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Friendship, Otherness, and Gadamer's Politics of Solidarity

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This article makes the political dimension of Gadamer's thought more explicit by examining the interplay of three concepts in his work: solidarity, friendship, and the other. Focusing primarily on certain post-*Truth and Method* writings, I argue that Gadamer's conception of solidarity has to do with historically contingent manifestations of bonds that reflect a civic life together of reciprocal co-perception. These bonds go beyond conscious recognition of observable similarities and differences and emerge from encounters among those who are, and remain, in important ways other to each other. I make this case through an analysis of Gadamer's phenomenology of friendship and the crucial role of otherness in his accounts of both understanding and friendship. I suggest that Gadamer's political thought gives us a way of conceptualizing solidarity and otherness without making the other same or leaving the other completely other.

Keywords: *Gadamer; political theory; solidarity; friendship; recognition; Arendt; Rorty*

As Richard Bernstein notes, one can detect a change of emphasis in the thought of Hans-Georg Gadamer, from a focus on the interpretation of texts, art, and history in *Truth and Method* to a focus on the practical consequences of hermeneutics in his later works. In some ways, Bernstein claims, this is a return to the ethical and political concerns of Gadamer's early writings on Plato.¹ Gadamer himself conceded in a 1986 interview that his later writings are perhaps more direct than his earlier ones, even though he insisted that his argument "has not become more political than it was."² The continuing thread is his focus on the linguistic structure of experience and the role of language in constructing the social, but the difference

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is that his later works, in his words, “address the phenomena at issue rather than the science or theory of them.”³ In other words, these later works do not so much put forth and defend his dialogical approach to understanding as take up particular social and political problems or questions in light of this approach.

Despite this shift, few political theorists approach Gadamer as someone whose ideas and writings shed light on politics itself, preferring instead to employ his works for criticizing empirical social science and for debating methods of textual interpretation. Perhaps this is because those who have approached Gadamer with politics in mind have tended to focus on the ontological and meta-theoretical claims they find in *Truth and Method* and then to deduce from these implications for politics—implications which they generally find troubling. An early, prominent example is Habermas’s contention that the emphasis on tradition renders Gadamer’s approach without grounds for critique. In particular, Gadamer’s claim that knowledge rests on the authority of tradition denies the possibility of critical self-reflection, according to Habermas, who believes such reflection “proves itself in its ability to reject the claim of traditions” and its ability to break “dogmatic forces.”⁴ Habermas rejects the idea that authority and knowledge converge, and along with it the idea that “we cannot transcend, to use Gadamer’s romantic phraseology, ‘the conversation that we are.’”⁵ He worries that the universality of hermeneutical understanding claimed by Gadamer obscures the role of power and coercion in language, providing no means for distinguishing communication from pseudocommunication and, by implication, rational claims from ideology.⁶ Habermas defends the critical social sciences and their methodology as the means to uncover domination and promote more rational discourse.⁷

The Gadamer-Habermas debate was productive for both theorists, as Jean Grondin demonstrates, leading Habermas to pay more attention to the possibility of understanding in language and leading Gadamer to develop the critical potential of his hermeneutics more explicitly.⁸ The result, as Bernstein notes, was that they subsequently came to sound more like each other, and what seemed to be extreme differences in the context of their debate now look more like “differences of emphasis.”⁹ Despite this partial convergence, however, the debate seems to have fixed an approach toward Gadamer’s political thought that focuses on the ontological aspects divined from *Truth and Method* to the neglect of more specific political claims in his later writings.¹⁰ John Caputo, for example, follows Derrida in finding a “metaphysics of truth” in *Truth and Method*. According to Caputo, Gadamer does nothing more than modify Plato and Hegel, with the consequence that his own

hermeneutics remains a “reactionary gesture” that forecloses the radical possibilities of Heidegger’s project.¹¹ Construed in this way, Gadamer’s thought would appear to hold little promise for critical purchase on politics, and so looking more carefully at his later writings would seem unnecessary.

This article argues for a more nuanced, richer understanding of the political dimension of Gadamer’s thought, not by starting with meta-theoretical issues, but by examining the interplay of three political concepts in his thinking that have not received enough attention: solidarity, friendship, and otherness. I focus first on the importance of solidarity in certain post-*Truth and Method* essays and interviews, especially from the mid-1980s onward, arguing that Gadamer’s conception has to do with historically contingent manifestations of particular things that are shared, rather than with a recognition that others as “like us.” In the second and third sections, I turn to Gadamer’s phenomenology of friendship as marked by a life together of reciprocal co-perception, and I argue that otherness is crucial for his accounts of both understanding and friendship. In the final section of the article, I bring these concepts together by arguing that friendship and solidarity are not identical phenomena, but not just parallel ones either. Instead, solidarities represent partial and temporary manifestations of bonds that reflect a civic life together of reciprocal co-perception—bonds that may include the bonds of friendship but also extend beyond our friends to fellow citizens. These bonds go beyond conscious recognition of observable similarities and differences and emerge, I argue, from encounters among those who are, and remain, in important ways other to each other.

Solidarity

Gadamer laments the loss of solidarity in a 1967 essay on the role of scientific experts in politics. Bureaucracy, technology, and specialization all increasingly threaten to fragment society, he argues, and traditional sources of unity like religion and the church are no longer viable. Moreover, rather than counteracting these forces, democratic politics further contributes to the problem by focusing precisely on what divides citizens: “Our public life appears to me to be defective in so far as there is too much emphasis upon the different and the disputed, upon that which is contested or in doubt.” The result of this emphasis on difference is that “what we truly have in common and what unites us remains, so to speak without a voice.”¹²

Nonetheless, Gadamer believes that even in a highly specialized and bureaucratized society, it is possible to strengthen existing solidarities. In the

absence of traditional sources of unity, this strengthening must take place politically, and so Gadamer calls politicians to stop focusing on differences as a means to electoral victory and instead give voice to those things that unite citizens. The social and political task of the day, he claims, is “becoming aware of what unites us.”¹³ This is a familiar refrain in Gadamer’s later works. In a 1986 speech on modern forms of alienation and their influence on the university, he complains that it is now “so unbelievably difficult just to discover an existing authentic solidarity.”¹⁴ He is a bit more hopeful in a 1993 interview, noting that citizens are, in fact, “becoming ever more aware of the solidarities that now exist.” Yet, he also insists that work remains to be done: “Among the tasks of politics today, I think a top priority should be to make us more generally aware of our deep solidarities.”¹⁵ This is particularly crucial, as he puts it in a 1999 essay, in an age of “interrelated foreignness” where we do not even know our neighbors.¹⁶

We should note two things about Gadamer’s call for a politics of solidarity. First, he begins from the premise that there already *are* solidarities that underlie civic life. In his view, the political task facing us is to “discover” and give voice to those things we have in common. As he says, “We do not have to invent these solidarities; we merely have to make ourselves aware of them.”¹⁷ Gadamer presumes that members of any political community necessarily have certain things in common,¹⁸ and so solidarities do not need to be constructed or invented, even though they may at times be difficult to perceive. The second thing to notice is that Gadamer’s discussions of solidarity are particular, in that they are tied to specific historical moments and cultural contexts. The few examples he gives tend to be specific social movements, like the protest against atomic energy in Germany in the 1980s.¹⁹ He does not, in other words, appeal to universal notions of solidarity based on our common humanity, our rationality, or our use of language. Instead, Gadamer’s solidarities have to do with particular things that bind specific groups of people to each other.

In this, his approach to solidarity bears some resemblance to that of Richard Rorty, and a brief comparison is instructive. Rorty rejects a conception of solidarity based on a “recognition of one another’s common humanity.”²⁰ Universal notions like this are, Rorty claims, weak and unconvincing, and they are generally not strong enough to prevent cruelty or motivate charity. Instead, our attachment to and concern for others are strongest when they are seen “as ‘one of us,’ where ‘us’ means something smaller and more local than the human race.”²¹ Rorty regards this parochialism as undeniable but not regrettable. In fact, this is precisely the approach to solidarity that he defends, one in which “feelings of solidarity are necessarily a matter of

which similarities and dissimilarities strike us as salient."²² Solidarity on these terms has to do with historically contingent identifications: a recognition that in this context and at this moment, certain others are part of "us" by virtue of some shared marker or markers. Our solidarity with others rests on the fact that we identify with them.

Solidarity as identification is seen most clearly in cases of shared national origin, ethnicity, race, or religion, where clear identifiers mark "us" off from "others." In characterizing his own approach as "ethnocentric," Rorty provocatively calls these solidarities to mind, knowing that they can also be fertile ground for nationalism, racism, and religious bigotry, including violence and injustice to those not part of us. The version of ethnocentrism Rorty defends, however, is more inclusive than this: "To be ethnocentric is to divide the human race into people to whom one must justify one's beliefs and the others. The first group—one's *ethnos*—comprises those who share enough of one's beliefs to make fruitful conversation possible."²³ In other words, the solidarities that divide up the world may, and often do, involve traditional differences like national origin, ethnicity, race, or religion, but they need not be limited to these. In fact, part of Rorty's project is to convince us that these are less important than similarities "with respect to pain and humiliation." In his view, solidarity ought to be based on an understanding that others suffer in the way that we do, an understanding we can encourage through detailed descriptions of particular pains and humiliations.²⁴ According to Rorty, then, we need to actively create a broader sense of solidarity rather than merely recognize those that already exist.²⁵

We can see, then, that Rorty's project is explicitly normative, and although it eschews universal foundations, it has what we might call a universal impulse, in the sense that its orientation is toward an ever expanding community based on the recognition that we suffer similarly. Gadamer shares Rorty's belief that solidarities are historically contingent, not antecedently universal, but he does not view the achievement of solidarity in the same terms. As I noted above, Gadamer thinks that solidarities need to be disclosed though not invented. This difference stems, I would argue, from the fact that Gadamer's conception of solidarity does not rest on identification in the way that Rorty's does. For Gadamer, solidarities bind members of political communities together in various ways, but these bonds are not, or at least not necessarily, the result of a recognition that others are like "us."

Instead, for Gadamer solidarity is connected with practice, which, in fact, he describes as "conducting oneself and acting in solidarity."²⁶ Briefly, Gadamer understands practice as a way of life that involves using reason to

make choices about what is good. In making these choices, we draw on shared norms, convictions, and practices, or, as he puts it in *Truth and Method*, on a *sensus communis* into which we are thrown and which we accept and revise even as we make our choices.²⁷ We might say that in general terms “solidarity” is the concept Gadamer employs to highlight the fact that these norms and convictions fundamentally bind us to each other in certain common enterprises. When making choices about what is good and right, one does not merely draw on these shared norms and convictions to determine what is right and good for oneself. Rather, solidarity has to do with the fact that in making such choices, we are inevitably choosing what is right and good *for us*—what is good for us in certain respects as a town, a community, a state, or a polity. Because the process of choosing not only draws on but simultaneously transforms these norms and convictions, such choices are made, in some sense, on our collective behalf rather than merely one’s own behalf.

Described in this way, Gadamer’s conception of solidarity might seem indistinguishable from concern for the public good, or from an effort to subsume one’s private interests in favor of public or shared interests. However, this is not what Gadamer has in mind; solidarity is more, or different, than mere public mindedness. Representing solidarity as a concern for the public good or as a search for mutual interests casts it in terms that depend too heavily on the conscious intentions of individuals. Public mindedness requires a self-consciousness on the part of citizens—an ability to step outside themselves, as it were, and distinguish their own interests from the public interest and choose the latter, or perhaps see how they are intertwined. It requires, in short, that citizens make their own interests and the interests of others present before them as objects of knowledge.

Gadamer’s conception of solidarity differs from this, in part because his hermeneutical approach denies this picture of knowledge. He criticizes the primacy of self-consciousness in modern thought, along with its restricted understanding of knowledge as making something present as an object of one’s consciousness.²⁸ Instead, he emphasizes our situatedness in history, tradition, and language, which means that our conscious understandings represent merely those things that have been brought to the foreground of thought at a particular moment. Thus, they constitute only a part of that which we know. Given this, it is not surprising that Gadamer does not conceptualize solidarity in terms of shared political interests. On his terms, this is a too limited way of thinking about the complex nature of our shared political life. While we are capable of making some of our interests objects of consciousness at a given moment and determining which ones might be

shared by others, doing so would at the same time miss other significant ways that we are bound to each other. In other words, Gadamer would not want to reduce solidarity to consciously shared interests because this reduction fails to capture the richness and complexity of the shared life underlying a political community.

This is also why Gadamer would reject Rorty's identification conception of solidarity. Even though Rorty wants to broadly construe the markers that define "us," his conception of solidarity remains tied to a recognition of salient similarities (and differences)—that is, on somehow making conscious the fact that we share certain characteristics. For Rorty solidarity is the *consequence* of identification; it proceeds from a knowledge that those included in the "us" have something in common. This is what allows Rorty to advocate the creation of new, broader forms of solidarity. On Gadamer's terms, in contrast, we cannot *create* solidarities because they are not the consequence of a consciousness of similarities. Instead, the relationship is reversed: solidarities underlie political communities, and democratic politics can and ought to help disclose them, bringing them to awareness. In fact, as I will argue, focusing on evident similarities potentially obstructs the disclosure of solidarities.

Friendship

Friendship is a recurring theme in Gadamer's later writings, with his most extensive discussions in essays from 1985²⁹ and 1999³⁰ that have to do with the place of friendship in Greek thought. Gadamer looks to the Greeks, he explains, not because past theories can be re-infused with life into a substantially changed world, but because they can serve as a "corrective" to our own thinking. In particular, the Greek concept of friendship can help us "recognize the bottleneck of modern subjectivism and modern voluntarism."³¹ In other words, we can think through the nature of friendship with the Greeks in order to re-cognize a dimension of life that contemporary modes of thought obscure. As I will argue below, this dimension of life is also at issue in Gadamer's conception of solidarity, and so we can use his phenomenology of friendship to bring solidarity into better view.

Gadamer contrasts the prominence of friendship in Greek thought to its relative neglect in modern thought. Because friendship is not a value or belief, Gadamer claims, it does not fit easily within modern thought, largely premised on a self-conscious modern subject.³² Although one can value friendship in the abstract and one's friends in particular, doing so is not the

same as friendship. Nor, Gadamer claims, is friendship a “personal quality” or a virtue that one might adopt or try to cultivate. Though the capacity for friendship requires certain personal qualities like empathy and integrity, having and cultivating these qualities is obviously not the same as friendship, nor would it guarantee friendship.³³ Rather than a value or a virtue, friendship is a good, Gadamer contends. But it is a peculiar good since “by its very nature, friendship cannot be the business of the one or the other.”³⁴ Friendship is a good that can only arise between persons—that is, a good that exists only by virtue of being shared. It is necessarily common. According to Gadamer, this means that friends are bound to each other in a way that is different than other relationships. Friendship cannot be summoned at will from oneself, nor can it be demanded from another. You cannot force yourself to be friends with someone else, nor can you force another person to be friends with you. Friendship is constituted between or among individuals in a way that is not directly the result of any one’s will. It is, as Gadamer says, a good that is “bestowed on us” rather than a value of which we are conscious.³⁵

According to Gadamer, one of the features of friendship, then, is that it goes beyond merely being well-disposed or having good will toward another. Drawing explicitly on Aristotle,³⁶ Gadamer wants to maintain a distinction between friendship, on one hand, and “mere friendliness,” on the other. As an exercise of will, friendliness can be extended to a stranger, to one who is, and may remain, unknown. In such cases “the two people [are] not really openly bound to each other.”³⁷ While extending good will toward a stranger may lead to friendship in the future, and even though there may be an element of care in extending good will to another, there remains a distance between the persons that distinguishes this relationship from friendship. The gesture of friendliness is an act of conscious subjectivity based on some other kind of commitment or interest. Friendship involves something more than this. The “more” has to do with the distinctive way in which friends find themselves bound to each other, though what this is can be difficult to articulate, and Gadamer is not always precise or thorough in his descriptions. In fact, he qualifies his own reflections on friendship by noting that it is something that “one can only live and can never define.”³⁸ Nonetheless, I would like to highlight two important features, gleaned from Gadamer’s account, that mark the bond among friends: *life together* and *reciprocal co-perception*.

The first feature arises in Gadamer’s contrast of friendship and friendliness: “The *common* condition of all friendship is more than [friendliness]; the true bond that—in various degrees—signifies a ‘life together.’”³⁹ As a

common good, friendship involves a being-with or living-with each other. At times, this might involve a literal living with, in the same house or the same apartment complex or on the same block. In most cases, it involves frequent interactions on a more or less regular basis. We can see the importance of this when comparing long-distance friendships to friendships with those close at hand. Although current communication technologies and easy travel have made long-distance friendships easier than before, we know the difficulty of sustaining such friendships. Fewer routine interactions and face-to-face contacts make it difficult to keep up on the day-to-day doings and ordinary events of each other's lives. Though these doings and events may be insignificant in and of themselves, knowing about and sharing in them, in fact, constitute a significant part of friendship. They are the visible manifestations of the intertwined nature of the friends' lives. In his 1999 essay on friendship, Gadamer calls this togetherness "house-ness" or "home-ness," drawing on the Greek term *Oikeion*. Although we generally associate this term with economics, it can, Gadamer points out, also connote "friendship." He treats this as a mysterious aspect of friendship, a connection "about which we cannot speak" because it is "something hidden" and thus difficult to get in view.⁴⁰ He does not elaborate on this claim, but he seems to mean that this connection, which we experience as a sense of being at home with our friends, is too close at hand for direct observation. It is not the focal point of the relationship per se—something we aim at or try to foster—but is instead an unintended by-product.

Perhaps because of this hiddenness, Gadamer refrains from getting too specific about what exactly binds friends in their life together. Nor does he follow Aristotle in setting up friendship typologies, since friendship is not, in his view, "some abstract concept, which is divided into various subspecies."⁴¹ So, identifying exactly what binds friends to each other belies the complexity of these relationships, and "one cannot say that it is something definite in him, something I like, that makes him my friend."⁴² Reflecting on one's own friendships bears this out. Certainly in one's close friendships, specifying what the friends have in common always comes up short as a way to characterize the relationship. Is it shared hobbies, political views, or other interests? Similar tastes in music, art, literature, or film? Shared features of identity, such as race or ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or geographical origin? Even if one allows that it might be several of these things, so that one could make a master list of commonalities, the list would still fail to capture something vital to the friendship, something beyond these identifiable similarities that constitutes the friendship and binds the friends to each other. This remainder, although

situated within the context of evident similarities and differences, cannot be reduced to them. It is this “with-structure” of the relationship,⁴³ this “homeness” beyond such similarities, that Gadamer sees as central to the bond of friendship.

This is related to the second feature of this bond that I want to highlight: what Gadamer calls “reciprocal co-perception.”⁴⁴ Friendship is obviously reciprocal, but Gadamer notes that “something more must be added to reciprocity: namely, that in their being good to one another the partners cannot remain concealed from each other.”⁴⁵ The bond of friendship exposes the friends to each other, in part, through a deepening mutual knowledge beyond the kinds of evident similarities and differences just discussed. Most straightforwardly, this involves coming to know what a friend, as we might say, “is like”—a phrase that covers a whole range of things, including temperament, interests, features of personality, anxieties and hopes, typical reactions, habits of mind, and so forth. While we might be able to maintain a projected image of ourselves in our professional relations or in our encounters with strangers, we denote others as friends precisely because it is with them that such projections fade away and our “true” selves are more exposed.

Gadamer contends that this knowing is not just of one’s friend, however. It is also connected to, and accompanied by, deepening self-knowledge. In friendship, Gadamer writes, “one recognizes oneself in others and the other recognizes itself in us,” either by seeing something that the friends share, or by seeing something distinctive in a friend that one does not see in oneself.⁴⁶ These disclosures of new commonalities and differences among us and our friends come by means of the relationship itself, a consequence of our life together. For example, a friend might say in reaction to something one has done, “It didn’t seem like you to do that.” And one might react to this by agreeing, “You’re right, that wasn’t like me.” In some cases, this merely confirms an existing self-portrait, but on other occasions this comes as a revelation, and as a result, one understands oneself in a different way. Or a friend might say, “I wouldn’t have done that,” and one might respond, “No, you wouldn’t, but I’m different than you.” This, too, can be revelatory, as one simultaneously recognizes something about oneself and one’s friend that was not known before. In these cases, the friend is a “mirror of self-knowledge” that helps us overcome illusions about ourselves and continue the hard task of self-knowledge.⁴⁷

For Gadamer, reciprocal co-perception involves not only knowledge but also love. Like knowledge, this love is not just for the other, which is clearly a necessary feature of friendship, but it also involves love of self. This is not

self-love in a selfish and negative sense, Gadamer alleges, as when individuals “think only of themselves and not what the Other is and what is for the Other.” Instead, it is self-love in the sense of “being united with oneself,” or being comfortable with oneself.⁴⁸ What Gadamer seems to have in mind is a level of self-acceptance sufficient for undertaking the risk of being known by another and the sometimes painful process of self-knowledge. One who is insecure may be averse to this exposure and so incapable of friendship. At the same time, the self-love necessary for friendship must “nevertheless not go so far in that direction that someone thinks he needs no friends.”⁴⁹ Self-love in the form of self-sufficiency forecloses the possibility of friendship because it treats the other as unnecessary. In the end, then, though Gadamer does not state it in these terms, the self-love necessary for friendship occupies the space between insecurity and self-sufficiency.

The Other in Understanding and Friendship

Before returning to solidarity, we need to take note of something that has so far mostly remained implicit: the role of otherness in Gadamer's account of friendship. It is easy in theorizing friendship to focus solely on the unity among friends, looking at their care for each other and what they have in common, to the neglect of their differences and distinctiveness. Robert Dostal criticizes Heidegger precisely on this point, claiming that he fails to see that friendship “is not merely a matter of unity and totality but of negativity and difference as well.”⁵⁰ Because he follows Heidegger by emphasizing the “with-structure” of friendship, Gadamer too runs the risk of over-emphasizing the unity of friendship in a way that neglects otherness. This is a particularly important concern given the criticism, made most prominently by Derrida in his 1981 exchange with Gadamer, that the latter's account of understanding as a fusion of horizons fails to recognize the other. According to Derrida, portraying understanding as a fusion pre-ordains consensus and, thus, gives no real standing to the other, whether a text or another person in conversation. In other words, the fusion account masks a will to power that treats the other as a mere instrument for my understanding, thereby denying the otherness of the other.⁵¹

Though Gadamer resisted this reading of his theory of understanding from the beginning, his later writings do give more attention to the importance of the other in understanding, perhaps in response to these criticisms. Since this article is about solidarity and friendship rather than understanding per se, the full details of this response are beyond its scope. Yet, I discuss

otherness in Gadamer's approach to understanding here briefly because, despite the contributions of Gadamer scholars like Lawrence Schmidt and James Risser,⁵² it is still often presumed that his approach necessarily diminishes alterity,⁵³ a presumption that distorts his approach to both friendship and solidarity.

Gadamer is perhaps best known for his account of understanding as a fusion of horizons, whether between individuals involved in a conversation or between an interpreter and text. On these terms, an event of understanding involves the forging of a common language about something that is common to us. Through the give and take of dialogue, as Gadamer writes in *Truth and Method*, "something comes into being that had not existed before and that exists from now on. . . . [S]omething emerges that is contained in neither of the partners alone."⁵⁴ Understanding, in other words, involves neither my adoption of your views nor your adoption of my views, but a coming-into-language of something that is common to us.⁵⁵ We can say, then, that the fusion of horizons is a productive fusion, in the sense that *a new thing* is brought forth, something that is common to those involved in the exchange and that did not exist before it.⁵⁶

In one of his later essays, Gadamer emphasizes that an event of understanding entails a confrontation with the limits of one's authority and knowledge. The other's freedom and his or her participation in the disclosure of a common subject force a recognition that "the other is not my dominion and I am not sovereign."⁵⁷ The presence of the other results in a revised and deeper understanding of the limits of our own knowledge, as we realize that what we thought we knew to be true is not, in fact, true, or at least not true in the way that we thought it was.⁵⁸ Our interaction with another calls forth some of what we thought we knew in advance or what we expected to be the case, thereby putting these prejudgments or prejudices into play. By virtue of being put into play, these prejudices are called into question and exposed as limited and partial. In revealing our limited and finite knowledge, the event of understanding makes possible greater self-knowledge.

However, the role of the other in understanding goes beyond this. Gadamer criticizes Heidegger for treating the other as *merely* a limit or a frustration to us and, thereby, giving short shrift to the phenomenon of understanding. In particular, Heidegger fails to ask "why I experience my own limitation through the encounter with the Other, and why I must always learn to experience anew if I am ever to be in a position to surpass my limits."⁵⁹ For Gadamer, it is not just that we understand differently or confront our own limitations through the presence of the other; without this

presence, we do not understand at all. As he says, only the other's presence allows me "to open up the real possibility of understanding" and "to allow one to go beyond one's own possibilities."⁶⁰ The event of understanding that entails a recognition of our limitations and a negation of our knowledge is at the same time a concession to the one with whom we interact. "What is at issue here," Gadamer says in a 1986 interview, "is that when something other or different is understood, then we must also concede something, yield—in certain limits—to the truth of the other." He calls this the "soul" of his hermeneutics: that understanding involves not just the recognition of our own limits, but recognizing and yielding to the truth that confronts us in the other.⁶¹

In sum, the presence of the other is indispensable for understanding on Gadamer's account. The fusion that produces a new thing cannot take place without the other that stands before us and through whose presence our prejudices are called forth, put into play, and revised. Coming to an understanding with another is the only way my own prejudices can become known to me and the only way that they can be transformed. The other is both an obstacle, in that he exposes the limits of my grasp of something, and also the means by which a new understanding of it emerges. It is in this sense that an event of understanding involves a concession to the other. Thus, the presence of the other is vital for seeing new possibilities, and so there is a fundamental openness to any event of understanding, as James Risser has shown.⁶² Its dialogical character renders it necessarily beyond one's control, and one does not know in advance what limits one will confront, how one's finitude will be manifested, or what truth will be brought forth by the encounter with another.

I would argue that the same holds true for friendship. The "with-structure" and reciprocal co-perception that mark the bond of friendship depend on an other who is and remains distinct. The self-knowledge and self-love that are part of the bond of friendship are inherently related to the *distinctiveness* of the friend, not from envisioning the friend as simply a reflection of oneself or making the friend the same as oneself. In discussing the nature of this self-knowledge, Gadamer claims that "because this other, this counterpart, is not one's own mirror image, but rather the *friend*, all powers come into play of increasing trust and devotion to the 'better self' that the other is for oneself."⁶³ As we saw above, one knows oneself, in part, by seeing what is distinctive in the friend—that is, by seeing the friend as model, as having characteristics that one either aspires to or one participates in through the friendship. What draws us to one who becomes a friend is often not similarity but "those differences worthy of admiration and love that one

discovers in another.”⁶⁴ As in understanding, this encounter is also an experience of one’s own limits.

Moreover, in their life together, friends can only have a relationship of true friendship if they remain other to each other in a way that allows the emergence of new commonalities and differences that may not be evident at first. If the otherness of a friend is suppressed or hidden, what actually binds the friends to each other cannot emerge. If one of the friends, say, so dominates the friendship that she refuses to acknowledge the distinctiveness of her friend, that which appears common to them is falsely constructed, and we do not have a friendship but some other kind of relationship—leader and follower, or teacher and disciple, perhaps. Similarly, the bond between friends cannot be sustained if a friend is certain that he “knows” the other in some complete and static sense, so that he reduces and objectifies his friend to a set of characteristics. In short, in order for a life together of reciprocal co-perception to endure, a friend must be an other. The friends must remain distinct, and this otherness is an indispensable part of the friendship, making it possible for the shared dimensions of the relationship to be revealed in new ways.

Because of this, friendships have an unpredictable quality about them. Over time, as we engage in a life together with our friends and as reciprocal co-perception continues, we perceive our friends and ourselves anew, sometimes in surprising ways. In some cases, these disclosures serve to sustain and strengthen the bond of friendship by revealing new ways in which our lives are shared. In other cases, however, such disclosures may result in greater distance between friends, even to the point of eventually bringing a friendship to an end. We may then look back and say, “She’s different than she used to be,” or “I thought I knew him, but it turns out I really didn’t.” In saying this we attest to the fact that there is no way to predict, much less guarantee, that the bond of friendship is strengthened by the ongoing process of encountering the other in the friend.

Politics and the Disclosure of Solidarities

I have discussed Gadamer’s account of friendship at length because I think it gives us insight into his conception of solidarity. Before looking at this connection, it is important to clarify first that Gadamer does not equate citizenship with friendship, nor am I arguing for this equation. Because friendship involves a life together based on mutual knowledge and love, it can be problematic for conceptualizing relations between citizens who are strangers to each other. Recent attempts to revive friendship as a model for

citizenship in contemporary democracies recognize this, and turn to friendship in partial fashion by deducing norms of friendship that are transferable to citizenship: a generalized concern for the virtue of other citizens, for example,⁶⁵ or more particular norms like truth and tenderness.⁶⁶ Likewise, Gadamer knows that “the romantic image of friendship and a general love of one’s neighbor” cannot be the basis of modern society.⁶⁷ Even if this were true of the ancient polis, nostalgia for a mythic past in which citizens were friends will not get us far in complex, anonymous societies.

Using friendship to theorize citizenship is problematic for another reason. Because “citizen” is also a legal category defined by law and connected to state boundaries, it becomes difficult when making a direct connection between friendship and citizenship to adequately theorize partial associations and attachments. Because solidarity identifies a more circumscribed relationship than “citizen,” it functions as a mediating concept between friendship and citizenship, especially when conceptualized in Gadamerian terms as referring to historically contingent manifestations of particular things that are shared. Of course, this non-universal character of solidarity is also what may make it problematic, as the earlier discussion of Rorty points out, in that it potentially includes exclusive solidarities based on markers of identity like race, sex, national origin, or sexual orientation.

The link this article puts forth is between solidarity and friendship, not friend and citizen. This is important because what we are trying to bring into view are not friends or citizens per se, but that which exists between them. This is what solidarity is meant to capture. How, then, does friendship help us see this? Unfortunately, Gadamer’s few comments about the connection between friendship and solidarity are rather unclear. Within the same essay, for example, he identifies a “tension between the concepts of friendship and solidarity,” but also claims that “we all share in both, in friendship and solidarity, and that we have to defend this inseparableness.”⁶⁸ He fails to elaborate on either of these claims, but I suggest that they point to a complex connection in which friendship and solidarity are not identical phenomena, but not just formally parallel ones either. Instead, I will argue, solidarities represent partial and temporary manifestations of bonds that reflect a civic life together of reciprocal co-perception—bonds that may include the bonds of friendship but also extend beyond our friends to fellow citizens. These bonds go beyond conscious recognition of observable similarities and differences and emerge, I will argue, from encounters among those who are, and remain, in important ways other to each other.

Although we are not necessarily friends with our fellow citizens, the familiar experience of friendship evokes dimensions of civic life that we are

prone to neglect if we approach politics solely in terms of shared interests or recognized similarities—that is, in ways premised on modern subjects who are conscious of their interests and also know the ways in which they do and do not resemble others. With its ongoing disclosure of ways in which friends' lives are intertwined, the phenomenon of friendship highlights and makes us attuned to the disclosure of new ways in which fellow citizens' lives are intertwined. Because of our life together, we are bound to each other as citizens in the choices and actions that constitute and sustain social and political life. These choices and actions in some cases overlap with those that constitute our friendships, but they are also distinct, having to do with the broader public dimensions rather than the intimate parts of our lives. In short, a version of the shared goods that can be seen in friendship also underlies our social and political relationships. Like friendship, solidarity has to do with this dimension of things that we share and on which our political life together depends.⁶⁹

Though Gadamer is stingy with examples, his passing reference to efforts by the environmental movement is helpful here.⁷⁰ The concern over present and forecasted ecological crises testifies to the fact that we share a life together as residents of a town, city, region, or nation, and that we are bound to each other in certain crucial respects, even if we are divided and fragmented in others. In bringing this dimension of our life together into view, the movement helped bring about a change in some of the mundane choices and actions that constitute our lives, one example being the way that recycling has become habit for many North Americans when it was virtually unheard of, say, twenty years ago. Stating it this way, however, oversimplifies what has taken place. It is not as if this dimension were *first* brought into view and then habits were changed; rather, these were mutually occurring phenomena. The change in practice on the part of some, along with their efforts to draw attention to these practices, helped bring into view an aspect of our life together, which in turn altered the practices of others, which helped sharpen this shared dimension of life, and so forth. As a result, for many citizens, it would now be strange *not* to think about at least some of their life choices with environmental concerns in mind.

Eventually, the emergence of this particular solidarity helped bring about legislative and regulative efforts at the local, state, and national levels to slow down environmental degradation. If you recall, one of the central tasks of politics in Gadamer's view is bringing solidarities to awareness, and so he would have to regard this as at least a partially successful political effort. At the same time, of course, the extent of environmental damage, the types of solutions, and the nature of our shared life in these respects remain hotly

contested, especially in the United States. We can see, then, that the disclosure of a solidarity is often an ongoing, sometimes difficult effort, not something that is done once and is then completed. Moreover, this example shows that the mere disclosure of a particular solidarity is no guarantee of policy solutions. Nor should we take such disclosures to be the same thing as, or eliminating the need for, the political dealings in the halls of power, including efforts by interest groups, lobbyists, and others with a stake in the outcomes of such policy. In this sense, the politics of solidarity suggested by Gadamer's later works is not a comprehensive democratic theory or theory of justice but an approach to one aspect of democratic politics.

Since, as I noted in the first section of this article, Gadamer's conception of solidarity is not an identification concept, it helps move us beyond the idea that we are primarily bound to those others who are "like us." The solidarity brought forth in the environmental movement, for example, is not primarily predicated on characteristics like race or ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. In fact, relying on such external markers of identity to determine to whom, and in what ways, we are bound may obstruct the awareness of these bonds among us. Even less immutable markers, like partisan affiliation, can do this. Concern for the environment among evangelical Christians is a case in point. Evangelicals have long been suspicious of the environmental movement because of its association with a left political agenda. From the point of view of many evangelicals, environmentalists presumably are part of "them," not "us," and so concern for this dimension of our life together has been muted. Recently, however, there is evidence of growing concern about the environment and support for environmental regulations among evangelicals,⁷¹ which may reflect a growing awareness of a bond of solidarity with others, despite partisan labels. We can easily imagine suspicion in the other direction now, however, with environmental activists warily wondering what evangelicals are *really* up to with their seemingly newfound concern for the environment. In this case, too, an awareness of solidarity would be precluded by the presumption that one antecedently *knows* the other in some complete or definitive sense.

What are necessary in such cases are social and political interactions that are also means of reciprocal co-perception. As with friendship, through interaction with these others, we come to understand the ways in which our lives are intertwined because we are, in part, exposed to each other. Through this mutual exposure we come to see each other and ourselves in new, sometimes surprising ways, thereby helping to reveal previously unrecognized bonds of solidarity. This reciprocal co-perception is particularly important since our historical and cultural situatedness means that we never have a

comprehensive view of the things we have in common. Instead, the solidarities that emerge will always be particular, as momentary and specific manifestations of things we share. The nature of our life together with respect to environmental degradation, for example, came to consciousness at a particular time and place, partly in response to specific threats.⁷² As with friendship, where it is impossible to give an account of all that binds one to another, so it is impossible to know the totality of that which binds us together as citizens. At the same time, an awareness of solidarity does not render identity markers unimportant, nor does it obliterate otherness more broadly. Rather than obliterate the otherness of the other, political interactions that produce an awareness of solidarity depend upon an other that confronts us with the limits of our knowledge, thereby making it possible for us to see new ways that we are bound together.⁷³ Conversely, solidarities that emerge from an exclusionary process, or through making the other same, will be limited at best, since exclusion or oppression will have prevented the full range of what is shared to come to light. In short, these alleged solidarities will not be manifestations of many of the things that bind us to each other, and so they will have but limited function as the grounds for political community and political action.

We can see that Gadamer's politics of solidarity is related to but distinct from a politics of recognition. On one hand, recognition in the sense advocated by, among others, Charles Taylor, Nancy Fraser, and Axel Honneth may be an important part of a politics aimed at bringing solidarities to our awareness.⁷⁴ Recognition of groups traditionally denied equal status may be necessary for bringing solidarities to consciousness, and it may at the same time be part of maintaining the otherness of the other. The reciprocal knowledge that comes in acts of solidarity involves the coming-to-know the other as an other. As we saw with friendship, perceiving that which binds us together entails perceiving the distinctiveness of the other. Inasmuch as recognition is about legitimizing and taking certain features of identity seriously, the emergence of solidarities depends upon it. However, recognition cannot be the last word, in the sense that one takes the knowledge of other and of self as complete. As we have seen, if recognition includes the presumption that the other is "known" in some complete sense, or if it takes one feature of identity as determinative, this may preclude bringing to awareness solidarities that are not immediately evident or unrelated to these features of identity.⁷⁵ While we might have a general sense of that which binds us to each other, a clearer awareness of the particular ways that we are bound to each other emerges through social and political interaction with others.

In contemporary political theory, this territory of plurality and otherness is generally reserved for Hannah Arendt. Given their common ancestry in Heidegger, it should not be surprising that the Gadamerian politics of solidarity I am presenting here has Arendtian overtones. As Bernstein notes, Gadamer and Arendt broadly share an emphasis on political dialogue, judgment, and plurality as an antidote to modern tendencies toward technocratic and bureaucratic politics.⁷⁶ But despite large areas of agreement, there are important differences between their approaches, two of which I would like to highlight briefly without getting too involved in the extensive and ongoing debates about Arendt's thought. First, like Gadamer, Arendt emphasizes the way that citizens are revealed to each other not as a matter of will but through political speech and action. However, for her the reciprocal revelation is largely limited to knowing the other. Unlike Gadamer, she does not regard increased self-knowledge as an important or even possible part of these encounters, claiming that "who" one is can be seen by others even though it remains hidden from oneself.⁷⁷ For Gadamer, as we have seen, self-knowledge is crucial for understanding the ways in which we are bound to each other.

The second difference also has to do with mutual exposure. In both *The Human Condition* and *On Revolution*, Arendt distinguishes the public *persona*—the citizen—that is revealed through speech and action from the human being that also inhabits the private and social worlds. This public identity of the citizen, in Arendt's view, is what makes possible a politics of reasoned action aimed at freedom, and she attributes the failure of the French Revolution, in part, to its failure to maintain this distinction.⁷⁸ Gadamer does not theorize a public-nonpublic distinction in this way. For him, coming to an understanding and the reciprocal co-perception that are part of both friendship and solidarity are all of a piece. In fact, I would argue that for Gadamer, understanding, friendship, and solidarity all depend on at least a minimal willingness to fall in with another, to open oneself up to some degree to the other who stands before you. Or, to state it differently, understanding, friendship, and solidarity require not steeling oneself against the other, or working to maintain unaltered one's current prejudices about the other and oneself.⁷⁹

Here we see the normative thrust of Gadamer's politics of solidarity. We can interpret his claim that becoming aware of our solidarities is a central political task as a plea that our political interactions be inflected with an openness to others and, thereby, to the emergence of new solidarities. The essence of a politics of solidarity is a disposition that nudges us toward

interactions with each other, thereby disclosing that which binds us to each other. Of course, seeking what is common among us in this way can be difficult and frustrating, and we are often not inclined toward such a disposition; it is something that must somehow be engendered in us, in part through recognizing this openness in our friendships. Gadamer understands his own efforts in this light, as he offers “a philosophy which teaches us to see the justification for the other’s point of view and which thus makes us doubt our own.”⁸⁰ More generally, he admits that “we must learn to respect others and otherness. This implies that we must learn that we could be wrong.”⁸¹ What this implies is that disclosing solidarities, like friendship, is unpredictable. Our encounters with the other may reveal forms of solidarity that make us uncomfortable—ways that our lives are bound up with others that we did not know and may not like. Or, they might reveal that we do not, in fact, have the kind of solidarity with other citizens that we previously assumed.

The appeal of this Gadamerian approach is that it gives us a way of conceptualizing solidarity and otherness without either making the other same or leaving the other completely other. Too often, the other is presented as wholly alien, something out of our experience whose appearance shocks, disrupts, and confuses. There is some truth here, and we can think of examples when the other does, and perhaps must, disrupt our comfortable world. But it is not the whole picture. Although we may not be able to see at first glance what we have in common, solidarities may emerge through our interaction. At the same time, as we have seen, the emergence of solidarities does not require making the other same, a totalizing absorption of the other such that it is no longer. In the end, then, Gadamer’s politics of solidarity stands in contrast to much contemporary political theory. In this sense, it functions as an alternative view and a corrective to the emphasis on difference, conflict, and the exercise of power that has become our stock in trade, even as it does not detract from the valuable contributions of these other approaches. This alternative view, especially as it emerges in Gadamer’s later writings, deserves further attention and development.

Notes

1. Richard Bernstein, “What Is the Difference That Makes a Difference? Gadamer, Habermas, and Rorty,” *PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association* 2 (1982): 335. For the political dimension of Gadamer’s early writings on Plato, see Robert Sullivan, *Political Hermeneutics: The Early Thinking of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989).

2. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Interview: The 1920s, 1930s, and the Present" (1986), in *On Education, Poetry and History*, ed. Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 150.
3. Gadamer, "Interview," 150.
4. Jürgen Habermas, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 170.
5. Jürgen Habermas, "On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality" (1970), in *The Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (New York: Continuum, 1985), 302.
6. Habermas, "On Hermeneutics' Claim," 302-3.
7. Habermas, *On the Logic*, 170.
8. Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), 132-33.
9. Bernstein, "What Is the Difference," 336.
10. There are exceptions to this, Bernstein among them. See Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983). Although James Risser is less focused on politics per se, he, too, has probed Gadamer's later works, like Bernstein helping to complicate the original, conservative image of his thought. See James Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other: Re-reading Gadamer's Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).
11. John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 5-6, 111. See also Jacques Derrida, "Three Questions to Hans-Georg Gadamer," in *Dialogue & Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. D. P. Michelfelder and R. E. Palmer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 53. Although Caputo still regards Gadamer as too metaphysical, he has recently acknowledged that he perhaps overstated the case originally: "Gadamer and Derrida are closer to each other than they themselves realized in 1981, or than I realized"; see John D. Caputo, "Good Will and the Hermeneutics of Friendship: Gadamer and Derrida," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 28, no. 5 (2002): 516.
12. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Limitations of the Expert" (1967), in Misgeld and Nicholson, *On Education*, 192.
13. Gadamer, "Limitations of the Expert," 192.
14. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Idea of the University" (1986), in Misgeld and Nicholson, *On Education*, 59.
15. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gadamer in Conversation*, ed. and trans. Richard E. Palmer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 80.
16. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Freundschaft und Solidarität" (1999), in his *Hermeneutische Entwurf: Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 57. Selections from this piece are translated by Chris Blauwkamp and David Vessey, whose translation of the essay will be published in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. I am grateful to David for providing a manuscript version while I was working on this article.
17. Gadamer, *Gadamer in Conversation*, 80.
18. See Brice Wachterhauser, *Beyond Being: Gadamer's Post-Platonic Hermeneutical Ontology* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 42-47.
19. Gadamer, *Gadamer in Conversation*, 80.
20. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 189-91.
21. Rorty, *Contingency*, 191.
22. Rorty, *Contingency*, 192.

23. Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 30.

24. Rorty, *Contingency*, 192.

25. Rorty, *Contingency*, 196.

26. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "What Is Practice? The Conditions of Social Reason" (1976), in *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), 87.

27. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., ed. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1995), 20-22.

28. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Praise of Theory" (1980), in *Praise of Theory: Speeches and Essays*, trans. Chris Dawson (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 28ff. This is also a prominent theme, of course, in *Truth and Method*.

29. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics" (1985), in his *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999). As Gadamer notes, this essay had its origins in his inaugural lecture in Marburg in 1929. He returns to the subject of friendship many years later because he realized that his original address insufficiently addressed how friendship cannot be reduced to subjectivity and functions as a critique of it (131).

30. Gadamer, "Freundschaft und Solidarität." As with many of Gadamer's essays, there is a fair amount of overlap between this one and "Friendship and Self-Knowledge."

31. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Citizens of Two Worlds" (1983), in Misgeld and Nicholson, *On Education*, 219.

32. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Ethics of Value and Practical Philosophy" (1982), in Weinsheimer, *Hermeneutics*, 117.

33. Gadamer, "The Ethics of Value," 117.

34. Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge," 131.

35. Gadamer, "The Ethics of Value," 117.

36. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald (New York: Macmillan/Library of Liberal Arts, 1962), 255ff. (1166b30ff.). As David Vessey points out, however, Gadamer's general reading of Aristotle on friendship tends to be selective and sometimes at odds with dominant readings; see David Vessey, "Gadamer's Theory of Friendship as an Alternative to Intersubjectivity," *Philosophy Today* (forthcoming). My concern here is Gadamer's own account of friendship, not his reading of Aristotle per se.

37. Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge," 134.

38. Gadamer, "Freundschaft und Solidarität," 57.

39. Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge," 134.

40. Gadamer, "Freundschaft und Solidarität," 58, 60.

41. Gadamer, "Freundschaft und Solidarität," 59.

42. Gadamer, "Freundschaft und Solidarität," 61.

43. Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge," 134.

44. Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge," 139.

45. Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge," 134.

46. Gadamer, "Freundschaft und Solidarität," 62.

47. Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge," 137-38.

48. Gadamer, "Freundschaft und Solidarität," 60. See also Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge," 139.

49. Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge," 136.

50. Robert Dostal, "Friendship and Politics: Heidegger's Failing," *Political Theory* 20, no. 3 (1992): 410.

51. Derrida, "Three Questions," 53. See also, among others, Josef Simon, "Good Will to Understand the Will to Power," in Michelfelder and Palmer, *Dialogue & Deconstruction*, 162-75; and John D. Caputo, "Gadamer's Closet Essentialism," in Michelfelder and Palmer, *Dialogue & Deconstruction*, 258-64. Robert Bernasconi raises this problem in a more nuanced fashion, alleging that Gadamer's theory of understanding tends to reduce alterity, but that his theory does not fully capture the hermeneutic experience itself, in which we sometimes experience the other as a radical challenge. In other words, Bernasconi defends Gadamer's broadly hermeneutical approach while criticizing some of the particulars of his account of understanding; see Robert Bernasconi "'You Don't Know What I'm Talking About': Alterity and the Hermeneutic Ideal," in *The Specter of Relativism*, ed. Lawrence K. Schmidt (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 178-94.

52. Lawrence Schmidt makes a compelling case that Gadamer's concern for the other is not merely a recent phenomenon but can be found in his earlier writings as well; Lawrence Schmidt, "Respecting Others: The Hermeneutic Virtue," *Continental Philosophy Review* 33, no. 3 (2000): 359-79. Risser's book, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other*, examines the full range of Gadamer's writings, and is the most extensive and compelling defense of the importance of the other in Gadamer's account of understanding. My discussion of understanding and the other depends heavily on the work of Schmidt and especially Risser.

53. For a recent example, see Marie Fleming, "Gadamer's Conversation: Does the Other Have a Say?" in *Feminist Interpretations of Gadamer*, ed. Lorraine Code (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003). Fleming looks primarily at *Truth and Method* and the Gadamer-Derrida exchange. Unfortunately, she does not take up the work of Schmidt, Risser, or Bernasconi.

54. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 462.

55. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 378.

56. I have examined the productive nature of understanding at greater length in Darren R. Walhof, "Bringing the Deliberative Back In: Gadamer on Conversation and Understanding," *Contemporary Political Theory* 4, no. 2 (May 2005): 154-74.

57. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Diversity of Europe" (1985), in Misgeld and Nicholson, *On Education*, 233.

58. Gerald Bruns nicely casts this experience in terms of failure. He claims that for Gadamer understanding is not the product of interpretation, but "the product of the failure of interpretation to hold its ground"; Gerald Bruns, *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 205.

59. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity, Subject and Person" (1975), trans. Peter Adamson and David Vessey, *Continental Philosophy Review* 33 (2000): 285.

60. Gadamer, "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity," 284.

61. Gadamer, "Interview," 152.

62. Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other*, 16-17.

63. Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge," 139.

64. Gadamer, "Freundschaft und Solidarität," 58.

65. Sibyl A. Schwarzenbach, "On Civic Friendship," *Ethics* 107 (1996): 97-128.

66. Jason A. Scorza, "Liberal Citizenship and Civic Friendship," *Political Theory* 32, no. 1 (2004): 85-108. For a different approach, see David Kahane, "Symposium: Diversity and Civic Solidarity," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 7, no. 3 (1999): 267-86. Kahane proposes

what he calls a “relationship-centered” account of friendship, in which the bond between friends is constructed through “the process of telling and retelling the friendship” (279). Similarly, a bond between citizens “will derive primarily from their valuing the civic relationship itself” (284-85).

67. Gadamer, “Citizens of Two Worlds,” 219.

68. Gadamer, “Freundschaft und Solidarität,” 57.

69. See Gadamer, “The Ethics of Value,” 117.

70. Gadamer, *Gadamer in Conversation*, 80.

71. According to polls conducted by John Green of the Ray C. Bliss Institute at Akron University, support for strict environmental restrictions among evangelicals has jumped from 45 percent in 2000 to 52 percent in 2004. Just over a year ago, the National Association for Evangelicals issued a statement that for the first time declared that “government has an obligation to protect its citizens from the effects of environmental degradation”; see “The Greening of Evangelicals,” *Washington Post*, February 6, 2005, A01.

72. Gadamer’s example of the solidarity in the face of bombing during the war also reflects this realization of a shared life together in the face of need; Gadamer, “Freundschaft und Solidarität,” 63.

73. This account, then, supports Bernstein’s relatively early recognition that there is a “latent radical strain” in Gadamer’s thought that he himself failed to realize; Bernstein, “What Is the Difference,” 336.

74. Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus* (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge: Polity, 1995). The literature on recognition is large and growing, and of course there are important differences among these works that are beyond the scope of this article. For a helpful overview of some of this literature, see the first chapter of Patchen Markell’s book, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

75. Markell argues for what he calls “acknowledgement” rather than recognition, in part because he finds the latter concept too static, with the demand of recognition based on who a group already is—on its identity as a *fait accompli*. Relying on Arendt, he argues that this neglects “our basic condition of intersubjective vulnerability” and belies the complex ways that identities are constructed and reconstructed through politics; Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, 14. I would agree, although my concern here is with how identity aids or hinders the emergence of solidarities, whereas his concern is primarily with the construction of these identities themselves.

76. Richard J. Bernstein, “The Varieties of Pluralism,” *American Journal of Education* 95, no. 4 (August 1987): 518. In his earlier book, Bernstein discusses the similarities and differences between Arendt and Gadamer at length on a range of issues, including freedom, authority, and their interpretations of Aristotle and Kant; see Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 207-20.

77. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 179-80.

78. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 181-88; and Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1963), 106-8. See Norma Moruzzi, *Speaking through the Mask: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Social Identity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001).

79. I have discussed the nature of this openness at more length in Walhof, “Bringing the Deliberative Back In,” 161-64.

80. Gadamer, "Interview," 152.

81. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Diversity of Europe: Inheritance and Future" (1985), in Misgeld and Nicholson, *On Education*, 233.

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