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**THE PROBLEM OF TRUTH-CLAIMS
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HERMENEUTIC CIRCLE
AND THE THEORETICAL PARADIGM
OF MULTIPLE LITERARY INTERPRETATIONS**

Abstract

The text analyses the pluralism of contemporary literary theories and asks whether claims to truth are relevant when choosing a theory of interpretation. The author shows that although the multiplicity of approaches is sometimes considered an advantage, it raises the problem of interpretative validity, particularly evident in Jungian criticism, which makes strong metaphysical claims to truth. By juxtaposing Jungianism with relativistic positions (e.g., neopragmatism), the text points to the tension between theories that require belief in their ontological assumptions and those that treat interpretation as a rhetorical strategy. The author rejects a methodological resolution of this dispute and proposes the perspective of Heidegger and Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics. In its light, the choice

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of theory does not result from an objective assessment of truth, but from the prior structure of understanding and belief inscribed in the hermeneutic circle.

Keywords: *interpretative pluralism, literary theory, claims to truth, hermeneutic circle, Jungian criticism, faith and interpretation*

PROBLEMATYKA TWIERDZEŃ PRAWDY W KONTEKŚCIE KOŁA HERMENEUTYCZNEGO I TEORETYCZNEGO PARADYGMATU LITERACKIEJ RÓŻNORODNOŚCI INTERPRETACYJNEJ

Streszczenie

Tekst analizuje pluralizm współczesnych teorii literackich i stawia pytanie, czy roszczenia do prawdy mają znaczenie przy wyborze teorii interpretacji. Autor pokazuje, że choć wielość podejść bywa uznawana za zaletę, rodzi ona problem interpretacyjnej ważności, szczególnie widoczny na przykładzie krytyki jungowskiej, która formułuje silne, metafizyczne roszczenia do prawdy. Zestawiając Jungianizm z relatywistycznymi stanowiskami (np. neopragmatyzmem), tekst wskazuje na napięcie między teoriami wymagającymi wiary w ich ontologiczne założenia a tymi, które traktują interpretację jako strategię retoryczną. Autor odrzuca metodologiczne rozstrzygnięcie tego sporu i proponuje perspektywę ontologicznej hermeneutyki Heideggera i Gadamera. W jej świetle wybór teorii nie wynika z obiektywnej oceny prawdziwości, lecz z uprzedniej struktury rozumienia i wiary wpisanej w hermeneutyczne koło.

Słowa kluczowe: *pluralizm interpretacyjny, teoria literatury, roszczenia do prawdy, hermeneutyczne koło, krytyka jungowska, wiara i interpretacja*

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The following article is intended as a concise contribution to the debate within literary theory situated in the field delineated by the opposing poles of foundationalist and relativist stances. The examples, discussed in paragraphs below and largely contingent/synchronistic – but not by coincidence aligned with the grounds of the theories they exemplify – are called upon to elucidate a question which originates in the very apparent plurality of theoretical approaches, or more simply put, ways of reading of literary texts. The question, whose exact formulation is less important than the plethora of problems it reflects, may be phrased in very general terms as: “are truth-claims at all significant in the choice of interpretation theory?” and in more specific terms “is there a significant di-

lemma in choosing between reading through a theory with strong truth-claims and one which does not seem to demand an equally powerful truth-claim, or by its nature, none at all?”

A brief survey of the catalogue of contemporary literary-theory anthologies/readers textbooks published within the last two decades indicates an unmistakably expansionary and to some extent arguably entropic nature of the discipline, characterized (quite ironically in its at least partial postmodern heritage) by a seeming, at least for the moment, delay – or a deferral – of a Kuhnian paradigm-shift. This phenomenon is well illustrated by Introductions to two editions of one particular anthology, with fifteen years of distance between. The earlier one expresses an intuition that while certain perspectives, while not “redundant, sterile or irrelevant – their premises, methodologies and perceptions remain enlightening, and may yet be the source of still more innovative departures in theorizing literature,” have, nevertheless, “dropped back and are out of the current race”¹. The newest edition seems less radical in its ultimate judgments and claims that some theories (Bakhtin School) “were revived [...] and continue to have an active life in literary, film and visual arts study” while others (New Criticism) have “made a reconfigured appearance in some ‘post’ or ‘anti-theory’ arguments of recent times”².

This peculiar, if well familiar to any practitioner, character of literary theory is widely regarded (as exemplified by readers and anthologies) as its strength rather than weakness, yet is not without certain problematic consequences. The awareness of the inherent plurality of textual interpretation, its “richness and flexibility”³ bestowed by a variety of perspectives, from well-established, in some cases perhaps already historical ones (structuralism, post-structuralism, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, feminist theory, postcolonial theory, to name but a few) to “emerging” but already well-grounded and prominent ones (ecocriticism, thing theory, digital humanities, animal studies, for example), still, and perhaps more so than ever, begs the question of interpretative validity.

It may, of course, be argued that this question has in the last decades lost much of its impact and the modern literary scholar (and a *didaktikós!*), well-used to pirouetting in the fluxes of theoretical winds most frequently accepts to settle the issue with the notion of choice. To use a technological, if a little outdated metaphor, like a professional photographer, they command a number of filters at their disposal to place in front of the camera lens, and, as such, according to

¹ R. Selden, P. Widdowson, P. Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory. Fifth Edition*, Harlow, London, New York 2005, p. 6.

² R. Selden, P. Widdowson, P. Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory. Sixth Edition*, London and New York 2017, p. 3.

³ G. Castle, *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory*, Malden, Oxford, Carlton 2007, p. 12.

the unique properties of each filter, modify, distort or illuminate the shot. Each perspective frames the text respectively to its optics, with the full awareness on the part of the scholar that photography, similarly to contemporary literary theory, has little to do with the notion of objectivity and indeed the very notion of a truth-claim and its individual realizations in particular theories are in some manner “always-already” constructed/motivated – ideologically, politically, culturally, or linguistically. Notwithstanding, the resultant interpretation is in some cases more gratifying than in others, as certain scenes (texts) seem to be better lit by certain filters (theories) than others.

An academic rigour of sorts is bestowed upon this attitude by the following series of interlaced quotes from Hugh Silverman’s *Textualities. Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, via a reference to what he calls “logic of the text,” bearing a close kinship to Umberto Eco’s “semiotic strategy,” which in turn conditions the “logic of interpretation”:

A literary logic establishes the underlying conditions for knowledge of a text. Such conditions operate within a particular literary space and they presuppose an understanding of how the text is to be interpreted [...] A wide variety of approaches accompany literary logics [...] In each case, however, the approach itself has an identity of its own just as the literary text has its own space and limits [...] Each time, the logic is a logic of a reading, or of an interpretation. It establishes its own coherence, consistency, and methodological rigor. Such a logic only allows for particular readings or interpretations to be followed, understood, appreciated, and proliferated. Even if each study is entirely unique, the logic of such a study will be the establishment of its own identity. It is much more customary for such logics to overlap and even reproduce themselves in new readings and interpretations – sometimes forming whole schools of approach. If the psychoanalytical, existential, mythological, sociological, phenomenological, structuralist, poststructuralist, feminist, and deconstructionist orientations are the more common, it is only because they have similar logics, with similar modes of reading and interpreting⁴.

Foregrounding the central theme of interpretive plurality within literary theory, Silverman emphasizes that every critical framework operates according to its own internal logic—a self-contained system of coherence and interpretation. This multiplicity is not a weakness but a defining feature of contemporary literary discourse. Each theory constitutes a way of reading, a methodological lens through which meaning is made intelligible. No single approach lays claim to an unmediated or “objective” truth.

⁴ H. Silverman, *Textualities. Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, New York and London 1994, pp. 71–71.

And yet, are there any intrinsic limitations—or perhaps better put, constraints—within this meta-methodological openness? The relativism of interpretations and perspectives that characterizes much of the humanist tradition is often worn as a badge of honor, and not without justification. Yet, the critical question remains: can all interpretive filters be placed side by side in a single analytical toolbox? More provocatively, does any one of them, overtly or covertly, carry a tag marked “the world as it is,” thus disturbing the equilibrium of interpretative equivalence? While perhaps a number of theories could be made to serve as potential examples in this context, perhaps the most illustrative – and because of its rather marginal character perhaps the most compelling for the elucidation of the initial question of the article – would be what can be framed broadly as Jungian interpretation of literary texts. Functioning at the fringes of interpretative practice, dwarfed by the presence of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis in literary theory anthologies, it seems to edge beyond the bounds of Silverman’s hermeneutic pluralism, gesturing toward a more foundational, even metaphysical, understanding of textual meaning. Leaving aside the obvious differences between interpretive outcomes – or even the content and presuppositions of a theory, which Silverman characterizes as variations in “internal logic” – we are faced here with a deeper ambiguity: namely, the implicit epistemological or ontological commitments that certain theories appear to make.

It is not my intention here to provide an in-depth critique of a Jungian approach to literary texts⁵, which would validate or invalidate its premises and outcomes. Rather, I will recall a single of its central concept – that of the collective unconscious – as what I referred to at the beginning of the article – potentially problematic “truth-claim” of a theory. In Jung’s theory the collective unconscious, the reservoir of a set archetypal patterns underlies the psychic reality of the entire humanity and is thus universal and objective⁶, which in itself is a strong ontological statement. When developed into a more extreme, contemporary “post-“ permutation, this approach leads to a perspective difficult to acknowledge without a serious epistemological commitment:

There is only One Mind in the universe [...] this book proposes a “metaphysical criticism” partly based on an overarching unity of time, space, matter, and thought [...] the study consider phenomena that arise from or relate to connections via the One Mind, the unifying energy that flows through all

⁵ Some relatively recent significant examples of publications on this subject include: S. Rowland, *Jungian Literary Criticism. An Essential Guide*, London and New York 2019; J. S. Baumlin, T. F. Baumlin, G. H. Jensen, *Post-Jungian Criticism. Theory and Practice*, Albany 2004; and, most notably, M. A. Fike, *The One Mind. C. G. Jung and the Future of Literary Criticism*, London and New York 2014.

⁶ C. G. Jung, *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, translated by R. F. C. Hull, Princeton 1980, pp. 42–53.

things, including nonphysical realms [...] Jungian psychological criticism appropriately provides a foundation, starting point, touchstone, and bridge between science and metaphysics. [...] my goal is to complement and upgrade that traditional psychological approach by highlighting literary connections to the One Mind [...] As a result of this shifted paradigm, the “Self” (Jung’s term for the archetype of wholeness or the integrated psyche) expands to include a comprehensive unity of persons, places, events, and things, whether physical or nonphysical, past or present⁷.

The overtones of the above passage, almost theological in nature, clearly indicate a series of truth-claims about the underlying reality of the world and any potential interpretation of literary works that might surface from the application of such a theory will essentially have to acknowledge those truth-claims as its foundation.

Thus, the question appears, on the surface, to be that of methodology – the acceptance of a truth-claim for the sake of a productive, inspiring, original, or profound interpretation.

Perhaps quite surprisingly, a possible justification for the inclusion of Jungian paradigm into the plethora of interpretative filters may come from a radically opposed site of reference – and remain axiomatic within its argument – that of Rortian antifoundationalist or neopragmatist perspective, whose relativist outlook remains a powerful idiomatic voice of the contemporary academia. From this perspective, a Jungian analysis is no more than a comprehensible rhetorical strategy, made particularly persuasive by a number of pertinent features. Among the most significant we may mention its:

- (a) holistic and systematic typology (archetypes);
- (b) explanatory potential towards narrative elements such as plot events, characters, setting, etc.;
- (c) connection with the creative process itself, which provides an interesting alternative for the tedious discussions over intentionality of meaning;
- (d) grounding in the field of outside literary studies: psychology (albeit relatively controversial).

The problem is that while a Rortiann may happily accept and practice Jungian interpretation, a Jungian would not, I believe, be pleased with a Rortian justification of their theory. For a neopragmatist, their worldview would be a result of “not as stages in the ascent towards Enlightenment, but simply as the contingent results of encounters with various books which happened to fall into one’s hand”⁸, while for a Jungian it would contain an element “a-causal, [...] meaningful coin-

⁷ M. A. Finke, *The One Mind*, pp. 1-2.

⁸ R. Rorty, *The pragmatist’s progress*, in: *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, ed. S. Collini, Cambridge 2002, p. 92.

cidence between archetype and physical world”⁹ – the workings of synchronicity: “recognition of meaningful coincidence between the human psyche and the world we habitually consider outside of it [...] a hidden connection”¹⁰. To sum up this part of the argument, a Jungian analysis may be found valid from the perspective of a certain kind of literary and philosophical thought, but this explanation is not, I believe, compatible enough to become satisfactory and convincing for the Jungian analysis itself.

Another justification may come from the cornerstone of the modern humanities, the Romantic hermeneutics distinction between Natur- and Geisteswissenschaften, as Jungian or post-Jungian literary object of study parallels the *Lebenswelt* of lived experience. In this light, depth psychology requires no explanation in the scientific sense, as its empiricism is made radically different and self-sustaining by the decisive split between the sciences of nature and the sciences of spirit. Jungian criticism may thus see itself as uncovering the kind of truth about the text that may exist alongside other truths/interpretations, since its essence concerns the psychological/spiritual aspects of the work of art and does not negate other critical perspectives. Two doubts emerge however: does this argumentation hold inter-disciplinarily, that is, when we transpose Jungian psychology into the field of literary studies, and is it valid in the context of theories that superseded Dilthey’s distinction and metamorphosed hermeneutics into a more relativised, radical form?

These doubts are by no means caused by a notion that interdisciplinary or radical hermeneutics may be in any sense invalidate depth psychology in and for itself. Nevertheless, they do cast a shadow of doubt upon the appropriateness of Jungian psychology as a technique of literary analysis. The reasons for those doubts converge: firstly, a curious reversal takes place depth psychology is a field of study of the structure of the human psyche – literature as a product of the psyche is not its prime target: it is rather the means to end, a mirror whose reflection turns the academic eye back to the origin of the work. In a nutshell, in the context of the proposed justification by tradition of Dilthey’ dichotomy, depth psychology reads the psyche through literature, rather than literature through the psyche. Taking into consideration its rather controversial character, not unfounded are suspicions that literature may be used to support and prove its premises and the intention to say something original and productive about literature is secondary if not marginal to its intent to reaffirm itself. To clarify by a counterexample: the intention of the structuralist thought was to demonstrate that literary texts, as linguistic and cultural products possess discernable patterns that may be captured

⁹ S. Rowland, *Jungian Literary Criticism*, p. 50.

¹⁰ S. Rowland, *Jungian Literary Criticism*, p. 128.

in taxonomy of genres and narrative descriptions. Take away literature and these patterns cease to have any meaning.

It seems that from a methodological perspective, one is faced with a serious dilemma – either Jungian criticism makes sense in a relativist paradigm as one of many strategies of persuasion, but it must essentially abandon its truth claims about literature, or it becomes trapped in the circle of self-affirmation, substantiating its own premises rather than its object of study.

When we consider those two possible justifications of Jungian criticism in the light of our initial question, it becomes apparent that despite its initial appearance, the question is not or rather should not be posed as that of methodology. We clearly appear to lack any meta-methodological point of reference, a convenient outside from which we could pass judgement on a particular theory, or, if you wish, to adopt an opposite perspective but describe the same situation, we could easily speak from a myriad of perspectives. Nevertheless, if we still wish to pursue inconvenient questions that seem to require, demand, a value judgement to be made, we may safely retreat, as I have done in the recent argument, to a strategy that we may call, for a lack of a better term, an enclosing juxtaposition, and locate our question in the midst of a comparative difference, a dialogue between fundamental concepts of theories.

While such a haven may serve us as a replacement for the lost objectivity of perspective, it is at the same time a position which evidently demonstrates the helplessness of positing a question about difference in terms of methodology. By no means is it because methodology has become a *persona non grata* in theoretical discourse. As Suresh Raval in his inspiring work on the foundationalist/anti-foundationalist debate writes:

[...] if every disagreement makes sense only against a background of agreements to which the disputants can appeal, then we are justified in saying that there is a limit beyond which the idea of critical disagreement becomes incoherent. This is a limit we can recognize without imposing a false unity on critical practices and without seeking comfort in a critical theology of either ahistorical, transcultural, universal standards or a sociobiology of all human behaviour and culture. Those seeking universal principles achieve one kind of false unity; those denying universal principles and yet proposing a global theoretical model that would account for the panorama of competing critical notions achieve yet another¹¹.

I would like to propose an alternative solution to the initial question by introducing into the discussion the concept of “belief” understood in a completely secular sense, and grounded in Heideggerian and Gadamerian ontological

¹¹ S. Raval, *Grounds of Literary Criticism*, Urbana and Chicago 1998, p. 84.

hermeneutics. Belief, something of a non-problem in the contemporary literary theory, causes an uncomfortable rapture in a theoretical debate. Jungian criticism in literature is particularly convenient for the demonstration of this rapture for two main reasons. Firstly, it is a striking example of interdisciplinarity. Secondly, the body of its theory and its non-empirical, metaphysical grounds mentioned earlier clearly mark its liminal status as a field that borders between the scientific and the spiritual – Jungian criticism starkly stands out as a theory which demands from its practitioner a certain degree of personal belief, necessarily connected with the notion of value judgments: “[...]since Northrop Frey formalized what had for some time amounted to an exile of value judgments from criticism, evaluation, although a necessary component of all literary criticism, has not had the pivotal to place it deserves in contemporary literary theory”¹².

The relation between belief and truth-claims acquires certain clarity when inscribed into the concept of the hermeneutic circle. Gadamer’s hermeneutic circle, along with his notion of prejudices, is rooted in Heidegger’s existential framework of understanding. This represents a significant shift from the conventional or everyday interpretation of the term. In ordinary usage, “understanding” is typically seen as a process or a mental state that individuals develop and apply to the world around them. However, Heidegger challenges this rather Cartesian view by offering an ontological perspective. From the ontic standpoint, understanding is seen as a skill or cognitive capacity of the mind. But ontologically—within the realm of fundamental structures of being—understanding is a core aspect of Dasein’s existence. It is not merely something humans possess, but rather a fundamental mode of being itself.

Dasein is such that in every case it has understood (or alternatively not understood) that it is to be thus or thus. As such understanding it “knows” what it is capable of. This “knowing” does not first arise from an immanent self-perception, but belongs to the Being of the “there,” which is essentially understanding¹³.

The fundamental significance of understanding thus resides in its capacity to reveal the possibilities inherent in Dasein’s existence within the world. Its “projective” nature serves, first, to situate Dasein in the world, and second, to unfold the potential for Dasein to realize its own existential possibilities within that context.

Out of the numerous consequences of such a vision of understanding I would like to single out one which is particularly significant for this argument. The Heideggerian foundation implies that understanding as an ontic quality takes

¹² S. Raval, *Grounds of Literary Criticism*, Urbana and Chicago 1998, p. 65.

¹³ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford 2001, p. 184.

precedence over any conscious action of thought that an interpreter may perform towards the world. In this sense, Dasein is always inscribed within the hermeneutic circle, which for all practical reasons, remain a circle without the outside since any mode of being is always constituted by a gesture of understanding extended prior to all else. This implies that a use of a theory, be it Jungian or any other, as methodology will always remain secondary in the relation text-interpreter.

We cannot of course forget that while understanding is a primary mode of being it is always an understanding directed towards something. The relation established by the rotation of the hermeneutic circle must not however be thought of in terms domination typical of the Cartesian dichotomy of subject/object. In words of Heidegger: "In interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a signification over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it; but when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the word"¹⁴. This serves as a reminder that, while the fundamental mode of understanding is a projection of Dasein's potentiality-for-being, such projection invariably unfolds through the network of relations that understanding has already taken up as its own. As Magda King writes: "It is quite erroneous to think that handiness is a 'subjective colouring' we cast over things: it is a mode of being prescribed by the significance-structure of the world, which enables us to understand things as they are 'in themselves'"¹⁵.

Understanding, then, is always engaged in a dual relation: between things in themselves and things as they relate to the interpreter. The subject is not a detached consciousness that regards the world and its contents as isolated, independent entities; rather, the fundamental structure of understanding lies in the unfolding of possible connections and relations between the self and the world. Dasein, as interpreter, is already shaped by the very things it seeks to understand – its mode of understanding is, in part, a consequence of the inherently projective nature of its existential structure, but equally shaped by the manner in which the world presents itself to it.

Taking into consideration the aspects of the hermeneutic circle which I have just described it seems that the problem of difference between theories particularly strongly grounded in the belief in their objective truth and between other theories may ultimately be reduced to the results of the ontological preconditioning of the interpreter. The application of a given theory in the methodological sense is ultimately secondary, while the belief in the justification of a given theory is a primary state, resultant from prestructure of understanding established in the unavoidable hermeneutic circle.

¹⁴ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 191.

¹⁵ M. King, *Heidegger's Philosophy. A Guide to His Basic Thought*, Oxford 1964, p. 101.

The obvious criticism at this stage may relate to using hermeneutics as a metatheory, which inevitably opens the argument to at least two forms of critique. One comes from the anti-foundationalist or constructivist perspectives which perceives Heidegger, despite his supposed intent, as the last great metaphysician, and once again opens the irresolvable debate over the relativity and artificiality of all perception and theory. The second criticism may, quite rightly, indicate the inappropriateness of using a metatheory to justify a theory which, could, at heart be seen to be fundamentally incompatible. There is an obvious dissonance between Jungian collective unconscious and Heideggerian structure of understanding, and a reconciliation of the two would prove to be a very difficult task indeed. Both of these arguments should be acknowledged. But if a problem of belief is to be addressed at all, it has to happen through a metatheory of some sort because it is in itself a meta-issue. Even neopragmatism, which claims to be the death of all perception based on objective criteria, and, one could say, takes beliefs as its central theme, in a similar discussion cannot help but become a metatheory founded on the paradox of relativism – a circularity – the belief in the relativity of perspectives must also be itself relative. Further pursuit of this line of thought will always lead to an intellectual paradox which can only be explained by the fact that the concept of belief as a metaconcept should not be framed into the meta-discussion of beliefs themselves. This alternative perspective also sets the incompatibility problem as basically irrelevant. If, for this particular problem only, we accept the necessity of a metatheory, a space opens up which reduces the significance of the incongruity of premises. While from a Jungian perspective Heideggerian theory is unacceptable, this does not have to be the case the other way around.

To return now to the hermeneutic circle, and its third, as yet unaddressed aspect – the concept of prejudices. Schmidt perceives Gadamerian notion of prejudices as an attempt to clarify and develop a rather obscure passage in *Being and Time*:

Gadamer quotes Heidegger's statement that a vicious circularity within understanding can be avoided and positive possibilities of knowing can be revealed only when prejudices are founded on *Sachen selbst*, i.e., the things themselves or on the subject matter, and not on fancies or popular conceptions, Gadamer's task is therefore to explain the legitimation of the prejudices during the process of understanding by demonstrating how they are grounded in the things themselves¹⁶. (Schmidt 73)

¹⁶ L. K. Schmidt, *Uncovering hermeneutic truth*, in: *The Specter of Relativism. Truth, Dialogue, and Phronesis in Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Evanston, ed. L. K. Schmidt, Illinois 1995, p. 73.

The passage to which Schmidt refers is the following “All correct interpretations must be on guard against arbitrary fancies and the limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought and direct its gaze “on the things themselves” [...] It is clear that to let the object take over in this way is not a matter for the interpreter of a single decision, but is “the first, last and constant task”¹⁷. It becomes clear that a distinction must be made between “arbitrary fancies” and genuinely fruitful prejudices. This assertion may seem problematic when considered alongside Gadamer’s later emphasis on the inevitability of pre-judgements. However, its primary function, I would argue, is to draw our attention back to the mutual dependence between the interpreter and the world, as previously discussed. While Gadamer integrates prejudices into the framework of interpretation, the foundational ontological understanding must always remain anchored in this relational dynamic. To “let the object take over” is not to negate the essential fore-meaning that the object itself brings forth.

The belief that dictates the use of a particular theory of interpretation is thus inscribed into the hermeneutic circle by three features: the structure of understanding, the relation interpreter/world involved in this structure and by the prejudices resultant from this structure which stress that this relation is largely determined by the preexisting cultural and intellectual heritage of judgments and values. Thus to return to the question which initiated this discussion “are truth-claims at all significant in the choice of interpretation theory?” and to regard this issue not from the perspective of methodology which essentially leads us astray but from the ontological perspective suggested by interpretation perceived in form of the hermeneutic circle, what lies behind the question does not concern a comparative study of the power of truth claims of different theories and the according matter of the degree of devotion, but rather in the problematizing of the relation between the concepts of a theory and truth-claim.

If, in the discussion of metaconcept of belief we assume the Heideggerian/Gadamerian hermeneutics as a metatheory, we note that the problem of the truth claim is in fact an illusory one. This is not because of the social relativity of truth, an anti-foundationalist answer which inscribes itself in the actual discussion of methodology, but because the structure of the hermeneutic circles dictates that the belief in the truth claim of a theory is in a certain sense necessitated in any act of interpretation. In other words, from the ontological perspective it is impossible to distinguish between a truth-claim and belief. On this level, it simply makes no sense to speak of the difference between theories, not because there is no difference but because in the moment of its initiation, the hermeneutic circle does not allow for such a difference.

¹⁷ H-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, New York 1982, p. 236.

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