

Pain¹

Reflections of a Philosopher

Hans-Georg Gadamer

Translated by Alexander Crist

Abstract: In “Pain,” Hans-Georg Gadamer offers several reflections on the experience of pain and its importance for both modern medicine and hermeneutic thought. Having already celebrated his 100th birthday at the time of this lecture, Gadamer speaks of his own experience with polio and the pains of old age, and the influence that his friend and physician, Paul Vogler, had on his approach to the treatment of pain. In the year 2000, Gadamer is concerned with the dominance of technology and chemical “pain management” in the professional medical community, which has largely forgotten the more natural or traditional healing methods in approaching pain and recovery. In light of this, what is crucial for Gadamer is that individuals approach the challenges of pain by taking an active part in their own recovery. For Gadamer, hermeneutics speaks to these encounters with pain and recovery as decisive for human life and understanding.

1. Translator’s Note: Gadamer’s lecture on pain took place at a medical conference entitled, “Approaching Orthopedic Pain Patients” (*Der Zugang zum orthopädischen Schmerzpatienten*), held at the Orthopädische Universitätsklinik Heidelberg on 11 November, 2000. Marcus Schiltenswolf, as the organizer of the conference, explains that this venue was meant for practicing medical professionals to discuss therapeutic measures in alleviating various forms of back pain, including chronic pain, and to continue to articulate and consider the various difficulties that develop within the doctor-patient relationship. In part, Schiltenswolf invites Gadamer to speak at the conference in order to provide a perspective on the role of pain for both doctor and patient that is not grounded within the horizon of scientific and medical research. See Marcus Schiltenswolf, “Vorwort,” in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Schmerz: Einschätzungen aus medizinischer, philosophischer und therapeutischer Sicht*, Vol. 2 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2010), 11–17.

I have listened to the lectures with great interest. Of course, I did not exactly know what role I would find for myself here. Should I tell of my life with pain, a life I have drawn out for so long without complaint? Or am I expected to offer a couple of fundamental considerations about what can be learned regarding pain in the age of technicity in which we live.

I begin with the fundamental considerations, which—to my great satisfaction—I observed in the preceding lectures, and which has to do with what emerged spontaneously in the moment. I do not generally attribute much to having everything prepared and then giving a lecture. One of the saddest atavisms of academic life consists, in my opinion, in the lecture. It is really unbelievable. It just simply does not work! A lecture! Does one actually reach a point by means of a lecture in which the other comes to understand? Of course, I always have a small set of notes with me. It is still necessary to seem somewhat prepared. Yet in truth, I try to lead the audience with which I speak into a conversation; a conversation that can never consist of one among many speaking to the others. After the conclusion of my small paper today, there will also of course be the real discussion and this is what allows us to go beyond the limits of our horizons and be informed. For this reason, every conversation is so precious because it awakens in us the knowledge of our own limits.

In order to know what pain is, it is perhaps sensible to ask: when is the first time we become consciously aware of pain? What is, for example, the initial birth cry? An expression of pain? Does one know such a thing? Can one know such a thing? I do not know. It is surely a curious reaction, one that is achieved with great energy to this unbelievable, unimaginable transformation in the world which provokes this initial birth cry. It is an indication that life begins with this cry, with this explosion of energy, in which both being disconcerted and pained directly play a role. Here in the birth cry, I already find an early indication of a conversation, a conversation which one has not yet seen, either with one's own mother or the doctor. Already in this very first situation we run into interesting questions.

Certainly, one can hardly better get to know the role of today's medicine than when one sees it as a field that is consumed by pain management.² But it is easy to forget that relief from severe pain has always belonged to the experiences (*Erfahrungen*) of human life: we all know the particular struggles and particular challenges in the immediate reaction of nature that we experience (*erleben*) as pain. Obviously it belongs to the balance of human

2. T/N: While *Schmerzbekämpfung* is often translated as "pain management," the German indicates a combat or fight against pain.

life that one must endure painful circumstances and their alleviation without calling upon medical help. For instance, one thinks about muscle aches, which are not an illness, but rather the consequence of overexertion. One can surely assume that the enduring and easing of pain was likewise always an aim of human conduct. Thus, it was all but taken for granted that grandmothers and mothers sought to ease the pain of children, and in truth, they did not forget to do this even for the generation that was already independent and grown up.

Yet, it is just as obvious that these technologies that have been passed down for generations, and the possibilities for the treatment of pain, have experienced an essential transformation. The doctor that performs treatment is the chronicler of this transformation. It is in such cases where patients, incentivized by the mass media, demand chemical pain management, that the doctor should avoid this for good reasons and at the risk of losing his reputation.³ The management of pain is becoming a particular problem for medical treatment in the age of technicity, in particular, where it has to do with the numbing of pain. Without a doubt, one sees oneself placed before an entirely new sphere of healing due to the development of technology, and especially in the chemical sciences. With this, one hardly any more notices and cares for the natural forms of the treatment of pain.

One must not be surprised to find much abuse in these circumstances, or to put it another way: that the natural process of healing is often not met with the patience that is required. From this, it is self-evident (or at least it should be) that traditional healing methods should also be cultivated alongside the highly technologized hospitals and educational institutions. The advantage in this is immediately made clear provided that one learns to grasp the natural methods as an aid in the healing process. No one will be able to seriously deny the value in the medication provided by science, in its ability to ease or avoid pain. To be sure, a natural healing process does not help one's health so rapidly, but in the long run it is better.

I return to the first conscious experience (*Erleben*) of pain. One must wonder how the understanding of adult life slowly takes over. Who does not know the initial joy of parents when they encounter the child's first successful word? We are first tasked with considering what it means to learn

3. T/N: The German word for doctor, *Arzt*, takes a masculine article and accords with a masculine personal pronoun in this sentence. Throughout the translation, I try to incorporate English neutral personal pronouns when it does not interrupt the flow or the meaning of the translation. However, in cases such as these, I maintain the masculine article in English instead of a neutral pronoun to stay close to Gadamer's German.

speech. It is the crossing over from play to triumph, an appropriation of that which belongs to someone or upon which one first lays claims. It is the years of upbringing whose significance we sense when we leave behind a life within the family and the familiar world of childhood.

When I was twelfth-two years old, I personally experienced what pain could be as I was stricken with polio and was laid out for weeks with severe back pain. Above all, I had to be concerned about whether, and to what degree, the paralysis would intensify, and always with the knowledge that no one knew of any treatment whatsoever for this illness. And of course, the pains could in no way be avoided. So, in bed, I once again took up my philosophical studies and during restful hours I read the complete works of Jean Paul, who to my mind is the greatest German prose writer. This was probably as much as twenty volumes. Eventually, the pain abated and what remained was only a weakness in my legs, which for years allowed me to engage in sports, in particular, on the tennis courts where there are only short distances to run. Not until my seventy-fifth year did I have to give up on tennis, and after all my years in Heidelberg I was quite familiar with all of the lovely forest paths in Odenwald.

Now, admittedly, I must walk around on crutches and train on a stationary bike in order to continue to walk on my own legs. Though polio is hardly any more cause for infections and complications in light of today's medical research, it still brings itself to memory ever anew through the muscular atrophy of old age, such that the process of walking is not exactly pain-free. Yet all things considered, I must say that I well endured the effects of this severe illness in a similar fashion to other intensive experiences with pain. It is precisely these experiences which raise one's sensibility for pain, especially when pain does not allow us to sleep. It is terrible to witness how patients struggle through sleepless nights and only when the morning dawns can they fit in a beneficial hour of sleep. As a hobbling old man, these are experiences which one accepts as if taken for granted, as all but familiar. But, of course, the natural need is for a healthy and healing sleep.

The great strides in chemical treatment are by now well known. Yet in all of this one should not forget that the indiscriminate application of these advancements also contains its own dangers. I am myself the son of a chemical researcher and pharmacist who made a name in alkaloid research.

It was certainly a great disappointment for my father that as a student I was inclined towards the "professors who only talk," as my father would call them, instead of coming to like the sciences. Today, one can just as well withstand this fatherly disappointment, and fathers cannot ultimately do

anything to change this. One may not also forget that one receives inheritance not only from one's father, but also from one's mother. I had already lost my mother when I was four years old, and, as a result of this, I also lost her deep artistic enthusiasm such as her religious affinity, which I only came to know afterwards from the reading of her estate.

In this regard, my father was quite different, as a brief episode can amusingly illustrate.

My father died somewhat early at sixty-one years of age, which was no surprise given the conditions at the time of the laboratories within which he had to work (he died of a lung tumor). As he lay in the hospital in Marburg, close to the end, he became greatly concerned about me. I had indeed completed my doctorate at a very young age; however this was certainly not yet a career, and my habilitation was only just underway. So my father wrote to my professor at the time, Heidegger, and asked whether he could pay just one visit to him in the hospital. This visit took place of course. Heidegger came and asked: "Mister privy councilor, what can I do for you?"—polite, as one does with older gentlemen. "Ah," said my father, "I'm worried about my son, what should then become of him? It is just terrible!" Heidegger wanted to comfort him and replied: "But he is excellent and already in the middle of his habilitation. He has already submitted his work, the habilitation is underway." There was indeed a still longer conversation between them both until my father asked Heidegger as he was leaving: "May I ask you one more thing, dear colleague: Do you really believe that philosophy is sufficient for one's purpose in life?" Just an example of a scientist's great sense of fulfillment in his endeavors.

Only later did I come to understand the root of his concern. My mother died of diabetes and then several years after her death a drug was found in alkaloid research that made possible an effective treatment for the illness. I believe that my father's one-sided perspective of my path in life is essentially due to this circumstance: that he himself could no longer apply the advancements of medicine to his own wife, advancements which he was not only able to experience but also take part in initiating.

But I have digressed a bit. I was in the middle of contrasting these two extremes with each other: The newborn's first cry of pain, and the infirmities, the "faint" but constant pain of the afflictions of old age. It is difficult to mediate between these two extremes because we are in pain and cannot separate this pain from ourselves. Pain, as it were, encompasses our lives and consistently challenges us anew. What pain demands from us is considerable. What is absolutely necessary is to not abandon courage regardless

of how great the pain may be. Whoever can manage this can—there is such a wonderful word in German for this—“recover” (*verwinden*) from pain.⁴ Language is so wise. We all live from out of the wisdom of language, especially us philosophers. To recover, what a word! And what is said with this word? This word articulates, as it were, a subduing of pain. It is perhaps the most remarkable thing in our remarkable lives that one forgets, that one is able to forget, that even the most worthwhile things slowly fade away. Forgetfulness is weakness. Here, one’s own struggle with pain is a clear opportunity, as one wholly devotes oneself to it, to engage in what wholly fulfills oneself. Nothing allows pain to be more bearable than the feeling that something is going on with me, that something is now on my mind. There is of course always a whole arsenal of unfinished tasks which we strive to overcome (*verwinden*). In this sense, pain is a great chance, perhaps the greatest chance, to finally “come to terms” with the tasks we have been given. The authentic dimension of one’s life becomes perceptible in one’s experience with pain, so long as one does not allow oneself to be *conquered*.⁵ With this I also see the greatest danger of the technological age, namely, that these powers are underestimated and with this—understandably—we are no longer able to fully develop our own capacities. What is at stake in this is the joy of succeeding, of sovereignty (*Beherrschen*), and ultimately of one’s own return to the feeling of health. I cannot deny that this joy of succeeding,

4. T/N: *Verwinden* is a crucial word in this text and can be translated in different ways. While on the one hand it can mean to twist or distort a physical object, it is also used to indicate that one has “gotten through,” “overcome,” or “come through” something. I have translated it here as “recover” in the hope of capturing the experience with pain that Gadamer is indicating here, namely, a convalescence that is neither a forgetting of pain nor a treatment of pain as something external that needs to be numbed and eradicated. Instead, for Gadamer, the patient must cope with or come to terms with pain as something that intimately concerns the patient and requires the patient to take an active role in one’s own healing. Thus, to recover implies a restoration or return to what Gadamer considers a more total sense of health, namely, a robust equilibrium that allows the patient to engage the world in an active and dynamic way: “It is a condition of being involved, of being in the world, of being together with one’s fellow human beings, of active and rewarding engagement in one’s everyday tasks” (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age*, trans. Jason Gaiger and Nicholas Walker [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996], 112–113). The translation of *verwinden* as “to recover” also resonates with Gadamer’s comments on forgetfulness. In this, to recover from pain involves the recovery of a memory, or, the “authentic dimension of one’s life.”

5. T/N: In the text, the root word “*winden*” is italicized (“*Überwinden*”), emphasizing a contrast between *verwinden* and *überwinden*.

of vigilance, and of devotion, which also resides in vigilance, is still perhaps the best medication that nature knew to provide for us.

In my own life, I have especially tried to strengthen the powers of my own organism. For this, I had the timely fortune of finding a good doctor who, furthermore, was a good friend. I am speaking of Paul Vogler,⁶ who was the third chair of the Charité in Berlin for naturopathy.⁷ During his lifetime he was still quite an exceptional character. Today—in such times where the dangers of an exclusively chemical treatment are well known—he would be in the very best of company, if you would forgive me for such flowery words. Vogler entered upon his path through very particular circumstances. Initially he took over the management of a research hospital in Märkisch Lusatia,⁸ but was quickly dissatisfied with the financial resources, such that he ultimately settled down in Frankfurt an der Oder and there began working with the natural healing methods of old family traditions,

6. T/N: After the publication of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer's relationship with his physician, Paul Vogler, was decisive for his growing interest and concern for the objectification of the human being within professional healthcare and medicine. Through conversations with Vogler, they began a joint project entitled "New Anthropology" (*Neue Anthropologie*), a multi-volume series of inter-disciplinary essays from contributors across the sciences and humanities. When Vogler died in 1969, Gadamer considered taking over and fulfilling this project as carrying on Vogler's legacy, and completed the project on his own in 1972 (Gadamer, *Biologische Anthropologie*, v). His introductory essay to this series, "Theorie, Technik, Praxis—die Aufgabe einer neuen Anthropologie" ("Theory, Technology, Praxis: The Task of the Science of Man"), became the first essay in a collection of essays and lectures between the 1960s and the 1990s entitled, *The Enigma of Health*, in which Gadamer addresses the growing technical capacities in the medical world, which threaten to engulf our understanding of health, embodiment, and human existence in the modern scientific age. See Gadamer, *The Enigma of Health*, and Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Vogler, eds. *Biologische Anthropologie*. Vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Neue Anthropologie, 1972).

7. T/N: Gadamer refers to Vogler as the third chair at the Charité presumably because there were two leading figures before him that occupied official positions in the general field of natural healing methods and physical therapy: Ludwig Brieger (1899), and Franz Schönenberger (1920). According to Witte, Vogler ran the Universitätsklinik für Physikalische Therapie at the Universität Berlin (Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität/Humboldt-Universität) from 1939 until 1965. Wilfried Witte, "Unerhörte Leiden: Die Geschichte der Schmerztherapie", in *Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2017); and Eberhard Conradi, "75 Jahre Physiotherapie an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin", *Physikalische Medizin, Rehabilitationsmedizin, Kurortmedizin* 34, no. 1 (1982), 3–8.

8. T/N: Gadamer is referring here to a region in Central Europe between Germany and Poland.

and with much success. Inspired by this success, he perfected his research in this area. I personally thank him for his most impressive aid. In any case, I believe that I am not a complete stranger to the particular context of today's proceedings and especially to this area of medicine, if I am emphasizing this side so strongly. Indeed, the concept of hermeneutic philosophy, which has become fashionable from my work, also points towards this area of medicine: The word "hermeneutic" comes from the name "Hermes," the messenger of the gods. What is it then to be the messenger of the gods? Was there ever such a message that Zeus assigned to the messenger of the gods to read? I don't think so. He never gave him a message. Nevertheless, Hermes travels through the lands and pronounces "his" message. This is what the word "hermeneutics" says: Such that what I read, learn, say, or hear, is not a message deemed to be proclaimed; there is no presupposition here. It is perhaps more a matter of bringing things into language, which is how we understand things, and perhaps by means of an appropriate constellation, which itself yet involves the appeasing of pain and its limitations, in order to come to an understanding of what we are.

These are the things with which I am so greatly occupied. It is true that the joy of success is the greatest joy of life and that the opportunities that consist in this for the healing process cannot be highly valued enough. Obviously, I realize that without the chemical industry we would not have the varied means and methods of modern medicine at our disposal and that endless lives are saved because of this. Yet the strengthening of one's form of life in response to pain, and making one's own ability and success once again able to be experienced in virtue of this enlivenment, is the great question posed to one's own vitality.

DISCUSSION

You have illustrated the importance of correct and appropriate conversation, which is today more and more on the decline. Think of the many PCs and the progressing computerization of our society, all of which is leading towards humans not only sitting in front of the user interface, but perhaps yet in the near future receiving a catheter in order to remain seated even longer still. Your opinion on this: How will this unfold, especially in light of the generally observed increase in back pain?

Gadamer: Many thanks! The question seems to me quite appropriate. I actually believe that we are heading for difficult times. Faith in computer science and the concomitant depersonalization of what I have spoken about

is certainly not the way which is helpful for the sovereignty,⁹ or better said, for the subduing, the recovery from pain. Surely, if we just have faith in life, these are developments from which we can also learn something. I am firmly convinced that there will be new forms of life formation, in the broadest sense, which will be able to conceive themselves in opposition to the world of machines, and will be able to draw much needed conclusions from this.

If I understand you correctly, then you are saying: Pain can also make sense, it can also be affirmed. If we consider the development of medicine (as well as here at this conference), then we see that one tends to record the exact opposite. We see and hear again and again: We are receiving too little medication, too few opiates for example, we hear the comparisons of kilograms per 100,000 residents, and we should perhaps take Denmark as a model. Taken in principle we follow an approach that is unchanged and runs precisely against what you have said: To also search for meaning in pain. We are trying to avoid the chronification of pain as quickly as possible and are trying to find all of the possible devices and tricks in order to make this possible. Thus, I see here a certain contradictory approach.

Gadamer: I agree with you. What you have said is just precisely what I am calling for. The question is, who seizes the more proper possibility and makes this useful for oneself. In my opinion, an engagement with pain cannot consist in allowing one to forget this pain as quickly as possible. One should rather try, as it were, to enable oneself to lead a bearable life through one's own devotion to that which fulfills oneself.

Directly to this point: You said correctly, to be sure, that it is a great fortune when one is able to defeat pain through one's own abilities. But what about those who cannot succeed in this? Is it not an impoverishment to human beings and their lives when pain becomes the dominant theme and one cannot defeat this pain through one's own abilities? Does one not then need the help of another, of a doctor, or perhaps even of chemical means?

Gadamer: Certainly, there are cases such as these. I am also certainly not contesting the necessity of such medicine. But the doctor is precisely more than just someone who is competent, such as a specialized consultant in a case of illness. The doctor reinforces exactly what I have been talking

9. T/N: I have translated both *Beherrschen* (in a previous paragraph) and *Beherrschung* (in this instance) as "sovereignty" to maintain consistency. However, it should be noted that Gadamer appears to hesitate on the use of this word in relation to the recovery from pain.

about, namely, that one in some way fulfills the life that one lives. This is precisely the sense in which one is indebted to the doctor, when the doctor does more than merely provide medication.

Herr Professor, you overlook one hundred years of civilization, within which there have been tremendous changes. Above all, I think on this point about the television. What kind of abyss in human existence must one imagine that allows human beings to stare into such a medium for up to three hours a day? And is it not so that this symptom of our society today shows that self-healing mechanisms and interactive mechanisms with pain are so far degenerated and estranged, that your words are indeed quite welcome, but are now also quite remote from reality?

Gadamer: That is certainly correct. The greatest threat to family is the television: Its effect is such that human beings no longer make conversation with one another. One sees it yet in all sociability. With this in mind, it is now such that we are headed for difficult times because all of these forms of communication are being adjusted. Yet despite this I believe that the need for understanding, as much as the need for free speech, can in no way be “conquered.” People will always say: That which I have conceived in thought will never be affected upon by television. It is a great difference whether I see a person directly before me or whether this person speaks to me through a video screen. It is also a question of participation and active concern for another. I believe that we can be quite reassured on this point: I am convinced and feel it: Yes, humans are still, in all things, human, and must reckon, in all things, with life. One should never forget this. We have profound strengths within ourselves that cannot so easily dwindle away. Yet in this regard the doctor has a maieutic function: He assists us in becoming conscious of these strengths. However, this process of becoming conscious is carried out through pain.

If one were to trace out the implications of your approach to the cause of and treatment for pain, then that would mean a revolution in chronic pain treatment. We could forget pain killers, injections, and things of the like. We would actually only have to give the patients courage to cope with their illness.

Gadamer: You mean, only with the help of the entire organism, though not without every aid; only thus have you understood me well.

What you have said: The discovery of one’s own powers for self-healing is what is today taught by psychologists in behavioral medicine. This is an important topic in medicine. Unfortunately, it is not yet generally accepted and not yet

known that the largest part of the treatment of pain comes from the powers which the individuals themselves have. Your remarks, meanwhile, have a distinguished predecessor: Michel de Montaigne said something quite similar 420 years ago. Due to suffering lithiasis and commonly occurring cholic, he knew well, as it were, about which he spoke. What is interesting is that his philosophical works are quite strongly defined by pain after this suffering befell him at forty years of age. In his Essays, he frequently reflected upon pain and the experiences he underwent in order to defeat this pain, and here writing all of this down. The entire book is full of these “tricks” by which one can cope with pain. This is also to say: “If you don’t defeat your pain, then your pain will defeat you.” He did not say: “If your doctor does not defeat your pain, then it will overwhelm you.” No, he spoke of “you.” He thus directed it to the reader himself. I believe what you have said is a very important teaching and it reinforces the psychologists who are now scientifically establishing this and want to bring this knowledge into the mainstream. It strengthens their position because you have said it.

Gadamer: I am quite delighted and I admit that I am very well acquainted with Montaigne from Hans Magnus Enzenberger’s newly published and quite lovely German translation, which I also found in my house. It also concerns incurable illness and death. There are such marvelous things in this book. Anyway, thank you very much for this endorsement!

Herr Professor Gadamer, imagine that you have had chronic pain for five years and then go to a doctor. What do you expect from your doctor in today’s age? What is your image of an ideal doctor? What do you expect of him?

Gadamer: Yes, of course. I expect primarily and above all that I can strengthen the powers of my own organism, whichever suffering may determine me. I admit to you (and certainly said it in my presentation) that I owe my convictions in this area quite substantially to Paul Vogler, my since deceased friend from Berlin, chair holder at the Charité for naturopathy. I would like to mention again that I have reached this healthy old age in the first place by a reasonable assimilation of what Vogler advocated. Is this still a name for you? Today, surely no one knows Paul Vogler anymore! It does not depend on knowing him, because what he taught is certainly able to be experienced everywhere. Before, there was the grandmother who would make use of the smallest of things and apply helpful poultices and the like. Vogler opened up similar things to me, which were always already within me waiting for their opening. Vogler himself no doubt came to his findings in a roundabout way, which I indicated in my modest lecture. He began to inform himself of the grandmothers—in Frankfurt an der Oder if I am not

mistaken—and of how they treat these infections. He then studied these things and showed to what degree, and by what opportunities, and with what possibilities, this can also effectively lead to success. It is the tradition or transmission that provides us knowledge. It is that which humans have experienced entirely on their own in their lives or have learned from others, are able to pass this on to others, and can for their part inform others.

I just wanted to briefly ask something: I have nothing against Kneipp,¹⁰ but how should a doctor, who is of your own mindset, deal with such patients? Could you perhaps give a few pragmatic tips?

Gadamer: Perhaps first and foremost we should educate these individuals. It has to do with the patients, after all, and not so much with the doctor. It is quite understandable from your vantage point that you would ask this question, and I have no doubt already a short while ago given you the answer. The topic I have addressed is yet the most lamentable circumstance, namely, that the doctor can scarcely treat patients with complete freedom anymore. Rather, the doctor stands under the dictate of the large chemical pharmaceutical industry and therefore, more and more, forgets how to really reach the patient where it would be meaningful: In one's own responsibility towards oneself and with respect to one's life in general.

I take what you are saying and advocating here as something with real weight. In the last ten to fifteen years I have treated many, indeed an uncountable number of pain patients. For these patients, pain is always as well the means by which one closes the door or the gateway to the world, and when one closes this gateway then one also no longer has the opportunity to engage with this world in a vigorous manner. And when this is no longer possible then one can no longer discover for one's life these qualities which you have shown us.

Gadamer: Yes, this is indeed the greatest test there is.

I think that too much is being polarized here. I think what Herr Professor Gadamer is saying here is entirely fantastic. But of course he himself portrays the kind of character he is advocating. Nevertheless, an objection: We have no doubt had to painfully learn that often other criteria apply to the ordinary pain patient. This patient is so thrown back by pain that one is no longer in the position to develop these truly outstanding qualities that one may possess.

10. T/N: The person asking the question is most likely referring to Sebastian Kneipp, a Bavarian priest and a prominent figure in the history of holistic medicine and naturopathy. His water baths and water immersion treatments gained popularity in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Rather this patient must, on the whole, return to oneself first with the help of the chemical industry so that one can develop these capabilities. I do not think it is so good to act as if there was either only one or the other. With help from naturopathy one can perhaps spare a lot of medication and one can also bring individuals earlier into this phase with alternative methods. Perhaps precisely because pain therapy still finds itself in its developing stages, I do not think it is so good if one upends everything once again with a single blow. The individual human being is simply weaker than the examples that you have named for us and that come from outstanding and exemplary personalities. Unfortunately, this is not representative of the normal human being.

Gadamer: I believe you are underestimating nature. One should not forget that medication requires an otherwise healthy organism.

In your conversation with us—not in your lecture—you have said, or more-over, you have asked: “What is pain, is it a warning, is it a reminder?” What is pain for you?

Gadamer: Both! I hope that I have actually shown that one can handle very great difficulties if another indeed accomplishes this. Admittedly, I would hardly well stand here if I myself wanted to defend a misguided life. No, that was quite far from my mind.

Herr Professor Gadamer, we want to give you a heartfelt thank you for choosing and finding your way to us, which was surely not without its burden, and for discussing with everyone and leading us to an important insight, namely, that the I (das Ich) has a rather special role in the expression of pain. Many thanks.¹¹

11. T/N: I would like to thank the Editorial Staff and Editorial Assistants at the *Journal of Continental Philosophy* for their incredible support and invaluable contribution to this translation.