived the act of understanding itself as the movement of transcendence, of moving beyond being. This asks quite a lot of traditional hermeneutics; this seems essentially different from the understanding that takes place in science and is concerned with knowledge." Traditional hermeneutics has incorrectly limited the horizon within which understanding belongs. That is why the advance that Heidegger made over Dilthey is valuable for the problem of hermeneutics also; now, as a result of the existential futurity of human There-being, the structure of historical understanding appears with its full ontological background. (Pg. 230-231) He states, "At the beginning of all historical hermeneutics, then, the abstract antithesis between tradition and historical research, between history and knowledge, must be discarded. The effect of a living tradition and the effect of historical study must constitute a unity, the analysis of which would reveal only a texture of reciprocal relationships. Hence we would do well to regard historical consciousness as a new element within that which has always made up the human relation to the past. we have to recognize the element of tradition in the historical relation and enquire into its hermeneutical productivity." (Pg. 251) He says, "the interpreter seeks no more than to understand this universal thing, the text; i.e., to understand what this piece of tradition says, what constitutes the meaning and importance of the text. In order to understand that, he must not seek to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to this situation ,

if he wants to understand at all. If this is the case, then the gap between hermeneutics of the human sciences and legal hermeneutics cannot be as big as is generally assumed. Theological hermeneutics cannot, in that case, claim to have any independent systematic meaning. Thus there could be no longer any such thing as a specifically theological hermeneutics by giving up its dogmatic commitment, theological hermeneutics became united with literary and historical method. (Pg 289-290) He suggests "Openness to the other, then, includes the acknowledgement that I must accept some things that are against myself, even though there is no one else who asks this of me. This is the parallel to the hermeneutical experience. I must allow the validity of the claim made by tradition, not in the sense of simply acknowledging the past in its otherness, but in such a way that it has something to say to me. This too calls for a fundamental sort of openness. Someone who is open in this way to tradition sees the historical consciousness is not really open at all, but rather, if it reads out of texts, it has always thoroughly smoothed them out beforehand, so that the criteria of our own knowledge can never be put in question by tradition. (Pg. 324-325) He clarifies, "This is not to say that the hermeneutic situation in regard to texts is exactly the same as that between two people in conversation. Texts have to be understood, and that means that one partner in the hermeneutical conversation, the text, is expressed only through the other partner, the interpreter. Only through him are the written marks changed back into meaning. In relation to a text it is indispensable that the interpreter involve himself with its meaning. (Pg. 349) He says, "language constitutes the hermeneutical event proper not as language, whether as grammar or lexicon, but in the coming into language of that which has been said in the tradition: an event that is at once assimilation and interpretation. Thus here it really is true to say that this event is not our action upon the thing, but the act of the thing itself. (Pg. 421) He summarizes, "we are moving towards a metaphysical idea. The concept of the beautiful, which shared the place in eighteenth century aesthetics with the sublime, and which was to be entirely eliminated in the course of the nineteenth century by the aesthetic critique of classicism, was in the past, a universal metaphysical concept and had a function within metaphysics, the universal consideration of being, that was by no means limited to the aesthetic in the narrower sense. This old idea of the beautiful can also be of service to a comprehensive hermeneutics. (Pg. 434) He concludes, "Thus there is undoubtedly no understanding that is free from all prejudices, however much the will of our

knowledge must be directed towards escaping their thrall. It has emerged throughout our investigation that the certainty that is imparted by the use of scientific methods does not suffice to guarantee truth. This is so especially of the human sciences, but this does not mean a diminution of their scientific quality, but the justification of the claim to special humane significance that they have always made what the tool of method does not achieve must be achieved by a discipline of questioning and research, a discipline that guarantees truth. (Pg. 447) This is an important and influential book, that will be of great interest to those seriously studying modern philosophy.

The book itself is terrible quality. It's required reading for one of my classes, and many of my classmates' books are falling apart. Mine has fallen apart into three separate pieces. Not recommended if you plan to write in the book (although practically impossible in such small margins). The text can be pretty dry (and there's nothing wrong with that) but it's as if the font tries to beg that it's not, and that's a little conflicting when trying to read it.

This version has many, many typos. It looks like it was never proofed. Just get the other version...this one is not the best. Plus, the font makes you want to gouge your eyes out.

This is the version of the book to purchase. As a historian, it's a great book to help you understand yourself and how you conduct your writing and research. It truly helps you gain insight into your own way of thinking. I recommend this book to everyone and have so for years. My engineer friend thought it was an amazing read as well. For me, it was a life changing book. It will strengthen the way that you think. Also, if you love philosophy then this is a must read for you as well.

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