

THE LOST ART OF LISTENING: LEARNING FROM GADAMER TO OVERCOME POLARIZATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract. *This study focuses on the communication crisis in the digital age, characterized by a loss of listening skills and increasing polarization of opinion on social media. Using a qualitative approach through a literature study method, this study examines Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic thinking, particularly the concepts of the art of listening (die Kunst des Zuhörens) and fusion of horizons (Horizontverschmelzung), to formulate the ethics of dialogue in the digital communication space. The research questions include: (1) how Gadamer's concept of "the art of listening" in hermeneutics can form the basis of an ethics of dialogue in the digital communication era; (2) how the loss of the ability to listen causes hermeneutic closure and reinforces polarization on social media; and (3) how Gadamer's principles of dialogical hermeneutics can be applied to build more open and reflective communication. The results of this study show that the loss of the art of listening creates a crisis of understanding that hinders true dialogue. Gadamer asserts that listening is at the heart of the process of understanding and opens up space for the encounter of meaning. This study offers a model of Digital Dialogue Space based on hermeneutic awareness and empathy as a solution towards inclusive and humane communication in the era of social media.*

Keywords: Hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Art of Listening, Polarization, Social Media

I. Introduction

In the last two decades, social media has become the dominant space in modern human life. It is not just a communication tool, but an arena where identities, opinions, and values often clash.¹ This phenomenon gives birth to paradoxical social dynamics: on the one hand, social media promises infinite connectivity; on the other hand, it gives rise to increasingly sharp fragmentation. The polarization of opinions, hate speech, and debate culture that is oriented towards the victory of arguments, rather than understanding, are the hallmarks of today's digital interactions.² It is in this context that there is a deep concern that the art of hearing the basic

¹ Yudha Catur Pamungkas et al., "The Construction of Social Reality in Indonesia in the Role of Media and Cultural Identity in the Era of Globalization," *Metta : Journal of Multidisciplinary Science* 4, no. 4 (2024): 28–36, <https://doi.org/10.37329/metta.v4i4.3737>.

² Hery Wahyudi Marpaung and Hasan Sazali, "The Politics of Hate Speech Akun Fufufafa: Perspectives on Communication Ethics and Its Impact on Social Cohesion," *Indonesian Journal : Informatics and Communication Management* 6, no. 2 (2025): 1427–38, <https://doi.org/10.63447/jimik.v6i2.1437>.

ability to open oneself to other meanings and perspectives has slowly disappeared from the practice of modern human communication.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, a 20th-century German philosopher, through his work *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960), offers a way to re-understand the true meaning of communication. For Gadamer, understanding is not a neutral cognitive activity, but rather a dialogical event that involves openness to the "other". In the hermeneutic process, listening is not just a passive activity, but an ethical action: a readiness to allow the gaze of others to penetrate the horizons of our own understanding.³ Gadamer emphasized the importance of *horizon fusion* (*Horizontverschmelzung*), a process in which individuals combine the horizon of their personal meaning with the horizon of the meaning of the other party to achieve a broader and more inclusive understanding.

But in the digital communications landscape, this principle is often lost. Social media algorithms work with logic that is contrary to Gadamer's hermeneutics: it reinforces what we like, narrow down what we see, and close the possibility of encounters with differences. The phenomenon of *echo chambers* and *filter bubbles* keeps each user trapped in an environment of ideas that reinforce his or her personal beliefs. In such conditions, "listening" becomes an activity that is no longer meaningful.⁴ Instead of opening themselves up to other perspectives, users tend to seek confirmation, not dialogue. As a result, digital public spaces lose their deliberative function and turn into an arena of symbolic competition between identities.

This loss of the art of hearing has serious social and epistemological implications. Socially, it weakens people's ability to build consensus or even simply understand each other's differences. Epistemologically, it gives rise to a crisis of truth: each group claims its own truth without any hermeneutic attempt to understand the other. Gadamer rejects the view that truth belongs to one party; For him, the truth emerges in dialogue, in the encounter between different horizons. Thus, the truth is dynamic and open.⁵ This view challenges the way we communicate on social media, where the truth is often reduced to the most vocal opinions.

In this context, reviving the art of listening is an ethical as well as a political necessity. Listening is not only the act of listening to the voice of others, but also a willingness to defer judgment, acknowledge the limitations of self-understanding, and open up space for new interpretations. In Gadamer's language, understanding means letting something speak to us. That is, we do not impose meaning, but give the "text" or "other" a chance to reveal itself.⁶ If this principle is applied in digital interaction, then social media can become a healthier dialogue space not just an arena for argumentation, but a meeting place between horizons of meaning.

The phenomenon of polarization on social media also suggests that modern society tends to lose "hermeneutic patience." The process of understanding is replaced by the urge to respond quickly, judge, and affirm one's identity.⁷ In this instant culture, listening becomes

³ Alan Cahyadi et al., *HANS GEORG GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICS AS A CRITICAL APPROACH IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING*, 2 (2025).

⁴ Dean Mulya Armanda et al., "Bubble Filter and Echo Chamber: The Influence of Social Media Algorithms on Information Consumption Patterns of University of Lampung Students," *Journal of Communication and Socio-Political Sciences* 2, no. 4 (2025): 1124–29, <https://doi.org/10.62379/jiksp.v2i4.2669>.

⁵ Augustine Ryadi, *HANS-GEORG GADAMER AND FUSION HORIZON*, 12, no. 1 (2023).

⁶ Ni Kadek Juliantari, "PARADIGM OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN UNDERSTANDING TEXT AND CONTEXT TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS," *Acarya Pustaka* 3, no. 1 (2017): 12, <https://doi.org/10.23887/ap.v3i1.12732>.

⁷ Juliantari, "PARADIGM OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN UNDERSTANDING TEXT AND CONTEXT TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS."

something that is considered slow and unproductive. In fact, in Gadamer's framework, it is precisely in the delay that true understanding can grow. Hearing means giving time for meaning to work within us. Thus, the art of listening is not only about communication ethics, but also about how we become whole human beings in the midst of a flood of information.

This paper departs from the concern over the loss of the dialogical dimension in digital communication and seeks to re-explore the relevance of Gadamer's thought in the context of social media. With a hermeneutical-philosophical approach, this study seeks to answer three main questions: (1) how the concept of "the art of listening" in Gadamer's hermeneutics can be understood as the basis for dialogue ethics in the digital age; (2) how hearing loss creates hermeneutic secrecy that reinforces polarization in social media; and (3) how Gadamer's principles of dialogical hermeneutics can be applied as an alternative model for building more open and reflective communication in the digital space.

By integrating philosophical reflection and contemporary social phenomena, this research is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution. Theoretically, this research expands the understanding of the relevance of Gadamer's hermeneutics in the context of digital communication. Practically, it can be an inspiration to develop digital literacy based on dialogical ethics in an effort to build a listening culture in the midst of algorithmic noise. Ultimately, the art of listening is not just a matter of politeness in dialogue, but a practice of being: a way of being present in the world by opening ourselves up to others, and in the process, understanding ourselves more deeply.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with *the library research method*. Data collection is carried out through three main stages. The first stage is the study of the primary literature, namely by examining Hans-Georg Gadamer's original works, such as *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) and *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (1976), as well as interviews or supporting essays that review the meaning of listening and dialogue in hermeneutics. The second stage is a secondary literature review, involving various books, journal articles, and current research (2020–2025) that discusses hermeneutics, communication, and digital polarization. The third stage is contextual and comparative analysis, where academic sources are obtained through scientific databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and national academic portals. All data were selected based on their relevance to the research themes: hermeneutics, dialogical ethics, and social media polarization.

The data analysis technique used is hermeneutical-philosophical analysis, which emphasizes the interpretation of meaning through dialogue between the text, the context, and the reader. The analysis process is carried out through four interrelated stages. First, textual analysis, which explores key terms, philosophical contexts, and relationships between concepts in Gadamer's text to understand the meaning of "listening" in a hermeneutic framework. Second, contextual analysis, which connects Gadamer's hermeneutic concept with the phenomenon of polarization in social media through cross-textual reading between philosophy and digital communication theory. Third, comparative analysis and synthesis, by comparing Gadamer's hermeneutic approach with other communication theories such as Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action and Cass Sunstein's concept of *echo chambers* in order to expand interpretive horizons. Fourth, reflective analysis, which focuses on interpreting the ethical implications of the results of the analysis and the formulation of a dialogical communication model that can be applied in the digital space.

The entire analysis process is carried out inducively and interpretively, not deductive-normative, because this research does not aim to prove the cause-effect relationship, but rather to explore meaning and understanding. The validity of the analysis results is maintained through argumentative consistency, depth of philosophical reflection, and triangulation of literature from various credible academic sources. Thus, this research method allows researchers to build a conceptual bridge between classical hermeneutics and the phenomenon of modern digital communication, resulting in a more reflective, contextual, and ethical understanding of the issue of polarization in social media.⁸

Results and Discussion

Gadamer's Biography

Gadamer's full name is Hans-Georg Gadamer, he is a prominent German philosopher who is widely known as a major figure in the philosophical hermeneutic tradition. He was born on February 11, 1900 in Marburg, Germany, into a disciplined and science-oriented academic family. His father, Johannes Gadamer, was a professor of pharmacy at the University of Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland), who had strong scientific views and had a profound influence on the formation of the young Gadamer's intellectual character. From childhood, Gadamer grew up in an environment that valued rationality and scientific rigor, but he later became interested in exploring the dimensions of humanity and the meaning behind scientific knowledge. After completing his secondary education, Gadamer continued his studies in philosophy at the University of Breslau, then moved to the University of Marburg, where he studied under Paul Natorp and Nicolai Hartmann, two important figures of the Neo-Kantianist movement. It was also in Marburg that Gadamer became interested in phenomenology after interacting with Martin Heidegger, who at that time was a young lecturer and was developing existential-phenomenological thought.⁹

His encounter with Heidegger was an important turning point in Gadamer's intellectual development. From Heidegger, he learned that understanding is not merely a cognitive activity, but an existential engagement with the world. This idea then influenced the direction of Gadamer's research and philosophical reflection in later periods. He earned his doctorate in 1922 with a dissertation on Plato, and continued the habilitation process (an advanced academic qualification in Germany) in 1929, also with a focus on ancient Greek philosophy. Gadamer's academic career began at the University of Marburg as a young lecturer (*Privatdozent*), before later he taught at the University of Leipzig, the University of Frankfurt, and finally settled at the University of Heidelberg. In Leipzig, he served as Rector of the University in the post-World War II period, demonstrating high academic confidence in his leadership capacity in the midst of a difficult political situation. After the war, Gadamer continued to teach, write, and lecture at various universities in Germany and abroad, including in the United States, Canada, and Italy.¹⁰

⁸ Najwa Ammara Jauza and Meyniar Albina, "Quantitative Research Models and Approaches: Philosophical, Methodological, and Applicative Studies," *QOUBA : Journal of Education* 2, no. 1 (2025): 104–11, <https://doi.org/10.61104/qb.v2i1.280>.

⁹ Jean Grondin, *Hans-Georg Gadamer - Eine Biography* (Mohr Siebeck, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1628/978-3-16-167098-5>.

¹⁰ Vera Yuliana and Etmi Hardi, "Z Mawardi Effendi: The Career Journey of an Academic and Former Rector of Padang State University for Two Periods (1975-2020)," *Journal of Chronology* 3, no. 3 (2021): 272–85, <https://doi.org/10.24036/jk.v3i3.195>.

As an academic, Gadamer is known for having a dialogical and open teaching style. It emphasizes not only the mastery of theory, but also the importance of reflective engagement between the interpreter and the object of study. In every discussion, Gadamer always asserts that true knowledge can only emerge through sincere dialogue and a willingness to listen to the views of others. This intellectual attitude reflected the basic principles of hermeneutics that later became the hallmark of his entire academic journey. Hans-Georg Gadamer devoted his entire life to the world of thought and education. He became professor emeritus at the University of Heidelberg and remained active in discussions and writing until his old age. Gadamer died on March 13, 2002 in Heidelberg at the age of 102.¹¹ His long and dedicated life made him one of the most influential figures in 20th-century philosophy, especially in the fields of hermeneutics and the theory of human understanding.

Gadamer's Works

- 1) **Platos Dialektische Ethik: Phänomenologische Interpretationen zum Philebos** (Plato's *Dialectical Ethics: A Phenomenological Interpretation of Philebos*) – 1931
It was Gadamer's early work that focused on the interpretation of Plato's ethics through a phenomenological approach. This book shows Martin Heidegger's great influence on the way Gadamer read classical texts, particularly in terms of the relationship between language, meaning, and existence.
- 2) **Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik** (*Truth and Method: Outlines of Philosophical Hermeneutics*) – Gadamer's 1960 magnum opus and the most influential work in the modern hermeneutic tradition. The book introduces key concepts such as *pre-understanding* (*Vorverständnis*), *prejudice* (*Vorurteil*), *horizon fusion* (*Horizontverschmelzung*), and the *art of listening* (*die Kunst des Zuhörens*).
- 3) **Kleine Schriften** (*Small Writings*) – 1967–1977 (3 volumes)
A collection of Gadamer's essays and short writings that address a wide range of topics: aesthetics, ethics, history, and the relationship between philosophy and art. Here we can see the expansion of his hermeneutic reflection on cultural and language issues.
- 4) **Philosophical Hermeneutics** – 1976
This book is a collection of Gadamer's essays and lectures that further explain his ideas about language, understanding, and historical experience. In it, Gadamer affirms the importance of dialogue and interpretation as the core of the human experience.
- 5) **Reason in the Age of Science** – 1981
In this work, Gadamer highlights the crisis of modern rationality due to the dominance of the scientific method. He reminded that true rationality also includes ethical, historical, and communicative dimensions, not just technical and objective.
- 6) **The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays** – 1986
A collection of essays that connect hermeneutics with aesthetics. Gadamer emphasized that the experience of art and beauty is a form of dialogical understanding that teaches humans to listen and be open to other meanings.
- 7) **Gesammelte Werke** (*Complete Works*) – 1985–1995 (10 volumes)
A complete compilation of Gadamer's works that includes writings on philosophy, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and cultural criticism. This collection is the main reference for hermeneutics researchers around the world.

¹¹ Grondin, *Hans-Georg Gadamer - Eine Biography*.

- 8) **Hermeneutics II: Wahrheit und Methode. Ergänzungen, Register** – 1993
Revised and supplemental edition of *Wahrheit und Methode*, which contains commentaries, development of ideas, and responses to criticism from other thinkers such as Habermas and Derrida.
- 9) **The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age** – 1996
A work that connects hermeneutics with the field of medicine. Gadamer emphasized that health and healing are not only concerned with biological aspects, but also with existential meaning and the dialogical relationship between physician and patient.
- 10) **A Century of Philosophy: Hans-Georg Gadamer in Conversation with Riccardo Dottori** – 2006 (published posthumously)
The book is a summary of lengthy interviews between Gadamer and Riccardo Dottori, which contains Gadamer's reflections on his life, work, and philosophical thought over more than a century.¹²

Gadamer's Hermeneutic Concept

Hermeneutics for Hans-Georg Gadamer is not just a theory of the method of interpreting texts, but is the philosophy of human understanding as a whole. He places hermeneutics as the way in which man is in the world (*Seinsweise des Daseins*), that is, how one understands himself, others, and reality through dialogical and historical processes.¹³ This idea is a development of Martin Heidegger's thought, who interpreted understanding as an existential dimension, not just an intellectual activity. Through his seminal work *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960), Gadamer shifted the focus of hermeneutics from a methodological problem to an ontological problem from "how we interpret the text" to "how understanding itself is possible."

The essence of Gadamer's hermeneutics lies in the view that understanding is always historical (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*). That is, each interpreter never starts from zero, but always brings with him a certain background, prejudice (*Vorurteil*), and horizon of experience that shapes his or her view of the world. Prejudice in Gadamer's sense is not a negative bias, but rather an initial condition that allows understanding to occur.¹⁴ He rejects the modern view that knowledge must be free of prejudice. On the contrary, for Gadamer, it is precisely through awareness of prejudice that we can open ourselves to a broader understanding.

In the process of interpretation, Gadamer introduced the concept of "horizon fusion" (*Horizontverschmelzung*), which is the meeting between the horizon of the interpreter's meaning and the horizon of the interpreted text or reality.¹⁵ This process is not the absorption of one party by the other, but an encounter that gives birth to new understanding. Every dialogue, whether with texts, traditions, or fellow humans, is a space where different horizons meet and transform each other. Thus, understanding is not a fixed end result, but a process that continues to evolve along with openness to other meanings.

¹² Jon Nixon, *Hans-Georg Gadamer*, SpringerBriefs in Education (Springer International Publishing, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-52117-6>.

¹³ Hayatuddiniyah Hayatuddiniyah, "A Critique of the Hermeneutics of Hans Georg Gadamer's Philosophy," *Indonesian Philosophy Journal* 4, no. 2 (2021): 124–31, <https://doi.org/10.23887/jfi.v4i2.33874>.

¹⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer et al., *Truth and Method*, 2., rev. ed., reprint, Continuum Impacts (Continuum, 2011).

¹⁵ Gadamer et al., *Truth and Method*.

Gadamer's hermeneutics also emphasized the role of language as the primary medium of understanding. He declared that "*Sein, das verstanden werden kann, ist Sprache*" "everything that can be understood is language." Language is not just a means of communication, but a space where meaning lives and develops. In conversation, meaning is not possessed by the individual, but rather appears among the speakers through a dialogical process. Therefore, Gadamer calls hermeneutics the "art of dialogue and hearing", in which the success of understanding depends on the willingness to listen to other views earnestly.¹⁶ This is where the idea of the *true art of listening* *die Kunst des Zuhörens* emerged.

The concept of the art of listening in Gadamer's hermeneutics does not only mean linguistic skill, but is an ethical and existential attitude. Listening means opening up to others, suspending the desire to dominate the conversation, and making room for different meanings to appear.¹⁷ In this context, listening is a dialogical action that allows for authentic understanding. This attitude is rooted in the realization that humans never have the truth alone, but always seek the truth together in an ongoing conversation.

In addition, Gadamer's hermeneutics is also rooted in tradition and history. He rejects the subjectivistic view that assumes that pure understanding comes from individual consciousness. For Gadamer, every form of understanding always occurs within the horizon of the traditions that surround us. Tradition is not a shackle, but rather a source of collective wisdom that gives meaning to the experience of the present.¹⁸ Thus, understanding means in dialogue not only with others, but also with the past that continues to speak through texts, symbols, and cultures. In the context of modern life, Gadamer's hermeneutics has a strong relevance to the challenges of digital communication. The world of social media, characterized by the speed, fragmentation, and polarization of discourse, often loses the dimension of dialogue and hearing. Gadamer's hermeneutics reminds us that true communication is not a mere exchange of information, but rather a mutual engagement that requires empathy, patience, and a willingness to understand the other. By restoring the art of listening as a hermeneutic practice, humans can rebuild public spaces that are more reflective, open, and ethical.

Overall, Gadamer's hermeneutics offers a philosophical framework that affirms the importance of dialogue, openness, and historical awareness in understanding the world. He rejects the dichotomy between subject and object, and replaces it with participatory relationships in which meaning is always negotiated together. In the light of his philosophy, understanding is not the conquering of meaning, but entering into a never-ending conversation, an eternal dialogue between the past and the present, between the self and the other, between listening and being understood.

The Loss of the Art of Listening and Hermeneutic Secrecy in the Age of Social Media

The phenomenon of social media in the 21st century has fundamentally changed the way humans communicate. From a public space that was originally oriented towards dialogue and the exchange of ideas, social media is now often an arena for self-expression, identity

¹⁶ Paul Regan, *Hans-Georg Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics: Concepts of Reading, Understanding and Interpretation*, 2012.

¹⁷ Antono Wahyudi, "Hermeneutic Interpretation: Examining the Discourse of the Art of Understanding through the Lens of Modern and Postmodern Philosophy," *KLAUSA (Linguistic Studies, Language Learning, and Literature)* 2, no. 02 (2019): 51–79, <https://doi.org/10.33479/klaus.v2i02.150>.

¹⁸ Muhammad Nadhif Judhananto and Fitzgerald Kennedy Sitorus, "Fusion of Horizons: Gadamer's Thought on Dialogue and Understanding in Human Life," *ISO Journal: Journal of Social, Political and Humanities Sciences* 5, no. 1 (2025): 12, <https://doi.org/10.53697/iso.v5i1.2490>.

affirmation, and battle of opinions.¹⁹ In such a situation, the ability to *hear*—which in Hans-Georg Gadamer's view is the essence of hermeneutic understanding—slowly fades. As a result, the digital space loses its dialogical character and turns into a monological space, in which each individual only speaks from within his or her own horizon of understanding without attempting to penetrate the horizons of others.

In Gadamer's hermeneutic perspective, the process of understanding is always dialogical and open. True understanding is not born from the dominance of one voice over another, but from the inter-horizon encounter of meaning that makes possible the *fusion of horizons* (*Horizontverschmelzung*). When a person hears, he is actually opening himself up to the possibility of new meanings coming from the "other" (*der Andere*).²⁰ However, in the age of social media, this process often stalls on the surface because digital communication is more often driven by speed, sensation, and algorithms rather than by reflection and openness.

Hermeneutic Polarization and Closure

Polarization of opinion on social media can be understood as a form of hermeneutic closure (*hermeneutische Verslossenheit*), which is a state when an individual or group rejects the possibility of other meanings beyond their own horizons. This closure does not occur naturally, but is formed by a combination of psychological bias and technological structure. From a psychological perspective, humans tend to look for information that confirms their views on a phenomenon known as *confirmation bias*.²¹ From a technological perspective, social media algorithms reinforce this tendency by presenting content that matches user preferences (*filter bubbles*).²²

The result of this synergy between human bias and algorithms is the formation of an *echo chamber*, a digital echo chamber where a person only hears opinions that are similar to his own.²³ This is where the loss of the art of hearing becomes apparent. In the echo chamber, listening is no longer an activity of openness to others, but only a repetition of oneself. Communication turns into an internal resonance that deepens polarization, rather than expands understanding.

From a hermeneutic perspective, this situation illustrates a fundamental failure in the *Verstehen* (understanding) process. Gadamer emphasizes that every understanding is always mediated by prejudice (*Vorurteil*), but prejudice does not have to be an obstacle; It is precisely the starting point of dialogue.²⁴ The problem is when prejudice is not faced with the other, so it stops developing and becomes dogma. In the context of social media, hermeneutic secrecy means a failure to present the "other" as a subject worthy of hearing. Communication loses its

¹⁹ Husnul Muttaqin, "The Shift of Religious Authority in Virtual Public Space X (Twitter)," *The Sociology of Islam* 7, no. 1 (2024): 15–44, <https://doi.org/10.15642/jsi.2024.7.1.1-30>.

²⁰ Muhammad Nadhif Judhananto and Fitzgerald Kennedy Sitorus, "Fusion of Horizons."

²¹ Aldi Sajjan and Ardan Alif, "Social Structure and Conflict: Sociological Theory's Perspective on Polarization in the Social Media Era," *SEIKAT: Journal of Social, Political and Legal Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2025): 309–14, <https://doi.org/10.55681/seikat.v4i1.1632>.

²² Aldi Sajjan and Ardan Alif, "Social Structure and Conflict."

²³ Viandra Fahira Ramadani Batubara Astika Nisa Alfifa, "Social Media and the Formation of Public Opinion (Analysis of Echo Chamber Case Studies on Comment Interaction on Instagram Accounts @Turnbackhoaxid in the Context of Post – Truth)," preprint, Zenodo, January 21, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.14709277>.

²⁴ Salmon Pamantung, "Contextual Hermeneutics: A dialectic of interpreter and textual perspectives in understanding scripture," *CURIOSITIES* 10, no. 3 (2024): 614–25, <https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v10i3.1226>.

dialogical nature because it is no longer aimed at understanding, but rather to win debates or strengthen one's position.

Social Phenomena and Crises of Understanding

A crisis of hearing on social media can also be understood as a crisis of social understanding (*Verständigungskrise*). Gadamer, in line with Jürgen Habermas, believed that language was the primary medium for the formation of common meaning. However, when language is reduced to a tool of persuasion and propaganda, it loses its communicative function.²⁵ In social media, language is often a weapon to attack opponents, not a bridge to establish understanding.

This phenomenon can be seen in many online debates on platforms such as X (Twitter), Facebook, or TikTok, where comments and uploads are more often written to "correct" or "attack" than to understand. Each group has its own narrative, symbols, and vocabulary that is difficult for other groups to understand. This results in semantic segregation of meaning space that makes cross-view conversations impossible.²⁶ In other words, the digital world is experiencing *a crisis horizon*: each group lives within its own horizon of meaning without fusion efforts.

In Gadamer's view, understanding is only possible if human beings recognize the limitations of their horizons and are willing to open themselves to other horizons. He writes that "understanding is not a total absorption of the other, but rather an encounter in the middle between two horizons." However, social media algorithms work with the opposite logic: they narrow, not broaden, horizons. Each user interaction is mapped to reinforce existing preferences. Thus, hermeneutically, algorithms work as a mechanism of "closing meaning", not opening meaning.

Losing the art of listening on social media also creates a real social impact. Users who are exposed to opposing political views on Twitter are not becoming more tolerant, but rather more extreme.²⁷ This suggests that without the dialogical and empathic framework that Gadamer suggests, exposure to other views does not automatically lead to understanding. Certain hermeneutic conditions are needed, namely the willingness to listen and understand in order for cross-view conversations to truly produce a fusion of horizons.

The Ethical Dimension of Hearing Crisis

In addition to the epistemological dimension, the crisis of listening on social media also has an ethical dimension. Gadamer understood listening as a form of moral responsibility towards others. By listening, one acknowledges the existence and dignity of others as subjects worthy of hearing. Loss of hearing means loss of ethical recognition of the existence of others.²⁸ In this context, polarization is not only a communication issue, but also a moral issue that is a failure to treat others as equal dialogue partners.

²⁵ Anwar Nuris, "Communicative Action: An Overview of Jürgen Habermas' Thought," *al-Balagh : Journal of Da'wah and Communication* 1, no. 1 (2016): 39–66, <https://doi.org/10.22515/balagh.v1i1.45>.

²⁶ Nuha Fidaraini, "SELF-REPRESENTATION OF DEAF DISABILITIES @AMANDA_FARLIANY ON INSTAGRAM: AN ANALYSIS OF MENTAL SYSTEMS AND LANGUAGE," *Literature: Journal of Communication Sciences* 8, no. 3 (2025): 59–73, <https://doi.org/10.21831/lektur.v8i3.25398>.

²⁷ Mahyuddin K. M. Nasution, *Optimizing the word approach to the habits that users do on social media*, University of North Sumatra, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.35437.81122>.

²⁸ Hasyim Hasanah, *ONTOLOGICAL-DIALECTICAL HERMENEUTICS HANS-GEORG GADAMER*.

The hermeneutic ethics that Gadamer offers demands that we not only talk *about* the other, but *with* the other.²⁹ True dialogue demands inner presence, attention, and empathy. In a fast-paced and shallow digital world, these values are easily eroded. Yet this is precisely where the urgency of hermeneutics arises: it reminds us that human understanding cannot be reduced to the exchange of data, but is an existential encounter between two subjects who seek to understand each other.

Hermeneutic Reflections on Digital Polarization

From the above reading, it can be concluded that the loss of the art of listening on social media is a contemporary manifestation of hermeneutic closure. This situation shows that advances in communication technology are not always synonymous with advances in human understanding. In Gadamer's language, modern man is "immersed in the noise of language that is no longer the meeting place of meaning."

To overcome this situation, it is necessary to revitalize the art of listening as a hermeneutic practice, namely restoring digital communication to its dialogical essence. This means encouraging social media users to practice reflective awareness in interacting: not only responding, but also interpreting and understanding. Thus, the art of listening is not just a communication skill, but an ethical foundation for the sustainability of human dialogue in an increasingly fragmented digital world.

Gadamer's Dialogical Hermeneutics as a Reflective and Inclusive Communication Model on Social Media

Today's digital communication life presents a sharp paradox that the more people can talk, the fewer actually listen. Social media, which was originally intended as a participatory and democratic space, has instead developed into a polarizing field that widens the gap between groups. In this context, Hans-Georg Gadamer's thought on dialogical hermeneutics offers a philosophical foundation for rebuilding reflective, open, and inclusive communication.³⁰ Gadamer's hermeneutics does not only talk about how humans understand texts or traditions, but also how humans meet and understand their neighbors. Therefore, this idea has direct relevance to the communication crisis in the digital era.

Principles of Dialogical Hermeneutics

Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutics departs from the belief that human understanding is always historical and dialogical. Each individual lives within a certain horizon, which is a collection of experiences, values, and languages that shape his or her view of the world. When two horizons meet through dialogue, there is what Gadamer calls the *fusion of the horizon* (*Horizontverschmelzung*).³¹ This fusion does not mean total assimilation or the loss of differences, but rather the creation of new meanings that arise from the encounter between two worldviews.

²⁹ Adi Wijaya and Ehwanudin Ehwanudin, "Gadamer's Hermeneutic Approach in the Concept of Education KH. Hasyim Asy'ari: Gadamer's Hermeneutic Approach in the Concept of Education KH. "Hasyim Asy'ari," *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Education* 1, no. 2 (2021): 141–53, <https://doi.org/10.25217/cie.v1i2.1627>.

³⁰ Alan Cahyadi et al., *HANS GEORG GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICS AS A CRITICAL APPROACH IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING*, 2 (2025).

³¹ Gadamer et al., *Truth and Method*.

The first principle of dialogical hermeneutics is openness to the other (*Offenheit*). In the context of social media, this openness means a willingness to listen to different opinions without directly rejecting or attacking. Gadamer asserts that understanding does not mean approving, but gives meaning the opportunity to appear as it is. This principle is especially important because social media tends to encourage users to react quickly and emotionally. By applying hermeneutic openness, users can slow down the response process, reflect on context, and see the possible meanings behind differing views.

The second principle is the recognition of prejudice (*Vorurteil*) as part of understanding. In the modern tradition, prejudice is often seen as an obstacle to objectivity. However, for Gadamer, prejudice is precisely a prerequisite for any form of understanding, because humans always interpret from a certain position in history and culture. In digital communication, awareness of these prejudices is important so that individuals can reflect on their own positions and limitations. By recognizing that every view carries bias, social media users can interact more humbly and empathic.

The third principle is dialogue as a medium of truth. Gadamer argues that truth does not belong to one party, but emerges through conversation. In the dialogue, each participant is not only expressing an opinion, but is also willing to be changed by the meeting. This principle contains a strong ethical dimension: communication is not a place of domination, but a shared space where meaning is created collectively.

These three principles of openness, awareness of prejudice, and dialogue as a space of truth can be applied as the foundation of a new communication model that is more reflective and inclusive on social media.³²

Reconstruction of Digital Communication Ethics

Building reflective digital communication means restoring the ethical dimension of the listening process. In the framework of Gadamer's hermeneutics, listening is a moral act because it demands recognition of the existence of others. Digital communication ethics based on dialogical hermeneutics can be formulated through three practical principles:

1. Presence *Ethics*

Presence in a digital conversation does not simply mean being technically active, but being fully present in the listening process. Attendance etiquette requires that social media users not only interact reactively, but also provide attention and empathy to the interlocutor. This could mean reading carefully before answering, delaying emotional reactions, or making room for context to be understood.

2. Reflective *Ethics*

Reflection is a form of self-awareness of the limitations of the horizon of understanding. Reflective social media users will realize that every post, comment, or opinion is always born out of a specific context and does not represent the absolute truth. With reflection ethics, users learn to turn debate into conversation, and confrontation into learning.

3. Openness *Ethics*

This ethic requires the courage to let other meanings in without fear of losing one's identity. In a digital space often controlled by identity polarization (political, religious, cultural), hermeneutic openness is a radical step toward returning the conversation to its original purpose: the search for common understanding, not victory.

³² Nixon, Hans-Georg Gadamer.

These three ethical principles can be a conceptual framework in creating a *digital dialogue space*, which is a communication space that allows meetings across the horizons of meaning. Digital dialogue space does not mean eliminating differences, but managing differences productively so that they do not turn into hostility.

Gadamer's Hermeneutics Based Digital Dialogue Space Model

To answer the crisis of hearing on social media, this study proposes a conceptual model called *Digital Hermeneutic Dialogue Space*. This model is a direct application of Gadamer's hermeneutic principles into the context of online communication.

The model has four main elements:

1. *Hermeneutic Awareness*
Each individual is aware that his or her views are shaped by a particular historical and cultural horizon. This awareness prevents the absolutism of opinion and encourages users to understand that every statement is the result of interpretation.
2. *Interactive Dialogue*
Digital communication is directed not at debate, but at mutually constructive conversations. This can be realized by an interaction format that emphasizes reflective questions, rather than dogmatic statements. For example, changing the comment "You're wrong" to "What if we looked at it from another perspective?".
3. *Algorithmic Ecology*
This element has to do with the role of digital platforms in facilitating dialogue. Platforms can be designed to bring up content that expands the user's horizons, rather than narrows them. The hermeneutic algorithm will display proportionally diverse views so that users do not get trapped in the *echo chamber*.
4. *Ethical Participation*
A healthy digital space requires ethical participation, which is the awareness that every act of communication has social consequences. Respecting the interlocutor, not manipulating information, and practicing digital empathy are all part of this ethical responsibility.³³

The *Digital Dialogue Space model* is not a philosophical utopia, but a normative framework that can be adapted in digital literacy education, content moderation, and online social interaction design. By applying Gadamer's principles of dialogical hermeneutics, communication on social media can be restored from destructive tendencies towards more reflective and humane practices.

Hermeneutics as the Basis of Digital Social Reconciliation

Gadamer's hermeneutics also has far-reaching social implications. When the art of listening is restored, digital communication no longer functions as a forum for confrontation, but as a means of social reconciliation.³⁴ This reconciliation does not mean erasing differences, but turning differences into a space for shared learning. Gadamer emphasized that true dialogue

³³ Gadamer et al., *Truth and Method*.

³⁴ Deddy Andria Setiawan, "THE SOCIAL VALUES OF THE POETRY ANTHOLOGY 'NGEPAK-NGEPAK' BY FAHRURRAJI ASMUNI: A STUDY OF GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICS," *JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND LEARNING* 14, no. 1 (2024): 64, <https://doi.org/10.20527/jbsp.v14i1.16822>.

always brings transformation, because in the process of understanding, humans also learn to understand themselves through others.

In the context of a polarized society, this principle has an important meaning. Horizon fusion can be a metaphor for a social process in which different groups learn to coexist without negating their identity. By practicing the art of listening, digital societies can build *empathy literacy* the ability to interpret the experiences of others imaginatively and reflectively.³⁵

Furthermore, Gadamer's hermeneutics emphasizes that true understanding cannot be imposed unilaterally; it must be born from shared experience. Therefore, social media needs to be redirected to a space of *co-understanding*, not just *co-existence* (*co-existence* without communication).³⁶ Digital platforms designed with hermeneutic principles can encourage more meaningful participation through features that foster empathy and reflection, such as *comment delay features*, cross-view discussion rooms, or algorithms that prioritize the quality of conversations over the quantity of interactions.

Final Reflection: Towards Digital Hermeneutic Ethics

Thus, the application of Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutics in social media is not only a communication strategy, but also an ethical and cultural project. The digital world requires a new paradigm that is not only oriented towards the speed of information, but also on the depth of understanding. Gadamer's hermeneutics teaches that understanding is a historical process that requires time, patience, and openness. Digital hermeneutic ethics based on the art of listening can be the antithesis of *noise culture* on social media. He demands that digital humans return to their essence as interpreting beings (*homo hermeneuticus*) beings who not only speak, but also hear, understand, and change through dialogue.

By reviving the art of listening in the digital space, society can return communication to its original function: building understanding, strengthening solidarity, and fostering humanity in a connected yet alienated world.

Conclusion

This research shows that the communication crisis in the social media era is not only a technological problem, but also a hermeneutic and ethical issue. In a digital world increasingly noisy by opinions, quick reactions, and algorithms that narrow horizons, humans are missing the most basic ability in the process of understanding—the *art of listening*. Through the study of Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, this study confirms that listening is not a passive action, but the core of the process of understanding (*Verstehen*) and the basis of the ethics of human dialogue.

The concept of *the art of listening* in Gadamer's hermeneutics teaches that understanding means opening oneself to other meanings, transcending one's prejudices, and being willing to undergo transformation through encounters with others. In the context of social media, the art of listening demands a hermeneutic consciousness: that every view is born from a certain horizon and that no single truth can be monopolized. When this openness is lost, communication turns into a collective monologue—a situation in which each individual only hears echoes from himself.

³⁵ Za'farullah Jamaly et al., "Analyzing Gadamer's Philosophical Thought (Hermeneutic Thought)," *Lexicon: Journal of Language, Literature, and Culture Education* 2, no. 1 (2024): 01–06, <https://doi.org/10.59632/leksikon.v2i1.190>.

³⁶ Jamaly et al., "Analyzing Gadamer's Philosophical Thought (Hermeneutic Thought)."

The phenomenon of *echo chambers* and *filter bubbles* that have appeared on social media shows how the loss of the art of hearing creates a hermeneutic closure. The polarization of opinion and the degradation of dialogue are not solely caused by ideological differences, but by a failure to listen hermeneutically—a failure to acknowledge the existence and meaning of others. In this context, Gadamer's theory provides a framework for understanding that true understanding cannot be forced, but grows through patient, open, and reflective dialogue.

As a conceptual solution, this study offers a *Digital Dialogue Space model* as an application of Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutic principles in social media communication. The model emphasizes four key elements: hermeneutic awareness, interactive dialogue, an algorithmic ecology that supports a diversity of meanings, and ethical participation based on empathy. By applying this model, digital communication can be redirected back to its essence as a space for the formation of shared meaning, rather than an arena of division.

Finally, this study confirms that restoring the art of listening is not just a communication need, but an ethical and cultural calling. In the midst of a fragmented digital world, the ability to hear is a form of moral courage—the courage to open up to others and allow the truth to grow among us. Thus, Gadamer's hermeneutics gives way to more humane communication, where listening becomes the basis for understanding, and understanding becomes the basis for social reconciliation in the age of social media.

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