Language and the Diversification of Human Experience: An Exploration of Gadamer's Linguisticality

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Abstract

This paper explores the concept of language in the framework of philosophical hermeneutics, with a focus on Gadamer's notion of language as linguisticality. According to Gadamer, Language is intrinsically linked with understanding, which is the fundamental mode of human existence in the world. He critiques the role of language as simply a tool in Western metaphysics since Plato, and asserts instead that it is language that defines the entire horizon of understanding. By taking literature as an exemplary paradigm of hermeneutic experience, the study investigates the concept of linguisticality — the ontological nature of language. Through the understanding of literary works, readers can gain a better opportunity to affirm, refine and diversify their original experience and approach a level of authenticity that is rarely acknowledged in everyday life.

Keywords: Gadamer, linguisticality, language, experience, literature

1. Introduction

Language serves as the medium through which human beings perceive and articulate their understanding of the world. It serves as a gateway to exploring the intricacies of our surroundings. The multifaceted nature of language allows it to summon and assemble concepts, even when the objects themselves are absent from our immediate presence. On one hand, language solidifies everyday experiences, thereby facilitating comprehension. On the other hand, it can obscure meanings and create barriers to understanding. Consequently, language assumes an indispensable role in all facets of human existence.

Notably, within the realm of Western philosophy, the significance of language has been acknowledged since ancient Greece. Plato (c.428-347 B.C.) posited that language serves as a means for humans to engage with reality, enabling individuals to name and describe things through words. Throughout history, language has remained a central topic of discussion in Western philosophy, marking what has been termed the "linguistic turn" in philosophical thought. Consequently, language transitioned from being perceived as an analyzable and separable research subject. Modern philosophy of language, a prominent branch of analytic philosophy initiated by the German philosopher Gottlob Frege (1848-1925), conducted a rigorous mathematical and logical analysis of language. Underpinning this approach were specific presuppositions, wherein language was subjected to mathematical and logical scrutiny, rendering it as an irreducible elementary form. Consequently, language was abstracted and idealized to an infinite extent. In this context, the natural use of language was devalued and inadequate.[1] Simultaneously, the form of language was detached from its intrinsic meaning.

In the perspective of modern linguists, exemplified by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), language was perceived as a system of arbitrary signs. Their focus centered on the synchronic analysis of linguistic structures. Conversely, phenomenologists, such as Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), regarded language as the external manifestation of thoughts. Evidently, during the 20th century, diverse philosophical schools endeavored to uncover the essence of language from varying angles, highlighting the logical, formalized, and symbolic

dimensions of linguistic inquiry. However, they often neglected to delve sufficiently into the ontological nature of language, which is intertwined with the human experience.

Nonetheless, within continental philosophy, a distinctive branch of contemporary Western philosophy — philosophical hermeneutics — ushers in a profound "hermeneutical turn" in the study of language. Central to philosophical hermeneutics is the pivotal concept of understanding, which aptly describes the foundational structure of human experience, a process in which language assumes a pivotal role. Following Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)'s conceptualization of language as a means of "world-disclosure," Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) lays the groundwork for his theory of hermeneutic experience, encapsulated in the idea of "taking language as a guide"[2]. Gadamer's exploration traces its roots back to classical Greece, where he argues that there is not even a corresponding word for language, thus highlighting the unconsciousness of language. This view, however, is at odds with the way language is treated in modern times. "This process of increasing consciousness, which also involves a change in the attitude to language, makes it possible for 'language' as such — i.e., its form, separated from all content — to become an independent object of attention".[3]

According to Gadamer, the analytical approach to language as a repository of theoretical propositions represents just one extreme aspect of linguistic expression, one that excludes numerous other possibilities. Simultaneously, this subjective and conscious approach to language analysis has severed the content of language from its external form. In reality, there is more profound "essence" embedded within language. From the vantage point of philosophical hermeneutics, language is intricately interwoven with the entirety of the human experience. It should not be simplistically reduced to an analytical object, instrumentalized or rendered merely symbolic. Language is intrinsically linked with understanding — the foundational mode of our existence in the world — and is characterized as the fundamental medium and horizon of the human realm. In essence, language is intimately tied to human existence and life experience. As Gadamer eloquently expresses regarding language, "Being that can be understood is language"[4]. Language is not a mere tool that can be set aside once its utility has been exhausted. Instead, language envelops and encompasses all that can be comprehended within the world. Through language, we gain access to the entire world; consequently, "language in its world-disclosing function is the condition of possibility of experience"[5]. Language assumes a profound ontological significance, and it becomes evident that Gadamer's focus extends beyond the mere structural or formal aspects of language. What truly captures his attention is the very nature of language itself, or, more precisely, the question of what language signifies through its inherent existence.

The purpose of philosophical hermeneutics is not confined to the mere mastery or control of language; rather, it centers on what becomes apparent and understood through the medium of language. Going a step further, Gadamer aspires to unearth the existential significance of language — what language truly signifies for us as human beings and how it shapes human existence while enabling understanding. By imbuing language with this existential dimension, Gadamer provides a more profound and insightful approach to comprehending the essence of language. This paper aims to delve into Gadamer's perspective on language by elucidating his concept of "linguisticality". It will employ literary language as an illustrative example to showcase how language enriches and diversifies the human experience.

2. Language and Linguisticality

Gadamer's conception of language operates within the framework of philosophical hermeneutics, with the central concept of "understanding" at its core. It is language that defines the entire horizon of understanding. In his magnum opus, *Truth and Method* (1960), Gadamer, after a comprehensive examination of truth as experienced in art and its extension to the realm of understanding in the human sciences, pivots his focus towards the ontological shift of hermeneutics facilitated by language. According to Gadamer, language assumes a dominant role in the spheres of understanding and human experience, establishing itself as a fundamental mode of being for individuals within the context of philosophical hermeneutics. Consequently, it is imperative to delve into the foundational elements of Gadamer's philosophy of language. The study of Gadamer's understanding of language will encompass two aspects: the fundamental underpinning of his conception of language, including his critique of the modern philosophical approach to language, and the central theme of Gadamer's hermeneutics, which signifies a novel dimension in comprehending the essence of language — linguisticality.

2.1 Gadamer's Critique of Language as a Tool

In the third section of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer introduces his renowned and frequently debated thesis: "Being that can be understood is language"[6]. This assertion raises two significant questions. Firstly, it characterizes language as a form of "being," thus attributing ontological significance to language. Secondly, it broadens the scope of language's meaning, as Gadamer does not confine it to a specific language for practical use as a mere tool but rather addresses language in a general sense. Aligned with the thematic intent of Gadamer's hermeneutics, which critiques Western traditional metaphysics, it becomes evident that Gadamer's perspective on language challenges not only philosophical reflections on language but also serves as a response

to, or even a critique of, traditional Western views on language, particularly those philosophers who have inherited and perpetuated Western traditional metaphysical perspectives, beginning with Plato.

Gadamer identifies the roots of the analytical method of treating language in the works of Plato, whose views on language are dispersed across various dialogues. One such prominent dialogue is *Cratylus*, a cornerstone of Greek philosophy that significantly influenced the conception of language. In this dialogue, two distinct interpretations of the relationship between words and objects emerge. "The conventional theory regards unambiguous linguistic usage, reached by agreement and practice, as the only source of the meaning of words. The opposed theory holds that there is a natural agreement between word and object that is described by the idea of correctness (orthotes)"[7]. While Plato does not unequivocally endorse either theory, he does not wholly reject them either, as they share a common premise: the primacy of "the thing" over the word[8]. Gadamer comments that "both these interpretations of language start from the existence and instrumentality of words, and regard the subject matter as something we know about previously from an independent source"[9]. Within this dialogue, Plato expresses his stance on the nature of language, asserting that "language is a tool, a copy constructed and judged in terms of the original, the things themselves"[10]. Gadamer concludes that Plato dismisses the epistemological dimension of language, as "he does not accept a natural correctness of names, he still retains resemblance (homoion) as the criterion: for him, the copy (Abbild) and the original (Urbild) constitute the metaphysical model for everything within the noetic sphere"[11]. Consequently, it becomes evident that, beginning with Plato, language has been regarded as a tool for communication, albeit as a subjective tool solely controlled by humans, thereby distancing language from its inherent capacity to reveal existence.

To Gadamer, modern linguistics and contemporary philosophy of language essentially echo Plato's approach in perceiving language as a mere tool. Furthermore, they can be seen as an intensification of Plato's characterization of language as a tool. Gadamer contends that their sole focus is on the formal aspects of language, and it is both inappropriate and overly subjective to reduce language to a mere symbolic form. His primary targets in this critique encompass various philosophers, including Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945). Ernst Cassirer stands as one of the earliest philosophers to view language as a symbolic form, positioning it as a transcendental foundation for all human activities. He commences his exploration by positing that language, art, and religion represent forms. In essence, these symbolic forms serve as external manifestations of the fluid temporality of the human spirit. Language, in this context, is regarded as a symbolic form capable of representing spirit and thought, albeit divorced from them.

Subsequently, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) embarked on an endeavor to construct a universal language system, grounded in the artificiality of language symbols. His aim was to derive new, certain truths akin to mathematics through permutation and combination, where the order within this symbolic system would find correspondence across all languages. This language, as pursued by Leibniz, assumes a highly idealized and abstract nature, detaching itself from elements tied to human experience. In a sense, the symbolic language system aimed to become a framework for human reason. This mathematized and idealized language laid the groundwork for the emergence of analytic philosophy. Starting with Frege, Russell, and later Wittgenstein, philosophers within the realm of analytic philosophy leaned towards positivism and logical analysis of language, advocating for a physically-oriented language. Gadamer, however, asserts that all of these examinations of language pivot around the symbolic form of language[12] and deems them unnatural approaches to the study of language. He posits that the actuality of language is not encapsulated by the external power or capacity of its form; rather, it is the comprehensive grasp of all beings through the potential verbal expressions it affords.

Gadamer raises poignant questions regarding these approaches fixated on the sign function of language. He queries whether these concepts of language form can genuinely elucidate the myriad linguistic phenomena or whether they merely strip language of its essence by imposing an instrumental function upon it.[13] In the event that language is more than a controlled instrument, what, then, constitutes its essential nature? Can we adopt an alternative approach to fathom its essence? It is with these reservations and inquiries that Gadamer embarks on his distinct "hermeneutical turn" towards the realm of linguisticality, influenced by Heidegger within the German hermeneutic tradition. In this tradition, the act of understanding assumes a central role as the fundamental mode of human existence.

2.2 The Nature of Language as Linguisticality

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer situates language as "guiding the ontological shift of hermeneutics"[14]. To be specific, language constitutes the basic condition and form of human understanding. In pursuit of Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity and its later view of language, Gadamer continues to approach language through its dimension of world-disclosure.[15] Based on the hermeneutical dimension of language established by Heidegger, Gadamer sets his view of language towards linguisticality, situating language in an ontological context, concerning human experience. In one word, the theme of language itself transits to linguisticality, which embodies the nature of language. Through the existential interpretation of the question of understanding,

Gadamer establishes the relationship between language and human experience.

Gadamer's "hermeneutical turn" of language is based on the general theoretical framework of philosophical hermeneutics in pursuit of Heidegger. There is no doubt that Heidegger is the one who found hermeneutics in the ontological dimension, rather than the methodological and epistemological dimension. "What was involved in this shift was the transformation of interpretive understanding from a methodology tailored for academic disciplines into a mode of human existence, of human-being-in-the-world".[16] Through the historical analysis of Dasein, Heidegger considers "understanding is not a resigned ideal of human experience adopted in the old age of the spirit, as with Dilthey; nor is it, as with Husserl, a last methodological ideal of philosophy in contrast to the naivete of unreflecting life; it is, on the contrary, the original form of the realization of Dasein, which is being in-the-world"[17]. In other words, understanding is the basic mode of Dasein, which is not a subject that constitutes the world. Instead, it participates in the "totality of meaning" inherent in this world, a world in which it finds itself always already "thrown" (geworfen). While later Heidegger put forward his famous remark on language, "Only where there is language, is there world, that is, the constantly changing cycle of decision and work, of action and responsibility, but also of arbitrariness and turmoil, decay and confusion"[18]. This saying indicates the relationship between language and the world. Heidegger also criticizes the treatment of language as a tool and considers the function of language as world-disclosure. "The language in which reality 'comes into language,' in and with which all reflection on existence takes place, accompanies existence in all epochs of its realization".[19]To be specific, language is related to a unique "objectification" of human experience by naming with words, thus letting the entities that these words refer to appear. In Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity, along with understanding as an event of human existence, language also owns its eventfulness. Language is the happening of truth by disclosing or revealing the world. This nature of beingness and eventfulness lays a firm ontological foundation for Gadamer's conception of language. Especially in his later thinking, Heidegger turns to poetic ways to render his thoughts on the relationship between being and language. He emphasizes the function of language as "summoning".[20] Language always speaks to us in a way that reveals the original relationship between being and Dasein. However, Heidegger's thoughts on language are consistent. In this "house of being," we can acquire our horizon to perceive the "world". In one word, Heidegger's focus on language begins to transfer into the problem of the linguisticality of human existence, which indicates the nature of language as unconcealment of being, namely "world-disclosure".

To some extent, Gadamer's conception of language is both a continuation and radicalization of Heidegger's viewpoints. In fact, the main thoughts of philosophical hermeneutics are also a radicalization of Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity. Instead of a purely poetic approach to interpret language as "world-disclosure" by Heidegger, whose focus is on the relationship between Dasein and being, the focus of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is directly concerned with the very existence of human being. More specifically and practically, Gadamer intends to uncover the basic conditions that make all activities of human understanding possible. Through the studies and analysis of these conditions, it is to find the world experience of human beings themselves. In this way, we can find the fundamental relationship between the world and human beings. In Gadamer's hermeneutics, the topic of understanding is converted into the topic of experience, which means that understanding is to experience. In this case, experience is not a subschema in the subject-object framework. At the same time, it is not an unhistorical, atemporal, and abstract recognition existing externally to space. On the contrary, it is something happening in the lively and historical human existence. In one word, Gadamer focuses more on the practical dimension of hermeneutics, intending to shape it as a practical philosophy that describes the basic mode of human existence and experience. He also takes the action of understanding as the basic mode of human being, which means that experience is basically hermeneutical since human beings live by understanding or interpreting. According to Gadamer, it is language that forms the whole horizon for human beings to understand. In other words, it is through language that this event of understanding actually happens. Language forms the condition for understanding. Therefore, here language gets rid of the label as a tool and achieves its ontological significance. It is obvious that Gadamer's focus on language is not itself as a research object, but its fundamental function in the accomplishments of understanding, and its acts on the organization of human experience. As he talks of the function of language in understanding, "hermeneutical phenomenon proves to be a special case of the general relationship between thinking and speaking, whose enigmatic intimacy conceals the role of language in thought"[21]. We can see that in an intrinsic way, language guides the whole process of understanding. This unconscious "language" means more than the external form or surface of language. Gadamer initiates these considerations by arguing that the hermeneutic object and the execution and fulfillment of the hermeneutic event of understanding are determined by linguisticality, which is chosen to prevent one from erroneously concluding that there is no common basis in the development of different languages. In one word, there is something more in language than its communicative usage. In language, something general and fundamental about human existence is revealed. Moreover, the concept of linguisticality has linked the true essence that language contains and its external form together. Words do not exist earlier than

all human experience, so experience does not yield to and add to the existing experience. In other words, experience is not non-verbal at first and then becomes a reflective object through naming. Rather, the nature of experience lies in the fact that it always looks for and finds out the word that can express it. We find the right word, which means that we find the word that belongs to the thing. Therefore, the thing is expressed through the word. So, we can infer that with this essence of factualness, language organizes human experience and makes it appear.

In Gadamer's context, the inquiry of language changes into the topic of linguisticality. Gadamer's notion of language can be defined mainly as linguisticality due to the nature and purpose of language in his hermeneutics. Specifically, language does not serve as a tool for individuals to utilise on an as-needed basis. It constitutes the complete horizon of the fundamental pursuit for individuals, that is, comprehension. Language is central to human world experience and hermeneutic understanding. It is not a mere research object to be observed from a distance, but rather it surrounds us and shapes our perceptions. Thus, language's inherent quality is to disclose and construct our understanding of the world around us. Language achieves its essence by being comprehended and is ubiquitous in its reach. Its true nature is as a medium for revealing the world. Language is the medium through which we experience the world around us. According to Gadamer, language plays an ontological role in our understanding of the world. It establishes the framework for human comprehension and objectifies and concretizes our experiences. From an alternative perspective, the concept of "linguisticality" illustrates the process of solidifying and expressing human experience, which defines language in Gadamer's hermeneutics. It is not difficult to find that with Gadamer's "hermeneutic turn" of language, this topic has achieved broader and more profound importance. In his own words to generalize the definition of linguisticality, "the covering over of language as language has its basis in language itself and accords with the human experience of language".[22] So without language, human experience cannot find its way to show up and stay preserved in a structure. In one word, the essence of Gadamer's conception of language lies in its direction toward human experience as linguisticality. It is through language that human experience is organized and preserved.

3. Linguisticality as a Process of the Diversification of Experience

We have primarily discussed linguisticality as a process of solidification and organization of experience. It's language that makes our everyday experiences expressible and preservable. However, aside from these normal and ordinary experiences that can be disclosed by language, we also encounter other experiences in life, such as art experiences. Going back to ancient Greece, we find poets like Homer who seamlessly blend poetry and thought in their works. These early founders of Western culture didn't view the world in terms of the opposition between the spiritual and the material but as a coexistence of "thinking" and nature. According to Homer, "knowing" doesn't merely reflect human cognitive states; it reflects self-realization and an understanding of human beings' position and environment. In literature, this knowledge that encompasses human experience is awakened by thinking. Literature serves as an ideal model for human experience, as it offers novel and nuanced experiences within the world of diversity constructed through words. With its diversity and creativity, language forms a new totality of meaning, building on the existing literary tradition. Thus, experience transcends the normal phenomenal world, unfolding in a more subtle and enriched dimension. Literary experience serves as an ideal paradigm for the diversified experiences mediated by language and is a convincing presentation of linguisticality as both world-disclosure and conversation.

3.1 Literature as a Paradigm of Hermeneutic Experience

Literature occupies a vital role in hermeneutics, especially in poetry, which exceptionally illustrates the connection between language and thought. Heidegger's construals of poetry showcase a paradigmatic instance of hermeneutic experience. Gadamer expands on Heidegger's concepts and reflects on the literary experience as a speculative conversation with literary works. This analytical procedure results in the development of understanding towards a more theoretical and inventive aspect. This provides an opportunity to investigate the primary correlation between language and thinking, thus revealing the linguisticality of experience.

Heidegger is one of the philosophers who especially focus on the close relation between poetry and thinking. Especially in his later thoughts, when he considers that the whole system of the definitions of language, truth and thinking and the concept of understanding or interpretation are all thematized Plato's metaphysics.[23] There Heidegger put forward that we should understand Greek thoughts more than them, which means that we should pursue the Greek thoughts more originally and have an insight of them in their essence — the unconcealment or disclosure. Not only do we try to understand this form as the standpoint of presence, but in a horizon where the unconcealment happens.[24] Based on the consideration of unconcealment, Heidegger thinks that literature, especially poetry — during the interpretation of which there is always a speculative dialogue. It is the original and ideal hermeneutics. The action of interpretation must always return to the lively presentation of the original scene in the realm between the concealment and unconcealment.[25]

To unravel the nature of language and literary experience, Heidegger turns to a poet Friedrich Hölderlin

(1770-1843) for inspirations. He thinks that his poem reveals that only literature, especially poetry, let us come closer to destiny and become awareness of our own existence as Dasein. Heidegger considers that Hölderlin's poetry is to make poems solely about the essence of poetry. Hölderlin thinks that poetry creates the world of its own harmlessness and purposelessness and it is an innocent process. Poetry creates its works in the realm of language and out of the "material" of language.[26] Heidegger tries to use Hölderlin's work as a model to discover the intrinsic nature of language that disclosed in the poetic form. He has quoted several lines from his poems, "Much has man experienced. /Named many of the heavenly ones, /Since we have been a conversation /And able to hear from one another".[27] In this poem, Heidegger initiates his exploration of language as dialogue and its intentions. This exemplifies the relevance between poetry and thought. In this poem, humans are in a dialogue rather than leading one. Nevertheless, the underlying assumptions for such a dialogue depend on the ability to listen empathetically to each other. The poem's significance lies in its clear and immediate presentation of language's "beingness" in both its form and content. In the content, human experiences are organised in dialogue, and language speaks to us. The poem's form is unlimited and unrestrictive, and it speaks to us as an individual entity. Thus, readers are always encouraged to communicate with it when encountering this poem.

In his analysis of the poem "Words" by Stefan George (1868-1933), Heidegger illustrates the distinct linguistic experience presented in the work through his captivating use of language. With the last lines, "where word breaks off no thing may be", Heidegger notes that, we have already been involved into a dialogue with poetic experience, which shows the relationship between words and objects. Words themselves are relations, since they keep everything in being. If we are out of these words, the wholeness of things, namely the world will be in the dark.[28] Heidegger's Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry demonstrate this notion. He highlights two main aspects of literature, poetry in particular. Firstly, the literary experiences we encounter when interpreting poems are a genuine and ideal representation of our being within the world. We are constantly engaged in conversation and attentive to the messages conveyed by poetry. This allows us to better structure our experiences when analyzing literary texts. Additionally, Heidegger delves deeper into the nature of language, revealing that it not only possesses its own "beingness" through communication, but also maintains a relationship between the world and human experience. Consequently, we can appreciate how poetry serves as an ideal model for displaying the linguistic nature of humanity and existence.

In a truthful interpretation of another Hölderlin's hymn *The Ister*, Heidegger reveals the dimension in which poetry restores the original experience regarding being and Dasein by unfolding the relationship between unconcealment and concealment. Heidegger sees the river that appears in the hymn neither in terms of its specific historical and geographical location nor as a metaphysical (or even metaphorical) symbolic image of some universal truth, but as a poetic enigma. The Iser unveils itself simultaneously as "journeying" (Wanderung) and as the "locality" of human dwelling on the earth. It thus both changes and remains constant at the same time.[29] It could be argued that Heidegger regards Hölderlin as the embodiment of his hermeneutical thoughts in a poetic form. The river, as presented in Hölderlin's poetry, can be seen as symbolizing Dasein's journey towards being and its dwelling within a specific locality. From the content of the poem, the connection between "journeying" and "locality" becomes evident through the flowing river's imagery. Yet, on a deeper level, it is the artistic form of the poem that allows readers to attain an original experiential insight through the interplay between poetry and philosophical contemplation.

Even in Heidegger's later philosophical thinking, he remains dedicated to the concept of Dasein. Although he may gradually reduce his use of his own philosophical terminology, he continues to adopt a poetic approach to convey the closeness of Dasein to being. Heidegger is acutely aware of the limitations of human existence, prompting him to turn to poets who possess profound philosophical insights, such as Hölderlin. Through the lens of poetry, he seeks to depict and "restore" the experience of Dasein by engaging in a poetic "world-disclosure". Therefore, in Heidegger's perspective, literature, particularly poetry, excels at depicting the relationship between being and Dasein in an original manner. This experience, which is often overlooked, is a rarity in the modern world.

4. Literary Language and the Refinement of Experience

Gadamer basically shares the same view with Heidegger on the relationship between literature and our experience. What's more, on admitting the infinitude of human being, Gadamer considers that literature can not only depict the original and true experience, but also constitutes human experience. For him, literature is not the perfected concept of spirit, but rather its manifestation on the level of the sense intuition of the world. In the literal sense of the word, art is an intuition of the world [Welt-Anschauung].[30] To some extent, literary experience temporarily breaks away from our daily experience but constitutes itself in more subtilized and novel dimension. Like daily experience, the hermeneutical experience in literary interpretation reveals the linguisticality in experience more vividly and intuitively. The interpretation of literary works therefore becomes a paradigm of human experience.

Firstly, in the process of literary interpretation, readers and literary texts form a dialogical structure. Literary works offers a new and grand horizon for experience formation, where readers structuralize their new experience by confirming the old experience. Literary experience transcends the concrete art experience and lifts itself up to world experience. As Gadamer notes in *Truth and Method* that art experience should not be taken as an aesthetic object, so we should not devalue its own requirements. "Every encounter with the language of art is an encounter with an unfinished event, and the encounter is actually a part of the event".[31] Therefore we can also call this thing experience. Gadamer once demonstrates the relationship between poetry and experience. Through language we organize our experience and make it in order. The experience of things is constantly translated through language. However, poetic language not only constitutes our process of being in the world but itself an event of approaching the world. Therefore, human experience presents itself in the unique way of poetry.[32]

According to Gadamer, the understanding of literature is an event of "play", and the purpose of the event is the play itself. Readers not only function as the element of the play, but also "listen" to what the work wants to tell us. This just shows the nature of language as conversation. Literary understanding as a "play" emphasized the autonomy and expressiveness of the play, but not a pure aesthetic object opposite to the readers. M. W. Rowe thinks that compared to the "categorical truths" in natural science, which makes a judgment based on present and past, literature does not concern about the process of proving the truth or knowledge in it by judging the correctness of literary language. In fact, there is another truth in literature, "modal truths", which concerns about the way how human beings think, feel and act. Therefore, experience here is not observed and judged but by projection. Readers feel and describe the things and scenes by reconstructing their own life experience. Literature can make this reconstruction more concrete, vivid. Therefore, literary works do not tell us something and impose it on us but let the "world" appear.[33] We could have some examples here, in literary works, the purpose of the protagonist's action, such as the riding dream of Don Quixote or the revenge of Hamlet does not lead us to an undisputed propositional logic. In the process of understanding, the imagination of readers transcends the conclusion. While the characterization of moral type leads the readers to the philosophical dimension of meditation, like life, existence and meaning, etc., and this leads the readers to a realm of fictitious truth. Just as Goethe's poetic dramas *Faust, Faust* and *Maphisto*, as representatives of all human beings are invisible among us. In this work, *Faust*'s action of transcending and confirming himself let the readers call back experience of their own. Gadamer's analysis of the image of angels in Bohemian-Austrian poet *Rainer Maria Rilke* (1875-1926)'s *Duino Elegies* (1923) could also exhibit the fact that readers recognize themselves through literature. He thinks that the speaker's calling of the angel is like calling a witness, who should witness what he has already known and they are things that he himself knows clearly and consciously with intrinsic certainty.[34] Gadamer thinks that all the words of poetry is a myth, they can only be testified by their own speaking. It tells a story or talks about some actions to win the trust of the readers. However, it is only achieved when we encounter ourselves in the action and miseries of gods and heroes. The whole dimension of experience in human mind is transformed into a subjective and free being for individual. Therefore, Rilke successfully lifts the human experience to the level of myth — the level of poetry, whereas in a contemporary world no myth exists.[35] We could see that in literary works, the dialogical structure in understanding is more vivid. Readers always recollect their experience when they encounter the texts. Therefore, we have achieved the "knowing of the already known". Through the dialogue between literary tradition and us, and we always acquire a new opportunity to subtilize our experience.

Secondly, through the mediation of "historical effected consciousness", experience keeps open to literary tradition and project itself through the dialogue with tradition. Literary tradition is preserved and literary experience transforms into world experience. On one hand, literary tradition is consistent with the historicity and openness of experience. Through the function of historical effected consciousness, literary tradition is preserved, and at the same time, the individual experience that mediated with tradition through "fusion of horizons" is also structuralized. T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)'s poetry fully displays the openness of experience to tradition. In *The Waste Land* (1922), he has quoted lots of famous works and legends, like "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME/ HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME/Goodnight Bill. / Goodnight Lou. / Goodnight May. / Goodnight" was quoted from Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. The poet uses allusion to lead readers to keep open to literary tradition, and collect memories and experience, thus arousing the imagination and perception of present in the historical context and make experience "appear".

On the other hand, open to tradition, readers projects themselves in future as well, thus constituting a way of project their experience. This also shows the negativity of experience. Through the understanding of literary works, we are having a better opportunity to treat things and revise our original experience. Another set of poems *Four Quartets* (1943) of T. S. Eliot meticulously displays the theme of time, universe and history, but in a poetic form, which provides readers with the time and space for understanding. For example, in the first stanza of "Burnt Norton",

> Time present and time past

> Are both perhaps present in time future,
>
> And time future contained in time past.
>
> If all time is eternally present
>
> All time is unredeemable.
>
> What might have been is an abstraction
>
> Remaining a perpetual possibility
>
> Only in a world of speculation.
>
> What might have been and what has been
>
> Point to one end, which is always present.
>
> Footfalls echo in the memory
>
> Down the passage which we did not take
>
> Towards the door we never opened
>
> Into the rose-garden. My words echo
>
> Thus, in your mind…

These lines explore the theme of history and immortality, portraying how human beings are shaped by history. The poem intertwines past and present, projecting towards the future. At the same time, history provides a temporal scene of the "world" for the future. As readers, we are constantly confirming our experience and understanding through the concept of Dasein. The use of rhyme and meter emphasizes the repetition and cyclical nature of language, echoing the theme and reinforcing our experience. The primary connection is laid bare by poetry, which is a powerful demonstration of language as both world-disclosure and conversation. The existential apprehension is intertwined with the intricate sensation of reading a poem, signifying the role of poetry as a means of comprehending and enhancing human experience.

At last, with the diverse forms of unconcealment, experience is formed in a more speculative dimension. The diversity of literary language and form strengthens the speculative nature of language as "world-disclosure" and subtilizes experience in a new dimension. "Excellent metaphorical language can always offer us with new conception".[36] The vivid and magical metaphor used in literature reveals the vitality different from daily language. Thus, a new relation between language and being is revealed by novel use of language. The world literary work discloses is an infinite spiritual world of human being with limited expressions. The contrast between limitless and infinity constitutes the speculative structure of literature. In other words, literature is always conveying a kind of truth that natural language cannot express. Milan Kundera (1929-2023) especially focuses on the extent to which literature is concerned about being. He thinks that the fictitious character in the novel is an experimental ego, quoting the words from *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), the character in the novel is like a man in real life, and it is not given birth by a woman but a situation, a sentence and a metaphor. To make it brief, the metaphor contains a fundamental possibility of human beings. The category of possibility constitutes an important dimension of human existence.[37]

When reading a book, the reader should begin by drawing on their own experience and gaining the totality of poetic meaning through "fusion of horizons". "Literature has the apparently paradoxical power of being able to show by means of statement. This is partly because a whole narrative can show the kind of truth that any one proposition cannot; but mainly because the proposition of literature can prompt our imagination, allowing us to feel and picture the things and events described".[38] As well as this, other forms of literature reinforce the structuring of our experiences. In the renowned stream of consciousness novel *Ulysses* (1922), James Joyce (1882-1941) posits that all entities are interpreted through his characters' internal language, exemplified by Bloom's language, thereby supplementing gaps in reality. Memories and expectations both contribute to our ontology, connecting the past and future, thereby establishing the certitude of linguistic expression and revealing the coherence of absence and wholeness. The meaning totality is expressed.[39] "*Ulysses* caught in its bright net the live tangle of subconscious life; it marshals great battalions of words, calling back to the ranks words long asleep or rusted, and recruiting new ones by stress of imaginative need".[40] The authors endeavour to utilise the numerous possibilities of literature to construct imaginative scenes for readers to explore new ways of experiencing. Readers are transported to a world where they can engage with the text without manipulation, perceiving what is presented to them as it is. Regarding certain authors, for example T. S. Eliot, self-awareness of their historical context permeates their works. Therefore, he typically views classical literary works and myths from ancient Greece, ancient Rome, and the East as vessels of tradition. Similarly, authors imbue their personal experiences and emotions into the wider range of tradition and human experience.[41]

5. Conclusion

In the context of philosophical hermeneutics, the ontological nature of language is emphasized. According to Gadamer, the mathematical picture of modern science has brought about a great conflict between the experience of modern existence and the traditional legacy of education and knowledge that has been handed down to us through rhetoric. The concept of object constructed through mathematics is only possible through method, and this method of specifying things as objects ultimately achieves the goal of completely disarming the antagonism of the object and obtaining the subjugation and domination of nature. Language thus becomes an instrument in this process. Gadamer tries to associate language with the world humans actually live, but not the world of objects.[42] Just as another inheritor of Gadamer's view of linguisticality, George Steiner (1929-2020) proposed the priority of language since ancient Greece — Rome, "Literature, philosophy, theology, law, the arts of history, are endeavors to enclose within the bounds of rational discourse the sum of human experience, its recorded past, its present condition and future expectations"[43]. This suggests a cultural and linguistic experience that is less diverse due to the dominant use of language in modern scientific practices. Language has played a crucial role in shaping and reflecting human experience since the dawn of civilization. The restoration of this lost connection may be reached through literature and its ability to offer a wealth of human experience and possibilities.

In this sense, literature serves as an ideal paradigm of hermeneutic experience, approaching a level of authenticity that is rarely acknowledged in everyday life. Experience structures itself in a more speculative and nuanced manner, enhancing the reader's ability to reconstruct what is already known and facilitating the representation and empathy toward the unknown. This, in turn, projects the formation of an enriched and deepened experience. The refinement of experience is achieved through a more speculative approach to perceiving the world and through a dynamic conversation with the literary tradition, which, in turn, diversifies and enriches the experience itself. In a world increasingly constituted by algorithm and data, there is no doubt that the very existence of experience is endangered. Fortunately, many more modern and contemporary writers, particularly poets, take on the responsibility of unearthing the truth and fact that literary language can reveal.

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