



GADAMER'S PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS ON EDUCATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine philosophical hermeneutics as a referent for language learning concepts. This study seeks to explicate a descriptive set of principles based on Hans Georg Gadamer's theory of interpretation that has the potential for developing dispositions necessary for understanding. Central among these are the concepts of forestructure, prejudice, temporal distance, history of effect, dialogue, writing, tradition, virtue and culture all of which constitute part of the whole of the hermeneutic circle as envisaged by Gadamer. As such, Gadamer's hermeneutics is contrasted with Cartesian epistemology and its primacy of method, the Enlightenment's prejudice against prejudice, the modernist/progressive tendency to consider all situations as problems to be solved by relegating all forms of knowledge to techné, and the subjective nature of interpretation inherent in a hermeneutics of suspicion. While he did not write extensively on the subject of education, Gadamer is credited with developing a hermeneutics not as an attempt to prescribe a method or set of methods for understanding but to discover what is common to all modes of understanding and to show that understanding is never a subjective relation to a given 'object' but to the history of its effect.

Key Words: Gadamer, education, understanding.