

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. **Jean Grondin**, University of Montreal, Canada

Jean Grondin (Ph.D. Tübingen, 1982), professor of philosophy at the Université de Montréal, is a distinguished expert in the history of German philosophy (mostly Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Gadamer), hermeneutics, metaphysics, and the philosophy of religion.

After publishing one of the very first books on Gadamer in 1982 (*Hermeneutical Truth?*) and seminal books on Heidegger's turn (1987) and Kant's philosophy (1989), he gained wider attention with his classical *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (1991; 3rd ed. 2012), first published in German, which was translated into more than 15 languages, and whose French (and Spanish) edition was prefaced by Hans-Georg Gadamer. Sparked by a conversation with Gadamer, it understood hermeneutics out of the idea of the inner word (*verbum interius*), which we can strive to understand in every expression or outer word: what is the urgency, anxiety, and quest that seeks to express itself in all that is said? what is the question behind the stammering words that are uttered? He showed how this guiding question runs through the entire hermeneutic tradition and can help it fend off accusations of relativism. To this day, this book remains one of the most reliable and widely read introductions to philosophical hermeneutics. It also casts in a new light the question of meaning and even that of the meaning of life, to which Grondin devoted thoughtful essays (*Du sens de la vie*, 2003 = *Vom Sinn des Lebens*, 2006; *À l'écoute du sens*, 2011) in which he takes a stand against the constructivist understanding of meaning that characterizes modernity and our times. He renews the notion that there is a meaning in life itself and its striving for the better and the good. The "sense" of life also becomes here an ability to seize and to "sense" this meaning and inner aspiration in life.

This hermeneutic understanding of meaning led him to a renewed understanding of the history of metaphysics itself (*Introduction to Metaphysics*, 2004, Engl. transl. 2012) as the most cogent form of philosophy and a defensible answer to the question of the meaning of it all (which is, lest we forget, one of the, if not the basic question of philosophy). In opposition to the ubiquitous attempts to "overcome metaphysics," which often have scant knowledge of the metaphysics they pretend to leave behind, he understands metaphysics as the vigilant and dialogical effort of human thinking to grasp something about reality as a whole and its many orders of reason. This aspiration finds one of its touchstones in the experience of beauty (*La beauté de la métaphysique*, 2019) which was already paramount for Plato and Gadamer himself. Out of this insight, Grondin developed the outlines of a metaphysical hermeneutics (*Du sens des choses. L'idée de la métaphysique*, 2013) that strives to overcome the nominalist (and materialist) impasse of contemporary thought. Grondin regards it as one of Heidegger's and Gadamer's most important achievements to have identified this nihilistic dead end. He points out, however, Heidegger's own impasse in believing that one had to go beyond metaphysics in order to overcome the nominalism and nihilism of modernity (*Comprendre Heidegger. L'espoir d'une autre conception*

de l'être, 2019). Grondin relies in this regard on Gadamer's distance with Heidegger's unyielding reading of metaphysics and its allegedly constraining language. He takes up Gadamer's discreet hints about another possible reading of metaphysics and develops them in the form of a hermeneutic metaphysics, which emphasizes humanity's capacity for understanding, initiative, and hope.

Grondin was a pupil, French translator, interpreter (*Einführung zu Hans-Georg Gadamer*, 2000; *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, 2002) and close collaborator of Hans-Georg Gadamer (he edited his *Lesebuch* or *Reader*, in which he conducted a wide-ranging interview with Gadamer on his lifework, and published his extant correspondence with Ricœur and with Derrida). Out of this close collaboration grew the landmark biography of Hans-Georg Gadamer that Grondin published in 1999 (*Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography*, 1999, 2nd ed. 2013), and which was translated into many languages.

Grondin also had the good fortune to have met Ricœur very early on in his studies and wrote an introduction to his work, in the prestigious "Que sais-je?" series, on the occasion of his centenary in 2013 (*Paul Ricœur*, 3rd ed. 2021). It was also widely translated, as were his two other "Que sais-je?" on the *Philosophie de la religion* (2009, 4th ed. 2020) and on *Herméneutique* (2004, 4th ed. 2017). Grondin has tried to build bridges between Gadamer and Ricœur, viewing this as one of the most important tasks of contemporary research in hermeneutics.

His work has earned him prestigious honors, among them the Killam, Molson, [Léon-Gérin](#), and [André-Laurendeau](#) Prizes, the Konrad-Adenauer-Award of the Humboldt-Foundation as well as three honorary doctorates. Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, he was named Officer of the [Order of Canada](#), and of the [Order of Quebec](#). In 2018 he was awarded the [Gold medal](#) of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. He was the President of the Academy of Arts and Humanities of Canada (2016-2020). [Ambassador Scientist](#) of the Alexander-von-Humboldt-Foundation (2018-2022), he is also a member of the [Holberg Committee](#), which awards the Holberg Prize. He is a founding member and member of the Scientific Board of the Société francophone de philosophie de la religion and of the [Hans-Georg-Gadamer-Gesellschaft](#) (2021-2026).