

God's Word and the Church's Council:

Vatican II and Divine Revelation

Edited by

Mark O'Brien OP

Christopher Monaghan CP



**ATF Theology
Adelaide**

2014

Text copyright © 2014 remains with the individual authors for all papers in this collection.

All rights reserved. Except for any fair dealing permitted under the Copyright Act, no part of this book may be reproduced by any means without prior permission. Inquiries should be made to the publisher.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry (pbk)

Title: God's word and the church's council : Vatican II and divine revelation / Mark Alan O'Brien, Christopher John Monaghan, editors.

ISBN: 9781922239723 (paperback)
9781922239754 (hardback)
9781922239730 (ebook : pdf)
9781922239747 (ebook : kindle)

Series: Vatican II.

Notes: Includes index.

Subjects: Catholic Church--Liturgy.
Vatican Council (2nd : 1962-1965 : Basilica di San Pietro in Vaticano)

Other Authors/Contributors:
Monaghan, Christopher J., editor.
O'Brian, Mark, editor.

Dewey Number: 262.5

Cover design by Astrid Sengkey
Layout/Artwork by Anna Dimasi

Text Minion Pro Size 11

Published by:



An imprint of the ATF Ltd.
PO Box 504
Hindmarsh, SA 5007
ABN 90 116 359 963
www.atfpress.com

CONTENTS

Foreword	
<i>Mark Colerdege</i>	vii
Introduction	
<i>Mark O'Brien OP and Christopher Monaghan CP</i>	
1. <i>Dei Verbum</i> and Revelation	
<i>Gerald O'Collins SJ, AC</i>	1
2. Vatican II and 'The Study of the Sacred Page' as 'The Soul of Theology' (<i>Dei Verbum</i> 24)	
<i>Francis J Moloney SDB</i>	19
3. Scripture and Tradition in the Patristic Age	
<i>Denis P Minns OP</i>	41
4. 'I handed on to you what I also received' (1 Cor 15:3) The Scripture-Tradition Connection/Controversy	
<i>Dianne Bergant CSA</i>	55
5. 'The Unity of the Whole of Scripture'	
<i>Justin Taylor SM</i>	69
6. <i>Dei Verbum</i> : Literary Forms and Vatican II— An Old Testament Perspective	
<i>Antony F Campbell SJ</i>	87
7. <i>Dei Verbum</i> and the Witness of Creation: Reading Ecclesiastes 3:9–22 Ecologically	
<i>Marie Turner</i>	101
8. A Review and Assessment of the Church's Engagement with Historical Critical Analysis of the New Testament as outlined in <i>Dei Verbum</i>	
<i>Jerome Murphy-O'Connor OP</i>	113

9. . Breaking Open the Word: The Legacy of <i>Dei Verbum</i> Elizabeth Dowling RSM	135
10. Translating Biblical Texts Within an Ecclesial Context Dale Launderville OSB	149
11. <i>Dei Verbum</i> , Communication and Media Peter Malone MSC	163
12. <i>Dei Verbum</i> and the Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer John F Owens SM	179
13. Where do we Go From Here? The Future of Catholic Biblical Studies in the Wake of Vatican II Donald Senior CP	193
14. History as Bulwark, Bridge and Bulldozer: <i>Dei Verbum</i> and Ecumenical, Biblical Endeavour Alan Cadwallader	207
List of Contributors	225
Biblical Index	231
Citations from <i>Dei Verbum</i>	234
Index of Names and Subjects	235

Dei Verbum and the Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer

John F Owens SM

I

The relation between *Dei Verbum* (DV) and the philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer can be discerned in a contrast that is drawn in a key paragraph in which DV addresses the question of interpretation. The paragraph begins by endorsing use of the historical-critical method, recommending attention to what the authors of the sacred texts originally meant, the literary forms they used, customary patterns of expression which prevailed at the time of composition, and so on. But the Council fathers add a qualifying paragraph, insisting that the scholarly enterprise should keep in mind 'the content and unity of the whole of Scripture', and the 'living tradition of the whole church'.¹ They could scarcely have guessed that the tradition-based style of reading to which they refer in passing, mainly as a check on possible excesses of the historical-critical method, was about to become a topic of intense philosophical debate, and to give rise to a bewildering variety of possibilities. When the Pontifical Biblical Commission makes a list of interpretative styles some thirty years later, it records no fewer than a dozen major types, all of which, it readily concedes, have something to offer.²

This development beyond historical criticism alone, to acceptance of a more engaged style of reading, owes much to Gadamer's

1. 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation' (*Dei Verbum*) 12, *The Documents of Vatican II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 111–28.

2. Gadamer's own approach is probably included as one of these 'methods'. Cf 'Approach by the History of the Influence of the Text (*Wirkungsgeschichte*)', in *The Interpretation Of The Bible In The Church* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), 55.

influence. His best-known work, *Truth and Method*, appeared four years before the promulgation of *DV*.³ It signals a shift of focus beyond historical scholarship to a style of reading where ancient texts speak in the present to a contemporary reader. It is one of Gadamer's achievements to make this sort of reading academically respectable again. To the positivist eye of preceding generations, the circular, interest-based methods of human sciences like history or literary criticism, had looked impossibly subjective, falling far short of the standards of paradigmatic sciences like physics and chemistry. Dilthey had proposed a separate-but-equal status for the human sciences, claiming they had a respectable method of their own, that differed from the methods of the exact sciences. Gadamer claims not only that the circular procedures of the human sciences have their own validity, but that even the exact sciences rely in the end on similar procedures. *All* understanding ultimately works in the way that the human sciences do. The story of detached observation and hypothesis which the hard sciences tried to tell about themselves is in important respects illusory. This stunning reversal of the old positivist hierarchy caught seasoned defenders of the human sciences by surprise. Charles Taylor describes 'old-guard Diltheyans who suddenly pitch forward on their faces as all opposition ceases to the reign of universal hermeneutics'.⁴

In most respects, this development is very favourable to the interests expressed in *DV*. Historical-critical study becomes the background to an encounter with the text, and no longer dominates the reading process. If Catholics read the bible from within the life of the Church, learning to articulate and develop a tradition that has already formed them and their reading style, they are doing what everybody does who reads a text. So long as they allow the text to challenge them, and consent to be led beyond their starting-point, there is nothing necessarily 'subjective', or partisan in what they are doing. But alongside such areas of agreement, there are questions about how Gadamer's philosophy relates to wider interests of *DV*. Most obviously, the document insists on an authoritative Magisterium

3. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth And Method*, translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G Marshall, second revised edition (London: Continuum, 2004), henceforth *TM*.

4. Charles Taylor, 'Understanding In Human Science', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 34/1 (1980): 25–38, 26. Taylor thinks the view exaggerated.

that has the last word in the interpretative process. By contrast, universal hermeneutics seems to leave little room for anything *besides* hermeneutics. While the tensions here are real enough, I will suggest that they do not lie in the first place between ecclesiastical interests and those of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics. Rather they expose ambiguities and possible weaknesses within the hermeneutical approach itself.

II

The thought that revelation is in the first place *of* God, a kind of address where God speaks to us and we encounter him as a conversation partner, is now a commonplace. It was however not always so. In his influential 1967 commentary on *DV*, Joseph Ratzinger emphasises the size of the shift that has taken place in the document. He notes the abandonment of an earlier 'defensive' schema, one that viewed revelation as 'a store of mysterious supernatural teachings', in favour of a view that saw it as 'a true dialogue which touches man in his totality . . . addressing him as a partner . . .'⁵ Gadamer's philosophy sets out to examine what is involved in seeing a text as addressing us in this way as if it were another person. His problem is not in the first place that of bridging the gap between a text and a person—though he is aware of this as a problem⁶—but rather of finding the right approach to *both* texts and persons. He is not concerned to recommend any novelty here, as if he were introducing a new method or procedure. Rather he tries to wake us up to what we already do when we come to understand, so that we see and describe it in a way that accurately expresses the phenomenon, and does not distort it. In this sense, his approach can be described as a 'phenomenology' (*TM* 513).

Among his preliminary moves is an attack on the positivist notion of an enquiry that has no presuppositions, and claims simply to register data and form testable hypotheses. For Gadamer, this can never be the most primitive description of how we come to know the world. He points out the role of our own expectations in enabling a meaningful world to appear, determining for example what is

5. Joseph Ratzinger, 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: Chapter 1', in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Volume III, edited by Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 170–80, 172.

6. Gadamer, *TM*, 370–71.

relegated to the background as we come to know something, and what stands out as new or surprising. Our pre-judgments enable an initial meaningful content to emerge at all. The objectivity of an enquiry does not come down to a passive reception of material, but rather to a readiness to revise both pre-judgments and the objects that appear in their light.

the initial meaning emerges only because he (a person understanding a text) is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there (*TM* 269).

When we come to understand a person or a text, there are three possible approaches to the process of projection and revision. At the first level, there is no revision to speak of. We simply measure data against our projections, without ever thinking that the latter might need fundamental revision. This illustrates 'method' as developed in early modernity, and as assumed by the exact sciences when pursuing their normal activities. No interpretation is needed here. Interpretation first looms as a topic when we take into account the fact that the object of enquiry itself has an opinion, or something like an opinion. At the second level, we recognise the opinion of the other, but fit it completely into our own perspective, implicitly assuming we know better. A convinced Freudian might read the letters of St Paul in this way, seeing Paul as recording experiences that are not properly identified until the arrival of Freud. St Paul could of course return the compliment, seeing Freud as a particularly unfortunate attempt at salvation through 'works'. Each of the partners can 'reflectively . . . outdo the other', as Gadamer puts it (*TM* 353). This second level characterises a historical approach to a text, which sees the opinion of the text as a primitive (perhaps erroneous) expression of what we know better. To take an example, we might see the disturbing story of Abraham's journey up Mount Moriah as reflecting a 'primitive understanding of religion', which has fortunately been overcome as understanding has developed. The utterance of the text, the implicit approval that it gives to Abraham's intent to sacrifice Isaac, is relativised

so that it can be dismissed without really being heard. In approaching the text in this way, we never get beyond what we know already. Gadamer remarks that a reading at this level is really 'a form of self-relatedness' (*TM* 353). The other's view is never allowed to speak for itself. It does not occur to us, as we identify the historical limitations of the ancient statement, that we ourselves might be similarly limited, and that this has consequences for the way we proceed.

When we take our own historical contingency seriously, we enter the third level of interpretation. We allow the truth-claims of others to come into play as such. I see them as having 'something to say to me' (*TM* 355). To return to the example of Abraham on Moriah, we might allow into play the disturbing scriptural voice, which seems straightforwardly to approve Abraham's readiness to sacrifice. It might strike us how much we have domesticated our religious views, and suppressed their implicit danger. We wake up to ourselves and our own approach for the first time, entertaining the disturbing thought that the Moriah text might show us a side of every religious commitment, the absoluteness it brings to a life. Could our contemporaries have a point, when they depict religious belief as 'dangerous'? With this, we are grappling not just with a contrary or mistaken opinion that has strayed into our usual logical space. Rather, the space in which we began suddenly itself appears as limited—as just 'our' space. We realise that we too approach the world from a limited historical perspective, and are being called beyond it. In Gadamer's terms we wake up to the presence of our horizon, the particular vantage point that we inhabit, and its limited range of possible perceptions. Gadamer does not of course mean that we should simply take over the viewpoint of the alien horizon that confronts us. We are challenged rather to a process of growth, to let ourselves be taken beyond our own particular starting-point, so that we find ourselves 'rising to a higher universality' (*TM* 304). Understanding is not in the first place a process of assimilation, but a kind of journey on our part, where we come to inhabit a different horizon, and so come to understand the viewpoint of the other, even if we still do not agree with it. Gadamer refers to this as a 'fusion' of horizons (*TM* 305). It is an active process, which requires that our previous historical horizon is 'simultaneously superseded' (*TM* 306) even though it is always necessarily in play, if we are to proceed at all.

This description of the process of understanding as one where we begin with a perspective, are led to recognise its contingency, and are open to moving beyond it, helps resolve a good many questions. It explains the sides of life where people constantly explore other horizons—in conversation or fiction-reading for example. It fits with a view of scriptural reading that sees it not as acquisition of information but as gradual penetration into a mystery, involving a personal journey. Gadamer notes that the Gospel does not exist to be understood as ‘a merely historical document’, an information source about ancient beliefs, but is meant to be read so that ‘it exercises its saving effect’ (*TM* 307). He notes this, while also recognising that when properly interpreted, the Gospel retains the status of a canonical document, and acquires ‘no new content’ (*TM* 326).⁷ To meet the Gospel word in the right way is like meeting a person in an encounter that changes our life, so that our reading is an ‘event’ as Gadamer calls it (*TM* 308). Understanding does not take place in an internal ‘noetic’ sphere that is purely theoretical, after which we decide how to act, but is itself the beginning of a response where we commit our lives in a certain direction. After such an encounter, we are not as we were before. Gadamer goes so far as to say that if it is to be understood properly, the Gospel text must be understood at every moment ‘in a new and different way’ (*TM* 308).

While this fits with the view expressed in *DV* 2 that reading of the scriptures is a kind of personal encounter, where readers hear the voice of God speaking ‘so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with himself’, Gadamer’s emphasis on understanding as a process of change can seem exaggerated. His way of framing the question sees understanding as an advance that brings us into regions we had not previously entered. This means a preparedness to leave starting-points behind and move towards new possibilities. Insight always involves an escape from something that has ‘held us captive’ (*TM* 350). Every experience worthy of the name ‘thwarts an expectation’ (*TM* 350). This certainly captures a side of our encounters with others, whether in reading or conversation. We can feel a delight in encountering alien horizons that relativise and challenge our own, so that we are led in a kind of journey. Gadamer describes the aim of dialogue as reaching an understanding where we are ‘transformed

7. It differs from the understanding of a legal text in this respect (*TM* 326).

into a communion in which we do not remain what we were' (*TM* 371).

But the universality of the claim can take us by surprise. Gadamer appears here as heir to a long tradition of German thought that centres around the notion of *Bildung*, the point that education is not in the first place a matter of coming to know new things, but rather of expanding the horizons in which we know them. *Bildung* belongs to the rise of 'historical' philosophy after Kant. While our knowledge is always caught up with particular historical categories, we also experience a drive that takes us beyond them, towards a greater universality. It involves 'keeping oneself open to . . . other, more universal points of view' (*TM* 15). For Herder, one of the founding figures of the ideal, this ascent is precisely a 'rising up to humanity' (*TM* 9). Such a view tends to regard everyday identification and manipulation of the things of the world as a secondary, technical affair. We discover reality at the moment when our whole horizon expands, and we see something for the first time, which had been hidden by the familiarity of everyday contact. This moment of discovery cannot be possessed in a straightforward manner, but requires a struggle against the flattening effects of the everyday. For Hegel, insight is always a function of this struggle, so that a moment of true experience invariably has the structure of a 'reversal of consciousness' (*TM* 349). This explains part of the appeal of Gadamer's approach—it is in touch with the historical sense that forms the contemporary world. It raises however the large question of how it ultimately stands to the Catholic tradition.

III

Gadamer's approach particularly raises the question of authoritative teaching in the form of doctrine or dogma, given that his model of understanding always involves a willingness to move beyond one's starting point. He says that the truly 'experienced' person is 'radically undogmatic' (*TM* 350). One who follows the historical interpretative path that he recommends does not find fulfilment in 'definitive knowledge', but rather in 'the openness of experience that is made possible by experience itself' (*TM* 350). Such statements seem to recommend an open-ended Socratic enquiry, and tell against positions that claim to be determined for all time in advance. Significantly, Gadamer describes his approach as fitting more

naturally with Protestant rather than with Catholic traditions, and as being naturally antagonistic towards Catholic views of dogma. 'As a Protestant art of interpreting Scripture, modern hermeneutics is clearly related in a polemical way to the dogmatic tradition of the Catholic church' (TM 328). Gadamer does not deny that most of our beliefs must remain stable if a particular interpretation is to get off the ground. He says that 'only the support of familiar and common understanding makes possible the venture into the alien . . .'.⁸ But it is hard to see how any framework could be established as permanent within this approach. We cannot bind the interpretative future. This seems to follow an understanding that has taken hermeneutics from its limited beginnings as an interpretative aid or a methodology of the human sciences, and turned it into universal hermeneutics, with a claim to describe understanding as it always is. As Gadamer says: 'What I am describing is the mode of the whole human experience of the world. I call this experience hermeneutical . . .'.⁹

DV seems to go against this in at least two ways. It reaffirms the creedal belief that Jesus is not just a part of the revelation, but its perfection and fulfilment. While different phases of interpretation come and go, and might be relativised by the arrival of a broader later viewpoint (as happened, in Christian view, to the covenant of the Old Testament), this will not happen to Jesus himself and the dispensation he brings. 'The Christian dispensation . . . will never pass away, and we now await no further public revelation . . .' (DV 4). If this view seems to speak for itself, it should not be forgotten that there have long been theological opinions that see Jesus as part of a larger historical process of education, and the New Testament as a kind of textbook that could conceivably be superseded in the future.¹⁰ The question is whether views like this can ever be permanently excluded, by a statement that

8. Gadamer, 'The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem', in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, translated by David E Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 3–17, 15.

9. Gadamer, 'The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem', 15.

10. The eighteenth-century German Enlightenment thinker Lessing holds, or hints at, both these opinions. Cf. 'The Education of the Human Race', numbers 64–72 in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, edited and translated by HB Nisbet (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 217–40, 233–34.

claims to be able to bind future generations.¹¹ The second challenge to universal hermeneutics set down in *DV* 10 concerns authentic interpretation, which the document sees as entrusted 'exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church . . .' However familiar such a claim might be in the Catholic tradition, it seems to take us outside the historical flux, claiming to have identified part of the permanent framework within which interpretation goes on, rather than being itself subject to interpretation. In an article written to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the appearance of *DV*, the exegete Daniel Kosch raises the question of whether the document should not admit that the last word is always with the hermeneutical process:

Unfortunately, *Dei Verbum* does not explicitly make the point that the enunciated principles apply in the first place to the magisterial teachings themselves, that official church teaching is always expressed in time-conditioned forms and that one can therefore 'rightly understand' the tradition and official church teachings only if one interprets them contextually. But what applies to the 'inspired authors' of Holy Scripture must first of all apply to those persons who 'authentically interpret' these (*DV* 10).¹²

Divino Afflante Spiritu offers a nice example of what Kosch refers to, in that it relativises earlier magisterial disciplinary decrees against the use of the historical-critical method and in favour of use of the Vulgate text, precisely seeing them as time-bound in important respects, and therefore able to be superseded or modified. It notes that the historical-critical method has come to develop necessary checks and balances, and points out that the decree in favour of the Vulgate text was preferring it to other *Latin* texts, and not to the Hebrew or Greek

11. Cf the statement of Kant: 'But would a society of pastors, perhaps a church assembly . . . not be justified in binding itself by oath to a certain unalterable symbol . . . and this for all time: I say that this is wholly impossible'. (Immanuel Kant, 'What Is Enlightenment?' in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, translated by Ted Humphrey [Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983], 33–48, 35).

12. Daniel Kosch, 'Dei Verbum And Its Impact', translated by L Maluf, *Bulletin Dei Verbum*, 74/75 (2005), 13–16, 14–15.

originals.¹³ Does hermeneutics ultimately rule, so that whatever a constituted authority says at a particular time should be explicitly recognised as time-conditioned, no more than the latest stage of a historical process whose future development could not be predicted or controlled? Some early commentators on *DV* express a wish for something like this, at least as regards the activities of scholars, that they must be 'free and unfettered' in pursuing their task, so that they can 'follow truth wherever it leads'.¹⁴ While this can look like a tension between ecclesiastical authorities and hermeneutical philosophy or scholarship, I think this would be too simple a view. The tension is really deeper, and is to be found at the heart of the hermeneutical project itself.

IV

In responding to such concerns, Gadamer insists that he is not in fact interfering in the detailed ways in which different disciplines go about their business, and is not prescribing any 'open' or 'Socratic' method that should always be followed, as if hermeneutics were a method in competition with others. Rather it attempts to give an account of what all methods and procedures come down to in the end. Gadamer has a celebrated discussion on this point with the Italian legal historian Emilio Betti, who is concerned to develop a canon of hermeneutical principles that can be of direct use in the activity of interpretation, for example the principle that whenever we interpret a text, we should treat it as having an autonomy of meaning, or the principle that the objectivity of the content of a text must be grounded in an intention of the author (*TM* 511). Betti criticises Gadamer for not developing such principles, and therefore failing adequately to safeguard the scientific nature of interpretation. Gadamer protests that such criticism misunderstands his intentions. In an appendix to *TM* he reproduces part of a letter to Betti where he insists that 'fundamentally I am *not*

13. Cf. 'Pope Pius XII: Encyclical Letter Promoting Biblical Studies', numbers 13 and 14, in *The Scripture Documents*, edited and translated by Dean P Bechard (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 115–39, 123 and 124.

14. Frederick C Grant, 'A Response' (to 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation') in *The Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Walter M Abbott SJ and Very Rev. Msgr. Joseph Gallagher (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 129–32, 131.

proposing a method, but I am describing *what is the case . . .*' (TM 512). In other words he is not prescribing rules for how our understanding should proceed, but describing what we in fact do when, in various disciplines with different methods, we enquire systematically into a topic and come to understand it. For Betti, such a project is not satisfactory. It proceeds as if all historical interpretative processes were equal, and offers no criteria for judging whether they are right or wrong, or better or worse. The hermeneutical problem remains at the level of phenomenological description (TM 513), which is to say that it leaves all existing methods in place, apparently delivering us over to the relativism of history.

If Betti were right, and Gadamer's approach did renounce any attempt to reform existing modes of interpretation, we could imagine a quick way to harmonise Gadamer's approach with that of DV. There would be a recognition that the principles laid down in DV simply show us what Catholic interpretation of scripture ultimately *is*. 'The game is played', as Wittgenstein might have said, and there is no suggestion that it needs reforming in light of any external standard. I do not think however that Betti is right about Gadamer, at least as he has been taken up and interpreted. While Gadamer does not promote a particular method as such, his work almost invariably strikes the reader as *normative*, offering standards to which particular interpretations should conform. As noted above, he seems to recommend a kind of openness, where we are always prepared to call our current interpretation in question. If we refuse to do this, we have fallen into dogmatism, mistakenly privileging our own views, as if they are more than just an interpretation that has been tested in conversation. The Gadamer interpreter and commentator Georgia Warnke reflects this view in lamenting the 'lack of hermeneutic sensitivity and openness' which bedevils public discussions of controversial ethical issues like euthanasia or abortion. She recommends the kind of discussion that Gadamer seems to recommend, where participants acknowledge the 'legitimacy' of viewpoints other than their own, and form a kind of 'deliberative democracy'. 'Rather than holding dogmatically to their own interpretations, participants are open to developing them through the interpretations of others . . .'¹⁵

15. Georgia Warnke, 'Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, edited by Robert J Dostal (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge

This is clearly a normative ideal, which sets out what people should be doing. It also highlights a striking lack in Gadamer's approach, given that at least some of the time, it is surely wrong for us to be 'open' like this. Gadamer does not seem to offer any clue for when we should *refuse* a conversation. Warnke is aware that this could lead to a relativist lack of standards or even 'a deference to any interpretive understanding different from our own'.¹⁶ She herself puts her trust in the ultimate coherence of the views we already hold, believing that as long as we remain open to the logical consequences of our current best views, we will be led to alter views that are distorted or prejudiced. She cites legal decisions that eventually led to the abandonment of racial segregation in the United States, quoting Gadamer: 'Is it so perverse to think that in reality the irrational cannot hold out in the long run?'¹⁷ But her example takes a popular issue whose outcome is now accepted more or less by everybody, and directs recommendations to those who need to *change* their views (so that dogma and doctrine again appear simply as possible hindrances to progress). Surely there are cases where we should hold on to our views, and even, at the extreme, *refuse* to listen to those who want to persuade us otherwise? One is reminded of the famous statement of Elizabeth Anscombe that we should not even argue with people who want us to consider certain moral positions, for example whether an innocent person should in a particular situation be judicially executed in order to achieve a greater good. One who argues like this simply 'shows a corrupt mind', and we should not enter into discussion with them.¹⁸ Gadamer does not seem to consider cases like this. Ingrid Scheibler notes his encouragement that we take up a 'living relation' to tradition, and avoid the move where we reflect ourselves out of such a living relation by relativising an objection, and a *priori* refuse to consider it as a possible challenge to our position. Anscombe

University Press, 2002), 79–101, 97.

16. Warnke, 'Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics', 98.

17. Warnke, 'Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics', 100. The quote is from 'Hegel's Philosophy and Its Aftereffects Until Today' in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, translated by Frederick G Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1983), 21–37, 36.

18. Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', in *Ethics, Religion and Politics, Collected Philosophical Papers Volume III* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 26–42, 40.

recommends just such a reflection, seeing the view expressed above as the product of a 'corrupt mind'. By contrast, Gadamer seems to think we ought always to choose the living relation, and enter into conversation with the alternative view. Scheibler goes on:

Gadamer . . . never specifically addresses the *prescriptive* tone of his account . . . Are there cases in which, once one *does* begin to view the relation to tradition as a living one . . . one would 'reflectively'—that is, actively—opt out of the 'living relation' to tradition?¹⁹

This reveals perhaps that Gadamer smuggles into his approach more of a historical metaphysics, a view of 'how it always is', than he thinks. For him the task tends to be conceived as a slow breakout from encrusted prejudice into open dialogue with others. But this is itself a view that characterises a particular time. Geoff Waite makes a telling remark in commenting on the appearance of a volume called *Gadamer's Century*: 'as for "Gadamer's century", I'd prefer the term "current period of the globalizing tendency of liberal-parliamentarian free-market capitalism", though perhaps they amount to much the same thing—both promoting "moderation", "dialogue", and the like.'²⁰ Waite's remark effectively relativises Gadamer's whole approach, and raises the question again of what lies outside it. However this question is addressed, the Catholic tradition generally resists the move that might draw everything back into the process of interpretation itself, the programme of 'universal hermeneutics'. It maintains its unfashionable insistence that there are things we must hold on to through thick and thin, pointing beyond history to difficult questions of metaphysics. This seems to show that for all the coincidence of interest that obtains between DV and parts of Gadamer's philosophy, there are important aspects from which it remains resolutely aloof.

19. Ingrid Scheibler, *Gadamer, Between Heidegger and Habermas* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 68.

20. Geoff Waite, 'Radio Nietzsche, or, How to Fall Short of Philosophy', in *Gadamer's Repercussions: Reconsidering Philosophical Hermeneutics*, edited by Bruce Krajewski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 169–211, 169.