

Psychology for the Other Conference Submission

Name: Jerome Veith

Working Title:

**“The Hermeneutics of Having-Been: Historicity’s Relevance in the Memory Crisis”**

Abstract:

Despite the widening absorption of hermeneutic insights into therapeutic theory and practice—perhaps most notably in the development of the “relational” or “intersubjective” approach—there appears nevertheless to be an imbalance in this overall reception toward the side of linguisticity. Though the complementary notion of historicity has not gone unnoticed in therapy’s application of hermeneutics, it is safe to say that the temporal horizons of lived experience have received far less intensive scrutiny than the linguistic, which is frequently thematized as the “between” of the therapeutic encounter. This disproportionate attention is unfortunate, as I think hermeneutical insights concerning historicity address a crucial and widespread *aporia* in psychology about the status of memory in human existence.

To put this *aporia* bluntly, we tend to overlook that someone’s having-been is not itself a past entity or process, nor a spatially localizable brain-state (an archival record, as it were), but a contextually distributed meaning that is lived in and as the present. Gadamer’s account of this presently lived past, in the concept of effective-historical consciousness, provides a robust conceptual underpinning to intersubjective approaches, especially regarding trauma; the event of witnessing or being witnessed may thus amount to discovering what Gadamer calls the “inner infinity” of historicity. It is possible that this uncovering entails another version of Nietzsche’s *amor fati*, of loving one’s fate.

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