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For a Hermeneutics Yet to Come

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The hermeneutics of suspicion by itself is too one-sided, too limited, too restricted. . . . It reacts against the techniques by means of which false consciousness, the heard morality of the good and bad conscience, and the repressive facades of the super-ego cover-up the operations of power. This, of course, is all to the good. But one needs to graft on to this reactive hermeneutics a proactive hermeneutics, that is, an interpretive stance that sorts out the requirements for a more positive and more edifying dynamics of discourse and action.
—Calvin O. Schrag¹

Being invited to take on the significant responsibilities of editing *Analecta Hermeneutica* is an honor that calls for a few words to mark the occasion, but it is an occasion for which words will never quite capture what this task means to us. As the journal of the International Institute of Hermeneutics (IIH), it is the mission of *Analecta Hermeneutica* to provide a space for the most current and sophisticated thinking about all matters concerned with human being together initiated by the claims of philosophical hermeneutics. We inherit twelve years of exemplary work from Sean McGrath who edited *Analecta Hermeneutica* since co-founding the journal in 2009. We are grateful to have such a promising trajectory for the journal's future and a rich archive of issues curated by his studious hand. With this special issue devoted to the future of hermeneutics, which we have titled *For a Hermeneutics yet to Come*, we begin our tenure. This volume, which honors both Gadamer and Ricoeur's the inaugural support of the

¹ Ramsey Eric Ramsey and David James Miller, eds., *Experiences between Philosophy and Communication: Engaging the Philosophical Contributions of Calvin O. Schrag* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 8.

IIIH, collects essays showing us the way forward by engaging with the ontological claims of philosophical hermeneutics and the claims made on us by the hermeneutic tradition.

We find this issue a fecund point of departure for the type of thinking we mean to encourage during our time as editors. For a hermeneutics yet to come, the question is and will remain not if we are hermeneutical at heart but rather how accomplished will our hermeneutics be in the 21st century and beyond? This pressing question, one attendant to every other question addressing us, arises from the very structure of our being-in-the-world; indeed, as Gadamer reminds us, “interpretation does not *occur* as an activity in the course of life, but is the *form* of human life.”² It is necessary then, as suggested by our teacher Calvin O. Schrag in the epigraph atop this essay, both to critique and edify this form of life that stands as the impetus to practice hermeneutic philosophy.

In soliciting and selecting submissions for inclusion in this volume, we recognized certain core themes that continued to resonate in our discussions of the journal’s future. First, and perhaps most obvious, is the personal demand that hermeneutics places on us to be readers who recognize in the very freedom that enables our reading also a profound responsibility to ourselves, to the text, and to each other. It is fitting, then, that we commence this volume with reflections of a more personal nature. Richard Kearny supplies us with a piece of intellectual history cum biography, recollecting his experiences growing with and helping to grow the hermeneutic tradition, notably alongside Ricoeur. Together with articles on Ricoeur, imagination, and historiography by Paul Fairfield, and on hermeneutical approaches to environmental concerns emerging from an epoch wherein human beings are a determining force in global ecologies by David Utser and Cynthia Nielsen, these essays ask us to return perpetually to the question of humanity’s place in the world and the relationship between the personal, which is to say the individual, and the world in which they find themselves. We will continue to explore this dialectic between self and society—a major theme of hermeneutics central to all questions of justice wherein we recognize oneself in another.

Immediately, from the encounter between oneself and the world, we must recognize those others who populate the world and who succeed in every gesture at disclosing the world for us. It is for them that we communicate those insights gained from reflection on the human experience and the world of our experience. Friendship, solidarity, justice—these core concepts are explored in contributions by Jens Zimmermann, Patrick Casey, and Sophia Alcaine. These contributions attest to an ethical seam that runs deep and wide throughout the hermeneutic tradition and affirm our editorial commitment to exploring the relationship between ontology and ethics, between our solitude and our solidarity.

² Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, “The Conflict of Interpretations,” in *Phenomenology: Dialogues and Bridges*, ed. Ronald Bruzina and Bruce Wilshire (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 302.

Beyond the immediate relations between individuals—friendship and family—there emerges yet another level of analysis, that of the social. Though we are all a part of the collective, society itself is more than the sum of the individuals that constitute it. Facundo Bey and Blake Scott each approach this terrain through the concept of “utopia,” both in its desirability and its impossibility. We continue to think of utopias with them, both as a model of another possible world and as a regulating principle that helps us to aim our ethical projects toward something like the Good. Hermeneutics will never let us forget that understanding society is a practice of interpretation and that we must learn and relearn the ways society presents itself for reading, what avenues it opens and which it closes, and how the material conditions of our lives constrain or enable our freedom and our ability to imagine a more just society.

Throughout these contributions, but most expressly in work by David Liakos and Jens Zimmermann, the question of the future of hermeneutics is opened. We invite thinkers to return without remorse to the question of foundations—what is hermeneutics, what is philosophy, what is theology, etc.? To our understanding, these are not questions of the past, of how hermeneutics or the others have been defined. Rather, these are questions for a future wherein the past must be continually reconstituted if it is still to speak to us and our times, to serve our understandings of this moment, of each other, and of our places here together.

We are hopeful this volume is keen evidence of our commitment to seeking a broad range of themes in upcoming issues, as we take to heart Gadamer’s claim: “philosophical hermeneutics is not restricted to exercising philological skill in interpreting texts. Consequently, by textual interpretation is implied the totality of our orientation to the world, together with the assumption that deciphering and understanding a text is very much like encountering reality.”³ We much look forward the challenges and pleasures of editing future issues (indeed, work on Volume 14, *You Must Change Your Life: Hermeneutics as Living Demand*, is already underway).⁴

Anyone familiar with all that is required to publish a peer-reviewed journal understands the amount of work undertaken by all those who give their time and expertise to the endeavor. We understand our work would not be possible without those of you who read the journal, who submit original manuscripts, who peer-review submissions, and who undertake the task of being guest editors. Our sincere gratitude to all those who have done these things for this and past issues.

In light of this, a special acknowledgment is in order. The labor necessary to publish this issue (and future volumes) owes an unrepayable debt to the incredible efforts of Sohinee Roy, managing editor of *Analecta Hermeneutica*, and the daily diligence of Elise Poll, assistant to the editors. Our undying gratitude for all they do to make *Analecta Hermeneutica* an outlet for the thinking essential for attempting to understand all that is entailed in a hermeneutics yet to come.

³ Gadamer and Ricoeur, “The Conflict of Interpretations,” 302.

⁴ We welcome queries from those seeking to explore a theme of their choosing by being a special issue editor. Email: AnalectaHermeneutica@asu.edu.