

Philosophy 23 Study Questions #1:

1. Philosophical Hermeneutics:

The term hermeneutics literally means the art of making what is hidden manifest. Philosophical hermeneutics is an attempt to understand understanding itself and the process of interpretation that is basic to all meaningful experience. More broadly hermeneutics refers to the rigorous attempt to understand interpretation and understanding. Philosophical hermeneutics is concerned with meaningfulness itself. It is a reflection on interpretation that reveals the fundamentally interpretive character of our relation to the world; we must realize that hermeneutics is reflexively aware of itself as an interpretation. All language use and our thoughts are forms of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is not absolutism, a theory or a dogma. Hermeneutics is not in search for the final truth, but recognition of the interpretive nature of any truth claim; it recognizes any claim to be an interpretation. Hermeneutics is a critical questioning position toward any claim to truth, revealing it as a perspective conditioned by interests. Understanding is not something we do; instead understanding is something that happens to us. The hermeneutic event of understanding is determined by linguisticity which does not reduce to any particular human language but is the basis for all of them. It is vital to understand that there is no fixed starting point of meaning; we all are a part of a world which meaning and interpretations are already always taking place and underway. Philosophical hermeneutics is the attempt to understand understanding that can help us gain insight in how to deal with the world we live in.

Comment [dp1]: Why must we realize this?

Phenomenology:

Phenomenology is the study of human experience and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience. It is a descriptive method of seeing what is there. The method of phenomenology brackets out our familiar concepts through which we habitually understand the world so we can actually see what is immediately present to our awareness. The method allows us to see the difference between what is there in consciousness and what we make it mean. Phenomenology addresses the problem of appearances and concerns the question of direct knowledge. Phenomenology provides a subtle way of approaching the question of knowledge and experience that is far more productive and successful than any other philosophy has been. Phenomenology is the careful noticing of the actual phenomena of consciousness apart from, but not independent from our interpretations; we need the skills to be able to bracket out our familiar concepts and meanings. We are all beings who live in our meanings; of phenomenology allows us to gain the ability and have the opportunity to not be *trapped* in our meanings. The worst things human beings do are become slaves to their habits and suffer from being trapped within them, but phenomenology allows us to free ourselves from the habits of our minds. Phenomenology enables us to be aware the world as it appears, not what we make it mean.

Comment [dp2]: Give some examples of what negative consequences this has

Comment [dp3]: What good is that?

Bildung:

Bildung is a German word which in English translates to “education.” Bildung is the process of “self-formation.” We must distinguish between school Bildung and philosophical or individual Bildung. Bildung, the “self-formation” is a continuous process; there is never an ending point. Bildung is nothing fixed, concrete or measurable. Bildung is a constant process of self-formation and self-overcoming. Bildung is not just a mere act of collecting knowledge, but an enlargement of self and the horizons in which we view and organize our perceptions and how we interpret the world. During the process a horizon shift takes place in which “world” and “self” become present in a new way. Bildung is a process which we become aware of an already interpreted world; this process allows us to go beyond the horizons of meanings to a new understanding. Bildung is a philosophical attitude and engagement. It is an ability and desire to allow one to set aside and become aware of one’s own prejudices and have an attitude that goes beyond any perspective or belief, an attitude of both humility and confidence to remain objective and accomplish mastered irony to set aside those things that would otherwise interfere with well-reasonedness.

Linguisticity:

No sense of self and world arises without language. There is an integral relation between language and thought; language and thought are not distinct. Linguisticity is the basic condition of being already situated in a language and its already interpreted meaningful context that makes possible and shapes how we experience things. To think of humans without language is to actually not be thinking of humans; human life is unimaginable apart from language use. Meaningful thought is also impossible without language and meaning. Our meanings are not something merely subjective or psychological, nor is it something just in our minds; meaning does not exist independently of language.

Comment [dp4]: RIGHT: So there IS an objective basis for our claims and for deciding one claim is better than another. You could go on here and say more about this, why some interpretations are much better than others, etc. That is a very important thing to get clear on, since many people mistakenly think hermeneutics is some kind of relativism

You pull together the right stuff from our reading here and that may indicate that you understand some of this pretty well.

GRADE: 5