

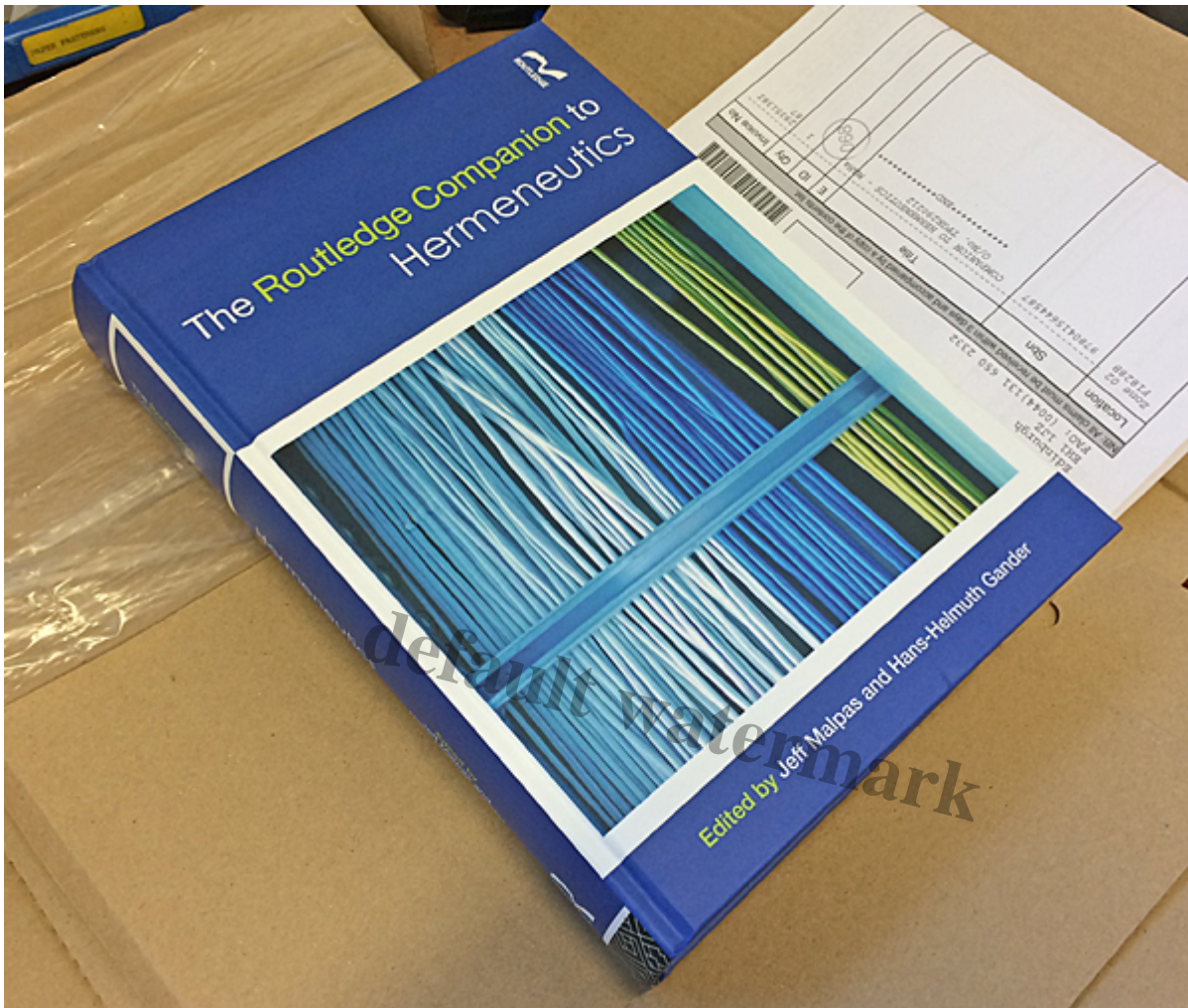


## The big book of hermeneutics

### Description

Understanding is always a *standing somewhere*, and it is this standing somewhere that underlies understanding itself (355). That's a clever statement by philosopher Jeff Malpas describing the circumstances of interpretation. We always interpret a book, painting, play or a building from some position or other within a horizon; and so Malpas links hermeneutics (the study of interpretation) to space or *topology* if you prefer. Spatial metaphors are abundant in hermeneutical theory and horizon, standing, the hermeneutical circle and metaphors are never *just* metaphors.

My copy of *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics* arrived this week. It's a massive treat for bibliophiles 753 pages. Over 50 authors contributed. It was compiled by Jeff Malpas and Hans-Helmuth Gander. Topology gets further mention via architecture and landscape: Brian Treanor (Nature and environment), Beata Sirowy (Hermeneutics, aesthetics and the arts), Jeff Malpas (Place and situation) and my own chapter (Hermeneutics, architecture and design).



The book is in five parts. PART I provides theoretical background. PART II focusses on prominent hermeneutic thinkers such as Spinoza, Vico, Wolff, Chladenius, Meier, Ast, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Nietzsche, Barth, Bultmann, Heidegger, Strauss, Gadamer, Lonergan, Pareyson and Vattimo, Collingwood, Oakeshott, MacIntyre, Taylor, Davidson, Rorty, Brandom, and McDowell.

PART III is about questions and challenges raised by hermeneutics: Rationality and method, Being and metaphysics, Language and meaning, Truth and relativism, Ethics and community, Politics and critique, Dialogue and conversation, Text and translation, Place and situation, Symbol and allegory, Life and world, Nature and environment, and Self and narrative.

PART IV looks at how different disciplines have engaged with hermeneutical themes: epistemology, science, literature, religion, God, jurisprudence, law, rhetoric, intercultural understanding, the social sciences, race, gender, aesthetics, the arts, education, health, medicine, architecture and design.

PART V examines Hermeneutic challenges and dialogues: phenomenology, deconstruction, critical theory, pragmatism, psychoanalysis, language philosophy, feminism, structuralism, post-structuralism, Confucianism, Judaic thought, Arabic and Islamic hermeneutics, and a conclusion on the future of hermeneutics.



## Positioning architecture

Contrary to Thomas Nagel's proposition in the book *The View from Nowhere*, Malpas says, "The only view, then, is a view from somewhere, and it is in virtue of our being-somewhere – our being-in-place – that we can have a view at all" (354).

In another context text Adrian Snodgrass and I wrote: "The idea of positioning accords with our common usage of the words 'interpretation' and 'understanding'" (8). "Positioning is a convenient architectural metaphor. It alludes to accounts of the first architectural act, the positioning of the pole or gnomon into the ground that forms the centre of a circle and defines the orientation of the city, and its relationship with the sun, the winds and the constellations. Here the positioning presents as an assertion, staking out, defining, orientation and grounding" (9).

## References

- Malpas, Jeff, and Hans-Helmuth Gander (eds). 2015. *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. [Book description](#).
- Malpas, Jeff. 2014. Place and situation. In J. Malpas, and H.-H. Gander (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*: 354-366. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Nagel, Thomas. 1986. *The View from Nowhere*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Snodgrass, Adrian, and Richard Coyne. 2006. *Interpretation in Architecture: Design as a Way of Thinking*. London: Routledge.

## Notes

- The compendium includes a detailed index, though music isn't included. However, music is mentioned on pages 67, 277, 347-348, 373, 431, 491, 525-526, 668, and 682.
- See blog posts tagged [Hermeneutics](#).

## Category

1. Architecture

## Tags

1. Gadamer
2. hermeneutics
3. interpretation
4. Phenomenology

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