

## *On Critical Interpretation as Itself a Kind of Critical Validation*

We do not live understandingly alone, but together with others whose attempts to understand things we also have to understand. Whether we agree with them or disagree with them, take them to be right or take them to be wrong, we must in any event understand (or misunderstand) what they say and mean. In doing so, however, we either make or imply yet another claim to validity—the claim, namely, to have understood or interpreted what they say and mean correctly.

But in this case, as much as any other, our validity claim may become sufficiently problematic that we have no choice, if we are not to break off communication altogether, but to shift from the primary level of living understandingly to the secondary level—the level of critical reflection and proper theory, where our interpretation of others also becomes critical insofar as it consists in critically validating (or invalidating) this further claim to validity that we make or imply, that we have interpreted others correctly.

In this sense, or to this extent, critical interpretation itself is or involves critical validation. But critically validating *this* claim by means of critical interpretation is wholly different from critically validating the other claims to validity that are made or implied by the attempts to understand on the part of others that we must somehow understand in living understandingly with them. To confirm simply that a given interpretation of what someone says and means is a correct interpretation is to say nothing whatever, one way or the other, about whether what she or he says and means is right or wrong, true or false. A critical interpretation, properly so-called, is critical and, therefore, in its own way, is or involves critical validation only with respect to other interpretations *as* interpretations, not with respect to the claims to validity made or implied by the *interpretandum* of the interpretations. Whether or not *its* claims to validity are valid is the proper question, not of critical interpretation, or of the kind of critical validation that critical interpretation itself is or involves, but only of critical validation, or the other kind of critical validation that is concerned with the validity of the claims made or implied, not by the interpretations themselves, but by what they are attempts to interpret.

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