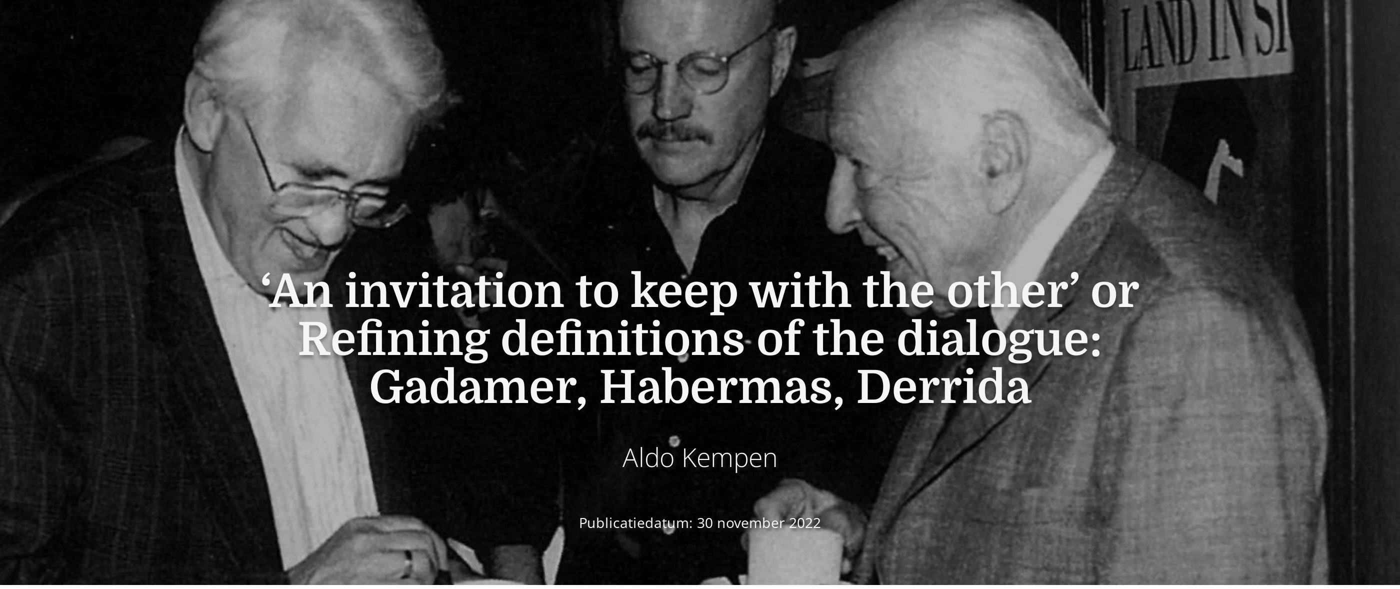

‘An invitation to keep with the other’ or Refining definitions of the dialogue: Gadamer, Habermas, Derrida

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Enabled by smartphones, computer screens and endless media, present life seems more connected than ever. Throughout the day, we are inundated with information from all over the world: from breaking news to messages from friends, loved ones and even angry neighbours.

But amidst this bombardment of connectivity, we also hear a different sound. Our political arenas are becoming that of shouting and division, our societies are becoming increasingly segregated, and on social media we seem to only beg for attention. On various levels, hyper-connectedness goes hand in hand with far-reaching isolation and division. These channels that claim to connect us, at the same time seem to have created profound separation and disconnection.

Structurally, a solution is being offered: *dialogue*. Politicians need to engage in dialogue with citizens, [1] citizens need to reconnect with each other through dialogue sessions, [2] the media needs to engage in dialogue with its readers [3] and friends, lovers and families need to reconnect through dialogue training and listening sessions. [4] The answer to isolation and division seems ubiquitous — dialogue will save us.

But what ‘dialogue’ means remains shrouded in one-liners and open doors, e.g., ‘Truly listening’, ‘trying to understand each other’ and ‘finding one another’. While it is almost unanimously presented as a cure to a host of societal and social ailments, general definition of the word does not go much further than vague declarations and broad specifics, perhaps so that no one can be against it.

If dialogue is the cure for the moment, what does this treatment entail?

The history of western philosophy offers a rich reservoir to answer this question. Importantly, the concept of the dialogue forms the starting point of Western philosophy. Socrates, distinguishing dialogue from a mere controversy or debate, thought of the pursuit of philosophy in inherently dialogic terms; only within the safe havens of the dialogue can the truth (and thus philosophy) shine. However, for this article, we will look at a more contemporary set of philosophers to help us answer this question. Flexing the conceptual muscle of the 20th-century continental tradition of philosophy, this article aims to clarify what we can and could mean when engaging in dialogue.

This piece takes a walk alongside three major figures from this tradition and explores how we can draw out a richer definition of dialogue from them. These figures are Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida. These three thinkers far from agree with each other and discussion amongst them was, at times, heated. While they never met all together, they all met each other individually and spoke on this topic. Each of these thinkers can be seen as exemplar figures of the major paradigms of continental philosophy of the 20th century. Where Gadamer spearheads the phenomenological tradition, Derrida is the father of the deconstruction. And, contrary to these, Habermas is an exemplary figure of the Frankfurter Schule and its critical democratic heritage.

Placing these three giants together, the article draws out different, and sometimes conflicting, elements of the dialogue — building a rich definition that aims to help us flesh out what it means when we cry out for the help of dialogue. The diversity in their individual conceptualisations of dialogue gives an insight into the wealth of conceptual resources that is hidden in this word. To illustrate this, this piece reads selected pieces from these thinkers through the lens of the concept of dialogue — building and refining a definition of what dialogue could mean.

Hans-Georg Gadamer (left) and Jacques Derrida (right) in Heidelberg in 1998.

Dialogue; now

First, let's further excavate some common-sense notions of the concept of dialogue as we find it in everyday writing. 'Dialogue' finds its etymological root in the Greek διάλογος (diálogos), where it simply means 'conversation' and as such, was introduced into the English language in the 12th century. However, searching for what still reverberates in the word, it is comprised of the words *dia* (meaning through or between) and *logos* (denoting word or reason). Even older, the word logos is derived from the Proto-European root '*leg-' meaning "'to collect, gather,' with derivatives meaning 'to speak' on the notion of 'to gather words, to pick out words'". [5] From an etymological perspective, the act of gathering or collecting knowledge between two individuals echoes on in our current usage of the word.

This reverberation of an act of 'gathering together', or 'collecting between two individuals' is still noticeable in many popular definitions of the word dialogue. Many blogs, relationship therapists and more emphasise how there is an unbiased gathering of viewpoints. It is seen as a bringing up between people without wanting to persuade or win — in a certain sense it is disinterested. Moreover, it is seen as striving towards a form of consensus — where the truth comes to shine. This truth can be then accepted by all parties as their detached attitudes allow them to see beyond their interests.

Here, dialogue is often contrasted with debate. [6] A debate is defined as a duel with arguments where the participants try to persuade each other and strive to win the overarching argument using logic, but also, at times, rhetoric. Contrastingly, a dialogue is an exchange of experiences and knowledges where the participants collectively search for deeper or better insight. The goal is not to win but to listen and further the inquiry collectively.

As such, a dialogue is, often, seen as a place where knowledge is, unbiasedly, gathered — a place of reaching understanding and, possibly, consensus.

Dialogic Understanding - Gadamer

The next stop of our journey to further flesh out this definition is in the work of Hans-George Gadamer. Gadamer is one of the 20th-century's giants in the development of hermeneutics, and dialogue takes a central role in this.

In a way, Gadamer follows, in his definition of dialogue, the difference between dialogue and debate explained above. However, more precisely, Gadamer follows the Socratic distinction between a mere controversy and a genuine philosophical discussion. Where a dialogue is concerned only with questions of meaning, in debate emotions and the heat of the moment trouble this. While a conversation between living people will always be characterised by "*emotionalen Momenten des Ausdrucks und der Kundgabe*", [7] the purest form of dialogue takes place in relation to a text as it can be cleansed of these human traits. When reading a text, "*der Sinn des Gesprochenen ist rein für sich da*." [8] As such, only in the encounter with a text, can we overcome our tendencies towards debate and reach for the ideality of true dialogue.

However, while a dialogue is characterised by the absence of certain emotions, it is not disinterested. Dialogue, Gadamer explains in a discussion with Derrida, fundamentally strives towards understanding and agreement (*einverständnis*). As this is the goal, "both partners [in an exchange] must have the goodwill to try to understand one another" [9]— they must attempt to strengthen each other's claims as far as possible. Or as Gadamer puts it: "[w]hoever opens his mouth wants to be understood; otherwise, one would neither speak nor write". [10] Conversely, when we approach a text, we must, according to Gadamer, presume completeness and the possibility that it can communicate a unity of meaning.

While a true and perfect dialogue can only happen with a text, Gadamer claims that the human being-in-the-world is fundamentally hermeneutic and thus dialogic. We navigate the world in constant dialogue with our surroundings. This dialogue is not detached, the participants do not stand in a relation of exteriority towards each other. Our surroundings and cultures shape us and only through this shaping can we start our processes of understanding. As such, for Gadamer "*[u]nser Wahrnehmen ist eben niemals eine einfache Abspiegelung dessen, was den Sinnen gegeben ist*." [11] Cultural traditions inculcate us with prejudices (*Vorverständnisse*) that allow us the possibility of understanding textual meaning. Here, prejudice must not be read in the pejorative sense but rather in a more neutral tone: they are the frames, knowledge, and words of the past that we carry with us into each new encounter. Only through these words that are handed down to us, can we start to begin to comprehend. These frames, prejudices, and ways of organising baked into languages are a necessary prerequisite to (textual) understanding. [12]

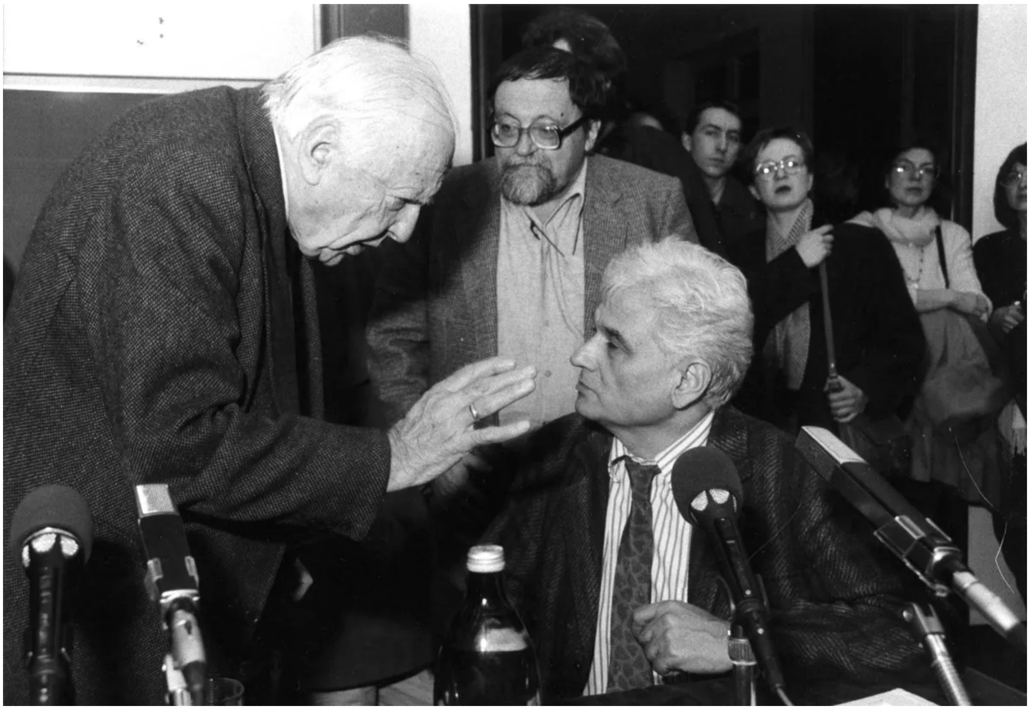
While popular definitions of the dialogue view it as a back-and-forth between two entities, for Gadamer, it is more of a circular movement where various partners continually change and influence each other. The dialogue, for Gadamer, is not a place where we 'dump' knowledge in an intersubjective space, it also comes back and changes us in the process. More fundamentally, only in and through this dialogic circularity do we come to understand ourselves in the first place.

This understanding must be thought in a specific way. While on the one hand there is goodwill and the presupposition of unitary meaning, on the other, this can never be fully reached. We are constrained in our process of retrieving this unitary meaning by the vast histories and traditions of our languages and practices. For Gadamer, understanding is thus a regulative idea that guides the interlocutors. However, the unattainable understanding is, every communication must presuppose this goodwill.

Moreover, while true understanding and total agreement is unattainable, in every dialogic encounter there is also a fundamental risk. To truly hear someone or something new puts yourself at risk. While you do bring your prejudices, traditions, and interests to a conversation, yet "*mehr wie eine Meinung und Möglichkeit, die man ins Spiel bringt und aufs Spiel setzt und die mit dazu hilft, sich wahrhaft anzueignen, was in dem Texte gesagt ist. Wir haben das oben als Horizontverschmelzung beschrieben*." [13] The dialogue for Gadamer is thus a process of give and take between the interpreter's prejudices and the text — a process where both come out transformed. For Gadamer, the truth of a text or a dialogue is not something that predates this encounter. Only in this transformative process does it emerge — in this give and take, truth comes into being. [14]

In many ways, Gadamer's writing on the dialogue can be seen as a refinement and as a widening of the common-sense definition that we presented earlier. He refines it in the sense that he builds onto the distinction between debate and dialogue and clarifies the distinct attitude that a dialogue asks from us. On the one hand, it has a certain quietness to it; an absence of certain heated emotions. On the other hand, there is goodwill that must be presupposed and held.

This goodwill is not directed towards being right or vindicating a certain truth that was already in one's possession. Importantly, the truth, for Gadamer, comes into being during dialogue. Even more fundamentally, the assumptions and prejudices that were held before the dialogue are continuously put at risk during a dialogue. Everything that was held before the dialogue stands at risk. However, Gadamer also widens the concept. He points out that dialogue, in its ideality, subtends every encounter with the world. While not every conversation is a dialogue, every act of understanding presupposes a form of dialogue that is strived towards. The dialogue underlies every form of encounter as its telos — a goal that is striven towards but that which can never be attained.


Hans-Georg Gadamer (left) and Jacques Derrida (right) in Heidelberg in 1998.

Consensus and Critique - Habermas

Distinctly, it was this broadening of the concept of dialogue that was criticised by Jürgen Habermas. While he builds on Gadamer's thoughts on various points, his critiques and nuances of this concept can help us further flesh out our understanding of dialogue.

Much like Gadamer, Habermas emphasises how the participants in each dialogue are ineluctably bound by inherited interpretive schemes: "[h]ermeneutical understanding cannot approach a subject-matter free of any prejudice; it is, rather, unavoidably pre-possessed by the context (...)." [15] However, though they both claim that prejudices are built into every act of understanding, Habermas claims that Gadamer fails to adequately factor in how certain forces or powers skew or distort the hermeneutic process.

Put differently, according to Habermas, Gadamer over-emphasises the constructive aspects of prejudice (again here understood as Vorverständnis). In this, Habermas supportingly quotes Albrecht Wellmer: "the universal claim of the hermeneutic approach [can only] be maintained if it is realised at the outset that the context of tradition as a locus of possible truth and factual agreement is, at the same time, the locus of factual untruth and continued force." [16] While prejudice, in its broadest sense, allows us to experience in the first place, Habermas claims that Gadamer is not specific enough as to what kinds of prejudices skew dialogue to the point where it is no longer recognisable as dialogue.

Gadamer's hermeneutics, for Habermas, is unable to give criteria to adjudicate between competing understandings of a source or within a dialogue. For Habermas, " (...)every consensus, as the outcome of an understanding of meaning, is, in principle, suspect of having been enforced through pseudo-communication". [17] Here, Habermas wants to highlight how sometimes processes of understanding can be the result of power dynamics rather than actual dialogue.

From this perspective, we can understand why Habermas, contrary to Gadamer, formulates the procedural conditions for successful dialogue. This allows him to distinguish (where Gadamer lacks the conceptual tools) between true dialogue and pseudo-dialogue. As Habermas acknowledges that hermeneutic understanding is made possible through prejudice, he uses logical methods (in contrast to hermeneutical methods) to derive what these procedures must look like, to uncover meta-hermeneutical principles. Habermas (specifically in his later works) researched everyday speech situations and the procedures that must be, necessarily yet often implicitly, presupposed by individuals engaged in these.

Importantly, we must understand Habermas's discussion of the dialogue in relation to his commitment to social change and his place within the German history of critical theory. Habermas was trained within the German materialist tradition ranging from, amongst others, Marx to Benjamin to Adorno. As such, his writing develops ways for critique to emerge and how normative, and potentially utopian, statements are possible in a world saturated with ideology. He researches how it is possible to adjudicate between false and true dialogue in a world where all understanding is made possible in the first place, by forms of prejudice. This is why he tries to single out in what areas and under what circumstances can true dialogue happen.

From this perspective, we can understand why he distinguished two forms of action or cooperation that are possible in language: ‘work’ and ‘interaction’. [18] While work includes the modes of action based on maximising principles and instrumental reason, interaction refers to what he calls ‘communicative action’ where participants agree on behaviours based on norms and principles. The former is concerned with efficiency, efficacy and the reproduction of the economic base. Contrastingly, the latter deals with questions of normativity and truth; only in this realm, true dialogue emerges.

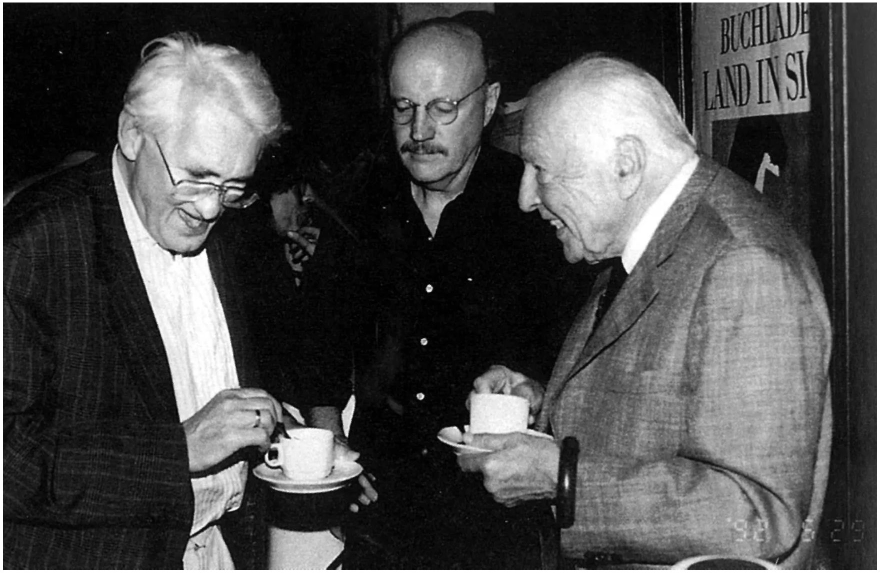
Within the realm of interaction and communicative action, dialogue, for Habermas, is aimed towards consensus, much like in the common-sense definition with which we started. While it might not be evident always, within all forms of communicative action, the idea of consensus is implied and presupposed. In this domain, dialogue is aimed at discursively achieved agreement. The validity of norms and principles comes about through aiming at the agreement of all participants (and for some subjects all people). Reason, truth and understanding are shot true, for Habermas, with the pursuit of such consensus. [19]

Importantly, Habermas is not claiming that agreement is always (if ever) possible within this realm. However, he does claim that the possibility of agreement is a necessary presupposition for participating in a dialogue. In some ways echoing Gadamer’s goodwill, participants must presuppose that agreement is possible — otherwise, there would be no point in starting a dialogue.

Within the realm of ‘interaction’ and thus dialogue, Habermas makes another set of sub-distinctions to get a better understanding of what procedures must be undertaken to reach consensus. Not all types of utterances deal with the same subject matter and thus, for Habermas, the forms of consensus that these dialogues strive towards are different. [20] He distinguishes moral, ethical (meaning here relating to the personal good life), aesthetic and truth claims. While discussions around moral and ethical claims require a stronger definition of consensus, ethical claims have a weaker sense. When a claim is valid, in this stronger sense, it should be valid for everyone, no matter the context — everyone would agree that it’s valid. Contrary to this, the weaker interpretation is more context-dependent. This means that the claim has to be valid for all members of a certain community or tradition. While claims of what constitutes a good life are rooted in local considerations, for Habermas, moral or truth claims find their validity in more universalistic notions of ‘everyone’ and must, implicitly, include the possibility of acceptance of the claim of a near infinite amount of people.

In many ways, Habermas further refines an understanding of the dialogue given by Gadamer. He does this, as we have seen, in two ways, broadly speaking. The first, as he refines it, is through identifying specific areas in which dialogue can happen. While many forms of understanding and conversation can be co-opted by prejudice or the trappings of power, he identifies the area of interaction and the realm of communicative action as a place where dialogue can flourish more freely. Dialogue emerges around claims of normativity and truth; when the conversation is geared towards consensus and agreement. Habermas, contra Gadamer, argues that a meta-hermeneutical principle is needed to effectively distinguish true dialogue from mere discussion.

He then refines it in a second way by distinguishing different forms of dialogue (i.e., moral, ethical aesthetic and truth-based dialogues) that can happen within this realm of interaction. Even more radically, Habermas ultimately thinks about rationality in terms of the dialogue. Through distinguishing these different forms of consensus, he reformulates rationality in terms of the specific forms of dialogue and consensus that types of conversations strive towards.



Jürgen Habermas (left) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (right) enjoying a coffee

Against the Monologue - Derrida

Jacques Derrida, the great father of 'deconstruction', might be an odd choice for an article on dialogue. His work became known for its critique of consensus and full understanding, and his first meetings with Gadamer and Habermas were conflictual.

Given the significant differences between them discussed in this piece, it is not surprising that their encounters were conflictual. Derrida even states that "dialogue" is "foreign to [his] lexicon (…)" ((Derrida 2005 p. 136). [21] In his work, he does not elaborate on the meaning of the dialogue, but, in his seminal work on Husserl's *La Voix et le Phénomène*, he elaborates a critique of the possibility of monologue.

His discussion of this antonym of dialogue, can help us on our last stop of our journey to flesh out the conceptuality of dialogue. Derrida's discussion of the monologue highlights how we are dependent on the other, even in our most private conversations. For Derrida, every monologue contains a trace of the other, a place where more than one tongue is speaking. And this has far reaching ethical consequences for what it means to engage in dialogue. However, in order to see this, we have to shortly dive into his critique of the monologue before we can unravel what this means for the dialogue.

While Husserl's specific critique is not of interest for us here, Derrida elaborates a critique of Husserl through an attack on the transparency of meaning that is often ascribed to our inner monologues. Pure monologue, as understood by Husserl, is a pre-expressive stratum of sense — a form of experiencing that is given before words. [22] Our inner monologues are not seen as communicating anything since the intention of the words are immediately graspable by their author — we are not making something known to ourselves that we didn't know before.

Here, the meaning of a thing and the thing itself coincide and full understanding is present. However, Derrida argues, this is to imply that there is meaning prior to the intervention of signs. In this view, signs would only secondarily communicate a meaning that was already present before langue. The sign, here, is merely a supplemental tool that is employed to communicate a pre-existing entity of knowledge.

However, for Derrida, from the moment meaning and knowledge comes into being, there is nothing but signs. Thinking, seeing, perceiving, judging, distinguishing etc., is made possible in and through signs. Even in our most intimate monologues, as soon as we formulate, signs are a necessity. And fundamentally, signs, for Derrida, do not have a positive meaning — they don't signify in and on themselves. For him, there is no direct relation between sign and object. Rather, signs designate through a relation of difference, or put differently, "identity can only *determine* or delimit itself through differential relations to other elements". [23]

We can only understand the meaning of the word 'book' through its difference from a 'leaflet', 'pamphlet', 'note' etc. Only through and in this infinite and contingent network of relations of difference do individual words acquire meaning. So, while knowledge is made possible through signs, these signs only become meaningful through an entire network of difference. To have an inner monologue, you are dependent on a whole network of signs that was shaped contingently and intersubjectively through the vicissitudes of various histories.

Our conceptual categories, ways of organising and understanding of the ways that concepts relate to one another is shaped through the “real-history-of-the-world” and as such, change with these developing histories. [24] As the relation between signs and objects that they designate is not directly given but is understood through a shifting network of difference, the sign never exhausts the singularity of the object it designates.

We can make this more concrete by returning to our example of the book. The word ‘book’ acquires its meaning through this relation of difference to other signs but the word never exhausts the full meaning of this particular book at my table here. In order to meaningfully designate the book in front on me, I need to appropriate the concept of book — using this concept that was first used in different circumstances, to designate other books. This book is put into relation with a shifting set of objects: all other books that at this moment count as books and their relation to all non-book entities. This is not a stable relation since what counts as books is dependent on this whole fleeting and shifting network of relations that changes over time. We can only talk about this book through this shifting term that might hold other objects in the future — equating this singular object with a whole host of other objects.

Applying this to the monologue, we see that to meaningfully use a sign, it is dependent on an intersubjectively and historically created network of signifiers. Even the most intimate monologue, is dependent on this network that predates the subject and with each signifier, this entire web echoes with it. Put differently, “no element can function as a sign without relating to another element which itself is not simply present”. [25] We are dependent on the other — meanings of others resonate even in our inner conversations. Every monologue structurally harbours a trace of the other and is thus, in a sense, already a dialogue — a place where multiple voices are speaking. Pure monologue, is thus, for Derrida, structurally impossible through the nature of the sign.

This impossibility of the monologue has consequences for what the aims should be of a dialogue. While for Gadamer and Habermas, dialogue is fundamentally aimed at understanding and consensus, for Derrida pure understanding (defined as finding a stable unchanging truth) is impossible and thus also not the goal. While understanding seems to be aimed at eliminating the difference between your view and an external claim, this elimination is, according to Derrida, structurally impossible given the way the sign is constructed — meaning is never self-same in the beginning. The goal of dialogue would thus not be to eliminate the difference with the other but to be sensitive to this difference and open to the ways it might change.

Dialogue, from this perspective, does not find its telos in its own negation (becoming a monologue). Much rather, this perspective highlights a certain responsible form of dealing with difference that is at the heart of the dialogue. As the current meaning is made possible through a network that could have been different (and thus this network is excluding other forms of mattering and signifying), there is a responsibility towards what is excluded and towards what it might change into in the future. Our ways of signifying are made possible through certain exclusions and, for Derrida, there is a responsibility to what is being excluded in every form of understanding. We should be attentive to and are responsible for what is excluded in each provisional form of knowing.

The temporality of the dialogue also changes because of this. As each form of knowing is provisional, in big contrast to Gadamer’s approach, the dialogue has no real or, even, ideal end. Since meaning is predicated on certain exclusions and we have a certain responsibility towards what is excluded, every form of understanding necessitates an openness towards what is excluded. Dialogue, from this point of view, is thus not something that can stop, but an invitation to stay with a topic; an intention to follow the endless perspectives that can be taken onto a subject matter.

This intention is mirrored in the way Derrida responded to an encounter that he had with Gadamer. When they met during a conference specifically dedicated to their respective philosophies in 1981, their individual papers seemed to misunderstand each other or appeared to be two separate conversations. Many years later, Derrida responded that this encounter actually proved very productive. “What is it that remains, even today, so *unheimlich* about this encounter, which was, to my mind, all the more fortunate, if not successful, precisely for having been, in the eyes of many, a missed encounter? It succeeded so well at being missed that it left an active and provocative trace, with more of a future ahead than if it had been a harmonious and consensual dialogue”. [26] Rather than finalising a dialogue or coming towards a harmonious conclusion, the points of misunderstanding formed, for Derrida, an invitation to rethink what was at stake and to keep open for what he might have missed.

Moreover, this disharmony inherent in the dialogue also reorganises the way that dialogue seems to be opposed to rhetoric and form. As we saw in our common-sense definition, rhetoric is seen as using formal and stylistic devices to persuade someone. Contrary to this, dialogue is seen as the absence of form, a place where only meaning and the force of the best argument rules. However, Derrida's discussion of the sign shows that the structure of the sign and its place in a network is essential to the creation of meaning. Meaning is never pure but always already inflected through the network that gives rise to it. As such, the form of the signifier and the form of every unit of meaning, is not secondary but necessary to the way that it signifies.

Formal aspects of language are thus not secondary but inherent to the act of signifying and as such, not opposite to dialogue. Derrida's discussion of the monologue and the status of the signifier highlights how dialogue is not in a relation of opposition to formal aspects. Moreover, Derrida's complex, and at times, poetic writing, shows how the usage of literary devices could at times be the most truthful to the dialogue. Literary language harbours, for Derrida, a potentiality to rearrange structures of perceiving and can highlight excluded elements from our conceptual schemata. [27]

When we no longer oppose form and dialogue, a more important aspect of the dialogue becomes visible. For Derrida, the dialogue is not contrary to questions of form but deals with questions of responsibility towards the other — in what way we are responsive to the limitations of our knowledges and the forms of exclusion upon which it is predicated. While for Gadamer every understanding presupposes a dialogue, Derrida argues that every form of dialogue presupposes misunderstanding. This misunderstanding can have real consequences; Derrida even connects it to violence. He shows how it is not possible to bring all various views into one over-arching understanding and as such, he emphasises responsibility and an awareness to exclusion over the focus on reaching full understanding. For Derrida, the dialogue can thus better be seen as a striving for a multiplicity of voices — a multiplicity that can never be fully integrated into one perspective.

Conceptual muscles

In this short tour, I tried to unearth the semantic fertility and conceptual bandwidth that is hidden in the concept of the dialogue. Rather than presenting a unified account of the dialogue, here we have followed one of the invitations of the dialogue; to gather and hold a plurality of perspectives.

While we started with distilling a definition as it is presented throughout the web, our discussion unearthed a depth beyond this. Gadamer widened and nuanced this definition — showing a distinct attitude that balances an emotional quietness with a goodwill towards understanding. It showed how truth is a function of dialogue rather than something that exists before it. It is not a bringing together of pre-existing knowledges, but the creation thereof. Even more importantly, dialogue is a risky endeavour — rather than vindicating your truth, in true dialogue you risk and put your assumptions into play.

Using Habermas's reflections on consensus, we saw how the concept of dialogue already holds a plurality of conversation types — each aimed at a different form of consensus. While it holds a diversity, for Habermas it is already a specific subsection of conversation types — one that tries to purify itself from the trappings of power and prejudice. Finally, our discussion on the impossibility of the monologue in Derrida emphasised the more disharmonious aspects that can be detected in the dialogue. The discussion on the nature of the sign showed how speaking in full harmony with your interlocutor is structurally impossible.

As such, dialogue, for Derrida, is not about reaching full understanding but about responsibility — a responsible dealing with difference and a certain openness to the future. It is thus not opposite to formal considerations, but opposite to a closing of or a cutting short. Derrida's account shows the burden of true dialogue, how it requires a stretched-out temporality and denies shortcuts and coming to conclusions. While being divergent in many instances, all accounts share an emphasis of a shared process of truth-making — knowing and understanding happens in the interstices of our shared existence. While they all highlight the fundamental role of prejudice and context for knowing, dialogue can be seen at each as an invitation to keep with the other.

Overviewing these various definitions, the invitation of the dialogue might not be easily reconciled with the problems it was suggested to be a cure for. Unearthing these various perspectives of the dialogue, this conversation type is, to say the least, time-consuming. For Derrida, the dialogue forms an invitation to a stretched-out responsibility. But Gadamer and Habermas also show that the way to understanding and consensus is never straightforward or easily, if ever, reached. For instance, Gadamer's emphasis on reading as the epitome of dialogue shows that a certain quietness and duration is necessary. If anything, the dialogue stands for an invitation to slow down.

Where the dialogue is asked for as a remedy, we might, implicitly, be asking for this slowing down. In a hyperconnected world that moves faster, and concentration spans are growing shorter, the dialogue might be a disguised plea to slow down. An invitation to sit with each other, unhurriedly.

Voetnoten

[1] For instance, see the EU's “citizens dialogue” project: https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/get-involved/citizens-dialogues_en
[2] See, for instance, the “Burgerberaden”: https://burgerberaad.nu/
[3] A host of initiatives has sprung up where citizens can directly talk to the media and voice their concerns/opinions. For instance see “Nu jij”: https://www.nu.nl/nujij
[4] Various forms of listening or socratic dialogue therapies exist. See, for instance: https://www.relatietherapeuten.net/partnercommunicatie-therapie
[5] https://www.etymonline.com/word/*leg-#etymonline_v_52572.
[6] For instance, in a blog for dialogue sessions for the citizens of Utrecht: https://www.utrechtindialoog.nl/wat-is-een-dialoog/
[7] Trans: "emotional moments of expression and announcement”. Gadamer, H.-G. (2011). *Wahrheit und Methode*. Akademie Verlag, p. 396.
[8] Trans: “the meaning of what is said is purely there for itself”. Gadamer, H.-G. (2011). *Wahrheit und Methode.* Akademie Verlag, p. 396.
[9] Gadamer, H.-G. (1989). “Reply to Jacques Derrida.” In: *Dialogue and deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida encounter*, ed. R. E. Palmer and D. P. Michelfelder, State University of New York Press, p. 33.
[10] Gadamer, H.-G. (1989). “Reply to Jacques Derrida.” In: *Dialogue and deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida encounter*, ed. R. E. Palmer and D. P. Michelfelder, State University of New York Press, p. 55.
[11] Trans: “our perception is never a simple reflection of what is presented to the senses”. Gadamer, H.-G. (2011). *Wahrheit und Methode*. Akademie Verlag, p.96.
[12] Gadamer, H. -G. (1980). "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem”. In: *Contemporary hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as method, philosophy, and critique*, ed. J. Bleicher, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 133.
[13] Trans: “but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk, and helps one truly to make one's own what the text says. I have described this above as a fusion of horizons.”. Gadamer, H.-G. (2011). *Wahrheit und Methode*. Akademie Verlag, p. 388.
[14] Gadamer, H.-G. (2011). *Wahrheit und Methode*. Akademie Verlag, p. 462.
[15] Habermas, J. (1980). “The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality”. In: *Contemporary hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as method, philosophy, and critique*, ed. J. Bleicher,. London Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 183.
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[17] Habermas, J. (1980). “The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality”. In: *Contemporary hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as method, philosophy, and critique*, ed. J. Bleicher,. London Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 205.
[18] Habermas, J. (1970). *Toward a Rational Society*, J. J. Shapiro (trans.). Beacon.
[19] Habermas, J. (1980). “The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality”. In: *Contemporary hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as method, philosophy, and critique*, ed. J. Bleicher,. London Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 205
[20] For a discussion of this, see: Cooke, M. (1994). *Language and Reason: A Study of Habermas's Pragmatics*. MIT Press.
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[22] Derrida, J. (1983). *La voix et Le phénomène: Introd. au problème du signe dans la phénoménologie de Husserl*. Pr.univ.de France. p 34.
[23] Derrida, J. (2008). *Limited inc.* Northwestern Univ. Press. p. 53.
[24] Derrida, J. (2008). *Limited inc*. Translated by Alan Bass, Northwestern Univ. Press. p. 136.
[25] Derrida. J. (1981). *Positions*. Translated by Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press. p.26.
[26] Derrida, Jacques. (2005) “Rams. Uninterrupted Dialogue—Between Two Infinities, the Poem.” In: *Sovereignties in Question.The Poetics of Paul Celan*, edited by Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen, Fordham University Press. p. 136-37.
[27] For more on this see: Jong, J. de. (2020). The movement of showing: Indirect Method, critique, and responsibility in Derrida, Hegel, and Heidegger. State university of New York press. or

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